Trip Report
University of the Western Cape
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Introduction

Since 1986, the University of Missouri and the University of the Western Cape have been engaged in an active relationship involving the exchange of faculty, students, and administrative staff. These exchanges have promoted research, enhanced the quality of teaching at both universities, and provided a stimulating experience to those who have traveled. Equally important, the visits and exchanges have enriched both schools by broadening the perspectives of both the travelers and those who have interacted with the travelers.

As in past years, I traveled to UWC in two capacities. First, I once again traveled to UWC to co-direct a study abroad program jointly sponsored by the University of Missouri School of Law and UWC’s law faculty. Second, in my role as Director University of Missouri South African Education Program (UMSAEP), I met with Professor Jan Persens, UWC’s Director of International Relations, and other key UWC officials to discuss our partnership and to talk about ways we might be able to build upon our past successes. Additionally, I met with UWC deans and faculty to encourage them to explore research and teaching collaborations with their UM counterparts. Finally, I interviewed the UWC applicants for the 2010 UMSAEP Linkage awards.

Because the law school program is almost six weeks long and quite labor intensive, I decided to come earlier than usual to UWC in order to have more time for extended discussions with UWC faculty and administrators on ways to strengthen our research and teaching collaborations and to promote our long-standing partnership. I am pleased to report that I found administrators and faculty at UWC very eager to increase collaborations with their UM partners. As described below, many at UWC are particularly interested in exploring how technology, especially video conferencing, can be used to greatly increase interactions between UM/UWC faculty, administrators, and students.

MU/UWC Law Program

Since 2004, the University of Missouri Law School and the UWC law faculty have jointly sponsored a five and one-half week program at UWC. Held during UWC’s winter break, the program allows American law students, most of who are from Missouri, to learn about aspects of South African law while UWC students are learning about American law. The American students take 3 courses for which they earn 6 credits.

This year 22 American students participated in the entire program. In addition, 6 students from Washington University joined the American students in taking UWC Professor Pierre de Vos’ Comparative Constitutional Law course. After the Washington University students left Cape
Town for their internship in Durban, the remaining 22 American students, along with 12 UWC students, took a Comparative Criminal Justice Administration class that I co-taught with UWC Professor Lovell Fernandez. The American students, joined by 15 UWC students, also took a Comparative Dispute Resolution course co-taught by MU Dean Larry Dessem and UWC’s Craig Bosch.

As in past years, the program was an unqualified success with many MU students describing the trip to South Africa as “life changing.” Unfortunately, shortly before I arrived, I learned that Professor de Vos, who has co-directed the program since its inception, decided to accept a new chair at the University of Cape Town. Thus, I had to spend considerable time with Professor de Vos, Craig Bosch and others on the law faculty planning for the future. That planning was complicated in that UWC Dean Najma Moosa stepped down about 6 months earlier and her successor, Professor Julie Sloth-Nielsen was on sick leave when I first arrived. I did have several discussions with Deputy Dean Bob Martin who was serving as acting dean and we resolved certain issues. Fortunately, Dean Sloth-Nielsen returned to UWC shortly before I left and we had several fruitful discussions. Thus, we are generally prepared to move forward with the program in future years despite Professor de Vos’ departure. Next year will be particularly challenging because South Africa is hosting the 2010 World Cup. I am confident, however, that we will again be able to run a very successful, albeit different, program next year.

Social Work Study Abroad Program

Last summer and fall I had extensive discussions with Professor Margie Sable, Director of MU’s School of Social Work, and Professor Lois Pierce, Director of UMSL’s School of Social Work and a member of the UMSAEP committee, about starting a study abroad program at UWC for social work students. Professors Sable and Pierce were interested in designing a program that took advantage of some of the lessons we learned in running our law school program. After countless e-mail exchanges and many discussions, I am delighted to report that Professors Sable and Pierce successfully launched their study abroad program this past July. They brought 11 master level social work students to UWC for an intensive, stimulating two week program. Given their success, they expect to be able to offer a program again next year. Moreover, based on discussions that Profs. Sable and Pierce had with their counterparts in the social work faculty at UWC, they hope to be able to integrate UWC faculty and students into the program even more in future years.

