

# Student travel grant report by Miss Julia Cisneros

## Scientific interactions overseas – the beginning of a promising future in collaboration

As a first year graduate student, attending a scientific conference of this size and focus was initially intimidating. I knew I could not pass it up, as my research is focused in dunes, but being new in the field it was nerve-wrecking to think I would be sharing a stage with some of the biggest names in marine and river dune dynamic research.

All of my apprehension disappeared the first night during the icebreaker where I was greeted as a fellow researcher. I had never felt so welcomed and able to speak about my science, and I truly enjoyed the small setting that allowed for more intimate and relaxed conversation. In the past, I had only attended very large conferences and the contrast between those and MARID was strikingly apparent. I appreciated being able to attend every talk and having several opportunities to speak to researchers via the multiple coffee breaks. Whereas coffee breaks are usually a fight for the front of the line, MARID gave me the opportunity to catch a presenter and ask a question or applaud them for a great talk.

The smaller attendance size also gave me the opportunity to meet and have ample conversations with several professors and students. As a student, I have never had this opportunity before. I think this is important and gave me a new sense of belonging in the field of dune research. I found that other researchers have come across the same observations of dunes as I have and we spoke about our different methods and reasoning to describe them.



*Figure 2: The beautiful city of Caernarfon allowed for easy exploration and amazing views after a day of presentations.*



*Figure 1: After presentations, delegates visited the famous Caernarfon Castle.*

Aside from the science, I think MARID gave me the opportunity to shed the impressive publication list from several delegates and to get to know them as a person. From the funny stories of ‘when I was younger’ to the exciting experiences in fieldwork, I felt less intimidated and finally realized how collaborators can also become life long friends. I also enjoyed spending time with delegates outside of the conference and exploring Caernarfon (fig. 1 and 2). This is why conferences like MARID are important – they offer an intimate setting for us to meet fellow researchers who not only have the same scientific interests but who also have similar lives.

Through MARID, I’ve been more confident in asking for collaboration and widening my research scope because I saw how open everyone was to sharing their research. Sometimes it is tough to see the importance of your own research when you are one of the few in your department doing that type of research. Attending MARID gave me a sense of how and why my research is important and applicable to other fields. I think overall, I left MARID with several new ideas and insights of how to tackle my research problems and how to widen my scope for more applications within the marine and river dune dynamics field.

Through this conference, I have gained not only a scientific but also a more personal relationship with the dune research community and I am excited to work more closely with other researchers around the world.