



Sustainable EARTH

EARTH University draws students from dozens of countries around the globe and prepares ethical leaders to contribute to the sustainable development of the tropics and to construct a prosperous and just society.

BY AMANDA LEFF RITCHIE

With its sights set on expanding international exchange opportunities for Chatham University, including internationalizing the educational opportunities for students and faculty in Chatham's new School of Sustainability and the Environment (SSE), a delegation from Chatham recently visited EARTH University, an innovative international institution located in the heart of a tropical rainforest in Costa Rica.



Since returning from EARTH University, President Esther L. Barazzone signed a cooperative agreement. At this time, a Chatham team is exploring several collaborative programs with EARTH.

There, the delegation learned firsthand how EARTH is helping students from around the world contribute to the sustainable development of their homelands.

Drawing students from dozens of countries around the globe (especially Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Africa), EARTH prepares leaders with ethical values to contribute to the sustainable development of the tropics and to construct a prosperous and just society. EARTH's campus, located in Guacimo, Costa Rica, includes classrooms, laboratories, academic farms, sports and recreational facilities, student and faculty residences, a commercial banana plantation, reforested areas, and a forest reserve. The university was created through the financial support of the Costa Rican government, U.S. Agency for International Development, and W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

For students who want to become leaders of positive change in their home countries, EARTH University is a one-of-a-kind educational opportunity. Students, regardless of their financial situations, are recruited based on leadership potential, vocation, values, and social and environmental commitment. The solid foundation in sustainable agriculture and experiential curriculum allow students to run their own businesses, complete international internships, and work with their communities to address problems they face.

Much like that of Chatham's SSE, EARTH's curriculum takes a holistic approach to education. EARTH offers a rigorous four-year undergraduate program in agricultural sciences and natural resources management, led by an international faculty that emphasizes values, ethical entrepreneurship, and environmental and social commitment. With these principles in common, it's not surprising that Chatham and EARTH are negotiating the terms of several collaborative efforts. In fact, student exchange programs and a one-year Master of Sustainability degree from the SSE for EARTH graduates are already in the works.

"Chatham's partnership with EARTH will internationalize the School of Sustainability and the Environment in curricular development, program building, and internships," says Wenying Xu, dean of academics at Chatham.

EARTH University highly subsidizes the educational costs of all of its students. And thanks to a seven-year, \$19.5 million grant from the MasterCard Foundation, 120 students from Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean will receive scholarships.

As part of its commitment to provide opportunities to young people who want to make a difference in the world but lack the resources for higher education, EARTH operates a commercial enterprise and markets EARTH University products in Costa

Rica, Latin America, and the United States. Profits from the sale of sustainably grown bananas, pineapple, tropical flowers, frozen fruit, and coffee support EARTH's scholarship program and operational expenses. EARTH also sells natural yogurt and natural cleaning products in Costa Rica, and biological agricultural inputs, such as pesticides and fertilizer, in Costa Rica and Latin America.

Similar to the living/learning environment being developed at Eden Hall Campus, EARTH students in their third year of the bachelor's program spend seven weeks at EARTH's new campus, EARTH-La Flor, where they live and work on sustainable development projects in the surrounding communities. The campus also offers public seminars and training programs on topics such as renewable energies, entrepreneurship, and sustainable agriculture.

While in Costa Rica, President Esther L. Barazzone also visited EARTH-La Flor, which is located in the dry tropics of Costa Rica's Guanacaste province. The family of former Costa Rican President Daniel Oduber Quirós donated the 3,700-acre property to EARTH in 2005. Much like Chatham's Eden Hall Campus, EARTH-La Flor promises to be a hub for research, development, and innovation.

Since the delegation returned from EARTH, President Barazzone signed a cooperative agreement, and a Chatham team is working out the details of the one-year master's program. And, Chatham is already offering summer programs at EARTH for Chatham College for Women students that will fulfill undergraduate general education requirements.

"The trip was inspirational and made us think outside the box about experiential learning and entrepreneurial experiences, particularly of the programs in SSE," says Wenying. ☺

"Chatham's partnership with EARTH will internationalize the School of Sustainability and the Environment in curricular development, program building, and internships," says Wenying Xu, dean of academics at Chatham.

In the heart of the tropical rainforest in the Caribbean lowlands of Costa Rica resides EARTH University. The 8,342-acre campus includes classrooms, laboratories, academic farms, sports and recreational facilities, student and faculty residences, a commercial banana plantation, reforested areas, and a forest reserve.

