

Who are Global Environmental Leaders?

Who are Global Environmental Leaders? There is much discussion taking place about this question, and there might be a variety of views about: who global environmental leaders are; what knowledge and skills they must acquire; and what students must learn to be global environmental leaders. The following is a hint for you to consider upon starting your study in NUGELP.

Global Environmental Leaders are professionals who take a leading role in decision-making, and enforcement and implementation of measures for the sustainable development of the human society at local, national, and global scales through environmental improvement. What then are the important elements of Global Environmental Leaders?

Global perspective and experience

In order to become environmental experts, or what we call global “environmental leaders”, you definitely need to have a global perspective based on experience as well as learning of special knowledge and skills. Environmental issues should be solved not by one country nor by a single entity but through cooperation and partnership of the global society.

Understanding of diverse cultures and values

Cultures and values, which have great influence on people’s attitudes and decisions toward environmental issues, are diverse around the world. It is almost impossible to get familiar with all cultures and values, but it is important to try as much as possible to understand and appreciate different worlds.

Involvement in international discussion and decision-making

How many languages do you speak? How many international friends and colleagues do you have? Communication skills are key to working for the interests of the global society using your expertise. Being able to express your ideas in English is essential but is just a starting line for this target. How you effectively work with people with different backgrounds, how you present your ideas and proposals and discuss with others, and how you lead decision-making processes are the essential parts of your role as global environmental leaders.

Is only working overseas global?

Working in foreign countries or international organizations is not the only way to be “global”. Working in local and national governments, private companies, and local NGOs, and communicating with different people with different views and interests are also

essential in contributing to the global society.

Environmental systems of the Earth

Whatever your academic background in the undergraduate program is, you should first understand basic mechanisms of the Earth as an environmental expert: what the governing rules and principles of the Earth (and the Universe) are; how the climatic systems work; how ecological services and biodiversity are provided; and how the Earth functions as a system.

Sustainability of natural and human environment

When we consider solutions toward sustainability and development, we always should consider the balance of the nature (“ecology”) and human activities (“economy”). Neither of the two can be missed.

Understanding the environment from diverse viewpoints

Related to the prior point, environmental issues cover very broad and diverse aspects including natural resource conservation and management, economic growth, population, urbanization, public health and sanitation, quality of life, food security, natural disaster and vulnerability, and education. You should therefore understand and consider from multiple viewpoints depending on the issues you tackle.

Leadership based on scientific knowledge and practical experience

What leaders think, speak, and behave should be always supported by profound knowledge and experience. Having abundant knowledge only on science or technology would not complete you as a leader, and the same applies to knowledge on policy. Deep insight and wisdom supported by practical experience is also demanded.

Philosophies, passion and actions

Knowledge is not the only requisite to be a leader. You need to take actions to exert good influence upon people and motivate them to do something for the environment. Fair and balanced philosophies, enthusiasm and passion (not too hot) behind compelling actions are very important for leaders to contribute to societies.

Communication and group leading skills

Even though you have become a knowledgeable person with good scientific knowledge and passion and tried to take some actions, you may not be able to accomplish them only by yourself without collaborating with and being supported from your colleagues and like-minded fellows. What makes you a leader, therefore, is up to your effort to develop good relationships with people around you and lead them toward socially meaningful goals in an effective manner.

Leaders are not almighty

You might feel you would become great and almighty enough if you achieve the above accomplishments. Don't worry. There is no final goal for a leader. There are always what you know and you do not, and things you can do and you could not. Knowing this is another essential element to be a leader. This is not your limitation, but your possibility to find out solutions.

T-shaped structure of knowledge and experience

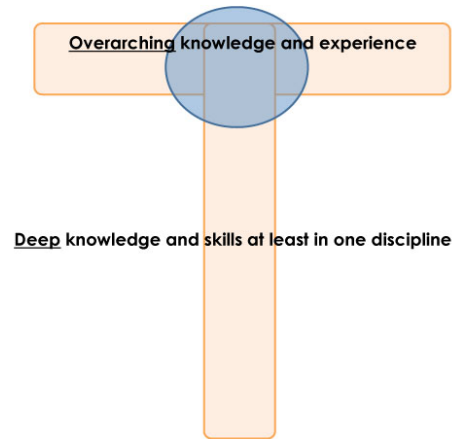
The knowledge and experience demanded for a global environmental leader can be compared to a “T-shaped column and beam structure”.

Vertical Block (or Column)

Deep knowledge and skills on one academic discipline. You must be an expert in at least one academic field.

Horizontal Block (or Beam)

Ability to understand the issues from a holistic bird-eye viewpoint, grasp the macro-structure of the issues together with their details, and propose a solution to complex issues.



The beam part shows special expertise to make a bridge over different issues connecting different academic disciplines. The more stable the column is, the larger and longer the beam can be, and your knowledge and experience can be more effectively utilized for solving a wider range of problems.

You need to open your eyes and have intellectual appetite to learn many things that are not the topic in the field of your original academic background. Students whose background is engineering, for example, are encouraged to study economics and political science, and vice versa. A good balance of the column and the beam will make you a distinct leader.

You should try to establish such a T-shaped structure in yourself. You can also develop a more stable II-shaped structure exploring another study subject in addition to your original one.

Completing the two-year program is not a goal but a starting line as future leaders. Leaders should make every effort to keep themselves getting enhanced throughout their carriers.

Where will you work and how will you commit yourselves as global environmental leaders?

There are a variety of possibilities and opportunities that global environmental leaders can take as professions. These include but are not limited to:

- Policy-makers in local and national governments and international organizations,
- Business persons in domestic and international companies,
- Researchers at universities and other institutions, and
- Officers in NGOs.