

Buffett Undergraduate Research Fellowship Opportunity START HERE

Flagship Report for Global Water Security

Faculty Mentor: Sera Young, Professor, Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences

Project Synopsis: Problems with water quality and quantity are increasing in frequency and severity throughout the world, with major implications for health and well-being. High-resolution, globally comparable data have been extremely helpful for understanding experiences with many global issues, e.g. food insecurity, but have not existed for water. This means that many problems with water have gone invisible.

To fill this gap, we have developed the Water InSecurity Experiences (WISE) Scales, the first cross-country equivalent way of measuring water access and use that have now been used in more than 100 countries (www.WISEscales.org). By the end of January 2026, nationally representative data will be available for 80 countries. These data, and the stories they tell, will be launched in a flagship report on Global Water Security at the UN Water meeting in the United Arab Emirates in December 2026. This report will describe how the WISE Scales can be used to estimate prevalence of water insecurity, make decisions about targeting resources, and to evaluate the impact of water interventions. It will lay out the evidence to date about how water insecurity shapes poor nutrition, mental health, and physical health, and the implications of water insecurity in the face of climate change. We will also describe real-world policy-relevant implications for measuring human experiences with water from around the globe.

Project Term: Summer and Academic Year 2026

Project Location: In person, on campus

Job Description: Students will help to analyze Gallup Poll data, prepare figures and tables, and write short policy briefs that will be contained in the flagship report. Students will need to have training in quantitative data analysis (ideally Stata, possibly R) and able to use Keynote or Adobe to prepare graphics. In terms of travel, they could potentially join me at various venues around the globe to present our findings.

Time Commitment: Ideally 10 hours per week, but this can fluctuate to more or less depending on the students' other demands.

Number of available positions: Two