



THE PANAMA TROPICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

ACADEMIC PROGRAM GUIDE 2023

WE ARE BUILDING.

Welcome to the Panama Tropical Research Institute at Kalu Yala, where we are discovering how humanity can live in a way that is socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable.



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WHO WE ARE



The Panama Tropical Research Institute (PTRI) is an experiment in sustainable living. We've gathered some of the brightest minds from across the many fields of sustainability - from Agriculture and Biology to Entrepreneurship and Education, here to reimagine what's possible.

With an interdisciplinary approach, PTRI is inventing, testing, and perfecting sustainable solutions that can be scaled and exported around the world. At the same time, we're teaching a new generation how they can effect change and shape their own futures..



A photograph of three young women standing outdoors, smiling. The woman on the left is wearing a grey tank top and a patterned skirt. The woman in the middle is wearing a pink tank top and blue jeans. The woman on the right is wearing a black tank top. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with trees.

WHAT ALUMNI SAY

92%

of alumni would recommend our program to a friend.

94%

of alumni have stated that their experience at PTRI has positively contributed to their career growth, citing it as a beneficial experience for medical school applications, developing critical soft skills for needs-based community- development assessments, and an overall transformative exposure to new academic fields, among others.

98%

positive reviews on GoOverseas.com, the leading online directory of abroad programs.

15%

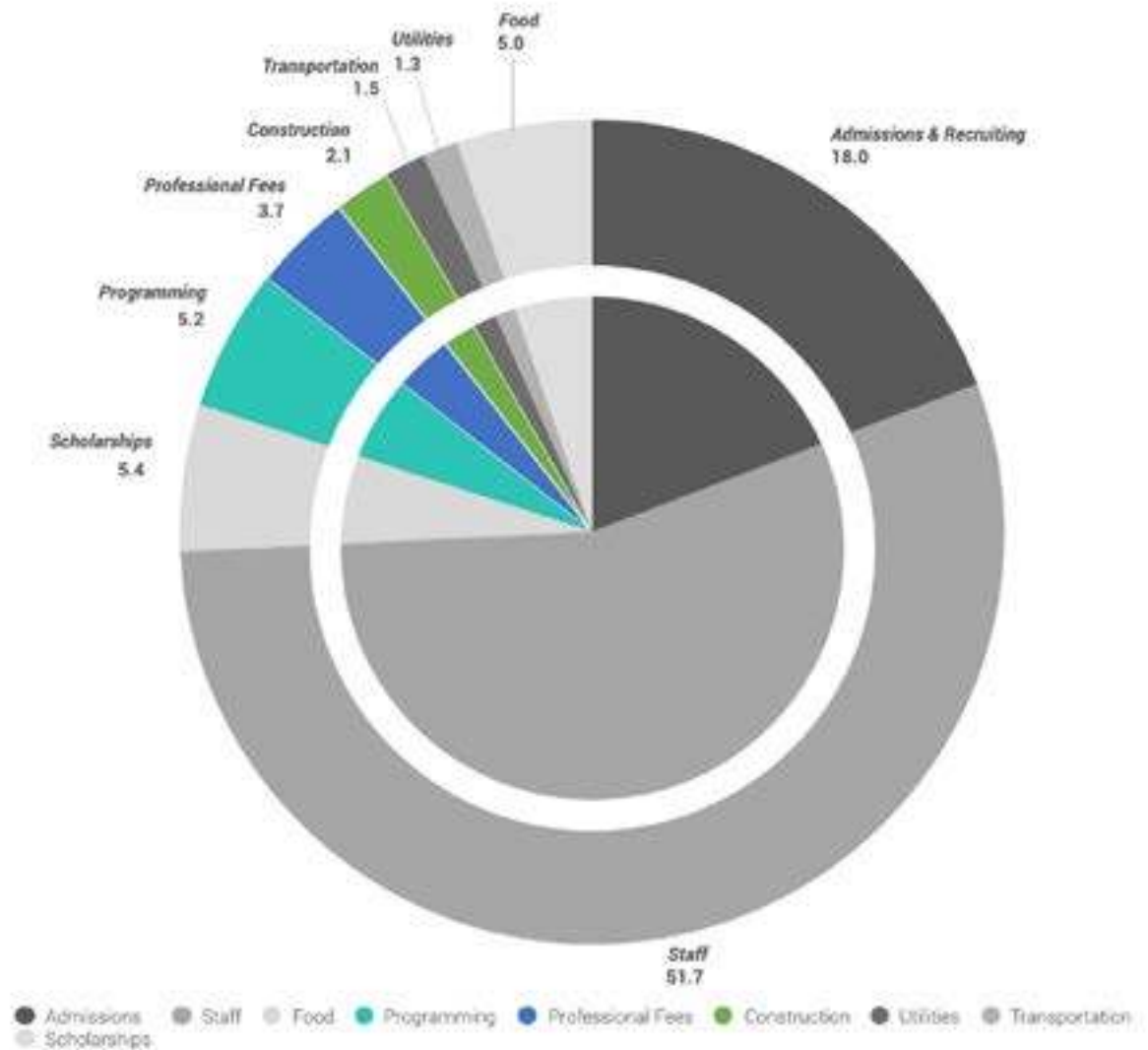
of alumni loved their time at PTRI so much they applied and were accepted to staff positions.

