

US-Brazil Exchange in Forest & Soil Ecosystem Services

By Erin Sills

The College of Natural Resources has been an active participant in the Forest & Soil Ecosystem Services Exchange Program. The program is funded by the U.S.-Brazil Higher Education Consortia Program, which is jointly administered by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and the Brazilian Ministry of Education. Under the program, CNR has sent students to and hosted students from the Brazilian federal universities of Paraná and Viçosa.

One of these students, Charlie MacIntyre, is beginning his second semester at Viçosa, which he says has been a “rewarding, challenging and unique” experience. He reports that “I take all my classes in Portuguese and live and socialize with Brazilians. Though classes can be challenging, the Brazilian professors and students have been more than happy to take time outside the classroom to help. Between soccer leagues and a politically active student body, social opportunities are easily had. I came to Viçosa with minimal Portuguese skills and little knowledge of Brazil and now am a proficient speaker with first-hand knowledge of natural resource issues in Brazil.”

In the fall 2008 semester, Dr. Lucian Lucia (WPS) and Simone Bauch (DFER) co-taught a course with faculty from the five other participating universities. More than 30 students enrolled in the course, including 8 who were participating in the exchange (5 Brazilians in the US and 3 Americans in Brazil). The course covered both physical and economic aspects of ecosystem services, through an on-line discussion board that allowed Brazilian and US students to interact, and an on-campus component that included student presentations and further discussion of readings and case studies.

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Photos of Charlie:

