

A SIDE EVENT CONCEPT NOTE

EARTH University Visioning: South to South Collaboration for University Transformation and Community Engagement

Background

EARTH University has a long and rich history of collaboration with African universities and university networks, particularly RUFORUM. This history of partnership and engagement dates back to the Sustainability, Education and the Management of Change (SEMCIT) seminar series that began in the late 1990's. A concrete product of that collaboration was the "Jinja Consensus" (2002) that called for the transformation of agricultural higher education. This transformation would emphasize experiential learning, student-centered pedagogy, community engagement and the inclusion of entrepreneurial formation in the agricultural curriculum. In the intervening years, vice chancellors, deans, professors and others from a number of RUFORUM member universities have visited EARTH to learn from the university's experience in implementing these and other innovations, and EARTH administrators and staff have visited many of African universities sharing lessons and expertise and learning from colleagues. Currently EARTH is partnering with Gulu and Egerton universities to promote the integration of community engagement and entrepreneurial education in their programs. The fruits of the relationship between EARTH and sister universities in Africa are clear examples of the potential benefits of south-south collaboration.

In addition to collaborating with African universities and networks, EARTH also has an increasingly African presence on campus and in its alumni: currently 16 African countries are represented at the University, comprising 20% of the student body. These students learn, live and collaborate over the course of their 4 years with counterparts from across Latin America, the Caribbean and elsewhere. They too are demonstrating the benefits of south-south collaboration.

EARTH is excited to deepen its collaboration with RUFORUM in the context of its new vision for 2030: the transformation of agri-food systems through higher education and research, in ways that improve livelihoods, job & wealth creation. EARTH also believes it is possible to transform the rural areas that are currently home to 80% of the world's extreme poor and nearly 90% of EARTH students into areas which are economically prosperous, environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive. To help achieve this, the University plans to create the EARTH Center for Rural Impact, an innovative 'think and do tank' for advancing rural sustainability and rural livelihoods with programs in communities across the Americas and Africa.

The Center will develop three programs which are critical for rural livelihoods and which build on the University's nearly 30 years of specialized expertise. These program areas include:

- Leadership Education
- Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems
- Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment

Within each of these programs, the Center will also emphasize critical themes:

- Women's Empowerment
- Technological and Digital Innovation
- Rural Climate & Natural Resources Solutions



	<p>To generate direct impact, Center will employ the following tools in its work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied Research and Direct Community Engagement to develop, test and validate innovative rural sustainability strategies and solutions with the potential for large scale impact; • Training and Capacity Building Programs to support the ongoing technological, skills and mindset evolution needed for global rural sustainability; and • Interactive Forums, Global Awareness Raising and Communicating to inform the global debate regarding solutions and policy options for increased rural sustainability worldwide. <p>EARTH University has been in operation for the last 25 years; a period during which it has demonstrated that it is possible to radically transform how universities train and prepare graduates for the labour market. EARTH University has also demonstrated that universities can be critical actors and players in community transformation by re-orienting their priorities and programming, anchored within a coherent framework and in the context of an innovative educational model. The innovations EARTH University has pioneered in the last 25 years, adapted to different contexts and conditions, are possible within any university in developed as well as in developing nation. During its first 25 years EARTH has largely concentrated its efforts on building an innovative and unique academic model and preparing a relatively small cadre of graduates as agents of change.</p> <p>The University now plans to leverage its experience working at the intersection of agricultural science, natural resources management, leadership and entrepreneurship to promote change on a global scale. Through the EARTH Center for Rural Impact, the University plans to connect with and scale its work together with an extensive network of international partners, including dozens of global research institutes and academic institutions, bi- and multi-lateral agencies, the private sector, private foundations and NGOs in Africa, Europe, Latin America and the US. We look forward to engaging with RUFORUM as a part of this process and see the network and its members as important allies in achieving our shared vision.</p>
Purpose of the Side Event	Those participating in this side event will have the opportunity to learn about the work EARTH University has done with university colleagues in Africa. At the same time, we hope to elicit feedback from RUFORUM university colleagues regarding the university's emerging vision as well as discuss ideas and opportunities for future collaboration.
Objectives of the side Event	<p>The specific objectives of the side event are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Drawing on recent collaboration between EARTH and RUFORUM, engage RUFORUM partners in a dialogue to enrich EARTH University's future strategy and specifically its role in Africa 2) Explore new opportunities for greater collaboration and impact in the context of RUFORUM's 2030 vision and EARTH's Center for Rural Impact
Approach and Methodology	EARTH's provost will make a brief presentation of EARTH's emerging vision followed by a round table discussion
Venue and Participants	Golden Peacock Hotel, Lilongwe, Malawi. Participants will be Principals, Deans and Deputy Vice Chancellors.



Side Event Organizers and Contact	EARTH University Daniel Sherrard, PhD Provost dsherrar@earth.ac.cr www.earth.ac.cr
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