



University of Nairobi

GFAR Collective Action on Transformational Learning & Student Leadership Development

Transformational learning and student leadership development in undergraduate universities at the global level is a key focus area of GFAR for the years 2018-2021

Agricultural and life science universities and departments around the world are keen to continuously review their programmes to adapt to changes in their dynamic environments. Still, **a gap exists in producing the right caliber of university graduates that possess the competencies and agility that enable them to fit the existing and future market, think as entrepreneurs, resolve complex issues using up-to-date creative and innovative problem solving approaches, meet societal demands, and fulfill their own aspirations regarding their own futures.** This gap in our university education system is demonstrated by the challenges that meet new graduates when finding employment or developing enterprises, when integrating into their professional and decision making environment or when exploring channels to develop themselves and lead and impact the change processes.

Comprehensive **transformative learning and student leadership development** schemes are needed in our agricultural and life science schools, to develop not only the academic knowledge and skills of the students, but also their intellectual, professional, spiritual and emotional aspects. The schemes should inspire, guide and equip the students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to meet their aspirations, access resources and grow into qualified knowledgeable graduates capable of realizing their desired future through entrepreneurship, leadership, appropriate employability and agri-business venturing, and the ability to innovate and lead the progress of their communities and of research and knowledge in their domains and realize the targeted developmental impact.

The aim of the **GFAR** collective action on **transformational learning and student leadership development** is to advise and facilitate the reform led by higher education institutions that are partners in **GFAR**, through adopting a holistic reform model to be developed by a representative platform of stakeholders from among the diverse constituencies of the society. This reform model will look into the visions, strategies, governance structures, curricula, learning methodologies and practices and student life programmes including mentoring, internships, and leadership development programs of the participating universities in relation to what these universities have announced as their targeted goals. Also, the model will look into how these targeted goals themselves are shaped by the expectations of wider society and the opportunities presented in relevant environments.

More precisely, this **GFAR** collective action – whose first meeting will be held in the University of Nairobi in September 2017 - will result in the following outputs:

- ❖ Establishing a **representative platform of stakeholders of higher education** from among the different constituencies of **GFAR** and RUFORUM who are willing to join hands on this initiative
- ❖ Identifying the **reform** to be undertaken by the participants based on representative and equitable dialogue – innovation platform style - of the multi-stakeholders concerned
- ❖ Formulating a **shared model of reform** that allows for sharing experiences, stories, challenges and opportunities experienced by the stakeholders
- ❖ **Fundraising** for the initiative through a joint multi-stakeholder proposal of this collective action
- ❖ Working together towards an established and jointly agreed results framework with action timelines and milestones to **achieve the agreed reform** in the participating universities, taking into consideration their different local environments and their specificities.
- ❖ **Monitoring and Evaluation and Documenting** the experience and the expertise developed
- ❖ **Scaling out** to other GFAR partners in other regions in the near future.

It is expected that the outputs of this continued partnership of multiple stakeholders that starts in the Nairobi meeting in September, will include reformed curricula, restructured governance, rewritten school missions and strategic plans. Integration of co-curricular activities that focus on the physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and professional development of students will be a core of this reform together with development of student leadership, mentoring and continuous evaluations schemes. Direct engagement of students will help link agro-industries and present opportunities from new technologies and service industries with universities and their neighboring communities. All will lead to measurable outcomes including qualified adaptable global oriented graduates who meet the identified demands and expectations, who are enthusiastic and committed to use their learning for agricultural research and development, and who are recognized as value-added in their environments, leading to impactful innovative agricultural and rural transformation around the world.

Some of the indicators used at the short, medium and long-term would be number of universities going through the reform, the number of reform model's elements adopted by each university, number of multi-stakeholder partnerships developed, processes that have been reviewed and changed, short term outputs; etc.

This **GFAR** initiative is currently in partnership with RUFORUM and the University of Nairobi in addition to GFAR partners from the private sector in Africa, civil society, farmer organizations, local rural youth and women associations and agricultural students associations. The initiative will then scale out this reform to other regions through South-South learning and exchange – in its second phase – building on the experience gained in Africa and the expertise available there.