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LEADING STUDY-ABROAD PROGRAMS: SOME EXAMPLES FROM NICARAGUA AND PANAMA

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ABSTRACT: During the past five years, Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources has conducted three study-abroad courses in Central America. The classes in Nicaragua and Panama have focused on key factors affecting management of natural resources—forestry, watershed management, fisheries, wildlife, and forest products. The format includes field exercises; visits to natural resources projects and agencies; team, classroom, and lab sessions; and self-directed study. Each course is designed to maximize contacts with natural resources management practitioners. Many students return for further study or to work in areas that we visit. The courses are team-taught to involve faculty new to international teaching. Several local students are involved, maximizing cross-fertilization of ideas. The course has lead to increased international involvement of faculty, and new research and outreach projects. The presentation will stress lessons learned and how they have influenced the college's international program.