In fall 2019, the FYRES class consisted of 23 students that researched a variety of topics on the dunes.

Addison Arendt

**Major/subject interest:** Undecided  
**Hometown:** Rockford, MI  
What is an interesting fact about you? I was kissed by a president of the US.  
What initially attracted you to the FYRES course? I like being outside. Exploring and understanding nature is important to me.  
What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far? The wind study on the top of dune 8.

Caleb Betten

**Major/subject interest:** Sciences or Pre-Law (Undecided)  
**Hometown:** Grand Rapids, MI  
What is an interesting fact about you? I can solve Rubik's cubes. The largest so far is a 7x7x7.  
What initially attracted you to the FYRES course? I want to experience scientific research.  
What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far? Going to dune 8 and placing sand traps.
Afua Brantuo

Major/subject interest: Math

Hometown: Windhoek, Namibia / Accra, Ghana

What is an interesting fact about you?
I would like to pursue film directing in the future.

What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?
The opportunity to do research in the first year.

What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?
I have enjoyed getting the opportunity to be outdoors and just appreciate nature without any distractions.

Paige Brodeur

Major/subject interest: Secondary Education (Major: Environmental Science; Minor: Spanish)

Hometown: St. Charles, MI

What is an interesting fact about you?
I like chicken and waffles.

What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?
I was interested in taking this course because I'm interested in environmental science, specifically how humans impact the environment, and biology, how the world and everything works together.

What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?
It's given me the opportunity to get to know other adventurous people doing fun work on the dunes as well as in the van rides - jamming out to good tunes.
Katelyn De Young

**Major/subject interest:** Marketing and Graphic Design

**Hometown:** Jenison, MI

**What is an interesting fact about you?**
I love to wake surf.

**What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?**
Living here in West Michigan, I have noticed the beach and dunes have changed a lot recently. Therefore, I wondered why and how these changes, such as change in lake levels, effected the dunes.

**What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?**
I have never been to PJ Hoffmaster, so it was very interesting to learn about dunes in and new and different location. Also, collaborating was a key part of labs which I enjoyed.

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Clare Doss

**Major/subject interest:** Environmental Science

**Hometown:** Falls Church, VA

**What is an interesting fact about you?**
I lived in the UK for 11 years. I've traveled to many countries in Europe, my favorite place being Belgium.

**What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?**
The ability to have a hands-on learning experience was very intriguing and I wanted to learn about different environments as lacustrine dune environments are unfamiliar to me.

**What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?**
Learning about all of the different types of dune vegetation and the symbiotic relationship between some species and sand deposition.
Josiah Eising

Major/subject interest: Geology

Hometown: Big Rapids, MI

What is an interesting fact about you?
I enjoy being outdoors doing fieldwork and climbing trees.

What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?
Weekly field work attracted me to the FYRES course.

What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?
GIS and GPS.

Sam Fynewever

Major/subject interest: Secondary Education, Spanish, and Math

Hometown: Grand Rapids, MI

What is an interesting fact about you?
I love playing cello and singing in gospel choir.

What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?
The possibility of going to the dunes as a researcher, and doing work that has real-world scientific importance.

What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?
Mid-class stretches! Cookies on on-campus lab days!
Isaiah Hageman

**Major/subject interest:** Environmental Science and Music minor

**Hometown:** Grand Rapids, MI

**What is an interesting fact about you?**
I am a numismatic editor and published author.

**What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?**
My interests in earth sciences.

**What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?**
Using the total station.

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Jack Hiegel

**Major/subject interest:** Economics and Finance

**Hometown:** Mundelien, IL

**What is an interesting fact about you?**
I was born on Friday the 13th.

**What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?**
The hands-on learning initiative rather than just classroom learning.

**What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?**
Traveling to the dunes and seeing the natural beauty.
Andrew Hill

Major/subject interest: Finance and Statistics
Hometown: Muskegon, MI

What is an interesting fact about you?
I play the guitar and saxophone.

What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?
Being from Muskegon, I have grown up around dunes my whole life. I thought the FYRES course would be an interesting way to learn about the world I’ve grown up in.

What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?
Wind research on a blowout in Hoffmaster State Park.

Will Hofmann

Major/subject interest: Environmental Science
Hometown: Grosse Pointe Woods, MI

What is an interesting fact about you?
I have traveled to Costa Rica and Cuba.

