15 June 2010

Prof J Persens

Director: International Relations Office

University of the Western Cape

Dear Dr Persens


We are pleased to submit this report on our recent visit to University of Missouri St Louis and Columbia Campuses:

St Louis Campus: May 10 – 14, 2010

The first part of the visit involved a one week stay at St Louis Campus of UM. Our host was Dr Matthew Taylor, an Assistant Professor, in the Department of Psychology. You will recall that Dr Taylor had identified us as collaborators on his research project focusing on racial and ethnic identity.

Our time visit was spent working in Dr Taylor’s laboratory where we reviewed the conceptualization of the project. The discussions centered around key aspects of the study, namely theoretical categorisations of social identity and similarities and differences between the USA and South Africa with regard to configuration of reference group sameness and personal uniqueness.

A second issue that we spent time deliberating was clarifying inventories that previous studies have employed in measuring social identity. As can be expected, there was much discussion about the validity of the measures with extensive suggestions to revise the instruments in order to ensure their suitability for the South African participants.
A third matter we discussed was logistics regarding the actual execution of the study in South Africa. It should be noted that Dr Taylor has already collected extensive data with an American sample and accordingly the research team has the benefit of learning from his experience. However, there specific practical issues that we had to consider with the South African part of the study. A great deal of the time was spent ironing out possible challenges that may arise in the roll out of the study.

**Columbia Campus Visit: May 17 – 28, 2010**

We spent two weeks at Columbia Campus as hosts of Dr Kevin Everett, Associate Professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine. Dr Everett was identified by us as a collaborator on our research project entitled, ‘Cigarette Smoking Among Students: Using the Theory of Triadic Influence to Develop Prevention and Intervention Programs at the University of the Western Cape’.

Dr Everett is arguably one of the leading experts on health behavior change with specific interest on tobacco use. The University of Missouri Columbia Campus has developed what is considered one of the most effective successful smoking cessation intervention programs on college campuses in the United States of America. The Campus-Community Alliances for Smoke-Free Environments or CASE at UM Columbia Campus aims to reduce workplace smoking and to promote smoking prevention programs in schools.

The program at Columbia was very well organized with meetings arranged with relevant staff involved in various health services on campus. One of our first meetings involved a seminar presented by Professor Toni Miles from the University of Louisville. The topic of her presentation was the recently passed Health Care Reform Bill under President Obama’s administration. The seminar gave insight into the complexities involved in health care reform. Professor Miles presented a unique view from her perspective as one of the experts that was invited by the United States Congress to collect submissions and compile the final report.

Another meeting involved staff at the Student Wellness Center. At this meeting we gained understanding of the comprehensive services that the university offers to students. Staff briefed us on research projects involving risk taking behaviors and interventions on campus. A similar meeting was held with staff at Student Health Services who shared their expert knowledge about holistic approach to students’ well-being.

The final meeting was a ‘Tobacco Free Campus’ workshop in Springfield. We met experts from different universities who are involved in efforts to ensure that campuses adopt policies that enhance clean air on campus. The meeting provided a depth of understanding regarding the complexities involved in policy change on campus.

Besides these meetings, we also held important discussions with Professor Everett around our specific research project. The meetings focused on identifying appropriate research instruments, research design and data collection approaches. Our discussions were very fruitful in pointing the way forward to realizing the aims and objectives of our research project.
Summary:

The meetings with both Professors Taylor and Everett went extremely well. Both hosts were highly organized and ensured that our time was spent productively. It was quite evident that our prior meetings by e-mail and videoconference went a long way in ensuring a basic understanding of the projects by both parties. Both Professors should be highly commended for keeping lines of communication open. They kept the projects alive and exciting by constantly sharing information and seeking clarity about research issues.

We are excited about the progress made and look forward to finalizing the research instruments and data collection in the next couple of months.

We would like to thank Professors Persens and Uphoff for making the exchange possible. We are grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with such dedicated researchers at the University of Missouri.

Sincerely,

Prof K Mwaba

Dr N Roman