

From Endorsement to Implementation

The University for Peace, COSTA RICA

Background

The UN-affiliated University for Peace (UPEACE), with its headquarters and main campus in Costa Rica, offers seven graduate degrees in various areas of peace studies. It also has several Regional Programmes which allow the organization to be present in many parts of the world.

The overarching mission of UPEACE is to provide humanity with an international institution of higher education for peace and with the aim of promoting among all human beings the spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Given the alignment of its mission with the Earth Charter Initiative's vision and goals, UPEACE's governing council endorsed the Earth Charter in the November 2000. The Earth Charter Secretariat is located on the campus of UPEACE.

In 2003, UPEACE and the Earth Charter Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) aiming for the institutions to have closer ties and for the Earth Charter to be implemented into the programmes of UPEACE. Since then, UPEACE's academic programmes have developed extremely rapidly, and in 2005 it counted with over 100 graduate students from more than 40 countries.

Aim

The overall aim is for UPEACE to use the Earth Charter as an educational tool, using it in the development of its courses, curriculum materials and activities.



Beautiful Upeace Campus

Participants

The key participants are the students, faculty and administration of the UPEACE system. The Earth Charter Secretariat is also a participant, as it is located on the campus of UPEACE.

Timeframe

This effort started with UPEACE's endorsement in 2000, and gained momentum in 2003, with the signing of the MOU between the University and the Secretariat. It is ongoing in 2005, at the time this case was written.

Description

The Earth Charter has not only been incorporated into a number of UPEACE classes, but has also been used as an important framework in helping with the design of the Peace Education Master's programme which initiated in 2004. Below is a brief description of the different areas of collaboration:

a) Foundation Course

UPEACE realized that a strategic point of entry for the Earth Charter would be its 'Foundation Course', a required class for all its students. The faculty in charge of the class worked closely with the Earth Charter Secretariat to design and deliver a session in the Foundation course in 2003 and 2004. The Earth Charter was presented as a document, a process, and as a tool. The applications of the Earth Charter were examined, particularly focusing on its relevance as a document that furthers the idea and reality of a positive peace, rooted in justice and sustainability.

b) Master's in Peace Education

The Earth Charter was used as a frame of reference for the development of the Master's Degree in Peace Education aimed at training education policy makers and teacher educators. The programme pursues two intertwined goals: capacity building (leadership training) and educational reform and change in school systems toward peace-building education. The preamble of the Earth Charter was used to articulate the learning goals of the programme and the Earth Charter was used as the integrating framework for the course. In 2006, the Earth Charter Secretariat will collaborate with UPEACE in teaching one-third of a 45-hr. course titled, '*Education for Sustainable Development*'.



In class

c) Course on Sustainable Development

In 2005, UPEACE will be offering a 2-week course titled 'Sustainable Development' which is part of the Master's in International Peace Studies. This course will address the fact that the relationship and interdependencies of the economic, environmental, and social justice elements of our world require new ways of thinking about things and taking action. UPEACE has invited the Earth Charter Secretariat staff to teach that course.

Funding

UPEACE grants the Earth Charter Secretariat rent-free office facilities, technical assistance with the Earth Charter website, as well administration support. This constitutes a generous in-kind support for which the Secretariat is very grateful.

Results

As a result of the collaboration between UPEACE and the Earth Charter, for the past two years, all of UPEACE's international students are introduced to the Earth Charter during the course of their programme. As future international leaders in the area of peace building, this has potentially far-reaching results.

Conclusion

UPEACE represents a model case of where endorsement led to a more in-depth process of incorporating the Earth Charter into courses and activities. In the case of the Master's in Peace Education, the Earth Charter was used to help conceptualize and develop the whole programme.

UPEACE has leveraged the fact that the Earth Charter Secretariat is on its campus. With the growing influence of the UPEACE system, the Earth Charter Secretariat values this partnership and hopes that UPEACE will continue to work closely with the Earth Charter Initiative.

Source:

- UPEACE website: www.upeace.org