What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?
Hearing about hands on research in the course interested me a lot because freshmen don't often get chances for this in-depth research.

What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?
I have loved the beautiful views that we have every time we drive out to the dunes. Also, I'm grateful for the friends I have made during the course.
Onyinyechi Iheme

**Major/subject interest:** Geology

**Hometown:** Nigeria

**What is an interesting fact about you?**
I like food and outdoor activities.

**What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?**
All of the outdoor activities that would be taking place.

**What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?**
The snacks. The trips.

Ben Kielar

**Major/subject interest:** Environmental Science

**Hometown:** Sturgeon Bay, WI

**What is an interesting fact about you?**
I grew up on an orchard with four siblings.

**What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?**
It was an opportunity to research during my freshman year! Also, the subject area seemed very interesting and relevant (because I've lived near two coasts my whole life).

**What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?**
The amount of snacks generously provided to us during lab periods.
Robin Kollar

Major/subject interest: Biology, Environmental Conservation

Hometown: Ada, MI

What is an interesting fact about you?
I love plants and experimenting with my fish tank.

What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?
Dune research in itself seemed very interesting. Being able to go and do research on actual dunes as a first year.

What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?
Taking data, seeing all the different kinds of plants and effects of dune movement on plants! And falling was funny!

Isabel Latvaitis

Major/subject interest: Biology

Hometown: Kentwood, MI

What is an interesting fact about you?
Certified scuba diver who can't dive, walking irony.

What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?
The opportunity to do research as a freshman and being able to go out and enjoy the dunes weekly.

What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?
Laughing (with Robin, not at her) as she fell while climbing up the dune.
Joshua Newhouse

**Hometown:** Grand Junction, Colorado

**What is an interesting fact about you?**
I love fly fishing. My favorite fish is a Brook Trout.

**What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?**
The hands-on aspect of learning.

**What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?**
Getting off campus to spend time in the beautiful dune systems.

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Grace Prom

**Major/subject interest:** Environmental Studies and Spanish

**Hometown:** Champaign, IL

**What is an interesting fact about you?**
I love to knit and play piano.

**What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?**
Doing research on the dunes because I've been to the Michigan dunes a number of times and don't know very much about them.

**What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?**
One highlight was being able to map the vegetation on Dune 8 at Hoffmaster State Park and seeing the GIANT Pitcher's Thistle.
Katie Scholma

**Major/subject interest:** Undecided

**Hometown:** Hudsonville, MI

**What is an interesting fact about you?**
I'm on the swim team.

**What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?**
Hands-on research and all the trips to the dunes.

**What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?**
Getting to know people and learning about things I've never studied before.

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Taylor Smelker

**Major/subject interest:** Environmental Science, French Minor

**Hometown:** DeWitt, MI

**What is an interesting fact about you?**
I will be hurdling for Calvin in the spring.

**What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?**
I wanted to get out of the traditional classroom setting.

**What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?**
The dunes are so pretty! We've been blessed with amazing weather so far!
Madeleine Snella

Major/subject interest: Environmental Studies

Hometown: Elmhurst, IL

What is an interesting fact about you? I'm coming up on my 5th year working in the ecology and conservation department at a scout camp. (Shoutout to Camp Long Lake!)

What initially attracted you to the FYRES course? Getting to do research as a freshman is pretty unique, so I wanted to take that opportunity. It sounded super fun!

What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far? Making a topographic map was so cool!

Ike Start

Major/subject interest: Pre-Law (Philosophy, Sociology)

Hometown: Hudsonville, MI

What is an interesting fact about you? TikTok famous ping pong star.

What initially attracted you to the FYRES course? The hands-on aspect of the FYRES course was attractive to me. Especially with science classes. I prefer getting involved instead of just sitting in class. I like the idea of implementing what we learn in class directly and immediately in the labs.

What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far? I felt incredible satisfaction seeing the data from my GPS surveying. I loved doing the actual research too.
Rine Wakeman

Major/subject interest: Double/some combination of ecology and illustration

Hometown: Grand Rapids, MI

What is an interesting fact about you?
My team won 7th in the country out of 49 at the national FFA (Future Farmers of America) landscaping and nursery care competition.

What initially attracted you to the FYRES course?
The field research wasn't something I had much experience with and dune/arid ecosystems are a particular interest to me.

What is a highlight that you have from your time in the course so far?
Being able to map out a rare, interesting plant I wasn't previously aware of and making a real impact.