



**Request for Expressions of Interest from
U.S. Universities for Ph.D. Degree Training
of Students from Liberia
Academic Year 2015-2016**

Background

The Borlaug Higher Education for Agricultural Research and Development (BHEARD) program is funded by USAID through CIMMYT and administered by Michigan State University in collaboration with the Bureau for Food Security. The goal of the BHEARD program is to build capacity of host country agricultural research institutions by providing M.S. and Ph.D. degree and short-term training opportunities to their staff members. Inclusion of qualified women candidates is especially encouraged. The current set of participating countries includes Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Rwanda, and potentially Mozambique and Uganda. These candidates join continuing trainees from Cambodia, Mali, and South Sudan.

After a thorough application review and selection process involving interviews of candidates, the USAID-Liberia mission has recommended eight potential candidates from Liberia for Ph.D. degree training at U.S. universities. Funding to support these Ph.D. candidates is available through the BHEARD program, for training programs to begin in Fall 2015. These candidates were selected from institutions which met the BHEARD program criteria; **a list of selected candidates and their areas of interest for graduate study is provided in Annex A.**

Copies of the students' transcripts, statements of purpose, CVs and other documents are available for download through a link to GoogleDrive:

<https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B7jlvGW0sasER0pBZjBPS3FrQXc&usp=sharing>

While all candidates have taken the TOEFL test, scores are not currently available. In addition, the GRE is not offered in Liberia, and travel is not currently allowed to neighboring countries who might offer the exam. We hope TOEFL scores will be available in March, but universities should consider if students can be admitted without these scores. No funding is available for English language training in the U.S., so only students receiving regular admission will be considered for the scholarship.

Program Description

The Borlaug Higher Education for Agricultural Research and Development (BHEARD) program, managed by Michigan State University invites '**Expressions of Interest**' from U.S. universities to provide Ph.D. degree training for **students from Liberia**. Candidates are employees of some of Liberia's major agricultural research institutions: Ministry of Agriculture, and Central Agricultural

Research Institute. The desired fields of study include agricultural economics, agribusiness, general area of data analysis, development of rice and cassava, fisheries, and aquaculture. For the list of candidates please see Annex A.

Degree programs should be designed with the following program parameters in mind:

1. Degrees will be awarded by a U.S. university.
2. Degree training will begin from Fall 2015. Course work and exams should be completed within three academic years, after which the candidates will return to Liberia to carry out dissertation research and write their dissertations.
3. In their academic and research programs, candidates will be mentored by a U.S. advisor; in addition to this advisor, students should identify a local consultant in Liberia to act as a mentor, such as a university faculty member or qualified researcher from Liberia.
4. The university will demonstrate flexibility in academic program requirements so as to address competency and knowledge needs as identified by the candidates' home institutions and the USAID mission for the cohort of Liberia students. The university will demonstrate innovation and flexibility by "tailoring" the degree program to meet the requirements for capacity building in the identified thematic areas, if necessary allowing academic credit for courses from different disciplines and departments, and to allow students to complete course and exam requirements within three calendar years. Program design should also take into account constraints that may be faced by women candidates.
5. Dissertation research and write-up will be carried out in Liberia during the year following the candidate's return from the U.S. Research topics should address issues of high scientific importance, but should also be consistent with the priorities of the candidate's home institution and with the priorities of USAID's [Feed the Future](#) program.
6. Candidates will be funded once during their three-year stay in the U.S., for purposes of developing their research proposal, or implementing initial research activities. The trainee's major advisor will also be able to visit the student once in Liberia, mostly likely after completion of the U.S. training phase, to provide guidance on the conduct of the research.
7. Requirements for a final dissertation defense seminar should be completed in the home country utilizing electronic and/or tele-conferencing technology to the extent possible, obviating the need for the trainee to return to the U.S. university to defend his/her dissertation.
8. Visa processing will be done by MSU through USAID's TraiNet system. All candidates will be issued J-1 visas, which carry the obligation to fulfill a two-year home country residency period at the end of the degree program.

Cost of the Training Program

Expenses associated with the graduate education of the cohort of Liberia students, including tuition, stipend, health insurance and travel will be covered by Michigan State University under the BHEARD Grant from USAID. A limited budget is also available to support the conduct of in-country research, and the U.S. advisor should expect to seek opportunities for leveraging other funds to support the student's research. Since an objective of the BHEARD program is to keep costs low so as to allow a larger number of trainees, U.S. universities submitting Expressions of Interest are encouraged to seek ways to limit their Ph.D. training costs, and to cost share. No minimum cost share is required, however. U.S. universities are encouraged to use BHEARD funding to provide graduate research assistantships for students, if it will reduce costs. More guidelines are provided in the instructions for budget preparation.

Request for Expressions of Interest

Who can submit "Expressions of Interest?"

Responses to this Request for Expressions of Interest are being sought from U.S. university administrators (e.g., Deans, Associate Deans, Directors, Department Chairs) and graduate program officers from Colleges of Agriculture or International Program Offices (or comparable units) which offer graduate programs in disciplines that match the areas of interest of the USAID mission and the candidates as profiled in Annex A. Expressions of Interest are especially sought from universities that have a demonstrated interest in Liberia as evidenced by professional faculty experience or collaborative projects in that country or the West Africa region.

