



*Natural flora and fauna at EARTH University's Guacimo campus*

## Commencement Ceremony Brings to a Close EARTH University's 20th Anniversary Celebration

EARTH's eighteenth Graduation Ceremony took place at the Guácimo campus on December 10, during which 79 agents of change were awarded the licenciatura degree in agronomy, bringing the total number of EARTH alumni to 1,546. The occasion also marked the official close of the University's 20th Anniversary celebrations.



*The EARTH graduating class of 2010*

### 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

### IN THIS ISSUE:

EARTH Welcomes New VP of Development	pg. 2
Campus Buzz	pg. 3
2011 Class Year Begins With a Look to the Future	pg. 3
2010 EARTH University Donors	pg. 4
Change Agent Arnoldo Quirós Solano	pg. 5

The keynote speaker for the event was Dr. Franklin Chang Díaz, who thoughtfully reminded alumni, students and guests of their responsibility to care for the planet to ensure the well-being of future generations. In addition, former President of Costa Rica, Dr. Luis Alberto Monge, delivered a moving recognition of EARTH benefactor, Mrs. Marjorie de Oduber, painting her and her late husband, former President Daniel Oduber Quirós, as visionaries in the development of the country.

The bestowing of the EARTH Prize is always a special moment and this year was no exception. The award went to David Navichoc, a young man from an indigenous community in Guatemala who not only excelled academically, but also demonstrated leadership and commitment as an agent of change during his four years at EARTH and with his charisma and positive attitude, earned the affection of all who got to know him.

Finally the Sustainability Prize, given by EARTH's friends and partners at The Sustainability Laboratories, was awarded this year to three students whose graduation projects best fulfilled the principles of sustainability. The winners were Neida Chow and Tania Pérez from Nicaragua and Johanny Pérez from the Dominican Republic.



# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

## EARTH Alumni Honored for Their Entrepreneurial Spirit

It is a pleasure to share with you that the most important Costa Rican financial journal, El Financiero, included three EARTH alumni in their "40 under 40" special, a list of the most influential and successful young leaders in Costa Rica. Graduates Gustavo Díaz, Hortensia Solís and Laura Lang were honored in one of their latest editions which profiled forty men and women under the age of forty in recognition of their contributions to the country and in gratitude of their entrepreneurial spirit.



From left to right: Laura Lang, Gustavo Diaz, Hortensia Solís

Laura Lang, Class of 1998, was honored for her creation of Aliados Cambio Climatico (ACC or the Allies for Climate Change) and the implementation of a system to measure the carbon footprint of national industries and offices. Also featured was Hortensia Solís, Class of 2006, who now heads the department of sustainable research and development for Coopedota, a cooperative of specialty coffee growers, and is also the leader of the largest project in Central America to fight climate change called CartasXCambio. Gustavo Díaz, Class of 2003 and President of Distribuidora Internacional Saludable y Sostenible (Disaso or Healthy and Sustainable International Distributor) was also among the recognized for his company's success in the commercialization of plantain and banana chips, spicy salsas, organic brown sugar and fresh young coconut, sold with a unique presentation in Costa Rica and Germany.

**We are very proud of these exceptional graduates and look forward to having more of them featured in this list in the future.**

Cordially,

Dr. José A. Zaglul  
University President



*Ingrid Blanton joined EARTH University as Vice President of Development on January 10 after serving as Associate Vice President of Gift Planning at Emory University. She has also held fundraising and leadership positions at Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the Williamsburg Land Conservancy. An attorney by training, Blanton is a member of the Virginia State Bar and practiced law for several years before moving to the nonprofit sector. Ingrid will be moving from Atlanta, Georgia to EARTH's campus in Costa Rica for her new position.*

### **Q. How did you first come to know about EARTH? And what about the University attracted you?**

I was familiar with EARTH when I moved to Atlanta in 2005 from Virginia. Friends of mine there had mentioned to me that they knew of a unique university in Costa Rica that had a foundation office located in Atlanta. So I looked EARTH up online and was very impressed with what I learned about it. The mission of EARTH resonated with me due to my interests in both environmental protection and developing countries.

