Update for Fidinam International Charity Foundation
September 2026

EARTH University is deeply grateful for the generosity and support of Fidinam International Charity Foundation, and we are pleased to submit this update on the impact of your grants. The first section will focus on your scholarship support of two African students in their third year of studies, and the second section will focus on your grant to build our institutional Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning capacity.

Scholarships

Fidinam Foundation's two scholarship students, Ellen Mensah of Ghana and Fogwe Prosper of Cameroon, continue to flourish at EARTH, taking full advantage of the life-changing education that your grant has made possible. They have both completed the first two trimesters of their third year, and like all of their third-year classmates this fall are starting an international internship that will last until early December. Both Ellen and Prosper secured internships in the United States, often the most sought-after and competitive placements for EARTH students! They continue to do well in their academic classes, and this update will focus on their achievements and progress outside the classroom – at internships and in community work near campus.

Prosper is doing an agricultural research internship at Everglades Research and Education Center in Florida**,** with a professor and the research team. His work will focus on lettuce breeding, particularly genetic research aimed at developing lettuce varieties with greater resistance to environmental and production challenges. Part of the internship is to lead his own small research project, and he is excited about the opportunity to move beyond classroom learning and gain firsthand experience in how agricultural research is designed, conducted, and analyzed from start to finish. He sees this experience as an important building block for his long-term goal of contributing to the development of climate-resilient seeds and crop varieties that can help

farmers maintain reliable food production when environmental conditions become unpredictable in Cameroon and other regions facing similar challenges.

Before leaving for his internship, Prosper continued his high academic performance in classes, and also participated in two meaningful community projects. In one, he worked with a local organization the breeding and production of black soldier flies for animal feed, learning how biological processes can be applied to develop more sustainable alternatives for livestock production and waste management. He also worked at a community primary school, where he taught and encouraged children to become more interested in agriculture. They developed small agricultural projects at the school and used practical activities to help the students see agriculture as something they could understand, enjoy, and potentially pursue in the future.



When asked about how his EARTH experience has changed him, Prosper reports, “My leadership skills have improved significantly. I am also much more confident in pitching ideas, communicating with others, and presenting in front of an audience. These are skills I have developed through student leadership, projects, presentations, and the different opportunities I have been given at the university. I have also grown considerably in business. Through my coursework and practical experience, I have learned more about business analysis, developing and improving business ideas, understanding customers, and thinking about how a business can become financially sustainable. Most importantly, I have become more comfortable taking an idea and turning it into something practical.”

Prosper shared gratitude in his own words:

> *Every day, I can see myself becoming a little better than I was before. The vision of the change I hope to contribute to is becoming clearer with every new experience, lesson, and opportunity. I am deeply grateful to you for believing in me and for investing in my education and my future. There are honestly not enough words to express how much this opportunity means to me. The experiences I am gaining because of your support are shaping not only the professional I hope to become, but also the person I am becoming.*
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> *I do not take this opportunity for granted. I am committed to learning as much as I can, making the most of every opportunity I receive, and eventually using what I learn to create meaningful change in the communities I come from. Thank you for believing in me, supporting me, and giving me the opportunity to grow. I am truly grateful.*

Ellen's internship is at Kalsec, a Michigan-based international company that uses innovative ingredients to create natural high-quality taste, color, and food protection products for the food and beverage industry. She is working in their sustainability department, focusing on waste management and mapping, employee safety, and intercultural relations. In her community project before leaving campus, she worked with a local municipal office on proposals for a community garden for the aged, learning how to work in a professional government setting. As for her development focus, she reports: "This year I have worked so hard on my public speaking by putting myself in situations that needed it. I worked in the church as the liturgist for a whole trimester to work on my speech and Spanish, then used that confidence and ability to present my business project in the closing summit. I learnt that with practice, everything becomes better."

Ellen also made the semi-final stage for the Sustainability Prize, with a business idea based on sustainable cocoa farming in Ghana. It is called Chocovida, which means "bring life to the production of cocoa", and she and her friend and business partner have already started applying to different seed fund programs to get the capital necessary to launch the business. Says Ellen, "I believe Chocovida is my future, and I will work relentlessly towards it."



To close with some words of gratitude from Ellen herself:

> *I want to say a very big thank you to the Fidinam Foundation because I know that without your support I would not have had all these experiences, opportunities and skills that I have today. I really appreciate all you do for your scholars. I am leaving for the U.S soon for a whole new point of view. I can't wait to update you on my internship experience.*

Prosper and Ellen are both on track to graduate on time in December 2027. Fidinam Foundation is invited to join us on campus in Costa Rica or via livestream to share in this celebration of the learning, achievement, and future careers of impact that your generous support has enabled.

Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning

Over the last two years, EARTH and Fidinam Foundation have discussed the development of a research agenda that would help EARTH better understand and share key aspects of success within our educational model. We realized that we lacked the staffing needed to gather, prepare, and analyze diverse sources of data – a key capacity prerequisite for this research agenda and for other critical work to assess and improve our effectiveness as an institution. Last fall we requested Fidinam Foundation's assistance in funding the salary for a new full-time Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Specialist in the Academic Program to address this limitation, and are deeply grateful that with your support we were able to hire Ana Arreaga in late 2025 to support this work.

Ana and the team designed an instrument and process to assess MEL capacity and map data and systems across the University, beginning with the Academic Program. The instrument draws on international best practices and is tailored to EARTH's context and needs. This work lays the groundwork for EARTH to more rigorously measure, learn from, and communicate its impact, and strengthens our capacity to support future evaluation and research by clarifying what data each area generates, its quality, the systems where it lives, and what needs to be improved. Through interviews and direct document and process reviews, Ana's work across the roughly 20 units of the Academic Program covered a comprehensive evaluation instrument with ten dimensions, including planning, data management, and team resources, and has helped us to honestly and objectively assess our starting point and map the steps and process toward our ideal state:

- Data- and evidence-based processes and decisions across all units
- Dedicated institutional structures and coordination for strategic projects
- An integrated digital ecosystem including common data, platforms and protocols
- A continuous cycle of evaluation, reflection and improvement as an institutional rhythm
- A culture of collaboration and learning including dialogue and professional development

Fidinam's early support has had a profound impact, funding this work at a stage when it was still largely an idea: a planning process to build a strategic learning and evaluation system for EARTH as a whole, rather than continuing project by project and through isolated studies. The studies we discussed with you then are now being situated within a clear institutional plan, with priorities and sequencing. We now have a diagnostic giving us baseline data across the university, evaluation plans and IT systems under construction,

and significant additional funding from the Mastercard Foundation to build out the capacity Fidinam helped us launch.

We deeply appreciate your helping EARTH solidify the foundation for a compelling, robust learning and research system capable of amplifying and sharing EARTH's transformative model that prepares global food systems leaders. We look forward to keeping up updated on the progress and impact of this work in the coming year.