

Funded Masters and PhD positions available starting Fall 2021 ParkSeek Affiliates Program

An interdisciplinary collaboration of faculty members from across Canada invite applications for up to 12 Masters and PhD students to participate in an exciting national research project (ParkSeek) on geographic accessibility to, and quality of experiences in, parks and recreational facilities across Canada.

Parks and recreational facilities in the Canadian context are critically important to health and wellbeing as they typically provide opportunities to connect with nature, pursue recreational activities, and facilitate social connections for the entire population. In the context of this project, parks and recreational facilities are defined as officially designated green/blue/grey indoor and outdoor spaces at the federal, provincial, territorial, regional, and local levels of government. In summary, the purpose of this project will be to:

1. Quantify the geographic accessibility of parks and recreational facilities across Canada at multiple scales using novel spatial analysis techniques.
2. Develop and test data collection tools in up to 12 communities to gather information about the quality of parks and recreational facilities.
3. Document operational and strategic policies across Canada that affect access to, and user experiences in, parks and recreational facilities using a health equity lens.

ABOUT PARKSEEK AFFILIATE POSITIONS

Students selected for ParkSeek Affiliate positions will engage in independent research about one or more of the three project topic areas: 1) geographic accessibility to parks and recreational facilities, 2) measuring the quality of experiences in parks and recreational facilities, and 3) identifying policy and operational barriers to accessing and having high-quality experiences in parks and recreational facilities.

Students will ideally possess:

- An undergraduate degree or Masters degree in environmental studies or sciences, recreation and leisure studies, geography, geomatics, planning, architecture, engineering, biology, psychology, sociology, political science, or related field that has a link to the project's objectives
- A minimum average of 80% in the last two years of undergraduate or graduate study
- Research interest and/or thesis topic in one of the three topic areas
- Basic knowledge of geographic information systems (GIS)
- Evidence of prior collaboration with peers and strong interpersonal skills
- Outstanding verbal and written communication skills
- Independent and self-starting attitude towards work
- Prior fieldwork or experience interacting with the public is an asset
- Additionally, proficiency in French, Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish, Punjabi, Arabic, or an Indigenous language would be an asset.

ParkSeek Affiliate positions will start in September 2021. Some positions will require relocation to relevant communities for a period of 8 months, expected to occur from May-December 2022. Funds to cover reasonable costs of relocation to study communities will be provided.

All positions will take the form of a Graduate Research Assistant or Graduate Student Assistant appointment at Western University, independent from other program and departmental

requirements of the student's current or planned institution. Renewal of position is completed on an annual basis and is subject to adequate performance and progress in achieving research objectives associated with the project.

Students who are successful in securing a position will receive \$6,400 (Masters) or \$8,400 (PhD) per year, and travel support, for the duration of the project (maximum of two years of support for Masters totaling \$12,800, and three years of support for PhDs totaling \$25,200.

Additional funding for the student over the course of the position and their graduate studies will be dependent on the institution, program, and supervisor of choice. All institutions and programs listed below offer competitive funding packages to graduate students.

Note: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the successful candidates may begin their programs working remotely anywhere in the world. International students must have a valid Canadian study permit to be eligible to work on the project. Once pandemic-related restrictions are lifted, it is anticipated that students will move to the community of their respective institution.

HOW TO APPLY

The following programs and institutions are currently eligible to host a ParkSeek Affiliate:

- Department of Geography & Environment or Graduate Program in Health & Department of Geography & Environmental Studies (Masters & PhD), Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo (ON)
- Department of Geography (Masters & PhD), University of Toronto (ON)
- Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies (Masters & PhD), University of Waterloo
- School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks & Tourism (Masters), Lakehead University, Thunder Bay (ON)
- School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape (Masters & PhD), University of Calgary (AB)
- School of Population & Public Health (Masters & PhD), University of British Columbia, Vancouver (BC)
- Department of Biology (Masters & PhD), Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's (NL)
- School of Health and Human Performance (Masters & PhD), Dalhousie University, Halifax (NS)

Students already enrolled at another institution, or one of the institutions listed above, are also eligible to apply for a position. Should they be successful, they will be assigned a research supervisor involved with the project who will provide guidance and mentorship over the course of their fellowship.

Applicants must submit curriculum vitae, unofficial transcript, a brief statement of research interests as it relates to the project, a writing sample, and names and contact details (email and telephone) of two referees we may contact.

Please send your application to Dr. Jason Gilliland at parkseek@uwo.ca, along with a list of up to three programs and supervisors you would be interested in applying to, or the name of your current program and institution. Your application will then be forwarded to potential supervisors. Informal inquiries are welcome! Review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until all positions are filled.