



Center for Responsible Travel

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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Emerging Environmental Leaders from Asia Pacific Region Visit the Center for Responsible Travel to Study U.S. Environmental Movement

A group of 20 young scholars from Malaysia, Singapore, Fiji and Papua New Guinea met with the Center for Responsible Travel at Stanford University as part of a six week environmental leadership program designed to empower emerging leaders with the knowledge, skills and relationships to successfully develop solutions to global environmental issues. This program is funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and administered by the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii.

From June 8-14, the participants of the **United States Institute on the Environment (USIE)** visited San Francisco and Monterey Bay to meet with an array of environmentally minded organizations. On June 10, CREST presented to the USIE participants about responsible travel and a few of CREST's programs including; cultural components of indigenous ecotourism, coastal tourism research in Costa Rica and Traveler's Philanthropy.



William Durham, Ph.D. with scholars from USIE

The **USIE** provides advanced undergraduate and graduate environmental science students from the Asia Pacific region exposure to the U.S. environmental movement and aids in the development of interdisciplinary pathways to environmental stewardship.

Goals of the program include:

- Transformative learning experience through introductions to the broad spectrum of approaches to the U.S. environmental movement.
- Opportunities for practitioners to learn about environmental challenges in the Asia Pacific region.
- Building networks and collaborative projects that link participants with U.S. environmental professionals to develop practical solutions to shared challenges.

In order to develop leadership abilities and understand social dimensions of environmental issues, the first four weeks of the institute were spent in Hawaii at the East-West Center's campus in Honolulu. While there, participants attended workshops, field studies, and shared approaches to common challenges with environmental experts, scholars, and organizations.

(About the participants)

Diversity is a key strength of the program. The participants bring a broad range of backgrounds, including Aerospace Engineering, Green Chemistry, Environmental Sciences, Urban Development, Tourism, and Public Health.

Some participants include:

- Sophiah Jamil (Singapore), who is studying the security implications of climate change and has published research on the environmental movement among Muslim youth;
- Masikerei Vunicagi (Fiji), who works as a field trainer educating rural communities on environmentally sustainable living practices;
- Chow Geh Tsung (Malaysia), who studies water quality and fresh water resources, and has worked in Malaysia's heavy industry sector;
- Lee Yee Hui Jonathan (Singapore), who is studying the effects of the aviation industry on climate change, and has been part of General Electric Aviation's "Eco-imagination" team;
- Subhashni Raj (Fiji), who is studying coral reef biodiversity and conservation, previously on a scholarship to Bangalore University;
- Wong Shu Kuan (Malaysia), a marine biology student focusing on conservational genetics.

Study of the U.S. Institutes are designed by the Study of the U.S. Branch in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) to promote a better understanding of the U.S. abroad and to help develop future world leaders. Institute participants are among the more than 40,000 academic and professional exchange program participants overseen annually by ECA. Other ECA programs include the Fulbright Program and the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program. For more information about ECA programs, visit <http://exchanges.state.gov/>.

The [Center for Responsible Travel](#), or CREST (formerly CESD), was launched in 2003 as a bi-coastal institute with offices in Washington, DC and at Stanford University. CREST offers programs, conferences, courses, and research projects at both of its locations, as well as field research opportunities in various aspects of responsible travel. CREST uses policy-oriented research to design, monitor, evaluate, and improve the social and environmental commitments of responsible tourism, as well as to promote sustainable practices and principles within the wider tourism industry. The focus of CREST is tourism's potential as a tool for poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation.

The [EAST-WEST CENTER](#) is an education and research organization established by the U.S. Congress in 1960 to strengthen relations and understanding among the peoples and nations of Asia, the Pacific, and the United States. The Center contributes to a peaceful, prosperous and just Asia Pacific community by serving as a vigorous hub for cooperative research, education and dialogue on critical issues of common concern to the Asia Pacific region and the United States. Funding for the Center comes from the U.S. government, with additional support provided by private agencies, individuals, foundations, corporations, and the governments of the region. For more information on the program, visit <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/education/student-programs/usie/>