

Applied Transdisciplinary Undergraduate Research in Costa Rica: Five Weeks Faculty-Led Study Abroad Model

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Abstract : This session explains the process and lessons learned as Central College (USA) faculty and staff developed undergraduate research opportunities within the model of a short-term faculty-led study abroad program in Costa Rica. The program in Costa Rica increases access to research opportunities across the disciplines and was developed by faculty from English, Biology, and Exercise Science. Session attendees will benefit from learning how faculty and staff navigated the program proposal process at a small liberal arts college and, in particular, how the program was built to be inclusive of departments with lower enrollment, like those currently seen in the humanities. Vital to this last point, presenters will explain how they negotiated issues of research supervision and disciplinary authority in such a way that the program is open to students from multiple disciplines without forcing the program budget to absorb costs for multiple faculty supervisors traveling and living in-country. Additionally, session attendees will learn how scouting laid the groundwork for mutually beneficial relationships between the program and the communities with which it collaborates. Presenters will explain how they built a coalition of students, faculty advisors, study abroad staff and local research hosts to support the development of research questions that are of value not just to the students, but to the community in which the research will take place. This program also incorporates principles of fair-trade learning by intentionally reporting research findings to local community members, as well as encouraging students to proactively share their research as a way to connect with local people.

Keywords : Costa Rica, research, sustainability, transdisciplinary

Conference Title : ICPHMT 2018 : International Conference on Public Health and Medical Technology

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : March 15-16, 2018