



Meet Gillian M. Palino

Gillian Palino, Ph.D Student
Civil and Environmental Engineering
University of Tennessee
gpalino@vols.utk.edu

Gillian Palino is currently a graduate Fellow of the National Academies of Sciences' Gulf Research Program, where she works with the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC). With the TBRPC, she has had the opportunity to collaborate with experts across academic, government, and industry backgrounds to gain a deeper insight into the intersection and application of sciences in local government.

Gillian holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Engineering with a minor in Soil and Water Sciences from the University of Florida. Presently she is a fourth-year Civil and Environmental Engineering Ph.D. student at The University of Tennessee with a concentration in Water Resources Engineering under the guidance of Dr. Jon Hathaway. Her thesis project focuses on the application of regenerative stormwater conveyances (RSCs) as an emerging urban stormwater management practice. Broadly, her research interests include the modeling, application, and assessment of green infrastructure in urban stormwater management.

Gillian has an established history of leadership and service through her involvement with several undergraduate and graduate groups, most notably the Clean Water Science Network (CWSN), whose mission is to improve developing communities' health through educational outreach, scientific studies, and applied research projects on water issues. She has served on the leadership team for the last two years and in this role has facilitated webinar meetings, coordinated social media postings, and mentored four Latin American undergraduate students interested in pursuing a graduate degree in the United States. Additionally, she has launched a new initiative called, 'Engagement Challenges' to recruit country specific representatives, emphasize water discussions on local issues, and ultimately encourage active participation within the cohort. These developed skills and lessons learned throughout her studies are directly transferable to serving as a student member of the Board of Directors.

"As student member of the Board of Directors, how do you plan to bring a student perspective to the organization, including one of our primary missions of planning and convening a national annual water resources conference?"

I am passionate about UCOWR's mission to promote education, research, and public service in water resources. If selected, I will bring perspective on the current climate and challenges faced by students interested in a career focused on water resources. I am eager to provide a student's viewpoint to UCOWR's initiatives, especially by developing new ones focused on providing targeted resources and facilitating mentorship and networking opportunities to encourage student involvement and participation.

From my role in CWSN, I have experience in convening subject matter experts and hosting webinar series. I propose expanding upon current UCOWR efforts to create a technical series focused on the application of software, laboratory, or field techniques relevant to a student's research studies. I'd also create a needs assessment or questionnaire to tailor this series towards the current students' interests. Responses from this needs assessment may then fuel a social media spotlight to highlight current students and their research projects. The 'Student Spotlight' would provide a networking opportunity for students and raise awareness of UCOWR's work.

As students approach graduation, I've seen firsthand, both as a mentor for CWSN and mentee in the Gulf Research Program Fellowship, how mentorship at this stage can provide vital guidance and confidence. Similar to 'Delegate Roundtables,' UCOWR can offer the virtual opportunity for students and professionals to be matched with a mentor/mentee based upon a student's specific career goals and background. The Annual Conference can be utilized for an in-person meetup of these already established mentoring pairs and facilitate new matches. I also suggest organizing a contest at the Annual Conference for students to create flyers on local water-related topics (e.g. novel water treatment methods, restoration projects, contaminants of concern). In these ways, students will be further encouraged to attend and participate in the Annual Conference as well as be engaged with UCOWR's mission.