

Students from Ghanaian Orphanage Offered Experience of a Lifetime

Online Course in Neurobiology Offered via Partnership with UC San Diego Extension and Boz Institute

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Contact: Anika Jackson
anika@anikapr.com
310.567.0038

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LearnGrowLead



Students Learning

Two evenings a week, ten high school students in the West African nation of Ghana travel by taxi from the orphanage where they live to historic Cape Coast Castle, once a fort used to hold slaves before they were loaded onto ships bound for the Americas. The students file into a conference room in what is now a government building, fire up laptops and connect to a research lab half a world away. They eagerly listen as instructors in California explain how to pluck out the brains of fruit flies to extract and analyze their genetic material.

The eight-week Neurobiology course is offered remotely by Boz Life Science Research and Teaching Institute as part of UC San Diego Extension's Futures program. UC San Diego Extension created the Futures program to allow high school students in the San Diego region to master high-demand career skills in life sciences, computer programming and business management. However, as the coronavirus pandemic forced the classes to move online, the change raised obstacles but also created opportunities.

"We were thinking about how being virtual allows us to access different groups of kids," said Liisa Bozinovic, who co-founded the Boz Institute with her husband, Goran. She serves on the board

of [Learn Grow Lead](#), a nonprofit group that supports the orphanage in Cape Coast, and it occurred to her that students there could take part in an online Futures class.

"I didn't even think it could be possible for us to be learning through the internet," 10th-grader Michael Cobbinah said in a Zoom call from Cape Coast, Ghana. "It astonishes me. I am finding it very fun and interesting."

Twelfth-grader Ebenezer Cann believes the class will help him on the path to a medical career. He is fascinated by what he is learning, "especially about the flies that we dissect. I really like the part about how we can use their DNA to study the diseases that affect human beings."

For Stephen Dankwah, Director of Learn Grow Lead's Ghanaian operations, the Futures class is only a beginning. "We want to go further with this program," he said. "If we can get a science lab built here in Cape Coast, it will be the greatest thing ever to happen to us. We could even extend it so that our children will have the opportunity to see the University of California through an exchange program. That has been our dream."

About Learn Grow Lead: Learn Grow Lead's mission is to make a difference in the world. This non-profit works tirelessly to educate and empower Ghana's children and help them build a better future. Learn Grow Lead is also driven to empower the local community to raise their own money and become less dependent on US donors, that project is The Helpers Farm. Since 2003 their board has impacted thousands of lives by educating children, starting the sustainable farm, and building an orphanage. Learn more about the work they do at <https://learngrowlead.org>.

Anika Jackson

Anika PR

+1 3105670038

anika@anikapr.com

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