



# Creating an Impact Assessment for Extension Work Abroad



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Introduction: For my practicum project I took the class AREC360. This class acted as an introduction to Liberia and created a collaborative global classroom between UMD students and students at the Liberia International Christian College (LICC). Due to COVID-19 the focus of this class was improving upon existing extension programs at LICC (in past years the focus was creating extension programs). We created a group of UMD and LICC students and worked together to produce an impact assessment about the current extension programs at LICC. We analyzed their success/failure and created a source of information that showcased what areas need improvement/more funding.

Activities: Before we began working with the LICC students we had to gain a greater understanding of the history of Liberia and the impacts COVID-19 has had on the country. We had a series of lectures covering many important aspects of Liberia as well as lectures on humanitarian work/aid and agriculture economics. These lectures prepared us for our group project which culminated with an impact assessment. To create the impact assessment we had to create a program directory, an inventory of the current extension programs, and a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). In addition to creating an impact assessment for LICC we created a “Strategic Recommendations” document stating why we believe LICC needs a dedicated extension department.



A screenshot of the UMD students I worked with to create the impact assessment.

Impact: In creating the impact assessment I gained a greater understanding of the importance of extension work and how beneficial it can be for not only a university, but also for the surrounding community. I got to learn about the specific impacts of a number of extension programs and create something that is incredibly useful for LICC. Our impact assessment is a piece of material that can and will be very useful in the future as it created a “baseline” for extension programs at LICC to work off of/with. Despite the restrictions created by COVID-19 I feel like I truly made a difference through my work and interactions with LICC because I contributed to the creation of a resource that will be used by others and that will hopefully contribute to the creation of an extension department at LICC.

Future Work: Sadly, due to COVID-19, the opportunity to go to Liberia and actually implement and work on extension programs there this summer has been canceled. Despite this, I plan on potentially going *next* summer and continuing the work we began in this class. I also plan on staying in contact with the LICC students I met through this course. This course has also inspired me to potentially/tentatively pursue a global poverty minor while I continue my studies at UMD in the next two years.

## Site Information:

Name of Site: Zoom University

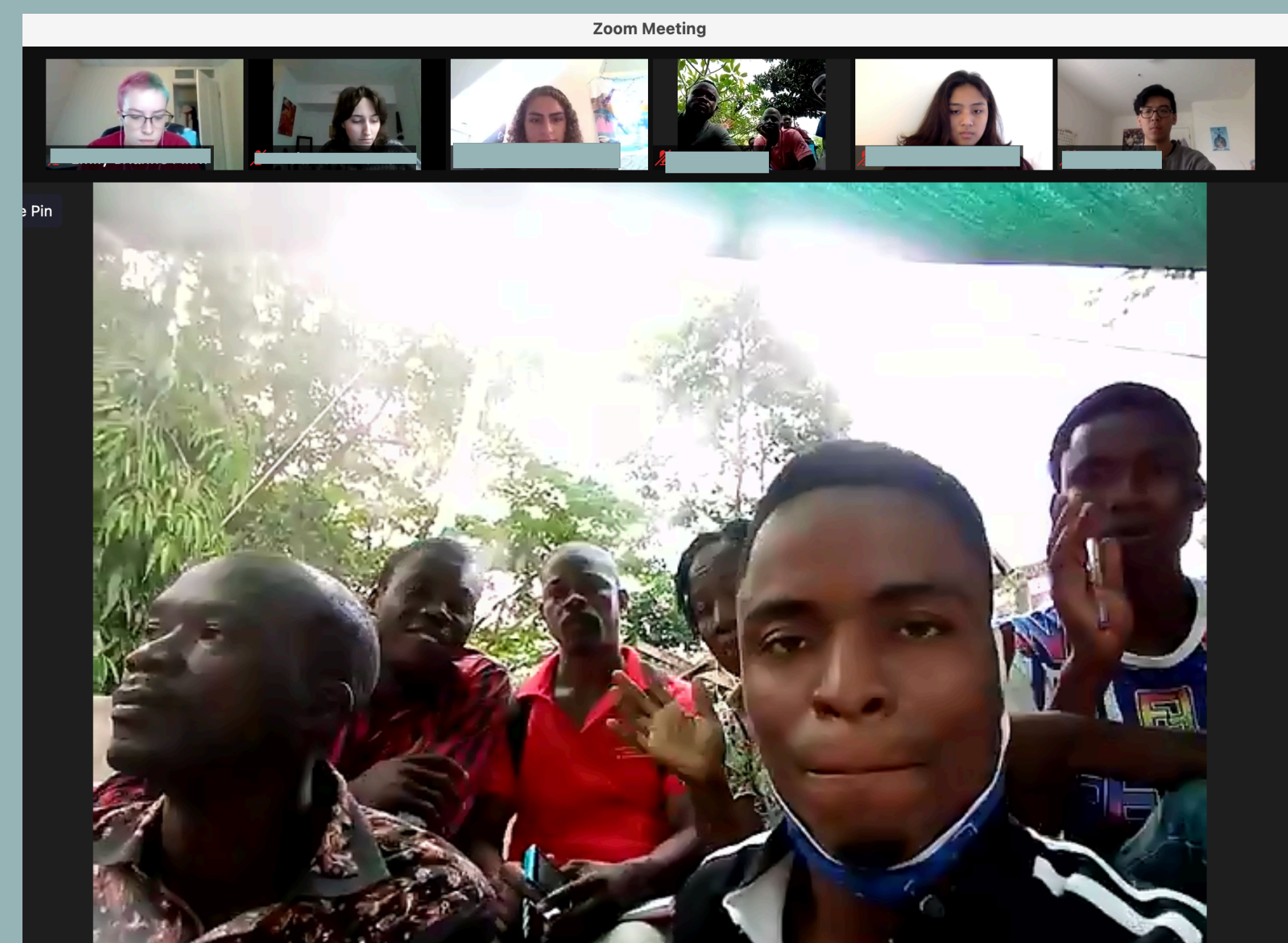
Address: University of Maryland, 1296, College Park, MD 20742 and [Liberia International Christian College](#), Ganta, Nimba County Liberia

Supervisors: Taryn Devereux and Anna Glenn.

The site mission: identify trends, challenges, and opportunities in global agriculture, and apply this body of knowledge towards the collaborative development of extension activities for farmers in Liberia.

The particular goals of group: creating an impact assessment for the existing extension programs at LICC.

Issues Confronting Site: A majority of the issues we faced were due to limited technological access and internet connections/expenses. Many students at LICC do not have access to a smartphone with video chat features and even if they do, cell phone data plans are very expensive in Liberia. On top of this, internet speeds are slow and the connection can therefore be difficult to maintain. We struggled with this a lot and our interactions with our LICC counterparts were limited due to this.



Another screenshot of a zoom with our LICC counterparts.

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank Taryn Devereux and Anna Glenn for being extremely informative, involved, and accommodating professors. Despite the technological issues and impact COVID-19 had, they made this class an amazing experience. I would also like to thank Dr. Holtz and Dr. Merck for everything they have done for me and my classmates these past two years. They made the transition into university and my first two years at UMD a genuinely fun experience and I am incredibly grateful for interactive classroom they created.