### **Q. How do you see your past professional experience – both in gift planning and in law – as contributing to your new position at EARTH?**

I'll address law first. A legal education provides strong training in analytical thinking and in persuasive writing and speaking. Both are attributes that serve well for a leadership position, especially one in which a key goal is to represent an organization, such as EARTH, and to seek funding support. Gift planning background is an extra benefit that will come in handy for EARTH as we seek to build a gift planning program here. Deferred gifts, such as will provisions and charitable trusts, are ideal for building the endowment and helping to ensure the future financial sustainability of EARTH.

### **Q. How do you see EARTH overcoming the challenges of the current economic climate?**

EARTH is in a fortunate position in several regards. First, its mission is one that is especially appealing to many now as we find ourselves in the midst of a "green" movement. Second, while EARTH has already enjoyed great success in fundraising, there are as yet relatively untapped resources. Foundation, corporate and government funding have been the mainstay, along with generous gifts from a relatively small group of individuals. A key initiative for 2011 is a major direct mail project to enlist new individual annual fund donors.

### **Q. You recently visited EARTH's campus – soon to be your new home – for the first time. What were your first impressions?**

As soon as my husband and I entered through the front gates, we knew we were at a very special place. It is, of course, lush and beautiful and then, when you arrive at the campus and meet the students and faculty, you are struck by the high caliber and commitment of everyone associated with EARTH.

### **Q. Have you already packed for your move to Costa Rica?**

I confess to giving only cursory thought to my household goods, but I am laying plans to get my bicycle down there as soon as possible. When it's not raining, it will be a great way to get around EARTH. I have been an avid bicycle commuter here in Atlanta and I look forward to also being one on campus.

# THE CAMPUS BUZZ

## EARTH leads important community project

A few months ago, following the tragic death of a local woman, a group of residents in Pocora approached EARTH to ask for the University's help with the construction of a walkway on the railway bridge over the Destierro River in Pocora. The rail-bridge is heavily transited by pedestrians, as it is the only way to cross the river without going onto the highway; but, without a walkway residents were constantly endangering their lives.

EARTH agreed to support the community's efforts and began reaching out to companies in the region to obtain the materials and support needed to complete the project. The University received the collaboration of the Municipality of Guácimo, the Costa Rican Railway Institute, the Development Board of Pocora, the Port Authority of the Atlantic, as well as local companies such as Codela and El Colono.

In addition to coordinating the project, several members of the staff participated on a volunteer basis on the construction of the structure. EARTH is pleased to have been able to work together with the community on this project, which will have an important long-term benefit for its residents.



*Luis Diego Chacón, head of EARTH's transportation group, was instrumental in the construction of the walkway. Since this photo was taken in December, community members completed the walkway, finishing the installation of chain-link fencing on both sides and painting the structure.*

## Meteorology station to be installed on the campus

As part of a joint project with the National Meteorology Institute (IMN) of Costa Rica, in January EARTH began the installation of high-tech meteorology station on the campus to monitor weather data, climate variations and waterfall, within the framework of the Costa Rican Government's efforts to respond to climate change.

This will be the sixth station in the country, and will allow researchers to analyze potential risks, prognosticate and define concrete actions to address climate change on a national and global level.

This collaboration reflects EARTH's commitment to environmental solutions and global sustainability. The University hopes that the information generated will provide new opportunities for collaboration with the Environment, Energy and Telecommunications Ministry of Costa Rica and increase EARTH's leadership role in the response to climate change.

## 2011 Class Year Begins With a Look to the Future

On January 17, EARTH welcomed the new incoming class and its returning students during the Inauguration Ceremony of the 22nd class year at the Emory L. Cocke Auditorium.