How to submit Expressions of Interest?

U.S. universities interested in providing Ph.D. training in the identified graduate program areas for students from Liberia should complete and submit an "Expression of Interest Submission Form" to the BHEARD Associate Director via e-mail to bheard@isp.msu.edu. If a university is interested in providing Ph.D. training in multiple graduate program areas, please list each academic department on the submission form. All questions should be directed to the BHEARD Program Office at:

By e-mail: bheard@isp.msu.edu

By mail: Anne Schneller, BHEARD Co-Director
Michigan State University
446 W. Circle Drive, Room Number 213E
East Lansing, MI 48824-1039

By Phone: (517) 355-3449

By Fax: (517) 432-1800

What is the time line for submitting the Expressions of Interest and the follow-up process?

Expressions of Interest should be submitted within one month from the official announcement for Liberian proposals and budgets (TBD). The official test scores will be sent to universities expressing interest in specific candidates as soon as they are available. Universities may express interest in candidates they find academically admissible, but no funding is available for English language training in the U.S. Since the BHEARD program requires that the selected candidates come to the

U.S. and begin their Ph.D. degree programs by Fall 2015, it will be necessary to have confirmation that the students you list in your submission form are admissible to your graduate programs. This will give the students adequate time to formally apply for admission and receive an official letter of admission, obtain the USAID-sponsored J-1 visa, make travel and all necessary arrangements for their pending study in the U.S.

Selection Criteria

The selection of a U.S. university or universities in which to place Liberian BHEARD program trainees will be based on the following criteria:

1. Ability of the university or universities to offer innovative Ph.D. degree programs in accord with the academic interests of the candidate trainees and the priorities of the USAID mission to Bangladesh.
2. Ability of the university to meet the program parameters outlined in the Program Description section above, including attention to issues of access for qualified women candidates.
3. Assurance of admission of selected qualified candidates to appropriate Ph.D. degree programs for a Fall 2015 start date.
4. Commitment and experience of the university and the potential faculty members to be engaged long-term in Liberia and to contribute to building sustainable institutions and increasing the competitiveness of the agriculture and natural resource sectors in Liberia.
5. National competitiveness of the Ph.D. degree program in terms of quality (i.e., faculty recognition, academic course offerings, etc.) and cost (i.e., registration and tuition fees, housing, etc.) compared to programs at other U.S. universities.
6. Competitiveness of budget for graduate training (e.g., tuition, stipend, residency requirement, etc.). Although not required, commitments by universities submitting Expressions of Interest to provide matching contributions to keep costs down (i.e., waiver of out-of-state tuition fees, support for faculty travel, support for research activities in Liberia, etc.) would be viewed favorably.
7. All university submissions will be reviewed by a team of technical experts from USAID. Reviewers will examine the strength of the proposed academic department, the match between the research interests of the proposed advisor and the student, and the department's/university's commitment to long-term collaboration in Liberia.
8. If multiple Expressions of Interest are received that meet the BHEARD program parameters and the above criteria for evaluation and selection, the ultimate decision on which university (or universities) will receive the training award(s) will be made by USAID with the local selection committee in Liberia, which includes representatives from the target institutions that have nominated the degree candidates.

Annex A: Liberia BHEARD Scholarship Candidates for Fall 2015 Admission

Name	Institution a/	M/F	Subject
Baysah, Nataline	CARI	F	Seed Technology
Dokpa, Meco	MoA	M	Entomology
Flomo, Deamanie	MoA	F	Agribusiness/Economic Policy
Gbokie, Thomas	MoA	M	Entomology
Johnson, Dans	CARI	M	Breeding/Crop Improvement
Kargbo, Irene Sepeya	CARI	F	Integrated Pest Management
Williams, Cheryl	MoA	F	Community Nutrition
Zolue, Moses	CARI	M	Land and Water Management

a/ CARI=Central Agricultural Research Institute; MoA=Ministry of Agriculture

Copies of the students' transcripts, statements of purpose, CVs and other documents are available for download through a link to GoogleDrive:

<https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B7jlvGW0sasER0pBZjBPS3FrQXc&usp=sharing>

**Zip files can be opened with password "20fifteen_Schol@rs".*

Annex B: Description of Liberia Educational System

The following document, from World Education Services (WES: http://www.wes.org/wes_tools/index.asp), provides excellent information on the education and grading system of Bangladesh.

WES Resources

- [WES Country Profile](#)
- [WES Grade Conversions](#)
- [Education Systems](#)
- [Document Requirements](#)
- [Document Verification](#)
- [Ministries of Education](#)
- [WENR](#)
- [University Rankings](#)
- [WES Education Links](#)



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INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION INTELLIGENCE

Ghana

Grading Scale

Degree Classification	U.S. Grade Equiv.
First Class Honours	A
Second Class Honours, Upper Division	A-/B+
Second Class Honours, Lower Division	B
Pass	C

Country Profile

- IBE: Profile of Education: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/worldwide/unesco-regions/africa/ghana/profile-of-education.html?type=ta>

Required Documents:

[wes.org/required/index.asp](http://www.wes.org/required/index.asp)

Document Verification Procedures

[wes.org/educators/verification.asp](http://www.wes.org/educators/verification.asp)

Ministries of Education

- Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of Ghana:
<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~univghana>