

THE UNIVERSITY BIOLOGY CURRICULUM AND ITS ROLE IN CONSERVATION: ADAPTING TRADITIONAL CURRICULA TO MEET THE GOAL OF PROMOTING CONSERVATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Costa Rica is part of one of the biodiversity hotspots in the world. With tourism as an important source of income, this country is an example of successful promotion of economic benefit from conservation. Biologists play a key role in conservation. The traditional formation of biologists in Costa Rica focused on basic research. The focus of the curriculum for the Bachelor's Degree in Biological Sciences with Emphasis in Ecology and Sustainable Development at the Universidad Latina of Costa Rica presented here is applied biology. The study plan includes 33 courses. The first courses intend to provide general knowledge in basic and biological science. The Ecology course prepares the students for field studies, and is located in the middle of the study plan. The last stages of the curriculum develop the practical aspects of current biology. The boom in tourism in the last decade, the resulting fast development in many areas of Costa Rica, and the diverse public and private conservation efforts have generated a necessity of qualified professionals in the field of biology. Therefore, the university biology curriculum must take a practical approach to the formation of biologists, with the final goal of promoting biodiversity conservation in the country.

Keywords: Costa Rica, biodiversity, sustainable, conservation, university curriculum