SECURE for Student Success

Undergraduate Research Program

Department of Civil Engineering and Construction Management

Research Duration:	Summer 2024 (June – August 2024)
Faculty:	Ricardo Medina
Email address:	Ricardo.medina@csun.edu
Contact No:	818-677-6298 Office Hours: Tuesday's 2-3 pm

Title of Project:	Developing Low-Cost Geophysics-Based Instruments

Goals and Objectives of the Project, Expectations and Outcomes

Goals and Objectives: The objective of this project is to design, manufacture, test, and validate groundwater flow and geophysics instruments. This project will develop small-scale instruments with off-the shelf CPU boards and circuit boards, design of specialized boards, and use of commercial circuit boards such as Arduino. While these systems will be tested on small-scale systems (bench-scale or local on-campus system), these systems can be refined and used in future field-based research projects.

Arduino is a brand of open-source microcontroller boards with their own processor and memory. Arduino boards are commonly referred to as I/O devices due to their ability to simultaneously act as input devices (i.e. receiving, detecting or measuring electronic signals or voltage levels) and output devices (i.e. sending electronic signals or varying output voltage levels). The I/O capability allows the Arduino microcontrollers to communicate with some electronic devices such as environmental sensors, data loggers, cameras, and other sensors or electronic components. Such components can be controlled or programmed using Arduino code. The

Arduino programming language is based on C/C++ that is accessed via a user-friendly integrated development environment (IDE). Peripherals such as microSD card shields and real-time clocks can be connected via breadboards and jumper wires (soldered or unsoldered), while bespoke printed circuit boards (PCBs) can be used to simplify construction and minimize connectivity issues such as loose wiring or poor soldering.

The specific objective of this project is to develop an Arduino-based electrical resistivity tomography (ERT) system. ERT is a geophysical technique for imaging sub-surface structures using electrical resistivity measurements made at the surface. The general method of ERT constitutes of a current induced in the ground using two current electrodes, and measuring the electrical potential drop using two other electrodes. ERT can be used to map geologic variations including: soil lithology (e.g., clay versus gravel), presence of ground water, fracture zones, variations in soil saturation, areas of increased salinity or, in some cases, ground water contamination. ERT is often the best option for mapping cavities such as caves, karst and/or evaporite dissolution sinkholes. The expected outcome of this project is a fully functional (or at minimum proof-of-concept) laboratory-scale experimental system (or measurement device). The final system will have been designed and constructed. Ideally, the system should be tested by the end of the project using small-scale experiments.

Expectations: Interested student(s) should have some familiarity with electronic components, e.g., Arduino boards, circuit boards, and other electronic components. Basic to advanced knowledge of C/C++ or other coding language. Students who do not possess coding or electronics skills, should demonstrate a willingness and ability to learn quickly.

Outcomes: The expected outcome of this project is a fully functional laboratory-scale experimental system (or measurement device). The system will be designed, constructed, and tested with small-scale experiments.