IU’s involvement in Africa has spanned a remarkable range of activities, most of which can be found in the university’s acclaimed African Studies Program, long recognized as one of the leading centers for the interdisciplinary study of Africa. The program, which celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2011, is one of 11 federally funded Title VI area studies centers in IU’s new School of Global and International Studies, the largest number of such centers anywhere in the United States. The program offers more African languages than any other U.S. college or university, as well as a wide spectrum of academic offerings that includes African art, film, folklore, history, literature, music, public health, and more.

Since the inception of the African Studies Program, IU has provided instruction in 52 African languages. The university regularly teaches Akan/Twi, Arabic, Bambara, Swahili, Wolof, Yoruba, and Zulu, from the elementary level all the way up to the most advanced levels. IU faculty have also published more books on African languages and linguistics than any other U.S. institution. In addition, the relocation of the National African Language Resource Center to IU Bloomington (IU is the only university with such a center) has served to further strengthen its position as a premier institution for the teaching of African languages.

A presidential delegation from Indiana University visited three African countries in August and September 2013. IU has had ties with Africa for more than half a century. President Michael A. McRobbie, the first sitting IU president to visit Africa in more than two decades, recognized this history and emphasized the need to assure its continued growth. “South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana are democracies that represent three of Africa’s most dynamic, fastest-growing economies, and they offer fertile ground for IU as we look to grow study-abroad opportunities for our students, generate faculty research collaborations across our respective continents, and recruit top students from sub-Saharan Africa to pursue an education at IU and bring with them a unique cultural perspective.”

IU Goes to Africa

BY RYAN PIUREK

Ryan Piurek, director of news and media at IU Bloomington and a graduate of the IU School of Journalism, was part of the delegation. In his daily blog (excerpted here) and his photographs, Piurek tells the story of the IU-Africa connection.
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

Activities began with a visit to the nation’s premier business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science. GIBS is part of the University of Pretoria, one of South Africa’s leading research, teaching, and learning universities. It is situated in a beautiful green-field campus that lies just outside the suburb of Sandton, Johannesburg’s business hub. To say the school is on the fast track to success would be a gross understatement. Established a little over a decade ago, the school is already considered the top business school for executive education in Africa. Just last year, the Financial Times ranked the GIBS executive M.B.A. first in Africa and sixtieth in the world.

Part of the school’s mission is the effort to develop a sophisticated business infrastructure in South Africa that, in the words of one GIBS faculty member, “rewrites the literature” of an Africa of famine and war and introduces the world to a diverse, dynamic economy energized by increasing intellectual activity.

Demonstrating a shared commitment to adding to South Africa’s intellectual and social capital, the leaders from IU and GIBS concluded the morning meetings by inking a new, formal partnership agreement that calls for, among other collaborative activities, the sharing of
faculty expertise, collaborative research projects, and, most importantly, future study abroad opportunities for students from both institutions.

After the signing, GIBS officials provided an opportunity for the delegation to tour the Diepsloot settlement, which GIBS is using as a “learning lab” that is intended to provide students with a better understanding of the needs and aspirations of Africa’s “emerging less poor.” In crowded, noisy, dusty Diepsloot, half the total population (400,000, living in a 5-square-kilometer area) is unemployed. It was striking how friendly and forthright members of the township were, as they enthusiastically welcomed members of the IU delegation into their shops and, in one instance, their family home.

On the second day in Johannesburg, the delegation visited GIBS’s parent institution, the University of Pretoria (UP). Similar in size and scope to IU’s Bloomington campus, UP, with about 45,000 students—not counting another 18,000 or so enrolled in its distance education programs—is one of the largest suppliers of high-level skills to the African economy, addressing the nation’s growing need for graduates in teaching and technology, science and engineering, and several other key development areas. UP has launched a major strategic initiative—UP 2025—designed to position the university as the leading “research-intensive” university in Africa and elevate its stature in the larger global marketplace.

In a meeting with UP officials, McRobbie was also keen to note that IU provides instruction in seven of South Africa’s 11 official languages (and 8 of 11 if you count English). Upon hearing about IU’s language prowess, and after learning about the university’s considerable information technology resources, Irma Eloff, dean of the faculty of education at UP, nearly leapt from her seat. “IT and languages, I’m impressed!” she said. Eloff surveyed the emerging African markets that UP seeks to better serve. “We simply cannot have a country where there are
so many different languages spoken but where we cannot provide anyone to teach those languages.”

