

Chorotega Biological Corridor-HojanCHA Team

PhD Assistantship Announcements

Interdisciplinary PhD Research Assistantships in Landscape Ecology and Ecosystem Service Science, Entomology, Regional Planning and Sustainable Communities, Social Systems and Resilient Livelihoods, and Environmental and Natural Resource Economics of the Chorotega Biological Corridor, a crucially important Mesoamerican landscape.

Up to five Ph.D. research assistantships will be available to join a collaborative team working on ecological, socio-economic, and institutional aspects of sustainable production, conservation, and sustainable rural livelihoods within the HojanCHA region of Costa Rica. The linked dissertation projects will work in a region that faces a variety of natural resource management problems and where land use changes affect, positively or negatively, the provision of ecosystem services for which increasing demand exists. With funding from the National Science Foundation's Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship program (IGERT), fellows will pursue disciplinary research important for the overall theme, and work together to identify and address interdisciplinary issues critical for effective policy development, institution building, management planning, and implementation. The team will interact with members of five other IGERT-funded student/faculty teams pursuing similar objectives in other ecosystems in Costa Rica and Idaho in which sustainability and conservation in the face of changing conditions and pressures are desired.

PhD Assistantship in Regional Planning and Sustainable Communities. Seeking a highly motivated and qualified student with a background in urban and regional planning, anthropology, geography, law or political science to pursue the study of how the social, cultural, economic and/or political-legal and institutional frameworks affect rural livelihood and land use dynamics and how public and private decision-making affect sustainable forms of regional and local development. Research will focus on a combination of the following or related topics: 1) understanding how complex contextual cultural, economic, social, institutional, and/or governance variables affect land use decisions and political dynamics; and 2) evaluating the feasibility and appropriateness of alternative regional planning and governance approaches to shift the trajectory of decisions to meet both conservation and socio-economic development goals at multiple local and regional scales. Familiarity with case study design, mixed methods, and geospatial applications for scenario-building and NVIVO will assist the team address multiple resource values while responding to economic and climate change scenarios at various rural to urban and regional scales. The student will closely collaborate with the student working on Social Systems and Resilient Livelihoods (see below). In addition, the student will conduct collaborative research to examine interdisciplinary aspects of ecological and social resilience in the dynamic, human-dominated landscape that constitutes the HojanCHA region with team members in fields such as entomology, landscape ecology, ecosystem service science, rural sociology, and environmental and natural resource economics. Contact Sandra Pinel (spinel@uidaho.edu), Dietmar Stoian (stoian@catie.ac.cr), and Roger Villalobos (rvillalo@catie.ac.cr).

PhD Assistantship in Social Systems and Resilient Livelihoods. Seeking a highly motivated and qualified student with a background in anthropology, rural sociology, or agricultural economics, to study how rural livelihoods and social/cultural systems respond to demographic, economic, environmental, institutional, and/or climate change. Emphasis will be on how related drivers interact and induce change in terms of vulnerability and resilience at household, community, territorial, and national level. Research may also analyze the impacts of emerging socio-political-economic systems and conservation policy alternatives on rural livelihoods and communities. A strong theoretical background in social resilience and experience with livelihoods frameworks in general, and qualitative case study, participatory, ethnographic, and mixed methods research design in particular, will be important to understand and address interactive economic and social variables and to evaluate the outcomes and impacts of market forces and policy alternatives on social equity and community systems. Research will include empirical analysis involving social and economic factors including conducting focus groups and interviews among rural households and key informants. In addition, the student will conduct collaborative research to examine interdisciplinary aspects of ecological and social resilience in the dynamic, human-dominated landscape that constitutes the Hojanca region with team members in fields such as regional planning, entomology, landscape ecology, ecosystem service science, and environmental and natural resource economics. Contact Sandra Pinel (spinel@uidaho.edu), Levan Elbakidze (lelbakidze@uidaho.edu), Patrick Gilham (gillham@uidaho.edu) and Dietmar Stoian (stoian@catie.ac.cr).

This unique graduate education program will provide students:

- Team-based interdisciplinary education
- International perspective
- Broad geographic and ecological exposure
- Participation in integrated interdisciplinary teams
- Cross-cultural experience
- Mentoring by faculty from multiple disciplines and institutions

Requirements: Applicants must be American citizens or permanent residents of the USA. Successful applicants must have obtained a research-based M.S. degree in a discipline of relevance to the project or equivalent experience during or after a B.S. degree, and demonstrate interest and/or experience in team-based projects. Prior Spanish language skills are desirable but not required. Students will join the program to begin course work at the end of July 2011.

Review of applications will begin November 1st 2010. Earlier applications are highly encouraged. Interviews of top applicants will be conducted at the University of Idaho campus in early February 2011.

For project and application information visit our web site: <http://www.cals.uidaho.edu/igert2/>

For information on the University of Idaho College of Graduate Studies see: <http://www.uidaho.edu/cogs/>

For information on the Joint Doctoral Program between UI and CATIE go to: <http://www.uiweb.uidaho.edu/catie/>

For information about CATIE visit: <http://www.catie.ac.cr/>