By bringing together the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, the School of Environment, Arts and Society (SEAS) is transforming the way we conduct research, educate students and engage the community. Because the world’s environmental challenges are multi-dimensional, the school’s revolutionary approach to full spectrum education will ensure our students become innovative leaders of the 21st century. SEAS includes three signature departments: Earth and Environment, Biological Sciences and English. The school also houses many of FIU’s prominent centers and programs including the Center for Humanities in an Urban Environment, International Center for Tropical Botany, Marine Education and Research Initiative, Southeast Environmental Research Center and the Tropical Conservation Institute.

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International Center for Tropical Botany
School of Environment, Arts and Society

Florida International University (FIU) has one of the nation’s largest concentrations of faculty and researchers engaged in tropical botany, for which it has earned global recognition. The International Center for Tropical Botany (ICTB) was established as a collaboration between FIU and the National Tropical Botanic Garden (NTBG) to study tropical plants and the resources they provide. ICTB will provide research-based knowledge and tools to preserve and sustainably use tropical plants, and will foster programs to educate future generations of tropical plant biologists.

ICTB headquarters will be located at the historical estate of plant explorer Dr. David Fairchild - The Kampong, one of NTBG’s five botanical gardens, in Coconut Grove, Florida. The proximity of several world-class botanical institutes in Florida provides ICTB with unparalleled access to research partners and resources. The center will also use the diverse collections, ecological reserves and resources held by NTBG’s gardens in Hawaii. NTBG brings international stature, with a world-class botanical research center, living collections covering more than 2000 acres, and nearly 50 years of research in the Pacific region.

The establishment of ICTB has been supported by generous matching grants from the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust and the Batchelor Foundation to construct the ICTB headquarters on land adjacent to The Kampong donated by NTBG.

The Need
Plants provide food, fiber, fuel, shelter, and medicine for everyone on Earth and especially in tropical regions. Tropical plant communities harbor more than three-quarters of the world’s plant diversity and buffer carbon and water cycling on a global scale. Tropical plants are therefore essential to the well-being and livelihoods of all humankind.

Yet, tropical plant communities are currently threatened by climate change, habitat loss, and overharvesting. Balancing the demands for plant resources by a human population that is predicted to exceed 9 billion by 2050 represents a major contemporary challenge and a core mission responsibility for ICTB.

At this critical moment, we are also experiencing a global shortage of botanists trained to study the important products and services tropical plant communities provide and to mitigate the threats facing them. ICTB will play a crucial role in training the next generation of tropical botanists.

The Vision
ICTB will develop research, education and outreach programs related to tropical botany, integrating the research programs of a faculty with global presence in tropical regions. Together with their international collaborators, ICTB faculty will advance projects that integrate three key research themes:

- The processes generating and maintaining extraordinary tropical plant diversity;
- The myriad products and services generated by tropical plants, including foods, fibers, fuels, and medicines;
- The conservation and management of threatened tropical plant species and habitats.

The International Center for Tropical Botany will advance tropical botany by:

- Building on the strong research faculties at FIU and NTBG to advance collaborative research projects and partnerships with botanical institutes in South Florida, nationally and globally.
- Training future generations of tropical botanists to describe tropical plant diversity; to pioneer novel uses for, and fair trade of, tropical plant products; and to mitigate threats to tropical plants and their habitats.
- Providing evidence-based knowledge and tools for the conservation and sustainable use of tropical plant resources.
- Broaden FIU’s influence locally and internationally through research and outreach to non-scientific audiences.

Impact
ICTB will generate lasting global impacts through collaborations with a wide variety of partners. The success of the center will be measured by the number of K-12, undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral students trained; the number and quality of academic research products published; and the utility of tools generated for the conservation and sustainable use of tropical plant resources.

ICTB offers many ways for you to get involved, including research collaborations, outreach and training programs, and joint funding ventures.

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