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LDEQ welcomes 12 students through its inaugural LEAP

BATON ROUGE – On June 3, 2024, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) welcomed twelve new student interns to the agency through its newly introduced Louisiana Environmental Ambassadors Program (LEAP).

LEAP is an 8-10 week internship program at LDEQ that offers students hands-on experience in the various divisions of LDEQ: surveillance, permitting, emergency response, enforcement, remediation, air quality and assessment, audit services, communications and environmental law. The program is designed to provide students with the opportunity to combine classroom knowledge and real world experience in the field. The goal of the program is to build strong cognitive awareness and analytical skills in each student through the application of experiential learning.



LDEQ Secretary Aurelia S. Giacometto and LDEQ executive staff with the 12 LEAP student interns after their orientation.

The inaugural year of LEAP is proving to be very competitive with over 65 applications received with only three weeks of announcing this program. The students represent seven different academic institutions with education backgrounds ranging from undergraduate and MBA programs to Ph.D. candidates.

“It is imperative to recruit talented and skilled individuals to represent our state, and LEAP is achieving precisely that,” said **Secretary Aurelia S. Giacometto**. “LEAP’s experiential form provides the opportunities to take the classroom into the field and workplace.”

Understanding the challenges and competing interest of students, LEAP offers either the students a paid internship or course credit. Students may apply time worked during the internship towards the probationary period of a classified position should they become employed at LDEQ within two years of completing the program.

“We are excited about the LEAP program starting up,” **LDEQ Business Analytics Specialist Tomeka Prioleau** said. “We hope that students get beneficial experiences in environmental management that they can take with them throughout their career.”

Office of Management and Finance intern, Recheal Naa Dedei Armah said she’s looking forward to broadening her knowledge of her potential career field and connecting with fellow student interns and LDEQ personnel.

The student interns’ hail from some of Louisiana’s leading academic institutions, including Louisiana State University, Louisiana Tech University, McNeese State University, Southern University A&M College, Tulane University, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and Xavier University.

In Louisiana's constantly evolving environment, it is imperative to recruit the most skilled individuals to represent our state, and LEAP is achieving precisely that. Under Governor Landry's visionary leadership, LDEQ is dedicated to harmonizing economic growth with environmental preservation, cultivating a welcoming environment for businesses while safeguarding our precious natural resources.

To learn more about the LEAP, please visit our website at www.deq.louisiana.gov/page/LEAP.