Administrative Exchanges

During my two meetings last year with Rector Brian O’Connell, he emphasized his interest in pursuing more administrative staff exchanges. It was not a surprise, then, that during my first meeting with the Rector this year that the subject of administrative staff exchanges was the first topic raised. The Rector firmly believes that it is critical to UWC’s future that the school develops more administrative capacity. He sees administrative staff exchanges with UM as an important vehicle for strengthening UWC’s administrative structure. Both the Rector and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Ramesh Bharuthram pointed to Dr. Lorna Holtman’s visit to UMSL and Columbia in June and July, 2009 as an example of the type of exchange that they would like to see happen more often. I spoke with Dr. Holtman upon her return and she was very enthusiastic
about her visit. By talking with people at both campuses about the structure, procedures, and policies of their graduate school, Dr. Holtman is now in an excellent position to help UWC create their own grad school structure. In my view, such administrative staff exchanges benefit both schools. The opportunity to travel to another school and to learn about its administrative structure and policies enables administrative staff members to grow professionally. But it is not only the traveler and his or her school that benefits. The host administrators are also likely to find the experience professionally rewarding. Moreover, in the process of explaining procedures or policies and responding to hard questions, the host administrator may well find gaps or inexplicable aspects of one’s own procedures or policies that cause that administrator to re-examine and reflect upon these procedures or policies.

Unquestionably, we can work with Rector O’Connell and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Bharuthram to identify significant areas and individuals that would be most appropriate for such administrative staff exchanges. Rector O’Connell and Vice Chancellor Bharuthram have expressed a willingness to help finance such exchanges. The UMSAEP committee has also indicated a willingness to use some of our special projects money to assist in this initiative. Finally, I am confident we can ensure that the visits will be most meaningful and productive by requiring people to communicate in advance of any trip through the use of video conferencing. Dr. Holtman had two video conferences with her UM colleagues prior to her visit and the conferencing helped to ensure the productivity of her trip.

**Distance Learning**

In each meeting I had with Brian O’Connell, Ramesh Bharuthram and Pro Vice Chancellor Stan Ridge, they reiterated their interest in seeing us expand our respective teaching and research missions by means of distance learning. Like me, they believe that distance learning not only will enable us to increase and improve our collaborations, but also provides us a means to expand the reach of the partnership to other parts of Africa. Clearly, however, it is not enough simply that top administrators at both schools support increased use of distance learning. Rather, it is critical that deans and faculty at each school be willing to work with their counterparts at the other school to take advantage of the potential that distance learning offers.

Video conferencing is, of course, only one of the distance learning tools that can be used to improve the educational experiences of our students. We may well be able to use a variety of distance learning tools to jointly offer courses to other parts of Africa. The Sudan initiative that Professor Neil Anderson of Missouri S & T is spearheading with his colleagues at UWC is an example of what we might be able to accomplish by creatively employing distance learning courses. I met with a number of UWC faculty members and deans during my stay in the hope that I might be able to encourage more of them to reach out to their UM counterpart. My goal is to work with the UMSAEP committee members to identify more UM faculty members and deans who might be interested in speaking with their UWC counterparts about distance learning possibilities.

As I noted in earlier memos, Jan Persens and I participated in a series of video conferences with faculty and deans from both schools to demonstrate the ease and value of video conferencing. Most of the video conferences were very successful. Indeed, MU Professors Colleen Heflin and
Margie Sable each lectured to a UWC class and found the experience to be a stimulating one. The lectures also were very well received by the UWC students. Nonetheless, we had a couple of problems develop that highlight the importance of a pre-test and show that firewall issues can crop up if we change rooms at the last minute. I am confident that as UWC’s bandwidth improves and we gain experience with video conferencing, the technological problems will be minimal. The challenges we face are:

1) Getting more faculty and departments at each school connected with their counterparts at the other school;
2) Making it easier for faculty members at either school to locate a readily available site to conduct a video conference;
3) Making mobile units readily accessible so that faculty members can use video conferencing to have faculty member and/or students from the other school participate in a class at the other.

