PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

DECEMBER 2018
UNIVERSITY OF REDLANDS

The University of Redlands is a private nonprofit university in Redlands, California. It offers more than 40 undergraduate programs, as well as graduate programs in business, communicative disorders, education, geographic information systems, and music. The Master of Science in Geographic Information Systems program is an intensive, one-year residential program that draws international acclaim, in part due to the close collaboration with Redlands-based Esri, the world’s leading GIS company. Several classes are taught in energy-efficient “green” buildings, and many Redlands students help the environment by participating in the annual Recycle Day and working on the school’s sustainable farm.

REDLANDS CENTER FOR SPATIAL STUDIES

The Center for Spatial Studies endeavors to create a spatially infused learning community at the University of Redlands. It helps integrate spatial thinking and technologies into instruction, research, and service to the University and the community at large. Additionally, with its expertise in spatial analysis, programming, project management, and fund development, the CSS also supports the efforts of faculty to secure sponsored projects that contribute to scholarship and instruction at the University.
In May 2017, 16 Redlands undergraduate students participated in a three-week May-term class in the Mamoni Valley Preserve, accompanied by Environmental Studies and GIS faculty, as well as Center for Spatial Studies staff. The students began a multi-year project to use field research and drones to map watershed boundaries, stream courses, and riparian habitat, trails, and to classify habitats according to vegetative structure and potential for carbon sequestration.

The goal of this course was to immerse students in the Mamoní Valley ecosystem through field research, which involved gathering forest mensuration, drone, cultural, and other kinds of data. By integrating this data into a geodatabase, analyzing the data and reflecting on their experiences, creating story maps about they had learned, and presenting their work to key stakeholders in Panama City, the students were able to come away with a deep connection to and appreciation for the Mamoní Valley. Experiences, such as bushwhacking through dense thickets of rainforest to identify tree species and measure vegetative densities, ensured that the students learned firsthand about the challenges and opportunities for conservation in the tropics.
MVP & THE UNIVERSITY OF REDLANDS

As a pioneer in conservation, and as a host of research by institutions such as Kaminando and STRI, MVP benefits tremendously from the work conducted by students from the University of Redlands. The information that Redlands has created—and continues to improve each year—has established a database with many layers of spatially referenced information that is useful for scientists, community development projects, and other work within the preserve. Simultaneously, this partnership enables young professionals graduating from one of the most prestigious GIS universities in the world to develop an intimate knowledge of tropical rainforest conditions and how they affect their work. As these students continue on in their careers, the unique experience and knowledge gained within the Mamoni Valley Preserve will thereby strengthen their contribution to multiple future conservation projects in other tropical settings.