

Master's Program in Sustainable Development Practice (MDP)



In June, 2009, the University of Florida received an award of approximately \$1 million from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to start up a new Masters degree in Development Practice (MDP). This is part of a global initiative designed to educate a new generation of development practitioners and MDP programs are now in place or under development at 22 universities worldwide, most of these with funding from the MacArthur Foundation. Other MDP programs in Africa are located at the University of Botswana, the Universite Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (Senegal) and the University of Ibadan (Nigeria). The MDP at UF is administered jointly through the Center for African Studies and Center for Latin American Studies.

The UF-MDP was designed by an interdisciplinary group of faculty from seven different colleges across campus. The 51-credit, five semester (including summer) MDP curriculum spans the social, natural, and health sciences and includes interdisciplinary management skills that will enable students coming out of the program to be much better prepared to deal with the complex array of contemporary development challenges. Coursework includes a Global Classroom in which MDP students from around the world participate and discuss development topics ranging from sustainable energy to food security to climate change to project management and foreign aid. This course is coordinated by the Earth Institute at Columbia University which

also serves as the Secretariat for the global MDP network. In addition, MDP students at UF also take courses in Health and Development, Economics, Ecological Principles for Development Professionals, Natural Resource Management and Innovation Systems, Communication and Leadership Skills, Conservation and Development Entrepreneurship, and Development Administration.

The MDP degree bridges scholarship and practice and includes a three month summer practicum which can be carried out in Africa or Latin America. One option is the field school in Botswana which is comprised of seven weeks in the field followed by an attachment where students work with communities or local partners on a specific development project. This field school is a collaboration with the MDP program at the University of Botswana and the Okavango Research Center (ORC)

The first cohort of 11 MDP students began this Fall (2010) and is comprised of two Africans, a Colombian/American and eight Americans. Four of these students completed their undergraduate degree at UF and the cohort as a whole has diverse academic backgrounds, including agriculture, history, international relations, environmental education, sociology and psychology, and community sciences. The first two MDP scholarships were awarded to Greyson Nyamoga from Tanzania and Tshubangu (“Tshi Tshi”) Kalala from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Greyson is a lecturer at the Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania and has also worked for the Tanzanian

government and as a loan officer for FINCA in Tanzania. Tshi Tshi has worked as a consultant, researcher and volunteer for several different organizations in war-torn areas of the DRC, including the World Food Program, Heal Africa, Doctors without Borders, and International Crisis Group.

Currently the Program is co-directed by Brian Child (Geography/African Studies) and Grenville Barnes (SFRC) with Marianne Schmink (Latin American Studies) as graduate coordinator. Program coordinator, Sheila Onzere, was hired in October 2009 and the first of two new faculty positions was filled by Rick Rheingans in July, 2010. Sheila is completing a PhD at Iowa State in sustainable food systems and Rick is a specialist in health and development and was previously an Associate Professor at Emory University. We are in the process of searching for the second MDP faculty position in development administration and expect to hire the successful candidate by July, 2011.

For more details on the MDP see <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/mdp/index.html>