



Stanford | SEED

Stanford Institute for Innovation
in Developing Economies

April 30, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to affirm that Stanford University's graduate course, Design for Extreme Affordability, meets the criteria established for the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's STARS Innovation Credit.

Design for Extreme Affordability (or Extreme as it is lovingly called by staff, faculty, and students alike) is a two-quarter, multidisciplinary, project-based course open to Stanford University students. Students, using design thinking methods and working in teams, develop products and services to serve the needs of the world's poor. To date, the course has run for eleven years with 409 students completing 100 projects in 21 countries.

As the assistant director of operations for the Stanford Institute for Innovation in Developing Economies (SEED), I have worked closely with the course and formally supported the class (and its associated Labs) from May 2013 to October 2013.

In order to achieve the challenge of designing extremely affordable products and services, students are pushed to develop innovative and sustainable solutions to meet the requirements of their users, focusing on in-articulated needs or existing market needs. The course culminates with the development of an effective product or service that can be handed back to the partner organization to implement in their market or taken forward by the students themselves.

Critical to a project's success is the design-thinking process. While "design thinking" has become a popular buzzword, it is still a very real part of what makes Extreme successful and innovative. Students gain empathy with their users and perform rapid prototyping exercises, creating an environment where students have the space to discard old ideas and move on to new and better concepts. Within the context of the two-semester class, students move through at least eight prototyping assignments, with each resulting in a design review complete with teaching team feedback.

In addition to the innovative nature of the course, the projects must serve a sustainable function. The teaching team selects projects and partner organizations that are looking to bring sustainable solutions to their organizations. Projects are scoped to allow the students space to consider bearable, equitable and viable solutions within an

Stanford Institute for Innovation in Developing Economies (SEED)

Knight Management Center, Stanford University
655 Knight Way, Stanford, CA 94305-7298
seed_inbox@stanford.edu
+1 650 497 0420
<http://seed.stanford.edu>

SEED West Africa

No 1, First Close, Airport Residential Area, Accra, Ghana
Mailing address: PO Box 1632, Accra, Ghana

+233 (0)30 290 2888
<http://seed.stanford.edu>

economic, societal and environmental context. Furthermore, class sessions are devoted towards encouraging students to think about the long-term sustainability of their product or service's impact in developing markets by creating actionable business plans, thereby increasing the likelihood of real world impact.

To learn more about the types of projects and organizations we have worked with, please check out the course's website at extreme.stanford.edu.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at rlonhart@stanford.edu or +1.650.736.1117.

Thank you for your consideration.



Rita Lonhart
Assistant Director, Operations
Stanford Institute for Innovation in Developing Economies (SEED)
Stanford Graduate School of Business

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