TUITION BREAKDOWN

So, where does your tuition go?

Every semester, we're eager to field questions on how the funds you've spent to get to PTRI translate into your experiences. We aim for transparency and invite these inquiries.

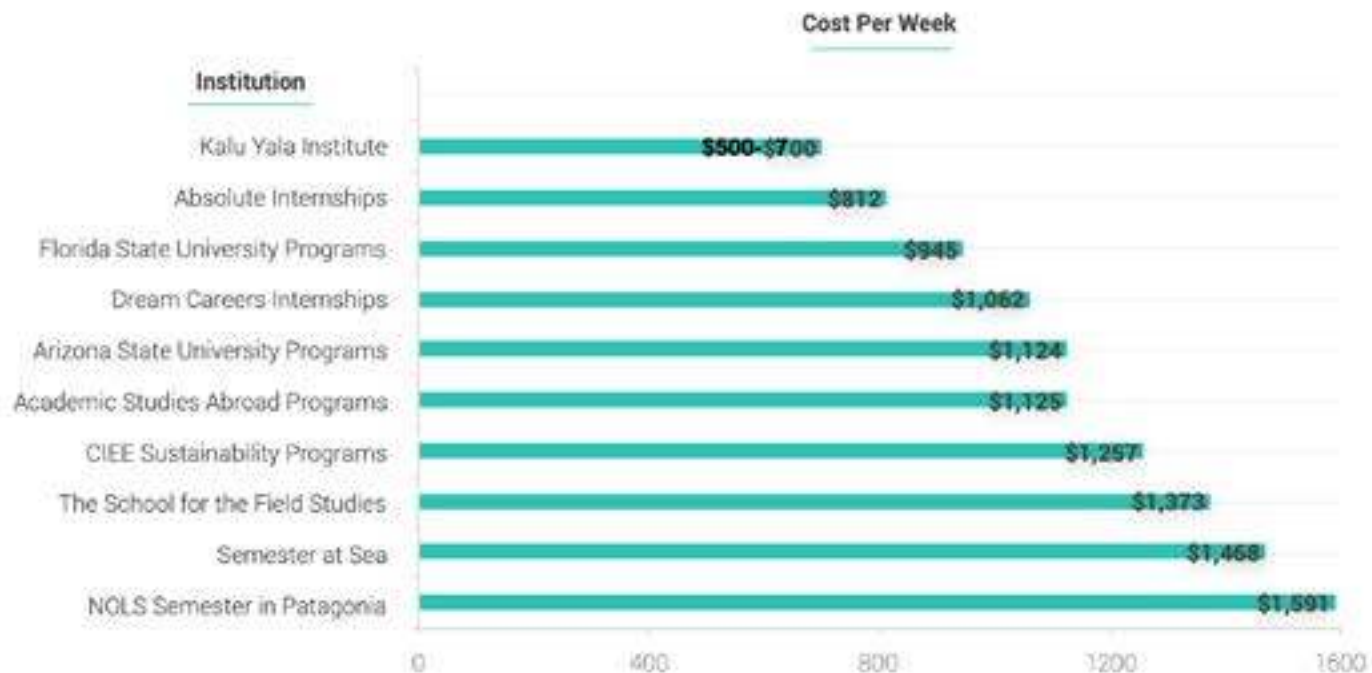
We want you to get a glimpse into how PTRI functions behind-the-scenes and learn more about the logistics of operating an institute in the jungle.



PROGRAM COST COMPARISON

This table displays a selection of comparable study abroad and internship programs with similar curricula, features, duration, and geographical settings. On a tuition-per-week basis, PTRI is consistently the most affordable program. The 10 week semesters cost \$4995 for fall, \$6995 for spring, and \$5995 for summer.

