Dear LTER Community,

I am writing in regards to the LTER graduate student co-chair nomination, with the intent to express my personal interest in this position, and thus nominate myself. I am a second-year PhD student in ecology at Colorado State University, and am a plant community and ecosystem ecologist. I study grassland ecosystems, and conduct my field research within the tallgrass prairie at the Konza Prairie LTER site in northeastern Kansas. Within my experiments I am looking into detail the ecology of extreme climatic events. For example, how do characteristics of drought (e.g., extremity, duration, and their interaction) affect ecophysiological, community, and ecosystem-level processes such as carbon cycling and resource supply?

I am applying for this position because I have a keen interest in contributing to and being involved with the LTER research community, which has developed during my nearly half a decade of living and researching on LTER sites. As an undergraduate at the University of Minnesota I spent two summers researching at Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve, and as a PhD student I have now spent two summers researching within Konza. Thus, the LTER program has been highly influential in my development as a young ecologist and field researcher. Furthermore, I believe the graduate student co-chair position is an important next step in the progression of my involvement with the LTER program and my professional development. This position would build upon my intent to develop a career-long involvement with LTER as a professional scientist.

Service and leadership opportunities are important to me. For example, as an undergraduate I was the director of charity for my student group, organizing large campus-wide events such as blood drives and breast cancer fundraisers. As a graduate student I have served on the abstract review committee for the Front Range Student Ecology Symposium, and have published two scientific communication articles highlighting and discussing LTER projects within the Colorado State University outlet Ecopress. I have also become a peer reviewer for the journal Plant Ecology to expand my professional service to ecological science. For research, I have already designed, lead and completed a research project in collaboration with multiple graduate students at Colorado State University during my first year. Currently, I am mentoring a Research Experience for Undergraduate (REU) student from Northwestern University at Konza, who is studying the biogeochemical effects of invasive plant species.

In total, I am nominating myself for the co-chair position because I believe it would provide a platform for me to engage with a more diverse group of LTER graduate students and scientists, build upon my past experiences with LTER, and contribute towards my professional development as a scientist and goal of becoming a future leader within the LTER community.

Thank you for your consideration,

Andrew Felton

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