I'm Siddharth Iyengar, a PhD student in the department of Ecology, Evolution and Behaviour at the University of Minnesota. I'm currently the graduate student representative from the Cedar Creek LTER site (CDR). I am from India, and am interested in how abiotic, biotic and human drivers shape plant communities and therefore ecosystem functions. I like to work with mathematical and statistical theory to see how we can gain insight into the functioning of ecosystems from simple experiments and observations. I like to think in the context of mixed use grasslands and dry forests, preferably tropical. I am also very interested in thinking of the science we do as a social process, and would hopefully like to explore how our cultural assumptions and societal paradigms influence scientific theory. I have currently just finished my first year of PhD, and hope to soon narrow down to the projects I will do in my PhD.

While I have only been a part of the LTER Grad Rep community for the past 8 months, I have really enjoyed working and planning for the ASM graduate student day. I strongly feel that community is a key part of making science, yet is often overlooked in our drive for outputs and excellence. Universities offer a tremendous diversity of people and ideas about the world, yet the narrow focus of disciplines and reality of geographies hinder creative collaborations. I see the LTER graduate student community as an exciting space to bring together people from all across the country (and the world), to come to multi- and inter-disciplinary discussions (and collaborations) about the world, with a focus that is both rooted in deep knowledge of a place (the individual long term sites) and a network with the power to understand continental (and even global) scale processes. It starts with getting to know people, and having fun, two things I love to facilitate.

I have been involved in voluntary student organizations all through my undergraduate education in India, and have continued to do so in the US. I volunteered for 5 years in a student movement for arts and culture (SPIC MACAY), organizing events at the city and national level. I was my department's representative to the graduate student government for 2014-15, and am a student representative to the University's Graduate Education Committee for 2015-16. I have also been assisting Ross Boucek in organizing the graduate student day for the ASM, where I administered a survey for graduate students that has so far gotten responses from 92 students across the network.

I look forward to this potential opportunity to serve the graduate student community in the network.

Yours,

Siddharth