Eric Kernfeld (Applied Mathematics, Junior)
- Undergraduate Research Fellow
- Full-time, 40 hours per week
- Paid

What do you do as an intern at this organization?
I am working with a partner on a computer model of invasive aspergillosis. Day to day, this involves collecting data to justify our methods and implementing our ideas in the computer language NetLogo.

How did you find your internship?
It was on the NSF website as an opportunity for undergraduates.

What do you enjoy most about your internship?
I enjoy the feeling of mastery that this job gives me. I am free to set my own agenda for the day, and I become the expert in whatever small piece I am constructing. My work also offers variety and tangible progress.

What do you find challenging?
At this internship, we are expected to be professional and well prepared for regular meetings, which means we end up working on weekends to make things come together.

What advice would you offer to someone who wants to make the most of an internship like yours?
Find out as much as you can beforehand about what your experience will be like. If you can, contact previous participants to make sure that the program offers stimulating projects and good mentors. Deadlines will be on the NSF site.

About the Organization
Virginia Bioinformatics Institute
Blacksburg, Virginia

The Virginia Bioinformatics Institute (VBI) is a world-class research institute with a growing faculty and staff of over 250 dedicated to the study of the biological sciences. The institute is housed in state-of-the-art facilities with over 130,000 square feet of space on the Virginia Tech campus, the nearby corporate research center and in offices in the new Virginia Tech National Capital Region building in Washington, D.C. By using bioinformatics and medical informatics, which combines transdisciplinary approaches to information technology and biomedicine, researchers at VBI create, interpret and apply vast amounts of biological data generated from basic research to some of today’s key challenges in the biomedical, environmental and agricultural sciences. The institute develops genomic, proteomic and bioinformatic tools and databases to study genomes and diseases for the discovery of new vaccine, drug and diagnostic targets for humans and the species upon which they depend to improve our quality of life, health and security.