This year in particular will be important for setting forth the future of the University, as EARTH prepares its 2012-2018 Strategic Plan based on the results of the visioning process conducted last year with the entire institutional community, alumni and other stakeholders.



*Students and faculty attending the Inauguration Ceremony*

The 2011-2014 class is comprised of 108 young men and women from 18 countries, including for the first time, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leon. About 63 percent of the first-year students come from rural regions and 36 percent are women. With this new group, our student body for the first trimester consists of 411 regular students, as well as three study-abroad students.

During the inauguration, attendees heard inspiring messages from first-year student Issa Daniela Secaira Mancía from Guatemala, and in representation of EARTH's Student Council, fourth-year student Pablo Tuñón from Panama. Their words reminded everyone that the true reward of their work is that EARTH delivers to the world agents of change who will promote the sustainable development of their communities.



*A student from Ghana carried his country's flag into the auditorium*



*First-year students working together during one of their classes*

EARTH University Foundation recognizes and appreciates the generous support of the following donors, whose gifts were received from January 1 – December 31, 2010. The Institution expresses its sincerest gratitude to these individuals, businesses, foundations, governments and international organizations who make the continued fulfillment of its mission possible.

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The EARTH University President's Circle is an alliance of passionate individuals committed to promoting lasting and positive change in the world through education.

The giving levels of the President's Circle are as follow:

Earth 🌍	\$20,000 AND ABOVE
Forest ♦	\$10,000 – \$19,999
Grove	\$5,000 – \$9,999
Tree	\$1,000 – \$4,999

# CHANGE AGENT

## Arnoldo Quirós Solano

Head of Security  
EARTH employee  
since 1990



Arnoldo had been a police officer in Siquirres (a town close to the EARTH campus) for many years. When he heard about the creation of the University he decided to apply for a security position in the hopes of finding better working and living conditions. He was hired and has worked at EARTH ever since.

Initially, Arnoldo began as a security official at the front gate, but with the formation of the campus Security Unit, his good track record landed him a position as supervisor. His diligence and honesty brought Arnoldo, some time later, another good reference: the head of security decided to resign and recommended Arnoldo as his replacement.

To this day, Arnoldo describes his job as being fairly simple. However, he is responsible for the logistical and tactical coordination of the protection of more than 3,000 hectares of land and a total population of more than 1,000 people between students, faculty and staff. "I live off campus and face the social reality of this region, plagued by so much delinquency, every day. This permits me to understand the reality and contextualize the University within it."

It is precisely this experience as a resident of the neighborhood of El Carmen in Pocora that has motivated him and his wife to be active participants in promoting a better quality of life for its more than 800 inhabitants. Arnoldo has also been a vital link between the El Carmen neighborhood and EARTH's Community Development Program, International Academic Program and other community initiatives.

For example, for the past six years, during the Día de los Hijos de la Tierra, EARTH's annual volunteer day, University staff and students have worked on restoration projects, fixing streets and improving drainage ditches in El Carmen. Arnoldo and his wife, Vilma, also host EARTH students working in El Carmen at their home. Vilma is herself an active member of community and religious committees. "My wife has been a source of inspiration. She motivates me a lot because of the care that she gives my community in which we live."

As president of the Development Committee of the El Carmen Neighborhood of Pocora, this athlete and father of seven children has a clear dream that he wants to see come to fruition in less than five years. **"We want this community to be better in terms of drugs, delinquency and bad habits. We also want to improve the infrastructure of the streets to facilitate access and to complete the community center so that we can offer workshops, bring cultural and educational activities and give the youth tools so that they can prosper. The challenging circumstances of the region will not cause us to back down."**

# CLOSER TO HOME

## NEW FOUNDATION STAFF

EARTH University Foundation is happy to introduce their latest additions to the Atlanta-based team.



**Donna Gould** — Database and Stewardship Manager

Donna joined EARTH University Foundation in August. Her responsibilities include database management and stewardship. She brings more than 5 years of non-profit experience in database management, website management and development to the Foundation.



