



The William L. and Ruth D. Nutting Research Grant supports graduate student research in the field of basic termite biology. It offers funding to a student whose proposed research shows the greatest potential to increase our understanding of this important group of social insects, with an emphasis on projects with clearly identified hypotheses that address specific biological questions. The 2019 winner of the Nutting Research Grant is **Austin Merchant**, who will receive \$2,500 to support his research this summer. Austin obtained his B.A. in Biology at the University of Kentucky and has continued there as a Ph.D. student in the lab of Xuguo “Joe” Zhou. His research project is titled, “Visualizing competitor-induced stress in the termite brain.” Austin’s project was selected following extensive discussion from a pool of well-developed proposals because it addressed a major gap in our knowledge of “basic termite biology.” Specifically, Austin proposes to visualize whole termite brains and then characterize basal and stress-induced expression of biogenic amines within the brains of four termite species that comprise two focal-competitor systems, one system that is North American and one that is East Asian. This project will thus reveal the extent to which stress-induced changes to biogenic amines are shared or are distinct across multiple termite species with distinct evolutionary histories.

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