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“The role of dialogue and networking:  
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**Responding to the Challenge of Environmental Sustainability:  
the Case of the Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University,  
Philippines**

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**Abstract**

Environmental quality in the Philippines is fast deteriorating as dramatized by the increased incidence of environmental disasters, problems associated with mine tailings, deforestation, pollution, salt water intrusion and a host of other destructive activities.

The unabated degradation of the quality of Philippine environment has prompted concerned agencies and institutions to respond by adopting policies and actions along environmental education and awareness. This has necessitated present moves to systematize the teaching of sustainable development in higher education and advanced education curriculum.

No less than the Deutsche Gessellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) which recognized the relevance of higher education institutions in researching environmental risks, methods of appropriate environmental protection, forms of sustainable agricultural and industrial management; in providing consultancy to policymakers, public authorities and enterprises in effective environmental protection; in the continuing education of economic actors; and in informing the population.

In the Philippines, one of the 108 state higher education institutions that is very concerned in environmental education is the Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU). Its Agroforestry Program was recorded by the International Center for Research in Agroforestry-SEANAFE as the first institution in the entire world to recognize the need for middle and high-level manpower and the generation of technologies in agroforestry.

Higher education institutions, such as DMMMSU, play a crucial role in bringing about greater understanding and appreciation of the multi-faceted character of environmental issues. They have the capacity to realize an environmentally literate citizenry imbued with a sense of responsibility to care, protect, and enhance environmental quality that is conducive to their well-being and supportive of the nation's economic development.

It is the objective of this paper to ventilate the role of DMMMSU, being a pro-active advocate of sustainable development, in preparing leaders and citizens to have ample background knowledge of ecology, environmental sciences and the dynamic interaction between nature and human systems. It also describes how this University, which was adjudged last July 2002 as the best performing forestry school in the Philippines, has been responding to the challenge of environmental sustainability through its agroforestry programs in instruction, research, and extension.

**Keywords:** Agroforestry, Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University, environmental education, environmental sustainability, Philippine environment, sustainable development