Do these figures include meal plan and housing? Not all of them. It's likely that for some of the programs listed, the actual cost to attend is substantially greater. Our tuition does include those amenities.



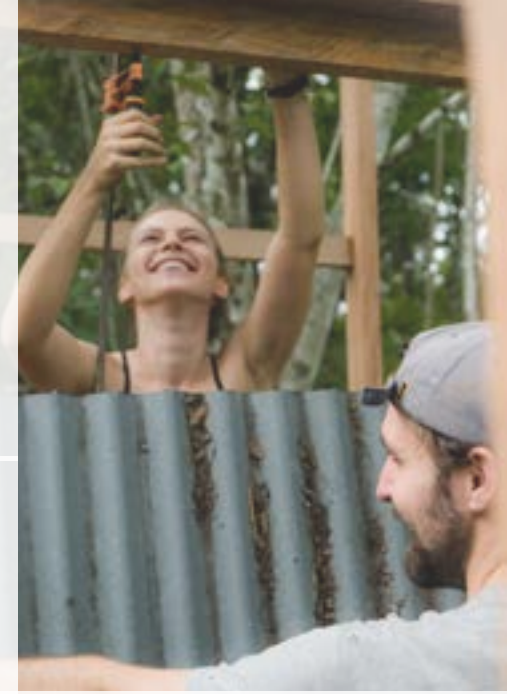
IN GOOD COMPANY

+ 216

That's the number of colleges and universities PTRI students come from (and counting), including small liberal arts schools like Middlebury, or Wellesley to larger institutions including Duke, UC Berkeley, Brown, and many more.

Our alumni have gone on to attend law, medical, and business schools, secured prestigious positions in many well-renowned organizations, and started their own companies. Our active alumni network and connections in a wide variety of professional fields serves as a particular advantage to many former students navigating the next chapters of their careers.

Throughout our nineteen semesters, PTRI has hosted students from over 30 countries and all 50 states.





+ SAFETY

At the Panama Tropical Research Institute, safety of our community is our utmost priority. A licensed medical professional is stationed on-site full time to ensure the well-being of all students. Additionally, we have many trained and certified Wilderness First Responders (WFR) among our staff.

Upon arriving, each student will learn the in's and the out's of remaining safe and healthy throughout their stay at PTRI including familiarizing oneself with our rigorous Emergency Action Plan and associated policies to appropriately-respond to any type of incident. While we stress that getting outside one's comfort zone can be a transformative experience, stringent parameters of health and safety remain in place. We do provide details upon acceptance of acquiring health coverage while in Panamá, as well as recommendations on consulting travel physicians prior to arrival.

Lastly, Panamá is considered one of the safest areas of Latin America with a very stable environment and low rates of crime. We pride ourselves on retaining excellent relationships with our neighboring communities and upholding detailed knowledge of Panamanian health care, including references at preeminent hospitals and clinics.

WHAT TO EXPECT

APPLICANTS SHOULD ASK THEMSELVES, AM I UP FOR:

- Immersing yourself in a non-traditional educational setting, with an emphasis on exploration, experimentation, and “Learning by Doing”?
- Spearheading tangible projects that tackle real-life social, ecological, and economic issues?
- Living in the Panama rainforest, a sun-and rain-drenched environment alive with flora and fauna?
- Figuring out how to take small scale, sustainable solutions and adapt for global export?
- Cohabiting in a diverse community filled with various backgrounds, disciplines, languages, and beliefs?
- Connecting with accomplished students, staff members, visitors, and guest speakers on a regular basis?
- Getting to know a new country, culture, language, and the astounding people within it?
- Contributing to a growing, beautifully imperfect community that thrives on innovation and collaboration?
- Testing physical, cognitive, and social endurance every single day?

... IF SO, THE TROPICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE IS FOR YOU

This guide will help applicants discover:

- What vital role will one play at PTRI?
- Which program will empower one to thrive?

This guide provides an introduction to the various disciplines and academic opportunities that await in our tropical jungle valley.





OUR CURRICULUM

Four unique academic components make up the core of the Panama Tropical Research Institute's curriculum - an experiential study abroad + internship program rooted in research and development. These are our (1) four educational programs, (2) weekly sustainability courses, (3) student self-directed projects, and (4) research internships with our faculty.

