

**LUANAR Innovation Scholars Program
Concept Note
11 December 2015
[Rev 25 Mar 2016]**

Developed by:

LUANAR Design Team

MSU GCSFI HICD Team



1. Background

Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and Michigan State University's Global Center for Food Systems Innovation (GCFSI) are working together to advance LUANAR toward the goals as outlined in LUANAR's Strategic Plan. The LUANAR Innovation Scholars Program (ISP), which is outlined in this concept note, is one of the key activities to be carried out by the Innovation Hub at LUANAR. The Innovation Hub will function as a key center where LUANAR academic personnel can work as interdisciplinary teams to solve food system problems that are relevant to the food system in Malawi.

Process of co-designing with LUANAR & GCFSI teams: GCFSI and LUANAR held two in-person, week-long meetings to jointly define the goals, structure, and outcomes for the LUANAR Innovation Scholars. The Programme Coordinating Office identified a group of faculty, referred to as the LUANAR Design Team, to work in tandem with the GCFSI team.

In the first session 7-11 December 2015 GCFSI utilized design-thinking methodology to gather input from LUANAR academic personnel on aspects of the LUANAR Innovation Scholars program. The working groups provided input on the concept of innovation and the structure of the innovations scholars year, processes for selecting fellows, contours and content of individual sessions, incentives for participation, outcomes and indicators, sustainability within the life and structure of LUANAR, and personnel to be trained to implement the program.

In the second session 23-25 February 2016 the GCFSI team facilitated sessions with the Design Team in order to revise and approve a workplan and generate program documents. Three working groups were formed: Application Group, Selection Committee Group, and Events Group. These three working groups generated 14 documents that were presented to and approved by the LUANAR Management Team on 26 February 2016.

This concept note synthesizes the input of these meetings and the vision that LUANAR academic personnel have for their own Innovation Scholars Program.

2. Core Concept

The Innovation Scholars Program (ISP), an innovative, 12-month faculty development program, will serve as a catalyst to advance the overarching objective of LUANAR's Innovation Hub to *support food system innovation that supports food security*, and develop the current and next generation of entrepreneurial scientists in Malawi and the region. The program is modeled after MSU's [Academy for Global Engagement](#)—a successful, field-tested faculty development program—yet targeted for innovation and contextual challenges. The core values include the following: *participatory, asset-based, learner-centered, contextualized, and evaluative*. As a result of the co-design process it was decided to add to the design of the program an academic leaders track that is intended to develop the type of institutional environment that would allow for the innovation culture to thrive and thus support the intended outcomes of the innovation scholars program.

3. Justification

The Innovation Scholars Program proposes to produce innovative scholars, which begs the question, what is scholarly innovation? Generally, innovation is the juxtaposition or remixing of old and new ideas to create a better process, product, service, or situation. Scholarly innovation, then, would be the juxtaposition or remixing of old and new academic methods, philosophies, personnel, and contexts to create better ways of teaching, learning, researching, and serving that result in better processes, products, services, or situations. Innovative scholarship differs from other research in that it is intentionally transformative, intending to address human need or advance human systems.

It addresses national problems by creating breakthrough outputs in the form of new process and products that have measurable impact on human systems. These require certain knowledge, skills and attitudes. Innovative scholars need deep scientific understanding of their discipline but also a deep understanding of the innovation process and a deep understanding of the context to which innovation will be applied.

Innovation scholars understand the process of human advance. They have a deep understanding of how ideas become catalysts for change. For that reason, innovation scholars must possess certain skills, such as the ability to map challenges in stakeholder contexts, excellence in research and communication, as well as the ability to move ideas into practical applications that can change systems, whether they be social, natural, or technological. These skills must be accompanied by an attitude that is creative, open-minded, collaborative, passionate, accommodative, motivated, and willing to take risks. In many academic circles these attributes must be cultivated. The Innovation Scholars Program is designed specifically to cultivate these attributes.

Finally because programs are only as effective as the institutions that house them, it is incumbent upon the program to pursue an institutional environment that will be supportive of and conducive to the intended goals of the program. For that reason, after consultation with our institutional partners at LUANAR, it was decided to add an academic leaders track to the program in order to lay the groundwork for developing an institutional culture that understands the importance of and supports innovation in research.

