

Innovation Proposal Abstract  
Dr. Gary Varner

### PHIL 314, Environmental Ethics Field Experience

In the Philosophy Department, Gary Varner's proposal was to establish a high-impact, study abroad learning experience for students in PHIL 314, Environmental Ethics. His course syllabus includes material on sustainable development/sustainable tourism, and the preservation and management of biodiversity and wilderness. Varner proposed to use the Soltis Center in Costa Rica as a "base camp" from which students can experience first-hand the challenges involved in balancing natural values like biodiversity against socio-economic concerns, and the multi-faceted impacts that sustainable development projects have on both natural resources and human communities. Although students can read about these issues on the College Station campus, from the Soltis Center they can directly experience both the tropical rainforests that are a major focus of biodiversity conservation efforts and interact with local people affected by both conservation and sustainable development/sustainable tourism programs. Varner will use his grant to fund the advance site visit that is necessary to investigate area projects and communities that would be appropriate for the students to visit on day trips during their field experience. The field of environmental ethics has traditionally been dominated by English-language philosophers, but with a visit to the Soltis Center on the agenda, Varner will also internationalize the course content by including readings on Latin American environmental philosophy.