Students first choose one of the core **four educational programs** - Agriculture, Biology, Design, & Outdoor Recreation. Each program explores a robust syllabus of topics over the 10-week semester. Students gain mastery and experience through a series of faculty-led lessons and workshops, individual and group projects, accomplished guest speaker lectures, and unusually awesome field trips that take advantage of the exceptional resources nearby in Panama City and beyond. Programs are led by 1-2 instructors who have demonstrated extraordinary passion and expertise in their fields and typically **have a maximum of 6-8 students, who range from individuals enrolled in undergrad to young professionals from all fields.**

Collaboration between programs is highly encouraged, as the pillars of sustainability are so inextricably linked. While each student must choose one program, everyone will also participate in **weekly interdisciplinary sustainability courses** that encourage us to engage in cross-sectoral sustainable development thinking and hands-on activity..

Through **self-directed projects**, students conduct their own research projects on a topic of choice in their chosen program. In addition to these independently-led projects, students also have the ability to be a **research intern** and assist faculty with their semester research studies.

AGRICULTURE

Dig deep into sustainable agriculture in the tropics. Develop and experiment with sustainable farming systems. Learn to grow food using a range of integrated, sustainable techniques. Spearhead the research, creation, or expansion of a tangible agriculture endeavor. Discover and define how sustainable agriculture can be built into your life and career. Teach and promote small-scale farming techniques to students, staff, and surrounding local communities.

In the Agriculture program, you'll delve deep into all aspects of agriculture, such as land planning and management, planting and propagation, composting, livestock, machete wielding, and irrigation work.



COMMON CAREER PATHS & MAJORS:

- Agricultural Production, Business, Engineering, Economics
- Animal and Plant Science
- Environmental Science and/or Studies
- Sustainability

EXAMPLES OF FORMER PROGRAM PROJECTS:

- Biochar production, implementation, & testing
- Planning, execution, and maintenance of compost
- Building chicken coops, chicken care & maintenance
- Building bamboo trellises for vertical farming
- Facilitation of aquaponics facility
- Extending large-scale agro-forestry project
- Greenhouse construction & maintenance



NOTE WORTHY GUESTS:

- Stephen Brooks: Co-Founder, Envision Festival, Director of Punta Mona Institute of Permaculture
- Lyn Bishop: Founder, Art Farm Panama



BIOLOGY

Learn in a living lab

Pioneer conservation research and efforts in an environment alive with fascinating flora and wildlife. Develop the biological knowledge base of Kalu Yala, Panama, and international conservation archives. Gain experience with scientific design, data collection, and analysis. Lead scientific investigations and contribute to meaningful research projects. Spread your love and respect for the environment to students, staff, and surrounding local communities.

In the Biology program, you'll play an active role in ensuring our sustainable town maintains a neutral or negative carbon footprint. You'll figure out how to adapt sustainable solutions for scale and export.



EXAMPLES OF FORMER PROGRAM PROEJCTS:

- Biochar production, sales, and renewable energy opportunities
- Medicinal plants & their uses in collaboration with other programs
- Sustainable aquaculture of river prawn populations
- Amphibian biodiversity survey in local rivers
- Biodiesel production
- Soil restoration
- Development of online species catalogue for flora & fauna
- Develop a professional-level biology lab for expanded research capabilities

COMMON CAREER PATHS & MAJORS:

- Biology
- Ecology, Behavior, and Evolution
- Environmental Science
- Animal Science
- Botany
- Forestry
- Geology
- Bioinformatics
- Physiology
- Neuroscience



DESIGN

We are building. +

Construct cherished spaces for the community using ecological design principles. Use design-thinking to solve problems and address opportunities. Study sustainable architecture and design, hone drawing, modeling, and full-scale building abilities. Learn to assess designs and concepts using a triple bottom line perspective. Create solutions quickly and efficiently in a startup jungle setting and in the context of a diverse and rapidly evolving community.

Combine design-thinking and eco-design to solve problems and inspire camaraderie. In the Design Thinking program, you'll collaborate with makers, dreamers, and do-ers to build places of beauty and function. You'll have the opportunity to pursue projects of your own invention, tapping into your passions and interests to deliver something exceptional.





