



University for Peace



Department of Environment and Development 5 Year Strategic Plan 2024-2029

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Introduction

To meet the needs of students, faculty, administration, and communities served by the Department Environment & Development, the Head of Department & faculty has developed the following list of goals, objectives, and strategies. The strategic plan describes key actions that serve as a roadmap as we navigate the ever-changing landscape of fundamental research and education.

Mission

To promote critical thinking and social/environmental justice in all learning and research and to translate this education into equitable and just environment and development actions in Costa Rica and internationally.

Values

- **Ethical Practice:** Ensure relational ethics of care, respect and reciprocity in course activities involving outside communities and institutions and student/faculty research.
- **Critical Thinking:** Mainstream critical thinking in all teaching, learning and research spaces.
- **Cross-cultural Communication and Empathy:** Mainstream cross-cultural communication techniques and practices and empathy in teaching and learning spaces.
- **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI):** Mainstream DEI in course content, research and in learning spaces.
- **Accountability:** Ensure relational accountability to colleagues, peers both in the University and in our collaborative partnerships

Established by the General Assembly of the United Nations

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Strategic Objectives 2024-2029

| Objective | Action | Goal | Completion Date |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| Systematize research and extensión lines | Analyze faculty research and organize them based on research lines, programmes, and projects. Analyze faculty extension work and organize them into a document. | Create a document that summarized faculty research lines. Create a document that summarizes faculty outreach projects. | 2024 |
| Evaluate areas requiring strengthening in the resident faculty and support staff | Identify resident faculty expertise that requires strengthening. Identify academic support staff expertise that requires strengthening. | Hire one new resident faculty working in a field currently lacking in resident staff. Hire an accreditation officer to support Master's programme accreditation. | 2025 2024 |
| Evaluate student needs and degree satisfaction upon entry and exit to the programmes | Create an entry and exit survey for students in all Master's programmes. | Complete exit and entry survey for students. Analyze data on a yearly basis for programme improvement | 2024-2029 |
| Analyze the skill training needs of students beyond the core Master's | Interview employers every 3 years to determine key skills sets. Required in the field of environment & development. Develop a yearly workshop on one key skill for student training. | Compile data from employer interviews. Based on said data, conduct a yearly workshop on skills training. Provide certificates for workshop. | 2026 |

Strategic Objectives 2024-2029

| Objective | Action | Goal | Completion Date |
|--|---|---|---|
| Analyze options for additional economic incomes for the department (beyond regular student enrolment) | Investigate grant programmes relevant to faculty research. Evaluate potential collaborations for study abroad programmes. Develop a certificate programme based on DED programme content. | Faculty (individually or collaboratively) will apply for one research grant per academic year. Strengthen existing study abroad and dual Master programmes (e.g., NRSD) and increase the options for study abroad (e.g., University of Saskatchewan). At least one certificate programme in the department. | 2024-2029 |
| Increase partnerships in Costa Rica to support student learning, student graduation projects, and faculty teaching/research | Compile a list of Costa Rican organizations that have collaborate with our program and tht can support classroom instruction, field trips, and student research and/or graduation projects. | Establish a database of Costa Rican organizations who can participate in DED courses and who can collaborate on student graduation project | 2025-2027 |
| Increase admission of underrepresented student populations, particularly local Costa Rican students | Create a timeline of DED marketing events that target local students. | Conduct a planning meeting in June or July for the next academic year. Organize an on-campus weekend activity to showcase DED's programs. Host at least two virtual events per year to promote DED programs. | 2024-2029 2025 2025-2029 |

Selected Foundational Achievements (2018- 2023)

Administration

- Hired an Academic Support Officer with training in this Educational Administration.
- Created multiple policies for department processes (DED grading guidelines, evaluation rubrics, field trip guidelines).
- Set up an internship database for student graduation projects.
- Set up an online survey for course registration.
- Created a graduation project file for systematization of projects.
- Created deadlines for syllabi submission by professors (2 months before course starts).
- Standardized emails for professor invitation.
- Systematization of syllabi formatting.

Academic

- Set up a partnership with University of Saskatchewan for student exchange and joint research among UPEACE and University of Saskatchewan (2022 MOU signed).
- Increased diversity of EDP invited profs and guest speakers (by ethnicity, race, gender, and geographic location).
- Created Indigenous taught Environmental course "Indigenous Perspectives on Environment & Development".
- Mainstreamed Justice in EDP in multiple courses (Climate Justice, Energy Justice, and Gender, Environment & Development).
- Created a gender course 'Gender, Environment & Development' that is mandatory across all Master's programmes (2001).
- Certificates created for current Master's students and alumni (i.e., Gender & Intersectionality Terminology Certificate and Energy Transitions certificate; 2023).
- Acquired funding for teaching assistants for classes with over 25 students.
- Skill surveys done to align class content/skills with students' professional needs (all programmes).
- SINAES Reaccreditation 2019.
- Conferences organized by DED faculty on campus with local and state organizations (e.g., Ministry of Agriculture, PROCOMER, Local NGOs such as Rinconcito Orgánico).
- Created a new Master's of Science called Ecology & Society Masters (2022).
- Skill building courses added to all Master's programmes (e.g., Ecology Research Methods, Statistics, Application of Development Frameworks, Project Management).
- Increased the research grants applied for; successful grants from 2018 to present: a) UK government (Dr Sylvester) b) Netherlands Government (Dr. Sylvester along with Dr. Cuadrado-Quesada from IHE-Delft, Netherlands and FRESNAPP), Canadian Embassy CFLI (with Chietón Morén and Ali Garcia from UCR, Costa Rica), Canadian Embassy small donation (Dr. Sylvester), IHE-Delft Water & Development Partnership Programme.

Selected Foundational Achievements (2018- 2023)

Outreach and Other

- Social events created to open and close the academic year (2020 present).
- UPEACE organic garden volunteer group created for faculty and student volunteering/research (2018-present).
- Formalized Huetar Indigenous collaboration for outreach (2022).
- Research Practicum and Longo Mai community outreach established with American University and the Norwegian Lifesciences University (NMBU) 2019-2023.
- Volunteer programme with the Costa Rican food bank established (2021).