4. Objective

The objective of the LUANAR Innovation Scholars program is to equip LUANAR academic and upper administrative personnel with the knowledge, skills, and qualities required to advance LUANAR towards their institutional Strategic Goals.

Faculty scholars will be able to:

- (i) implement new and innovative processes for facilitating student learning
- (ii) design, develop and conduct high quality innovative research that can address current food system challenges
- (iii) improve engagement with the private and public sector
- (iv) communicate the nature and importance of their scientific work to diverse audiences

Academic Leaders will be able to:

- (i) understand the nature of innovation and the research around institutionally conducive practices for innovation
- (ii) identify institutional barriers to innovation in teaching, research, and outreach
- (iii) develop innovation research management knowledge and skills such as:
 - a. Planning, design and organization of agricultural innovation research
 - b. Human resource management and incentive structures to reward innovation research
 - c. Research-extension-farmer linkages
 - d. Public-private partnerships
 - e. Intellectual property management, technology transfer, and commercialization
- (iv) develop recommendations to facilitate organizational change within LUANAR their specific sections toward an institutional culture of innovation
- (v) develop an institutional plan for the sustainability of the innovation scholars program.

This objective will be attained via individual food system challenges, short term training and experiential learning activities. Each element of the LUANAR Innovation Scholars and Academic Leaders program will be tied directly to supporting the goals for specific Strategic Plan Pillars.

The LUANAR Innovation Scholar Program has two tracks:

- Faculty Track
- Academic Leaders Track

Both tracks will be comprised of similar themes and contents, follow the same schedule, and require an application and selection process (described below). However, the focus and application of the two tracks are distinct, as follows:

	Faculty Track	Academic Leadership Track
Focus	The individual faculty member	The institution or parts of the institution
Level of Change	Individual	Institutional
Areas of Change	Research design, teaching, community engagement, communication, student engagement	Planning, policies, practices, rules, regulations, incentives, assessment, institutional culture
Type of Innovation the Scholar will propose in the application statement and advance through the year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An innovation in research, teaching, or outreach and its potential contribution to Malawi food system • How the proposed innovative project will advance the mission and goals of their academic department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An institutional innovation that will increase support for innovative research, teaching, and outreach at LUANAR and its potential contribution to LUANAR strategic plan • How the candidate's proposed innovative project will advance the mission and goals of the administrative section, be supported by the university management, and benefit LUANAR

For further description of the distinctions between the tracks, see the document “Comparison Faculty-Leadership Tracks.”

5. Eligibility

For Faculty:

- Full-time LUANAR faculty member

- No less than 5 years before retirement
- Applicants should have a Masters or PhD degree.
- Ideally, applicants will be considered provided there is an assurance that the applicant will be available to complete the program within the stipulated period and be available to apply the learned knowledge and skills at least within a year following completion of the Scholarship.
- Recommendation from the immediate supervisor (e.g. Head of Department or Dean)

For Academic Leaders:

- By virtue of their office all university leaders are eligible to apply; these include the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University Registrar, Assistant Registrars, Deans, Centre Directors, Director of Finance and Assistant Director of Finance.
- Applicants should have a minimum of a BSc degree
- Assurance that the candidate will be available to complete the programme within the stipulated period and be available to apply the learned knowledge and skills in their administrative position at least within a year following completion
- Recommendation from the immediate supervisor (e.g. Head of Section, UR, DVC or VC)

6. Selection of Scholars

Application materials will be reviewed by the ISP Selection Committee who will select 8-10 Faculty Scholars and 5-8 University Leader Scholars. The 2016 Innovation Scholars will be announced at the public launch of the program in June. Prior to the public launch, successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the Selection Committee's decision.

