



Photo by Danilo Alberto Solano Rojas, a second year student from Costa Rica, taken during EARTH University's National Geographic Photo Camp.

OUR MISSION:

Prepare leaders with ethical values to contribute to the sustainable development of the humid tropics and to construct a prosperous and just society

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The Buzz on Bio-digesters

Bio-digesters have been a hot topic in the Latin American news media this year. And it is no wonder; increased concern about climate change and greenhouse gas emissions has created an interest in simple, small-scale environmental solutions of the type that bio-digesters provide.

Once installed, the only resources needed to keep a bio-digester in operation are a steady influx of organic human or animal waste and water, yet the benefits are manifold. Bio-digesters cleanly manage organic wastes and capture methane and nitrous oxide—gases which are respectively 20 and 300 times more harmful than CO₂ in their greenhouse effect. Bio-digesters also prevent the release of hydrogen sulfide and ammonia into the environment—compounds responsible for acid rain.

A bio-digester is much more than just a tool for fighting climate change; it is a practical investment that provides energy to rural families all over the world. A simple installation consists of a large polyethylene plastic bag that composts organic waste, producing the biogas methane. This gas can be siphoned off for use as cooking fuel. The bio-digester also produces rich, composted manure, valuable to farmers as a natural fertilizer. A small installation typically costs a rural family \$200. By feeding the apparatus the equivalent of 2 cows' fresh manure per day, enough biogas is consistently produced to allow a family of five to cover all of its daily cooking needs, providing a full return on investment within 6 months.

Under the guidance of Professor Raúl Botero, EARTH University has been a leader in bringing bio-digester technology to Latin America. The eight installations on EARTH's campus currently process both human and animal waste. In the past three months, EARTH has been featured in the news media for its efforts in spreading bio-digester technology to other regions and institutions. In a March 13 interview with BBC Mundo, Professor Botero commented, "We estimate that there are currently 2000 family bio-digester units and 100 industrial units currently operating in Costa Rica, promoted [in part] by students, graduates, administrators, and professors of EARTH."



EARTH University's eight bio-digesters come in many sizes.



Beatriz López Ruiz

Mexico
Fourth Year Student

Giving back all that she's learned



Beatriz López was born in El Bosque, in Chiapas, Mexico, an area known for its vast biological and cultural richness. A native speaker of Tzotzil, the Mayan language of her home community, Beatriz brings that cultural depth to EARTH University.

Growing up in Chiapas, Beatriz learned to work in the production of coffee and corn from her father, who is a farmer. She has maintained an interest in farm work, and in coming to EARTH, she hoped to improve her living conditions and become a professional.

Given the economic limitations facing her family, she had to abandon her secondary studies for one year, during which she worked as a volunteer in communities far from her town. "I traveled an hour and half in car and then walked two hours to reach a community to give preschool classes. Because they were very remote places, I developed more confidence and courage." Thanks to this volunteer work, she was able to obtain a scholarship to complete high school.

Her road to EARTH began six months after finishing high school. "Since I arrived, I've felt really good, I was surprised with the solidarity shown to me, especially from my compatriots, who have provided me with their support."

Beatriz recently completed her internship with American Flowers Shippers located in Chiriqui, Panama. There, she worked in the production and commercialization of ornamental plants, as well as in the development of community integration activities.

"The community work that we carry out during our internships," she affirmed, "is an important way to help us grow as human beings, while involving us in the real lives of many people and bringing positive changes to our society."

In spite of the distance, this young woman explains that she feels connected to the hopes and aspirations of her home community in Mexico. As a result, she sees herself working in Chiapas, in agriculture: "I want to work in waste management, because in my town there are no initiatives of this type."



In her fourth year, Beatriz sees herself returning to Chiapas, Mexico and working in agriculture when she graduates.

NEW NEWSLETTER

Reflecting an interest among readers and staff members for a more colorful publication, EARTH University Foundation has designed a new look for its newsletter. With color, we hope to portray the splendor of EARTH's tropical campus in all of its beauty. In keeping with EARTH's commitment to environmental responsibility, we continue to print on 100% post-consumer recycled paper. Another great way to reduce your carbon footprint is to sign up for the electronic version of the newsletter by contacting Cherry Pacquette at cpacquette@earth-usa.org.