UP President Cheryl de la Rey, in a meeting later in the day, suggested a number of logical possible partnerships between UP and IU, including in areas where both universities have sizable strengths: education, law, the health sciences, and the humanities.

Also on the second day, McRobbie and IU Vice President of International Affairs David Zaret had a productive discussion with South Africa Minister of Higher Education and Training Blade Nzimande, who was visibly impressed upon hearing about IU’s long history of engagement in Africa. The discussion centered around opportunities for educational collaboration in South Africa in such areas as language studies and the health sciences and the possibility of IU hosting master’s and doctoral students from South Africa.
Shortly before members of the IU delegation met with senior leaders at the University of the Western Cape (UWC)—a public university located in the Bellville suburb of Cape Town, South Africa—President Barack Obama delivered remarks from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the historic March on Washington and the heroism of its leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In his address, Obama spoke about the spirit of the march and the sacrifices made by thousands of Americans, “men and women, young and old, blacks who longed for freedom and whites who could no longer accept freedom for themselves while witnessing the subjugation of others.”

With the official abolishment of apartheid in 1994, UWC was a major player in the formation of public policy and preparing South African students for a wide range of high-level careers. When Nelson Mandela became president, he took with him nearly a third of the university’s leadership team (including its president) to build his cabinet. The university now has an enrollment of more than 20,000 students.

The IU delegation and the leadership of UWC agreed that they are academically well matched, most notably in such key areas as education, the life sciences, and the arts and humanities, and that they would seek ways to further student and faculty exchanges. UWC is eager to build partnerships in the area of creative activity, which, sadly, apartheid denied to most of South Africa’s population.

As UWC continued to grow, so, too, did the campus’s intellectual and innovative spirit, much of which became focused on making the university freer and more democratic. By 1982 UWC’s leadership had formally rejected the apartheid ideology on which it was established, and a year later the university gained autonomy on the same terms as established white institutions.
imprisoned. The IU delegation didn’t have to look very far for a real-life example of that struggle in UWC Dean of Research Renfrew Christie, a classmate of IU’s David Zaret at Oxford during the 1970s. The former student leader at the University of Cape Town, who is white, spent seven years in prison, some on death row and some in solitary confinement, jailed by the apartheid government for spying on the nuclear weapons program for the African National Congress.

Nestled in the slopes of Devil’s Peak mountain, the University of Cape Town (UCT) boasts top-ranked programs in a number of areas, including business, economics, education, geography, history, law, psychology, and politics. It also counts five Nobel Laureates among its alumni. Enrollment at UCT has grown by a third each decade since 1950. Today, the university has over 25,000 students, half of whom are black, and it now has over 110,000 alumni around the world.

Deputy Vice Chancellor of Internationalization Thandabantu Nhlapo spoke of the university’s need to produce graduates who are internationally competitive and committed to engaged citizenship and social justice. UCT Deputy Vice Chancellor Sandra Klopper, who is also a professor of African art, suggested there may be potential for collaboration in the arts, law, music, and the natural sciences, among other areas, adding with a laugh, “You know, I think more than half of my colleagues in African art received their training at IU!” Klopper’s comments came right after Harold Kincaid, a professor from the UCT School of Economics, introduced himself to the delegation by telling the group that he possessed a total of three IU degrees.

President McRobbie talks technology with students in the Christel House at Cape Town.

Christel House was founded by Indianapolis philanthropist Christel DeHaan to help children around the world overcome poverty and realize their hopes and dreams. In South Africa, Christel House (which also has centers in India, Mexico, the U.S., and Venezuela) provides more than 700 K-through-12th-grade children from some of Cape Town’s most impoverished communities with a quality education, as well as proper nutrition, health care, and a safe, nurturing environment. The school has a 100 percent graduation rate over the last four years, a 99 percent retention rate, and a 98 percent attendance rate.

