

Report

ISB Development Project University of the Andes, Merida, Venezuela

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On behalf the International Society of Biomechanics, we have travelled to the University of the Andes (Universidad de Los Andes, ULA) from January 29 to February 3, 2010, to help the biomechanics group there developing their biomechanics graduate program.

ULA is located in the northwestern corner of Venezuela, in the city of Merida, with a breathtaking view of the Andes Mountains. It is a university with a 215 year of history, 50,000 students, and it has been rated as the #1 university among all of the universities in the former Spanish colonies by Spanish news media.



A view of the Andes from the Eagle Peak near ULA campus

The project started when Dr. Li first visited ULA and advised the group on the development of a graduate program in the summer of 2002. With political uncertainty and economic constraints, the program had a slow start. The ISB council cided to support Dr. Li's effort during 2007 ISB conference in Taipei and Dr. Hamill joined Dr. Li in the project. A donation was sought from among ISB members and friends. The biomechanics laboratory in University Maryland (Baltimore), Department of Physical Therapy, donated a used 4-camera Peak system and the Delsys company donated a brand new 8-channel EMG system.

There were three purposes of the trip to ULA. First, we installed the equipment at ULA. Second, we worked with the faculty and students on the use of the donated equipments. Third, we discussed future research projects and potential research lines with the faculty and students of the biomechanics group.

The donation was well received by the ULA authority. We met with the university officials and the local media during a ceremony celebrating the ISB donation. We then toured the historical administration building of the university. We discussed ISB's desire to support the further development of the ULA's biomechanic research program and their participation within the international biomechanics community. The University is reviewing a proposal to establish a multidisciplinary biomechanics graduate program and is willing to support a variety of exchanges between the group and the international community of biomechanics.



Drs. Li and Hamill met with the president (fourth from the left), vice president of academic (second from left), vice president of administration (fourth from left) and the leaders of the biomechanics group during the official ceremony of the ISB equipment donation.

The donated equipment will enhance the research activity of the ULA biomechanics group and will add to the proposal for the graduate program. Faculty, senior students majoring in biomechanics, and students in the year-and-half biomechanics specialist post-graduate program are very active in research with their very limited equipment. The graduate program is expected to be approved within the year and first class of students

could be recruited as early as May, 2010. The donated equipment will be used in teaching and research within the biomechanics graduate program.



Dr. Hamill explaining the equipment to the biomechanics group at ULA. (Antonio Hernandez on the left)

We discussed several research projects with the ULA biomechanics group during formal and informal settings. We held a one day session in which we discussed research projects in detail with the faculty and students. The group's research is focused mainly on sports biomechanics. They work on original research projects, collaborating projects with local and national sports teams, and multidisciplinary projects with physiologists within their department and bioengineering faculties across the campus.



Drs. Li and Hamill discussing research projects with the faculty and students of the ULA biomechanics group. Dr. Reyes (on the right) served as an interpreter during our visit.

Drs. Li and Hamill discussed biomechanics research, program and professional development, and other topics with the faculty and students. The students especially appreciated the support of ISB and the opportunity to learn more about the activities and potential of biomechanics research beyond the confines the country's boarder.



Drs. Li and Hamill were given a ULA t-shirts as a token of appreciation from the students.



Drs. Li and Hamill with the ULA biomechanics group.

We are happy to report to the ISB community that the trip was very successful. The impact of the trip will be felt far beyond our original initiative. The development the program will be further enhanced in education, service to the community, research, and participation in the activities among biomechanics community worldwide. With the anticipated approval of the multi-disciplinary Master's program this year, the graduate program at ULA will be formally established. New equipment and new research ideas will help provide better

service to the Venezuela sports community. With the support of ISB, we are confident that they are capable of playing an important role in biomechanics community and we are happy that we were part of this historical step.