“MILLS STUDENTS CAN HAVE AN IMMERSIVE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

DOING REAL FIELD AND LAB WORK.”

JENN SMITH
PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY

After months of preparation, a group of biology students spends part of their summer in California’s Briones Regional Park, 20 miles from the Mills campus.

But this is no picnic: they’ve come to study the park’s abundant population of ground squirrels, under the guidance of accomplished researcher Professor Jenn Smith.

As they collect samples and chart behaviors, the team practices the scientific method with their own eyes and hands. As they encounter real-life hurdles, they develop into resourceful problem solvers. As the students analyze the squirrels’ social interactions, disease transmission, hormone levels, and predator-detection systems, they perform graduate-level investigation.

These efforts are supported by the Jill Barrett Biology Research Program at Mills, which aims to “increase the representation, participation, and leadership of women in the biological sciences”—and it succeeds.

As Kate Houghton ‘15 says, “I’m answering research questions that no one else has answered. That’s pretty exciting.” ***And in studying the Briones squirrels, the students tap into something much larger: their powerful potential as the next generation of women scientists.***

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THE RATE AT WHICH WOMEN’S COLLEGES GRADUATE WOMEN IN THE SCIENCES VERSUS COED INSTITUTIONS

–Women’s College Coalition