

Why the critical role of Tertiary Education Institutions to Global Sustainable Development must be central to Rio+20 discussions

The role that tertiary education can, should and does play in achieving sustainable development has often gone unrecognized and/or under represented. In the past two decades, it has become clear that tertiary education institutions:

- Provide relevant and critical education to our future government, business, industry, education and community leaders. By integrating sustainable development into curriculum, skills training and student development, tertiary education will equip the future with people who have the knowledge and capacity to positively impact the global economic and educational systems, to eradicate poverty and improve access to education for all;
- Are critical homes for the research that provides sustainable solutions to the complex problems of development. Indeed, Secretary Ban Ki-moon pointed out in his call for the world's academic community to find solutions to global hunger, water shortages, and energy issues, "the academic community can help us connect the dots"; and
- Serve as the "test beds" for examining the context in which innovative sustainability practices are executed. As these institutions implement a variety of context-specific sustainability practices through education and operations, they demonstrate the viability of these practices and provide models for sustainable development.

In light of this, it is recommended that:

- Tertiary institutions and governments alike should provide resources and funding to facilitate the fundamental shift to embed sustainability in the curriculum, research, and operations of tertiary education. The development of tools, resources and appropriate professional development for academics and institutional leaders are required for this fundamental shift in our collective approach to sustainable development to be successful;
- Each tertiary institution within developed countries should partner and work with a tertiary institution from a developing country, for the purpose and mutual benefit of research, knowledge and resource exchange. Each institution should make this partnership explicit through registering on a dedicated UNCSD page; and
- Every tertiary institution should commit to sharing and learning from one another in the spirit of international partnership and long-term global societal benefit.

This document was prepared through collaboration among:

