

**Thandi Puoane, Professor
School of Public Health**

Year of Participation in the UM- UWC exchange program: 2005

Host: Marjorie Sable Professor, School of Social Work, University of Missouri

Objectives of the visit

To meet with faculty staff from Nutritional Sciences and the School of Social Work to discuss the development of the curriculum and distance education.

A brief report

The visit was initially planned for October/ November 2005 so that it could coincide with the annual American Public Health Association (APHA). Due to the devastating situation in New Orleans brought by Katrina Hurricane, the APHA was postponed to December 9th to the 14th. I therefore had to reschedule my trip to Missouri for the 1st week of December 2005.

I arrived in Missouri, Columbia on the 4th of December, on a very cold and white evening. I stayed at a warm and welcoming Bed and Breakfast situated at a walking distance from the university. When Marjorie picked me up for Dinner she immediately realised that I was not properly dressed for that weather. She kindly made some efforts to get me warm clothes (coat, gloves, hat and a scarf).

On the first day at the University I was invited to attend a meeting, where a proposal to establish a school of Public Health in Missouri was discussed. I also shared experiences from UWC including distance mode of learning.

In addition to the university tour, Marjorie arranged a welcome party to enable me to meet individuals who have an interest in international health. My daily activities included meeting with lectures from various departments, including, nutritional science, sport science, school of nursing and the department of Health. All meetings occurred over tea, lunch or dinner.

Since it was the last week of the semester, ad students preparing for the exams, I did not have much interaction with students, however I managed to give two lectures to dietetic and sports science students. I also gave one lunch time seminar to the faculty staff on my current research project, which lead to very interesting discussion.

Although the weather was not pleasant, especially for me as it was my first exposure to snow, I was impressed by the fact that life went on as in a normal day. This experience made me realise that we are spoiled in this country because weather changes affect our activities.

I also had fun activities, for example, I attended a 50th birthday party for Marjorie's colleague and a Christmas carol concert by the Letterman

It was a good experience to be at the University of Missouri. The staff was eager to share experiences as well as to explore the possibilities of further collaboration. I learnt a lot about other projects and about the place as such. The tour around the residential area of Columbia was an eye opener. In some places I saw people and behaviors that are similar to our South Africans situation in terms of poverty and what people buy and eat. Who would think that right in the US people could eat pig's feet or that people could be in areas where there are no recreation facilities at all? These are poor people who are at risk for Cardio-vascular diseases.

The entire visit was a valuable experience. Through this visit I am now in a process of strengthening collaboration with a team who is working on a similar project as ours, that is, community based interventions for prevention of non-communicable diseases.