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The Director
International Relations
University of the Western Cape

Report: UMKC visit by Dr Pradeep Brijlal (4 -16 June 2015)

The objective of my visit to UMKC was to obtain clarity on the different fields of research now and in the future. We have identified three areas of comparison between the two (maybe more) institutions, in conducting research in the following areas:
1) Entrepreneurial intentions of final year dentistry students, comparing UMKC and UWC, using the Theory of Planned Behavior model;
2) To what extent practice management module equip students to start and operate a successful dental practice and
3) To track students, within 5 years after graduation, examining the challenges faced in operating their dental practices.

Our initial focus is on topic one. We have now finalized the instrument, in the form of a questionnaire. I have had several meetings with my collaborators, including faculty from the Dental School at UMKC, in structuring and finalizing the questionnaire for administration. The questionnaire will be piloted, within 2 weeks, with a few final year Dentistry students. It will then be finalized and submitted, with the necessary documents, for ethical clearance. We expect to administer the questionnaire at both institutions by September 2015. Analysis and reporting and preparing the paper for publication are projected for December 2015 or early 2016.

Most of the arrangement of my visit was handled by UKMC staff, especially in terms of flights, accommodation and transport. UWC was not involved in the logistical arrangements, understandably so. UWC did assist me with queries and were very helpful in providing me the necessary information. The arrangements by the UMKC staff were also commendable.

My main collaborator, Prof Ahmed was very receptive and accommodating. We agreed on certain time frames and deliverables. We were in contact frequently, within the two weeks. He really made my stay a pleasant one. Dr McCunniff was also very receptive and helpful and I gained new knowledge on the dental school and its offerings. I was also introduced to other faculty in the department, for future research collaboration.

I was quite impressed with an on-line programme on Practice Management that has been adopted by the Dental School, which is offered over the four years of the dental programme. It is possible that we, at UWC, may be able to adopt it. I am a presenter in the two week workshop held by the Dental School (UWC) and I will be able to share insights from the USA on how to improve the current programme on Practice Management. I will have further discussions on this with the Dean and staff of the Dental School at UWC.

My visit will strengthen relationships between UWC and UMKC. I have been involved in the first aspect of the research and I intend attracting other staff from UWC to be involved in future research in the field of Dentistry and Practice Management. Staff at UMKC are eager to collaborate on future research in this field. I am confident that we will grow from strength to strength in our collaboration and add to research in the field of dentistry.
My suggestion for future collaboration should also lie with final year dentistry students, across the two universities. We should consider having an hour session, maybe once or twice a month on presentations by both institutions and discussions on exchange of information between the two countries. This may be part of internationalization of practice management. Exchange of ideas will thus assist students to learn from one another. It is also noted that students who study dentistry at the US usually have a prior degree, from various fields. They also need to satisfy certain pre-requirements before being accepted to study dentistry. They are thus more mature than our students in RSA who start their dentistry studies straight from high school.

UWC should encourage more staff/faculty to collaborate with faculty on research opportunities. I am of the opinion that HODs of the various departments across UWC encourage staff to write proposals and apply for funding to collaborate with faculty at the various UKMCs linkages. This will provide international exposure to our staff. Thus this should be a bottom—up approach, instead of the current top-down approach.

On the whole my trip was beneficial, thanks to Prof Ahmed and Dr McCunniff, who supported me throughout my stay here. My sincere thanks and appreciation goes to Brenda Dennis for arranging all the logistics for my stay and when my flights were delayed. I also wish to thank the UWC International Office and the DVC (Prof. Bharutram) for approving my application. I would encourage all staff to be involved in research collaboration with UM.

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