Civil Engineers travel to Brazil to collaborate with the Iracambi Research Center

On May 17, a group of four Civil Engineering students embarked on a study abroad experience to Porto Alegre, Brazil to assist on a research at the Iracambi Research Center, located in portion of Brazil’s Serra do Brigadeiro, which aims to repair the damage that Brazilian agriculture has done to the Atlantic Rainforest.

During their five-week visit, their aim was to assist the research through the design-build of the first of many isolated dormitories that would provide researchers with food, shelter and water—while not losing the focus of helping the forest regenerate itself.

Undergraduates that participated on this project under the direction of Professor of civil engineering Carlos Ferregut Ph.D., were Gabriel Haro, Eduardo Torres, Victor Garcia and graduate student Osvaldo Broesicke.

According to Osvaldo Broesicke, graduate student said that due to the lack of resources and availability of services, the project site was not ready.

“In order to best use our time at the Iracambi Research Center, the combined Ball State-UTEP team decided to assist them with unfinished projects at the research center’s core,” Broesicke said. “Taking this new direction, our team created a master plan for the research center to allow for better use of space and future on-site sustainability projects, and completed an unfinished structure using on-site materials.”

Towards the last weeks of June, the architects were able to transform the landscape of the research center by relocating key gathering areas to assist them with education of visitors. As an effect the UTEP-Ball State team completed a structure to be used for reception and museum/library space.

“Since the structural frame was already in place, the team constructed walls out of bamboo, reclaimed brick, mud, and used bottles,” Broesicke said. “Having our work completed, Iracambi has a map to help them continue growth, while keeping its main goal in full view.”
It was because of the tremendous support from Rosa Meguerian-Faria, Global Outreach Manager at the Graduate School, and Niamh Minion, Director of the Study Abroad Office along with effective team work at UTEP that this project was able to become a reality, Ferregut said.

“International experiences like this study abroad in Brazil complement the education of undergraduate and graduate students by giving them the opportunity to work as part of a multidisciplinary and multinational team in the solution of a practical problem,” Ferregut said. “Not only do students learn how to apply and integrate their knowledge and technical skills to address engineering challenges in a different cultural and social setting, this experience also gives them more confidence of the education that UTEP has provided them.”