EARTH UNIVERSITY REPRESENTED AT SOLD-OUT CONFERENCE

EARTH University was represented through its Foundation at the 12th Annual Georgia Organics Conference and Trade Show on March 20 and 21. This Atlanta conference brings together farmers, business owners and connoisseurs from the state of Georgia and beyond who are passionate about high quality, locally grown, organic food. This year's conference sold out to a record number of participants, and featured a keynote speech by best-selling author Michael Pollan. As part of the event's silent auction, EARTH offered a four day all-inclusive trip to its campus in Costa Rica, which generated much interest in the University. Event-goers were especially impressed with the efforts that the University makes to be a leader in its local community. The community outreach requirement in EARTH's curriculum has a lasting impact on students, many of whom continue to be agents of change in their communities long after graduation.

TIERRA PROGRAM

EARTH University Foundation has initiated a new program called Tierra, in which interested volunteers of all ages can become involved in the mission of EARTH University in their local communities. Tierra projects include bringing peri-urban gardening techniques from EARTH to local communities in the United States, volunteering as a group to clean up or protect the environment, enjoying new cultural experiences or raising awareness about EARTH and the values the Institution espouses. Tierra Atlanta, the first Tierra group of its kind, will be holding an event at the Atlanta restaurant, Aja, on April 21 in which proceeds will benefit the University. The Atlanta group plans to follow up this event with tree plantings, cultural discussions and a large fall fundraiser. Membership in Tierra Atlanta is \$25. For more information, or to find out about organizing a Tierra group in your city, please contact Melonie Tharpe at mtharpe@earth-usa.org.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Board meetings in Guanacaste strengthen University's future

From March 24–28, the University's Board of Directors and Board of Trustees and the EARTH University Foundation Board of Trustees held a series of productive and positive meetings focused primarily on assuring the financial sustainability of the Institution.

On Friday, March 27, as part of my annual report to the Boards, we placed the first corner stone for the new academic buildings at EARTH-La Flor. Later that afternoon, the three Boards received an update on the efforts of the Investment Committee of the Board of Trustees to ensure that the endowment is adequately protected from further market declines. We also learned about the Strategic Financial Plan developed with support from Cummins, Inc., which seeks to ensure the short and long-term financial viability of the Institution. At the close of the meeting, the members of all three Boards expressed their commitment to collectively donate \$250,000 to kick-start the University's new fund raising efforts.

I want to thank the members of all three Boards who participated in these meetings for their generosity with their time and for their unwavering commitment to the EARTH mission. It is reassuring to have such an experienced and dedicated group of leaders helping to guide and support us during this challenging time for the University. I am confident that with your backing we will become a stronger Institution with an even greater global influence.

Cordially,

Dr. José A. Zaglul, University President



Carlos Murillo, Director of EARTH-La Flor (with shovel), and Dr. José Zaglul, the University President (on left) at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new academic buildings at EARTH-La Flor.

FEATURES

Students participate in 2009 Clinton Global Initiative University (CGIU) Meeting

On February 13-15, students Claudio Castro and David Steiger represented EARTH at the 2009 CGIU meeting at the University of Texas in Austin. This activity, attended by former U.S. President Bill Clinton, aimed to create and implement action commitments that generate change in areas of



Claudio Castro (foreground) preparing the bio-intensive garden at a student dormitory on campus; Claudio and another EARTH student attended the Clinton Global Initiative University Meeting in February.

global interest. Participants developed proposals on how university students can make small-scale changes that could later be replicated globally. In collaboration with the student agro-ecology club on campus, Claudio and David developed a project focused on food security and proposed planting fruit trees on campus to increase the University's efforts to achieve self-sufficiency, a proposal EARTH is now considering.

Expanding the reach of the Third-Year Academic Program at EARTH-La Flor

New for 2009, the third-year Community Experience module at EARTH-La Flor will be brought under the umbrella of the Guanacaste Regional Development Plan to help promote the development of local communities. This new focus was born from a partnership between EARTH-La Flor and local government institutions overseeing the Plan. In the Agribusiness Development Experience module of the curriculum, faculty will now assume a greater role in helping local businesses identify projects that students can develop while in Guanacaste. The Academic Program at EARTH-La Flor brings third-year students to western Costa Rica for six weeks to learn about the social, environmental and economic situation in the rural communities of the dry tropical region of Guanacaste.

Inauguration of EARTH's 20th class year

On January 19, EARTH University welcomed 106 new students from 18 countries in the Americas, the Caribbean and Africa to join the ranks of students and graduates of 19 previous classes who have benefited from the Institution's rigorous curriculum in applied agricultural sciences. The generosity of many donors made it possible to grant full scholarships to 54% of the incoming class, and partial scholarships to another 32%. An impressive 72% of these new students come to EARTH from rural areas of the developing world, the regions most in need of the young ethical entrepreneurs EARTH trains in its four-year program.