7. Program Components

a. Leadership and administrative roles:

Individual / Team	Composition	Function
MSU HICD Team	GCFSI assistant director HICD experts (human and institutional capacity development)	Facilitate ISP design and implementation in conjunction with HUB coordinator and design team
LUANAR Design Team	8-10 LUANAR faculty	Provide conceptual leadership and formative assessment throughout ISP development and implementation phases
Hub Coordinator	LUANAR faculty member or outside hire; part-time salary	In conjunction with MSU team and the LUANAR design teams, lead the implementation of ISP, coordinate logistical support for all ISP events and activities; manage finances; monitor progress toward goals
Scholar Selection Committee	Committee of 7: DVC or representative, Registrar, Chair of Deans, 1 Professor, 2 MSU representatives, 1 industry reps	Select scholars from application pool based on selection criteria

b. Possible Capacity-building activities:

- Keynote speakers from relevant sectors for on-campus, regional convening

- Short-course workshops in topics such as design-thinking for applied research, theory of change, communicating research to various audiences, proposal writing, teaching in a changing world.
- Innovative research project leading to a proposal or article by the end of program
- Experiential learning (e.g. excursions to regional Innovation Hubs or centers of excellence)
- Faculty Mentorship Program
- Short, work-based internship with relevance to research project
- Closing Symposium featuring Scholar's work
- Parallel workshops/training for academic leaders for institutions capacity development

8. Intended Outcomes

By the end of this program LUANAR...

a. **Innovation Scholars** will be able to:

- Demonstrate a deeper understanding of core knowledge areas that support innovation in agricultural systems,
- Use a toolkit of activities to generate innovative work
- Communicate the importance of their research to diverse audiences
- Adapt and incorporate innovative design-thinking in student learning

b. **Academic Leaders** will be able to:

- Explain the importance of higher education in general and LUANAR in particular in the economic development of Malawi to various kinds of audiences
- Support and incentivize faculty development
- Develop a toolkit of sustainability strategies (e.g. intellectual property policy, short-courses, consultancies, technology transfer, patents, etc)
- Use levers of change to begin shifting the paradigm of the University towards a culture of innovation

9. Limitations & Proposed solutions

- Availability of scholars. Proposed solution: workload reduction for scholars
- Diversity of Scholars. Proposed solution: establish quotas for departments and gender
- Sustainability. Proposed solution: develop a strategy for sustainability

10. Proposed Timeline

2016		
March	Awareness Meetings	Conducted by Design Team representatives to present the ISP concept to faculties and receive input
April	Open Applications	Make application material available via LUANAR website
June	Program Launch	Announce Scholars to public and Promote program opening
JUNE	Workshop #1	INNOVATIVE SCHOLARSHIP: Using Design Thinking for Innovation in African Food Systems. [June 21: Public launch. June 22-23: Workshop #1.]

SEPTEMBER	Workshop #2	INNOVATIVE ENGAGEMENT: Making Research Relevant
DECEMBER	Workshop #3	INNOVATIVE TEACHING & LEARNING: Bringing Innovation to the Classroom and Beyond
2017		
FEB	Excursion	
MAY	Workshop #4	INNOVATIVE IMPACT: Innovation for Food System Transformation
AUGUST	Closing Symposium	

Note: all dates subject to revision depending on changes to / alignment with LUANAR academic calendar

11. Support for Scholars

To facilitate the participation of faculty members selected as Innovative Scholars, the ISP will provide support for the following:

- Funding to participate in ISP events including organized workshops, symposium or participate in an internal and external learning excursions/tours in line with rules and regulations of LUANAR and USAID.
- Seed funding or grants to undertake planned activities as outlined in the expectations. The level of funding will not exceed \$5,000 and is contingent upon the submission of an approved budget. The seed funding is to advance an innovative idea thru the cycles/stages of design thinking process that will culminate in a proposal for further external funding.
- For the Academic Leader Track seed funding will be available to undertake a group project. The collective level of funding will not exceed \$5,000 and is contingent upon the submission of an approved budget.
- Upon successful completion of the program, Scholars will receive a written letter of recognition as an Innovator Scholar of the LUANAR-Michigan State University Partnership, co-signed by the LUANAR VC and by MSU Global Center for Food Systems Innovation Director.

12. Next Steps (as of 25 March 2016)

- March
 - Identify LUANAR Innovation Hub Coordinator
 - Revise ISP documents with MT input
 - Plan and host on campus Awareness Mtg
 - Approval of Program Document & Budget
- April
 - Plan and publicize opening of ISP application process
 - Need IT support for web materials
- April - June
 - Plan and host orientation session for applicants
 - Coordinate selection process

- Invite and convene Selection Committee who will select scholars
 - Identify and invite workshop presenters
 - Plan logistics for workshops
- June
 - Plan and host ISP launch public event
 - Need Public Relations support
 - Conduct Workshop #1: Design Thinking for Innovation