

EARTH University's Educational Model

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a significant factor in disrupting intergenerational poverty. It plays an inherent role in reducing hunger, empowering women, and spurring economic growth. However, to address the needs of a growing population, a transformation of current higher education programs is required. Agriculture is exponentially metamorphosing and demands new and innovative ways to be adapted into an educational format. There is an urgency to adapt existing educational models to correspond with the demands of 21st century higher education. This report serves to identify the aspects of EARTH University's educational model that have the capacity to be implemented elsewhere and provide a sustainable and effective source of education.

METHOD

Jaxon Mullinnix spent just under two months as an intern at EARTH University in Guacimo, Costa Rica. His official title was "Pasante" but he was able to develop an understanding of student life on EARTH's one of a kind campus. Partaking in numerous activities and programs, Jaxon was in the capacity to do more than just observe EARTH's educational model-- he lived it.

Officially, EARTH University's mission is: 'Prepare leaders with ethical values to contribute to the sustainable development of the humid tropics and to construct a prosperous and just society.' In order to accomplish its mission, the institution has developed an educational model that provides a generalist, holistic, humanistic, and social education. These components are essential to providing students with the tools to be successful in all personal and professional endeavors. EARTH University recognizes that all competencies carry equal importance in life and therefore, must carry equal weight in the educational model. Throughout their time at EARTH, students will develop technical competencies in agriculture and natural resources, as well as skills in leadership and entrepreneurship. The balance of the technical and non-technical aspects of education is fundamental.

The university emphasizes that leadership plays an integral role in professional success and agricultural innovation. The ethical values inherent to authentic leadership are incorporated into the daily lives of students and thus, graduates.

IMAGES



RESULTS

One overwhelmingly passionate EARTH student was David Maduri. Maduri, a fourth-year student, came to EARTH in 2014 from his home in Kenya. Initially attracted to social change and poverty elimination, agriculture was somewhat of a new subject for Maduri. "You graduate as a well-rounded person who has applicable knowledge in agronomy, social justice, and much more at EARTH," Maduri said.

Highly motivated and decidedly prepared, Maduri founded a nonprofit organization during his studies at EARTH. His nonprofit, EducationHOPE.org, is aimed at providing low-income students with scholarships. "EARTH provided me with the space to interact with different people and share my vision. It provided me with a formidable network to create a nonprofit," said Maduri. Meanwhile, Maduri has begun to lay the groundwork for a startup intended to access untapped human potential and give refugees and displaced people the resources to solve their problems.

Students like David Maduri exemplify that EARTH's educational model is inspiring a new generation of leaders in agriculture. In the face of pressing agricultural challenges, it is time for universities to adopt EARTH's approaches and views on education. There is already a growing number of institutions that are looking to EARTH University's model for guidance and inspiration. If EARTH's methods are adapted into the conditions of other locations, there will be an undeniable shift towards sustainable development.

CONCLUSIONS

Students are bringing sustainable development back to their communities after studying at EARTH University. These students continually redefine the meaning of agriculture and transform communities. The capacity for EARTH to impact the transformation of higher education is immense. EARTH University's educational methodology sets it apart from other academic institutions. EARTH believes that students should be allowed to construct their learning process and develop their abilities through experience. EARTH students are able to take advantage of the expansive 8,340-acre campus and put themselves at the center of their education through projects, work experience, and creating and maintaining their own business. EARTH University's educational model has showed the potential all institutions have for establishing a sustainable system for equipping tomorrow's leaders with the abilities to enact change.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS...

EARTH's educational model addresses the pressures of modern social, economic, and environmental concerns and is bringing sustainable development to rural communities around the globe. This model has taken the idea of capacity building to its very core and is designed to be adapted into other institutions looking towards the future. Today's universities have the responsibility of preparing their students for a future in modern agriculture, but must adapt to its demands in order to do so. This relates to not only what universities are teaching but how they teach it. There is no better time to reflect on how today's universities are preparing future leaders than this moment.

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