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The GUPES Green Gown Awards Winners Announced

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Rewarding universities across the world that are leading the way in sustainability

Universities across the world were watching in anticipation as the winners of the GUPES Green Gown Awards were announced at the Awards Ceremony at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston, USA.

Universities from 5 global regions went head to head to become the inaugural GUPES Green Gown Awards winners. Entries were wide ranging from solar dancing flowers to fog catchers to protecting Nemo to aboriginal engagement and so much more!

The Asia and the Pacific Winner, **Fiji National University**, won for their community engagement project in Ba (Viti Levu) Fiji Islands which shows climate change adaptation can be made simple and effective to enhance community resilience. On their achievement, Professor Nigel Healey, Vice-Chancellor/Principal says, *“We are very honored to receive this GUPES Green Gown Award, as this will propel us towards quality international recognition. This will demonstrate that resilience can be achieved through simple practical measures that don’t require large external funding. Sustainability is derived from bottom-up practical means of adaptation, thus creating shared interest and mutual interconnectedness, emphasizing traditional knowledge and strengthening institutional research and development endeavors in Small Islands Developing States.”*

The Latin America and the Caribbean Winner, **Universidad San Francisco de Quito**, won for their community engagement project in Ecuador using Human-Centered Design. Fog catchers were implemented within the community to increase water available for agricultural purposes in an indigenous Andean community, whilst in the Galapagos water quality has been improved by a cleaning and filtration system. Both projects are now microenterprises within their relevant community to ensure their long-term sustainability. On their achievement, Carlos Montúfar, Rector, says, *“USFQ are honored to receive the GUPES Green Gown Award. We are inspired to use social innovation to strengthen our community engagement as well as encourage freedom of thought and education.”*

The Europe Winner, **Chalmers University of Technology**, won for their student engagement project Challenge Lab where students learn to explore, define and act upon global challenges that will transform the way we live together on this planet. Challenge Lab acknowledges, equips and empowers students to have a transformative impact on society. On their achievement, John Holmberg, Vice President, says, *“From the university’s standpoint we will gain recognition that verifies that we are on the right track in our work to bring transformative change being a long-term actor in society.”*

The North America Winner, **University of British Columbia**, won for their student engagement project SEEDS Sustainability Program which has engaged over 6,000 students and staff resulting in over 1,200 publically accessible research reports. Projects range from food gardens to a \$1 million revolving fund that provides loans for energy and water saving projects to public realm installations to highlight political refugees. On their achievement, Michael White, Associate Vice-President, says, *“Winning the GUPES Green Gown Award helps demonstrate UBC’s ongoing commitment and leadership in sustainability by spotlighting our SEEDS program on a global scale. This is a humbling recognition which will only strengthen our commitment to continue sharing our model and building partnerships with other institutions around the world.”*

The GUPES Green Gown Awards is a joint initiative supported by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) that expands the Green Gown Awards further across the globe with an emphasis on recognising and sharing successes for sustainability. This exciting partnership with the Global Universities Partnership on Environment and Sustainability (GUPES) will position universities and colleges as leaders in sustainability as well as enabling them to continue their learning from global leaders. The GUPES Green Gown Awards were open to GUPES Members across 6 regions (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and West Asia). The GUPES Green Gown Award Winner from each of the regions will automatically be entered into the International Green Gown Awards contest.

Monika MacDevette from the United Nations Environment Programme explains that, *“Universities are a rich source of innovation, commitment and passion for a sustainable future of people and planet in harmony. The GUPES Green Gown Awards showcase this and provide a source of inspiration and can-do spirit that the UN Environment Programme applauds and celebrates.”*

The education sector is a critical player in ensuring that future generations are equipped with the skills and experience required to provide a sustainable future. The GUPES Green Gown Awards celebrate those that are taking the bold steps necessary to develop resilience and adaptability and to showcase the education sector’s contribution to society.

Iain Patton, CEO, EAUC said,

“All around the world universities are beacons of hope for a more sustainable future. The GUPES Green Gown Awards recognise and celebrate the powerful contribution of university staff and students and most importantly let us learn and benefit from their excellence”.

The Awards help to achieve the United Nations Environment Assembly Resolution “investing in human capacity for sustainable development through environmental education and training”, the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the outcome document from Rio+20 Summit – The Future We Want.

RESULTS

Africa: **Continuous Improvement: Institutional Change**

- Strathmore University, Kenya – Highly Commended

Asia and the Pacific: **Community Engagement**

- Aklan State University, Philippines – Finalist
- De La Salle University, Philippines – Highly Commended
- Fiji National University, Fiji – Winner
- Xavier University, Philippines – Finalist

Europe: **Student Engagement**

- Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy – Highly Commended
- Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden – Winner

Latin America and the Caribbean: **Community Engagement**

- Red Costarricense de Instituciones Educativas Sostenibles (REDIES), Costa Rica – Highly Commended
- Universidad Nacional del Centro del Peru, Peru – Finalist
- Universidad del Norte, Colombia – Highly Commended
- Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador – Winner
- Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola, Peru – Finalists

North America: **Student Engagement**

- McGill University, Canada – Highly Commended
- University of British Columbia, Canada – Winner

Further details, videos and case studies on the GUPES Green Gown Awards winners and finalists can be found at http://www.unep.org/training/programmes/GUPES_Green_Gown_Awards_2016.asp and at <http://www.greengownawards.org/gupes-green-gown-awards>

The GUPES Green Gown Awards and the International Green Gown Awards are administered by the [Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges \(EAUC\)](#).

Contact: Green Gown Awards Team: greengown@eauc.org.uk