Rural Campus
University campus for community regeneration, Acatitlán, Mexico

Main author
Oscar Hagerman, architect, Universidad del Medio Ambiente, Mexico City, Mexico

Summary by the jury
The new campus for environmental studies in Acatitlán, 140km west of Mexico City will trigger a local regeneration process, reinforcing communities throughout the region. The project’s design for the Universidad del Medio Ambiente is locally attuned, self-sufficient regarding energy and water, promotes on-site food production, and will be realized with low-impact materials to minimize the architecture’s ecological footprint. Rather than promoting efficiency for efficiency’s sake, the authors frame the university curriculum based on local knowledge: “It’s not about the campus, it’s about a community”. Erected in three phases, the buildings are organized around a series of courtyards. Construction assemblies include stone foundations, wooden structures and wall finishes made of soil. The result is a sustainable and regenerative project, a “living classroom” that could readily be replicated.

Appraisal by the jury
The jury greatly values the intention to create a university campus in a rural context, a campus dedicated to the tenets of sustainable development, both in terms of the university curriculum – the environment being at the core of teaching and research – and the campus design according to state of the art ecological principles. The project offers an excellent example of how to act locally, and concurrently thinking globally, fostering regional benefits and cultural exchange, while combining social, economic and environmental regeneration with long-term objectives.

Further authors
Arturo Farias, scientist, Universidad del Medio Ambiente, Mexico City, Mexico; Juan Carlos Cano and Paloma Vera, Cano Vera Arquitectura, Mexico City, Mexico; Federico Llamas, academic, Universidad del Medio Ambiente, Valle de Bravo, Mexico; Miguel Campero, Centro Viva, Valle de Bravo, Mexico; Francisco Bonilla, Universidad del Medio Ambiente, Valle de Bravo, Mexico

Image 1: Universidad del Medio Ambiente: The new campus for environmental studies in Acatitlán, 140km west of Mexico City will trigger a local regeneration process, reinforcing communities throughout the region.

Image 2: Universidad del Medio Ambiente’s regional sustainable development plan.

Project data
Context Architecture, building and civil engineering
Client Universidad del Medio Ambiente
Background Private commission
Planned start January 2014
Image 3: Main building plan.

Image 4: Main building architecture.

Image 5: Water, energy and food self-sufficiency; Choice of materials.

Image 6: General plan and edible forest.

Image 7: Long term expansion of edible forests.

Image 8: B&B and housing plan for vicinity and community interaction.

Image 9: Impact and improvement on the Acatitlán community.

Image 10: Regional mobility plan.

More at www.holcimawards.org/projects/rural-campus