Students

I met with Joel Downer, a UMSL student who was attending UWC as a Henry Mitchell Scholar. He enthusiastically described his semester at UWC. I also met with 3 UWC law students who received a fellowship in the past to attend MU Law School and earn an LLM in Dispute Resolution. In addition, I met with 2 of the 3 UWC law students who were to travel to Columbia in August to begin their LLM studies. Thus, there are now 6 UWC law students who studied or who are studying at MU as a result of a fellowship created to support UWC law students.

Undergrad Study Abroad Program

In last year’s trip report, I recounted the discussions that I had in June and July 2008 in an effort to launch an undergrad study abroad program at UWC in 2009. The concept was to bring American students from Missouri to study and to live with UWC students in UWC’s dorms during UWC’s winter break. UWC’s Richard White, a popular instructor who taught an interdisciplinary environmental course, was selected to co-direct the program with Professor Sheilah Clark-Ekong from UMSL. In the fall, many hours were spent planning to launch the program in June 2009.

Unfortunately, Richard White’s status as an untenured contract employee at UWC became an issue that complicated planning. Uncertainty about his availability in June 2009 limited marketing of the program and, coupled with the economic downturn, resulted in a small number of students actually signing up for the program. Ultimately, we decided to cancel the program for 2009 because of the low enrollments.

Nonetheless, I remain optimistic that there is a significant market for a well-structured study abroad program at UWC. UWC remains very interested in such a program. I had more meetings with Professor Persens, Larry Popkas, Mark Seale and UWC Deans Duncan Brown and Chris Tapscott about such a program. Unquestionably, one key is identifying several UWC professors/or instructors who are committed to planning and implementing such a program. I will continue to work with Professor Persens and Deans Brown and Tapscott to find the right
UWC director and teachers. I will also work with the 4 UM international directors to ascertain the best structure at UM for operating such a program.

2010 UMSAEP Linkage Awards

As usual, I met with the UWC applicants for 2010 UMSAEP linkage awards. Surprisingly, there were only three UWC applications this year: Kelvin Mwaba and Nicolette Roman (Tobacco Use and Risk Perception Among Students at UWC and UM), Henry Okola Nyongesa (Mobile Access to Information Services with Healthcare Application), and Firdouza Waggie (Service Learning and University-Community Partnership Within Context of Health Professions Education).

I say surprisingly because I met with a number of other UWC faculty members in May who were contemplating submitting an application. A continuing challenge we face is finding an appropriate host or research collaborator for someone from either school interested in applying for a grant. Both committees have expressed an understandable preference for an application in which the applicant has already established a link with a colleague at the other school. For some interested professors, however, the biggest hurdle to a successful application – or even submitting an application – is locating a counterpart at the other school with a similar research or teaching interest. It is my hope that video conferencing will aid us in linking people and increasing the number of grant applicants.

Conclusion

As in past years, I found many in the UWC community who were familiar with and very enthusiastic about the UWC/UM partnership. Jan Persens and his staff were, as usual, incredibly supportive. I also was fortunate this trip to have more time to meet with UWC faculty who had not previously collaborated with anyone at UM, but who were very interested in doing so. I am firmly convinced that distance learning affords us the opportunity to work with UWC to greatly expand our research collaborations and the internationalization of our four campuses. UWC is very interested in moving our partnership forward. It will ultimately be up to the individual campuses, however, to decide how fast and how far to go. My hope is that we will take advantage of this opportunity and push this partnership to an even higher level.