



Transformational Learning and Student Leadership Development in undergraduate universities at the global level

A Collective Action within Key Focus Area (KFA) 3 of GFAR's Medium Term Plan 2018-2021

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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 fits the existing market and societal demands. New graduates face challenges in integrating into their professional and decision making environment, and in finding channels to impact the change processes of their societies and the world. They also may feel unprepared to venture into uncharted territory to start their own agricultural enterprises.

Comprehensive transformational learning and student leadership development schemes are needed in our agricultural and life science schools, to develop not only academic skills, but also the intellectual, professional, spiritual and emotional aspects of the students. 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 and prepared graduates. They must demonstrate employability, leadership aptitude and entrepreneurial agility. They must be able to innovate and lead the integration of their specialized research into society for real 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 by adopting a holistic reform model. The model that will be developed by the different stakeholders in higher education will first look into the visions, strategies, governance structures, curricula, instructional techniques and student life programmes of the participating universities. Working back from the outcomes they want to achieve—ensuring that their graduates meet the identified demands and bring value to their working environments—the model will set out the transformations needed to reform higher education in the Agriculture and Life Sciences.



Photo courtesy of Professor Agnes Mwang'ombe

What we will do together

More precisely, this GFAR Collective Action will be launched in September 2017 at a meeting held at the University of Nairobi, and is currently in partnership with [RUFORUM](#), the [University of Nairobi](#), and the [Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa \(FARA\)](#). A representative number of universities in Africa are also partnering, as well as [Inter-University Consortium \(IUC\)](#), [GCHERA](#),

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AARINENA, GFRAS, YPARD, WRF, CGIAR, Agrinatura, CAAS/China and GFAR partners from the private sector in Africa, civil society, farmer organizations, local rural youth and women associations and agricultural students associations.

The meeting at the University of Nairobi in September 2017 will produce 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 participating universities 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 each university
- ❖ 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

Going forward, the outputs of this partnership of multiple stakeholders are expected to include reformed curricula, restructured governance, rewritten school missions and strategic plans. Co-curricular activities that focus on the physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and professional development of students will also be developed, in addition to student leadership, mentoring and continuous evaluations schemes. Students will be directly engaged with the industries and opportunities in their own and neighbouring communities. All of this will contribute to turning out qualified, adaptable, global-oriented graduates who meet the identified demands and expectations, who are enthusiastic and committed to using their learning for agricultural research and development, and who are recognized as a value-addition to their environments. Measurable outcomes will be seen in impacts to agricultural and rural transformation around the world.

The GFAR Collective Action on transformational learning and student leadership development aims at scaling out this reform to other regions through South-South learning and exchange – in its second phase – building on the experience gained in Africa. China has also expressed interest in similar GFAR initiative. This collective action will contribute to GFAR's Key Focus Area (KFA) 3 as set out in the Medium-Term Plan for 2018-2021 under the theme: *“Strengthening organizational and individual capacities”*.

You are invited to join the University of Nairobi, RUFORUM, FARA and other Partners in GFAR in their Collective Action on *Transformational Learning and Student Leadership Development*.

For more information, contact GFAR Secretariat at GFAR-Secretariat@fao.org or write to: Iman.Elkafras@fao.org

