2013 Marianne Schmink Outstanding Dissertation Award

We are pleased to announce that **Laura Kowler** has been selected as the 2013 recipient of the Marianne Schmink Award for the Outstanding Dissertation from UF's Tropical Conservation and Development Program. Dr. Kowler completed her dissertation in the School for Natural Resources and the Environment under the supervision of Dr. Christine Overdevest. Her dissertation was entitled *"Interpreting legitimacy through a multi-level governance lens: the case of environmental forums in Bolivia"*.

Interactive social network analysis with CORIDUP; a workshop to discuss Dr. Kowler's preliminary findings

The committee was impressed by several aspects of Dr. Kowler's dissertation. Her work was found to be an important contribution to the discipline in that it is one of the best examples of how one can test hypotheses that address how social networks influence perceptions of organizational legitimacy. The diversity of tools used gave confidence regarding her conclusions, and her results suggest promising directions for future research. On a more practical level, her results demonstrate just how challenging it is to put participatory governance into place by *campesino* and indigenous organizations, even in a country in which it would seem the conditions are ideally suited for doing so. Finally, Laura's research was viewed as a model TCD dissertation – she brought theory to bear on an important problem that affects biodiversity conservation and human well-being, and did so in a way that has expanded the network of people and institutions with which future TCD students can work. Indeed, having gained the trust of so many people and different types of organizations was affirmation that she had mastered many of the skills in facilitation, conflict resolution, and communication that characterize the TCD approach to conducting research. Coupled with her dedication and active participation in the program, the selection committee viewed Laura as an ideal recipient of the Schmink Outstanding Dissertation Award.

For her dissertation Dr. Kowler focused on the rise of participatory governance, which provides new spaces for grassroots political participation that have increasingly enabled a wide-range of civil society actors to influence policy. The emergence of such governance arrangements has inspired questions regarding their legitimacy, the opportunity of citizens to express their voice, and government responsiveness. Dr. Kowler developed a multi-level governance framework to examine the legitimacy of several environmental forums in Bolivia in which civil society actors are engaged in resolving natural resource governance issues emerging at the local level and through policy frameworks at the national level. Using social network analysis and ethnographic methods, she found that that the dynamics at the meso (forum) level intimately relate to the cross-level linkages to the micro (community) and macro (national) levels, which demonstrates the need for greater integration of these linkages to achieve a more legitimate form of governance. The

Discussion of co-management in protected area of Apolobamba, Bolivia

most central network actors, or forum leaders, are most influential in shaping the forum's internal and external legitimacy through their control over communication and decision-making. Her results also highlight the significance of the broader socio-political context, which affects the government's responsiveness to forum demands as well as the forums' ability to voice demands at the national level. This study provides insights into emerging collaborative networked arrangements involving civil society actors in participatory governance.

The Selection Committee – composed of TCD faculty members Dr. Glenn Galloway and Dr. Emilio Bruna and TCD alumnus Dr. Richard Wallace (Associate Professor of Anthropology, California State University Stanislaus) – and the TCD program congratulates Dr. Kowler on her selection as the 2013 recipient of the Marianne Schmink Outstanding Dissertation.