COMMON CAREER PATHS & MAJORS:

- Architectural Design & Engineering
- City, Community, Regional Planning
- Landscape Architecture
- Industrial and Product Design
- Visual Arts and Design Majors

EXAMPLES OF FORMER PROGRAM PROEJCTS:

- Exploring clay and bamboo as basic materials
- Creation of Art Studio and weekly gallery events
- Construction of functional tiny homes
- Collaboration with international eco-hostel chain Selina
- Developing co-working spaces
- Design and construction of expanded rancho spaces
- Carrying out weekly product development

NOTEWORTHY GUEST SPEAKERS:

- Kim Lewis: Founder, Kim Lewis Designs, Design Consultant, FYI Television Network
- Oz Zechovoy: Creative Director, Selina Hostels
- George Moreno: Principal, George Moreno & Partners, leading architecture & urbanism firm in Panamá



OUTDOOR RECREATION

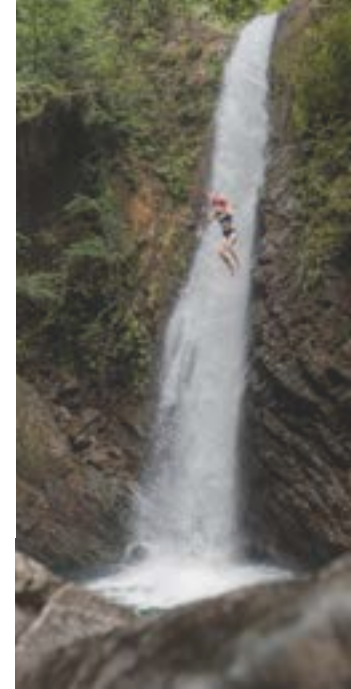
Harness adventure and exploration to get communities excited and engaged in the natural world. Design and lead outdoor adventure experiences for Kalu Yala and surrounding local communities. Study wilderness ethics, environmental impact, and survival skills in an intense jungle setting. Pursue personal passions and develop your unique leadership style. Learn to connect and collaborate in a diverse team, and work with other cultures to bring the natural world to life.

In the Outdoor Recreation program, you'll learn how to plan and conduct trips in a foreign country with diverse participants. You'll learn the academic research and ground-level realities of the outdoor recreation industry in developing countries.



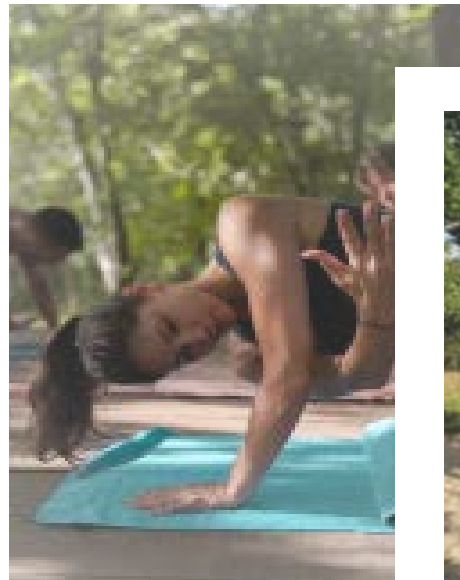
COMMON CAREER PATHS & MAJORS:

- Outdoor Recreation and Exercise Science
- Tourism & Travel Management
- Parks, Recreation, & Leisure Studies
- Environmental Studies
- Sports Management



EXAMPLES OF FORMER PROGRAM PROJECTS:

- Design, Construction, and Maintenance of recreation park, volleyball course, yoga and meditation garden, amphitheater, surrounding hiking trails
- Launch of adventure tour company
- Climbing wall and obstacle course design
- Installation of observation platforms along overnight wilderness hikes
- Conduct emergency evacuation analysis



"I spent the semester hiking, swimming, surfing, climbing, getting to know humans from all different backgrounds and schools of thought, and learned things that I will spend the rest of my life unpacking."

- CARLY GARLAND FALL '16



FOCIS TALKS

This weekly series of interdisciplinary lectures offers a deep dive into the Foundations of Community, Innovation, and Sustainability (FOCIS) by looking at how each program offered at Kalu Yala contributes to our overall mission. Each Monday afternoon, the entire community assembles for engaging lectures paired with hands-on activities led by a rotating duo of instructors.



