

CSUDH Summer 2013 Costa Rica Ecological Research Experience
August 14, 2013

Activity Description: CSUDH-LSAMP offers students the opportunity to perform research in ecological and environmental biology at La Selva Biological Station in Costa Rica. La Selva is owned and operated by the Organization for Tropical Studies, which is a consortium of universities in North America and Latin America dedicated to promoting research, education and conservation. This is a competitive activity, and LSAMP-eligible students apply for as many as six slots. The existence of this research opportunity is announced in relevant classes, email and flyers. Students are chosen by the faculty mentors who administer this program in consultation with the LSAMP coordinators. Important criteria are: 1) interest in attending graduate school, with a particular focus on ecological research and 2) potential to conduct research in a tropical rainforest. Students conduct research for a minimum of two weeks in the summer, either under the supervision of the CSUDH faculty mentor, or with collaborating faculty mentors from other universities conducting research at La Selva. Travel and station fees (which include food and housing) are funded by LSAMP.

Activity Goals: The goals of the Costa Rica International Research Experience are to: 1) provide opportunities and resources for LSAMP students to conduct research in tropical ecology, 2) expose students to research in a global context, which includes interaction with scientists from different parts of the world, 3) enhance the global awareness of LSAMP, and 4) develop students' confidence in conducting field research, which enhances their interest in graduate studies in a STEM discipline.

Activity Outcome: Five LSAMP students were selected to participate in the 2013 Costa Rica Ecological Research Experience. The students were 1) Ashley Aranda, 2) Jeremy Emerson, 3) Jaime Lopez, 4) Omar Nasir, and 5) Erika Parra. Ashley, Jeremy and Omar were selected to participate in the 2-week experience, while Jaime and Erika participated in a 12-week experience. Erika participated in the Costa Rica experience in Summer 2012. Students studied the native ant populations and examined how they interacted and affected their environment. Upon their return, students were asked to complete an anonymous survey about their research experience. All students responded and the results are as follows: 1) 100% of students "agree" or "strongly agree" that the research experience was organized and focused, increased their confidence in conducting research, and was satisfying; 2) 100% "agree" or "strongly agree" that the faculty mentor was available and answered questions related to their research, and all students felt that he was extremely knowledgeable about his research and the La Selva Biological Station; 3) 100% "agree" or "strongly agree" that the research experience increased their interest in scientific research and graduate studies. All students strongly agreed that they recommend this research experience to other students.