



Ecological Society of America

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February 27, 2024

Dr. Vincent E. Price, President
Duke University
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Dr. Alec D. Gallimore, Provost
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Dr. Gary G. Bennett, Dean
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Dr. Susan Alberts, Dean
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Dr. Lori Benneer, Stanback Dean
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Dr. Trina Jones, Chair
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Dr. Emily S. Bernhardt, Chair
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Dear Drs. Price, Gallimore, Bennett, Alberts, Benneer, Jones, and Bernhardt:

The Ecological Society of America (ESA) is the world's largest society of professional ecologists, representing over 8,000 members across the country. ESA strongly encourages Duke University to reconsider the decision to close its Herbarium.

The 825,000 specimens it contains are a vital resource for ecological research, understanding global environmental change, and advancing plant research. In an era of environmental challenges, preserving such resources is paramount. The herbarium's closure would be a setback of national and international importance. This decision contradicts national priorities outlined in the 2022 CHIPS and Science Act, White House reports on the U.S. bioeconomy, and publications by esteemed bodies like the National Academies.

Internationally, the Duke Herbarium serves as a crucial asset for the global botanical community, extending its reach far beyond the university's confines. If the herbarium closes, it would impede

the work of plant and fungal biodiversity collections and researchers worldwide. Given the vast number of specimens housed, it is improbable for any single herbarium to absorb them all. Consequently, the collection is likely to be divided and moved to different areas, disrupting its historical continuity and causing confusion regarding specimen locations. Unrestricted access to these specimens is vital to fully maximize the contributions to science and to make the next scientific discovery. Without adequate resources to integrate transferred specimens and data into new collections, the usability and enhancement of existing collections will suffer greatly.

Duke is a leader in climate research and sustainability that produces world class research. Withdrawal from supporting the herbarium contradicts its commitment to climate research and sustainability. ESA respectfully requests reconsideration of the decision to close the Duke Herbarium as the ramifications extend beyond Duke's campus to impact local and global stakeholders who rely on the herbarium for their work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shahid Naem". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Shahid Naem
President