**Cathy Hackl** — Communications Coordinator

Hired in November, Cathy supports the newly formed Office of Communications at EARTH. Her responsibilities include media relations in the U.S, as well as managing written communications for external and internal audiences. She is an EMMY nominated journalist and has worked with Spaulding Communications, a full-service public relations firm, CNN, Animal Planet, ABC News and FOX5.



**Yvette Huertas** — Executive Assistant to Director of Development & VP of Development

Yvette joined EARTH University Foundation in September and supports the day-to-day operations of the Foundation. She has more than 10 years of high-level administrative experience, four of which were in the non-profit sector. Prior to joining the Foundation, she was the Development Coordinator for Jack & Jill Children's Center. Yvette is a recent transplant from South Florida and currently lives in Atlanta with her husband and three children.

EARTH University Foundation has recently begun collaborating with Georgia Interfaith Power and Light to expose the congregations they serve to the work of EARTH University and on ways that we can jointly create more awareness on issues affecting the sustainability of our planet. The article below was written by GIPL for the Foundation newsletter.

## CONGREGATIONS BENEFIT FROM ENERGY EFFICIENCY

### Georgia Interfaith Power & Light

Since 2003, Georgia Interfaith Power & Light's (GIPL) mission has been to "engage communities of faith in stewardship of God's Creation as a direct reflection of their faithfulness through worship, education and the sustainable generation and efficient use of energy." Thanks to recent federal and state funding, GIPL now has even greater tools and resources to help congregations in Georgia protect the environment by saving energy. GIPL's program—Power Wise offers low-cost energy audits to faith communities across the state.

No other organization in the country is offering congregations of every faith a detailed road map like this to systematically assess and reduce their energy use. Demand for Power Wise has been unprecedented as congregations across the state have signed up to receive Power Wise Energy Audits.

In addition to energy audits, Power Wise congregations are eligible to apply for up to \$25,000 in Energy Improvement Matching Grants. This program is designed to help congregations institute changes that would otherwise be cost-prohibitive, such as improving insulation, upgrading lighting and windows, and installing energy efficient heating and air conditioning units.

Power Wise helps congregations become better stewards of their financial resources and of the environment. Money saved through energy efficiency improvements can be used to support your congregation's mission and programming.

To find out more about Power Wise, or to sign up, please visit Georgia Interfaith Power & Light's website <http://gipl.org>



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## HELP CHANGE TAKE ROOT WHAT IS EARTH?

EARTH University is a private, international, non-profit university located in Costa Rica, dedicated to education in the field of agricultural sciences and the rational use of natural resources. Founded in 1990, EARTH University has approximately 400 students from 26 countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa. In keeping with the University's mission to contribute to the sustainable development of regions in the greatest need, 80 percent of students are granted full or partial scholarships. 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 youth of modest means.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you are inspired by what EARTH is doing, please consider contributing to EARTH's mission to create a bright and better future; your contribution will make a difference. One way to give is through our Circle of Sustainers Program, which allows you to consider planned giving options that may be right for you. For more information, please contact Liliana Salas-Grip at [lsgrid@earth-usa.org](mailto:lsgrid@earth-usa.org) or by phone at (404) 995-1243.



### RETIREMENT PLAN ASSETS

*Gifts of Retirement Plan Assets are now easier than ever! By naming EARTH as beneficiary of your IRA, 401(k) or 403(b) account, you can make a gift of those retirement assets to the University. Contributing these tax burdened assets can also benefit your heirs by reserving a larger portion of your estate for them.*

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A MEMBER OF EARTH CIRCLE  
OF SUSTAINERS TODAY.

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### March 22:

Day without Cars on EARTH  
University Campus

#### March 23–26:

Amigos Trip to Costa Rica  
(filled to capacity)

#### April 13–16:

Amigos Trip to Costa Rica  
(contact Donna Gould for more  
info: [dgould@earth-usa.org](mailto:dgould@earth-usa.org) or  
404-995-1232)