Impressive as those statistics are, they are no substitute for seeing these amazing students, all fully uniformed and full of energy, in their learning environment. The entire Christel House student body, teachers, and staff had gathered to welcome their Hoosier guests. McRobbie told the attentive students about the importance of education, how inspired he was by their accomplishments, and how he hoped that, one day, they might even continue their studies at IU.
ROBBEN ISLAND

It's almost impossible to put into words what it's like to walk around Robben Island, an island about three miles west off the coast of Cape Town, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned behind bars for 18 of his 27 years during South Africa's apartheid era.

One could describe the 8-foot-by-8-foot jail cells where Mandela and many other political prisoners, including South Africa's current president Jacob Zuma, were held captive, the solitary confinement areas, the lime quarry where inmates worked, but it would simply not give this historic setting its proper due.

Coincidentally (or maybe not so much considering IU's many South African connections), Robben Island’s CEO is Sibongiseni Mkhize, who spent eight weeks studying at IU Bloomington in 2001 as part of an African Studies summer program and who met with members of the IU delegation during a special alumni dinner earlier in the week.

When Mkhize found out the IU delegation was coming to South Africa, he arranged a special tour, led by Sipho Msomi, a former Robben Island inmate. Sipho was arrested by the South African police in 1984 when he was only 20 years old, along with five other young organizers for the African National Congress. One of those organizers, he said, was tortured to death.

Msomi spent four of his five years in prison at Robben Island. Today, he leads tours of the island, recounting his and other prisoners’ tales of sacrifice, while giving his guests a strong sense of how the island has been transformed into a beacon of African pride and spirit.

Msomi took us to the jail cell where Mandela was imprisoned and slept on the cold stone floor, often with just a thin blanket to protect him from the island's often frigid temperatures. He also showed us to the courtyard where inmates gathered, talked about the cement bags and toilet paper that Mandela and others could sometimes use as writing surfaces, and brought us to the solitary confinement area where he, himself, spent 10 months.

Msomi then sent us off on a short bus ride to another area of the island, where Robert Sobukwe, who became president of the Pan Africanist Congress in opposition to apartheid in 1959, spent six years in solitary confinement, his imprisonment renewed annually by the minister of justice in a procedure that became known as the “Sobukwe clause.” The clause was never used for anyone else, and Sobukwe, who lost the use of his vocal chords while at Robben, was ultimately held under house arrest by the national government until his death in 1978. Before his death, though, he earned a degree in economics from the University of London.

Finally, it was on to the lime quarry where Mandela and others were sent to work until their hands blistered and bled. The barren quarry, which wouldn’t be out of place back home in Bloomington, Indiana, could have simply been a place of great hardship. Instead, it was transformed, through education, into a place of hope. Here, at what became known as “Robben Island University,” many of South Africa’s most prominent prisoners at the time, including Mandela, engaged in discussions and debate over a wide range of topics, including democracy, socialism, political protest movements, and more.
ELDORÉT, KENYA

AMPATH, the Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare, was conceived in the late 1980s by four IU physicians (Bob Einterz, Joe Mamlin, Charlie Kelley, and Dave Van Reken), each of whom had experience in developing countries. The program initially intended to link faculty and resources at the IU School of Medicine with the fledgling Moi University Faculty of Health Sciences—later to be renamed the Moi University School of Medicine. Today, with 20 million Africans estimated to be infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, AMPATH, a partnership among IU, Moi University, and the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital, is one of the largest and most comprehensive academic centers for the treatment of AIDS in the world. The program serves a population of 3.5 million people in over 500 urban and rural clinical sites throughout western Kenya and has enrolled more than 160,000 HIV-positive people. In its efforts to develop a successful system for treating HIV/AIDS, the program has expanded attention to other areas critical to Kenyans’ survival, including food and income security, and noncommunicable chronic diseases in sub-Saharan Africa such as heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and cancer that are projected to far exceed that of HIV.

President McRobbie became the first IU president to visit the program. Dr. Joe Mamlin, one of the program founders, expressed his gratitude at the recognition as he led a tour of the project. Program director Dr. Sylvester Kimaiyo said, “I do not think I would’ve started an HIV program without the braveness and support of my colleagues at IU. It was thought that you couldn’t start an HIV hospital in Africa. Just impossible. But we did it. We started it. And now we are one of the biggest HIV programs in the world.”