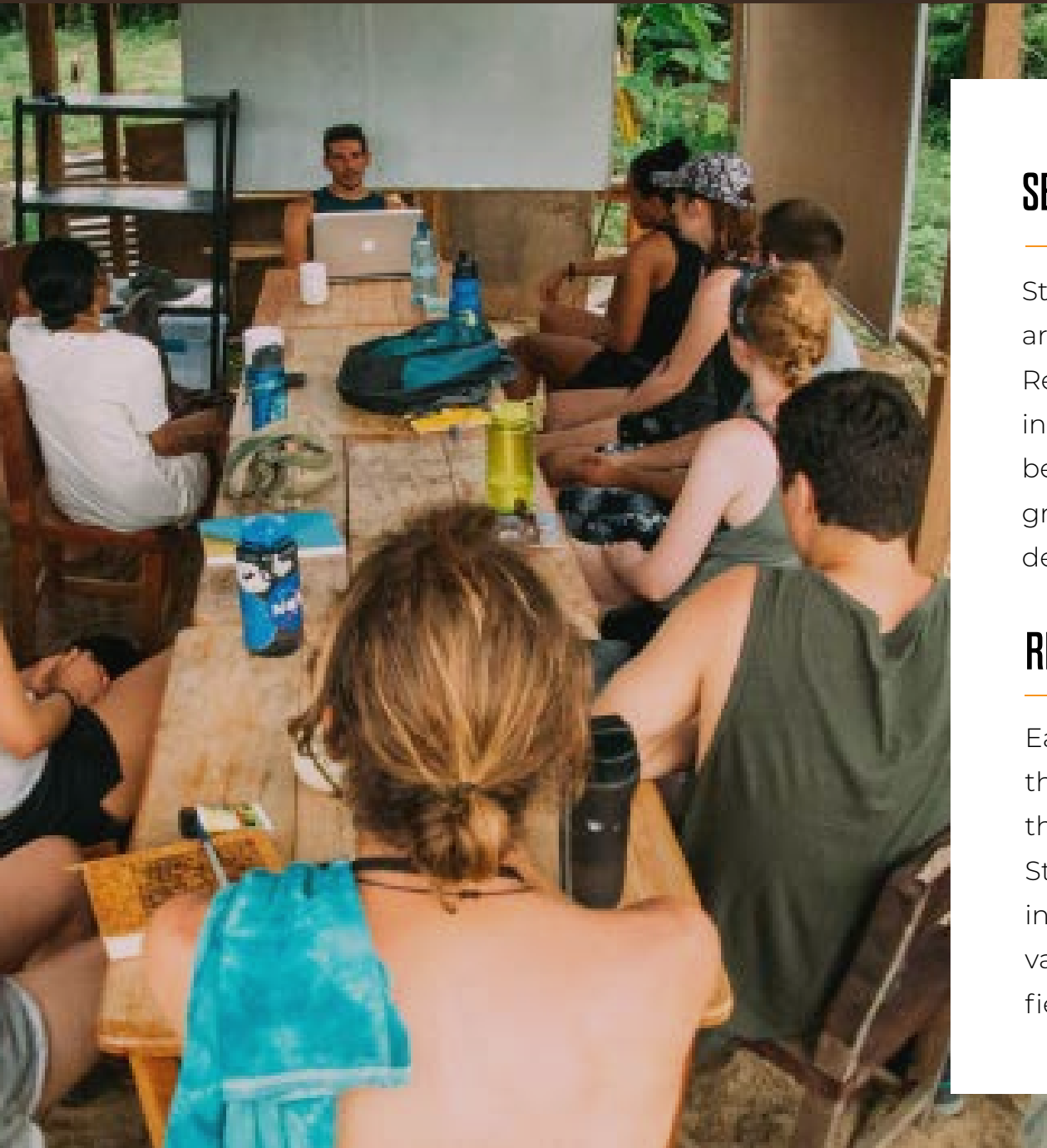
CORE LECTURES

These lectures highlight important topics in your program field of choice and are held weekly. The purpose of these lectures series is to engage students in the most relevant topics in their field, while relating these topics on a cross-discipline approach.



INTERDISCIPLINARY SUSTAINABILITY COURSES

1. Intro to Sustainability
2. Business
3. Construction
4. Cooking



SELF-DIRECTED PROJECTS

Student self-directed research projects are at the core of the Panama Tropical Research Institute's curriculum. These independently-directed projects can be conducted individually, or with a group, on a relevant topic in sustainable development.

RESEARCH INTERNSHIP

Each program instructor will conduct their own faculty-led research project throughout the duration of the semester. Students are able to assist as a research intern to their faculty of choice, gaining valuable hands-on experience in their field of study.

WHAT THE MEDIA SAYS



The Panama Tropical Research Institute has been praised as a groundbreaking organization in many prominent media outlets for its unique system of hands-on experiential education, exciting approach to establishing a sustainable modern town, and the stunning physical beauty of our tropical valley landscape.



FOR MORE INFORMATION...

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