Duh Helen Inseng,
Department of management,
Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences
University of Western Cape

Dear Sir/Madame,

A REPORT OF A MONTH’S VISIT TO MISSOURI UNIVERSITY, COLUMBIA CAMPUS FROM JUNE 03 – JULY 04, 2007 IN PARTICIPATION OF THE UM/UWC ACADEMIC EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

The Objective of the visit
The objective of my visit was to meet an expert of my doctorate research interest who could advise and guide me in gathering relevant literature and data so that the required components that make up a complete content of a 25-30 pages PhD research proposal could be put together and written.

Extent to which my objectives was fulfilled and why I did not fully achieve my objectives
My objective was partly achieved because adequate materials were gathered and useful search tips were gotten but in reading all of the relevant literature and doing my write-ups, the one month elapsed. Part of the write-ups was however done and I have in the past week after my return, working towards its completion.

Aspects of my visit I would have wished changed
Apart from time limitation, two other factors which I would have wished changed were:
   (1) Visitors’ internet log-on time in the library was limited especially for research purposes. I was lucky to have unlimited log-on time in the first two weeks (presumably because of the summer break) after which I was surprisingly allotted only two hours a day.
   (2) I would have preferred to be accommodated where I could prepare my own meals and be sure of what to eat for lunch and supper as compared to moving from one restaurant to the next with the uncertainty of what to order.

Area of improvement within the UWC structures
The UM/UWC Exchange Programme has been running for over 20 years now with increasingly number of students and academics participating. I suggest someone be hired at the UWC international office to specifically handle all logistics (e.g., Visas, accommodation) pertaining to the Exchange Programme. I am sorry to say that obtaining a U.S visa is one dreaded process and there should be someone that calms down fears by
instructing people of the specific requirements and steps to follow. One secretary at UWC international office I perceived, is surely “over-assigned” to handle all international travel matters including the UM/UWC Exchange Programme demands.

**An overall assessment of the value of UM/UWC Exchange Programme**
The willingness of the UM/UWC Exchange Programme participants to share knowledge and assist upcoming researchers makes the programme incredible. For example, a masters student whose research project I am supervising was battling last year with his data analysis. Prof. Dick Madsen from UM statistics department visited UWC under the UM/UWC Exchange Programme and provided assistance. The UWC academics especially, are as well not only been sponsored but given the opportunity to step out of their hectic teaching schedules to further their research skills and achieve personal career goals.

**An Aspect of the overall exchange programme that needs improvement**
I suggest an improvement in the organization. One applies, is called for an interview, receives a letter of acceptance after which no indications are given of who to contact for what, who arranges and pays for accommodation etc. I however sailed through by applying the principle of “Ask and you will receive.” Participants need to be informed of the overall structure of the programme. Contact persons of some needs are not obviously known.

**Problems encountered during my visit**
I encountered just one meaningful problem. I was so eager to obtain a visitor’s ID thinking it would provide me with an access number to log-on to the internet and print materials. The ID was not useful in any of these regard and I had to push my way through by asking the librarians for a log-in id that allowed me to log-on for two hours daily.

**How my visit will improve programmes at UWC**
This particular question does not specify the programme you are referring to. Anywhere, my visit should have drawn attention to the fact that academics need guidance to obtain U.S visas and book accommodation. Secondly cheques due academics should be paid out on time so that they are cashed before departure.

**Question on whether I would still want to participate in the exchange programme if given the opportunity**
I will gladly do so with gratitude

**An aspect of my exchange experience that surprised me**
One memorable aspect of my exchange experience that pleasantly surprised me was the knowledge that there are people out there who are unconditionally kind and caring or should I say I am truly blessed? Prof Hawley Jana, Dr Noble Deborah and one other student – Bellyn Kaplan who had not known before opened their doors, hearts and resources to make me feel welcome and comfortable. Everyone I approached was readily willing to listen and give assistance.
**What I like most about the programme**
I like the 16 points guide to writing this report. I mostly appreciated the freedom to choose the visit period and the swiftness with which requests are attended to and granted. For example, I did not like my first accommodation and the next day a solution was sought.

**How the knowledge and experience gained will influence my future work related endeavours**
Firstly I realized that great progress can be made in obtaining my PhD if some time is taken off the hectic work demands to plunge my focus into it. Secondly, I used to rely on research assistants (students) to search required articles and data for me. Sometimes they are unsuccessful. I have now realized that access to a lot of useful information can be gotten if I do most of the search myself especially as I know best of what I am searching for. Lastly I have been exposed to researchers who are working around my research interest are readily willing to provide guidance.

**What the future endeavours specifically entail**
I plan to maintain my useful contacts I was given the opportunity to create, ask for guidance when needed, and put greater effort to starting and completing my doctorate. It has also been my department’s dream for more lecturers to obtain PhDs so that the growing number of masters students can be more professionally supervised.

**Question on whether the exchange programme should be continued**
The exchange programme should be definitely continued especially as there are a lot to be learnt from both cultures. Prof Jana Hawley was amazed at how much she learnt from me in less than a month. UWC academics need all the exposure and support to match the researching and publishing abilities of U.S academics.

**Other observation relating to the exchange programme**
Within my department, my visit has been a pointer to the fact that academics of all levels can participate in the programme and even a month’s participation can awaken “buried research dreams.” Since my return discussions about the moves towards the start and completion of my PhD flows with more certainty. Colleagues of my level are motivated to participate.