Experiences from the University of Hawai’i – NASA Astrobiology Institute Winter School

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The UH-NAI Winter School is held in Hawai’i during January every second year, the purpose of which is to bring early career research scientists together allowing for an interdisciplinary collaborative learning environment. The winter school is organized by the NASA Astrobiology Institute in affiliation with the Institute for astronomy at the University of Hawai’i. The participants included graduate and PhD students from primarily Europe and the US – from research fields such as organic geochemistry, microbiology, astrophysics, planetary science and of course my forte – geology. We attended both theory and practical sessions during the program. Over thirty seminars were presented, by speakers from multiple disciplines, linked to ideas about water in the universe, exploring its elemental distribution, how Earth got its water and its biological importance. As well as seminar sessions, students also participated in practical astronomical observations and shared their own work through poster sessions. This seminar outlines the winter school experience and provides a brief synthesis of the ideas and research shared during the course of the program.