**Why should educational institutions consider joining the GeoForAll network?**

*Reason #1: Educational institutions – especially higher education institutions –have an obligation to expose our students the larger geospatial technology ecosystem, rather than a focus on aspects of this ecosystem.*
Generally speaking of the software sector, over the last twenty years, a spectrum of “software types” have emerged. On one end of this spectrum is proprietary software where the source code is inaccessible, and the copyright licenses for use have specific requirements on how many computers can install it. On the other end of the spectrum is “Free/Libre” software, where in general, the copyright license gives the user permission to freely distribute the “runtime” software on as many computers as they wish, and gives the user access to the readable software logic (the source code). Often, Free/Libre licensed software comes with the requirement that if the user makes a change to the software code, that change automatically falls under the same licensing rules as its “parent” software, in the belief that software should be a public good. In between, are open source software technologies that follow some of the “openness principles” but are sometimes more receptive to commercial use for changes made to that software.

In our view, higher educational institutions have an obligation to expose students to the entire ecosystem of geospatial technologies available (proprietary, free/libre and open source) so that students can decide for themselves what is the right technology to use for analysis or management problems they might face in the future.  In short, the future of the technology sector will be a hybrid world involving a combination of all kinds of software. It is important that our students are exposed to all of them rather than just a subset. Students should have the experience and skill to select and deploy the right tools for the job at hand.

*Reason #2: In this era of high costs of higher education for our students, we have an obligation reduce the cost of entry. The use of open source software and accompanying open-access educational materials is one way we can reduce the costs our students incur.*

*Reason #3: Geospatial technologies are critical tools to help manage the natural environment as well as many urgent humanitarian crises or situations. GeoForAll labs are working to contribute to a growing body of and collaborative educational material related to geospatial data management and analysis that needs to be freely accessed by the world. This is required if we are to effectively address the extraordinary environmental management issues of our time and the humanitarian problems directly related to those conditions.*

*Reason #4: A shared, collaborative effort in geospatial research and education is critical for helping the world address some of its most challenging problems.*
Simply put, we hold a belief that closed systems create frictions toward innovation whereas open systems provide opportunities for advancing innovations. This openness allows for accelerated innovation, and greatly improves our collective ability to more rapidly solve “wicked problems.”  Each GeoForAll node is part of this much larger network of open source geospatial research and education nodes around the world, and we seek to contribute toward this greater good through truly positive, tangible and substantive collaborative efforts in geospatial research and education.