EARTH Graduate Discovers Natural Control for Banana Disease

Costa Rican scientist Laura Soto has received acclaim for her discovery of a natural way to combat sigatoka disease in banana. Soto, a graduate of EARTH University, partnered with the Institution to do research on the disease, which causes significant damage to the banana leaf tissue and prevents the fruit from maturing properly. Her natural alternative substitutes a portion of the toxic agrochemicals that are traditionally used against sigatoka with a natural control agent that she has developed from local waste products such as cow manure and shrimp heads (a by-product from fishing).

EARTH University Cited as Model Institution

A February Senate Foreign Relations Committee Report titled "Global Food Insecurity: Perspectives from the Field" found much to commend about EARTH University. The report's aim was to uncover the causes of global food insecurity and the ways in which the United States government can provide leadership in solving it. The report found that making investments in agricultural productivity and rural development is essential to eradicating hunger and encouraging sustained economic growth and prosperity for food-insecure nations. EARTH was cited as a model educational institution whose structure could be replicated in underdeveloped regions worldwide to promote sustainable rural development.

President of EARTH University Meets with Carlos Slim

EARTH University President, Dr. José Zaglul traveled to Mexico in early March to sign an agreement between the University and the state of Veracruz, sealing the donation of four scholarships for students from Veracruz to study at EARTH. The Governor of Veracruz, who participated in the event, also expressed interest in working with EARTH on projects related to waste management and carbon neutrality. During the three-day trip, President Zaglul met with Carlos Slim and shared EARTH's mission, philosophy and programs. Slim, the world's third richest man, expressed interest in visiting the University in the future.

Positive Advancements in the Carbon Neutral Program

As the first university in Costa Rica to go carbon neutral, EARTH has been eager to share experiences with other institutions interested in following suit. The University achieved a status of neutral CO2 emissions in 2007, and is now preparing to become accredited as a certifying body under its Carbon Neutral Program. As part of this effort, EARTH is preparing to meet a series of norms and requirements established by ECA, the Costa Rican Accreditation Agency. ECA went to campus in early March to provide certification training, and will be responsible for supervising and validating EARTH's methodology in certifying outside organizations and companies as carbon neutral entities.

*Newly arrived students from EARTH's
20th class year participating in orientation
activities on campus.*

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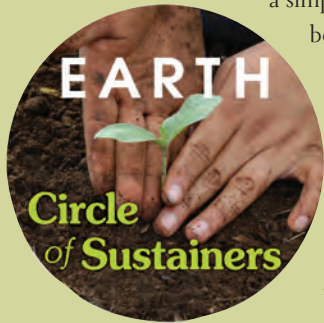
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To accomplish its mission, EARTH recruits leaders from economically-depressed regions of the world and provides scholarships to 80% of its student body. Since EARTH's endowment only covers a portion of total student tuition, investing in the future of EARTH is the only way to ensure that we can continue to offer financial assistance to qualified, deserving rural youth of modest means. If you are inspired by what EARTH is doing, please consider contributing to EARTH's mission to create a bright and better future. Our Circle of Sustainers Program allows you to consider planned giving options that may be right for you. We will be featuring one of these options in each quarterly newsletter. For more information, please contact Pat Fischer at pfischer@earth-usa.org or by phone at (404) 995-1243.

EARTH Circle of Sustainers

For those interested in helping to secure EARTH University's future, we invite you to become a member of EARTH's Circle of Sustainers. One way to do this is with the Charitable Gift Annuity, a simple contract with EARTH University to pay you and/or your designated beneficiary a fixed annuity for life. At the end of the contract term, the remainder will be distributed to EARTH to be used for the purposes you designate. Enjoy guaranteed income for the rest of your life and an immediate income-tax deduction – and see your gift to EARTH University be put to good use immediately!

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UPCOMING EVENTS

April 21:
Tierra Atlanta Meeting in Atlanta, GA

May 21–22:
Carbon Neutral Event on EARTH
University Campus

June 5:
Day without Cars on EARTH
University Campus

June 16:
EARTH University Foundation
Board of Trustees Meeting in Atlanta

July 4–5:
Tropical Americas Fair on
EARTH University Campus

July 16–19:
Amigos Trip to Costa Rica

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