Amazon Student Exchange and Collaboration Program

Http://www.iamazonica.org.br/

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The **Exchange Program between Amazonian Universities and Agricultural, Forestry and Agroforestry research centers** associated to the Amazon Initiative Consortium offers an opportunity for sharing of information and experiences between educational institutions and research centers across the region. The program aims to train young Amazonian professionals in sustainable development initiatives within the Amazon Initiative agenda.

Background

Launched in October 2005 by the Amazon Initiative in partnership with UNAMAZ, the Association of Amazonian Universities, the Pan Amazon Student Exchange program offers short-time field research fellowships to undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in educational institutions affiliated to UNAMAZ. Successful candidates are expected to submit a research proposal linked to at least one of the focal areas of the Amazon Initiative scientific agenda.

Objectives

The Program objectives include:

-Broadening students' knowledge base by gaining understanding of another country's context

- Exposing future professionals to new concepts, methods and innovative technologies, thereby promoting mechanisms for collaborative interdisciplinary scientific endeavors.

Expected results

Students are expected to produce following guidelines provided by the Amazon Initiative coordination:

- Workplan together with his supervisor
- Final report with recommendations to the program
- Scientific publication, e.g. Thesis, journal article, congress article, etc.
- Summary and graphic material for web
- A public seminar or activity to show the results to relevant stakeholders.

About the participants

More than 60% of students come from Peru and Brazil. These two countries also host 80% of the exchanges. 67% of them are undergraduate students, whereas 23 % are studying a master's degree and 10% a doctoral degree (Figure 1). Most of the 200 enquiries and 100 applicants since 2005 have learnt about the program by word of mouth.

Diversity and gender balance are key values of the Exchange Program

During the selection process, special attention is given to the innovative character of the topic as well as diversity of origin and gender balance of the group. The examples below illustrate this diversity:

From bottom left, clockwise:

1) Rosana Maneschy (Brazil) interviews a farmer about environmental services in Costa Rica

2) Daniel Lopez (Peru) takes soil samples in Acre, Brazil

3) Kely Torres (Peru) assists a participatory mapping exercise in a silvopastoralist farm in Colombia

4) Fernando de Morais (Brazil) analyzes fish reproductive system from Orinoco river, Venezuela

5) Elessandra Lopes (Brazil) measures organic carbon in Colombia

6) Luis Suarez (Peru) studies the effect of burning on soil fertility in Brasilia, Brazil.

Learning for all

The exchange program is in itself a learning experience. Its main lessons have been summarized in a book entitled "Student Exchanges in the Amazon" (*Intercambios Estudiantiles en la Amazonia*), available from the Amazon Initiative website, in Spanish. The book is divided in two parts, the first one, contains the complete analysis of the program done by its Coordinator until 2007 and the second one is a compilation of illustrated research summaries written by the students.

Figure 1. Student academic level during their participation in the Pan Amazon Student Exchange program.

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