



BBA sophomore Rebecca Beagan had always wanted to travel to a Spanish-speaking country to work on her language skills, but she had no idea what to expect when she arrived at [INCAE](#) for the **2011 CIBE May Program (Strategy 320)**. Costa Rica was not on her radar as a business hot spot, and aside from a single PITE class, she had no previous coursework related to sustainability or the environment. During the next three weeks, she and 23 other UM undergraduates developed from a group of acquaintances into a close-knit team sharing a transformative experience at one of

the top business schools in Latin America. In addition to classroom lectures by some of INCAE's top faculty, the group visited several companies to learn firsthand how the free trade zone has affected foreign investment in Costa Rica, and how entrepreneurs and families are growing successful, sustainable businesses rooted in the country's natural riches (coffee growing and ecotourism) and its highly skilled work force (electronics):

Overall, I took away that strategic planning, development, and execution are crucial to positive change and continued progress, as Costa Rica exemplifies through its dedication to education and growth since a country-wide collapse in the 1980s. Academic quality and support by program faculty was superior, aiming to educate and make each student successful in the course. On a personal level, the experience has inspired a passion to explore the topic of our course – sustainable business – professionally, a potentially life-changing inspiration.

Teamwork was an important part of the course. While in the classroom they worked in groups researching topics such as health care, free trade and carbon neutrality, Rebecca and her classmates bonded during outdoor activities on INCAE's lush campus, in the rainforest and on tropical beaches. They went whitewater rafting, hiked in the Arenal National Park and relaxed at a luxurious rainforest spa. "Whether through team building activities like the ropes course or group research papers and presentations, I took away how important strong team community can be to group dynamics and how managing time, leveraging strengths, and being inclusive can enhance group output." They also met and befriended MBA students from all over Latin America studying at INCAE; Rebecca has stayed in touch with several of these students, one of whom, Juan Ramon Sanchez, is currently here at Ross on exchange.

"... the people, the culture, the natural beauty of Costa Rica – they made an imprint in me for which I will be forever thankful, fondly recalling memories for the rest of my life. I will strive to live by the country's heartbeat – heard as a greeting, a celebration, a farewell: "Pura Vida," translated to mean "pure life," but more profoundly to the people who have experienced the country, "Full of Life."