Just getting children to an AMPATH clinic is a huge achievement because the costs and stigma associated with having a child with HIV causes many families not to seek treatment.
Program officials led the IU delegation on a tour that included a pediatric clinic that daily sees 100 children exposed to HIV, half of whom will contract the virus. They visited the data center where, with the help of the Regenstrief Institute at IUPUI, ragged scraps of paper records are entered to a new, high-tech records system, and the new Chronic Disease Building, which will provide outpatient clinics, research space, and classrooms when it is completed in 2015.

And then there was Njoki. In 2002 Njoki was pregnant when a prenatal exam revealed she was HIV-positive. Left by her husband and alone on the streets of Eldoret, she found her way to AMPATH, where she eventually learned to string beads into ribbons and necklaces that she was encouraged to sell. Today, she is production manager of the Imani Workshops, established in 2005 to provide job training and income-generation activities for those affected by HIV and others in need. The group now employs more than 100 members and sells jewelry, bowls, stationary, bags, and other items, with 100 percent of the sales income reinvested in the workshops. Njoki spoke proudly of coming to IU and to the Herron School of Art and Design at IUPUI, where she received several months of training. “So now,” she laughed, “I, too, can say that I am a member of IU.”

One afternoon I went to visit a rural health clinic operated by AMPATH, and from there to an individual home in a remote village to sit in on a clinical visit. We rode there in a four-wheeled vehicle over the worst roads I’ve ever seen, just a sea of water and red mud. The object of the visit was a female head of the household. After a negative AIDS test, and good blood pressure results, she relaxed and insisted at the end that we have some of her tea, roast corn, and, a special luxury, fermented sour milk. The ‘living room’ in this one-room shack uses old calendars for decoration. No electricity. But this is a relatively prosperous household, with several acres and cows. The gourd held by the woman contains the sour, fermented milk. She gave me a similar (but empty) gourd as a present. —David Zaret
Moi University started in 1984 as Kenya’s second public university with a first class of 83 students and just one faculty member. Today, it has more than 30,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students and four campuses, including the main campus in Eldoret and another in the western part of the town. Moi also boasts 14 schools, including newly established schools of aerospace science, biological and physical science, and tourism, hospitality, and event management.

Among its more established units are the Schools of Dentistry, Nursing, and Medicine, which, as Vice Chancellor Richard Kiprono Mibey and other Moi leaders pointed out, would not have been possible without the support of IU. As a result of the AMPATH project, these schools have partnered with IU on a number of service learning and faculty exchange programs that have helped them grow into some of the best academic programs in Kenya.

To ensure the continued impact of this decades-long collaboration, IU President McRobbie and Mibey signed a new IU-Moi partnership agreement. Additionally, the two leaders inked a sub-agreement between the IU School of Journalism and the Moi Department of Communications, a program that has experienced major growth in correlation with one of Kenya’s fastest-growing industries, mass media.
The University of Ghana (UG), with enrollments of more than 36,000 students a year, is the country’s oldest public university. President Michael McRobbie is the first IU president to visit. The IU delegation talked with five faculty members, all of whom were beneficiaries of IU scholarships to study in Bloomington.

Kodzo Gavua is a senior lecturer in the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies. He had the opportunity to come to IU in 2002 and spend a year working alongside faculty members in IU’s departments of anthropology and folklore and ethnomusicology. While at IU, he also sought instruction in computer literacy, music, and basic studio engineering, and he even learned how to play West African percussion. Folks in Bloomington might remember him as the leader of the popular “Afro Hoosier Intl” dance band.

In 2009 Emmanuel Asampong was a visiting scholar in Bloomington, where he had the opportunity to assist in research on HIV being conducted by IU Bloomington School of Public Health Associate Dean Michael Reece and his team at the Center for Sexual Health Promotion. Today, he is a clinical psychologist and lecturer at the UG. While at IU, he helped link IU public health students with students in Ghana.
President McRobbie and University of Ghana Pro-Vice Chancellor Osam trade stories as they discuss expanded cooperation.

Alexina Arthur, senior lecturer in the UG’s Department of Modern Languages and scholar of Russian literature, says she spent the majority of her time at IU (time, she says, that was far too short!) devouring countless books and scouring newspaper archives documenting Russian-African relations when she wasn’t helping her daughter adjust to life and academic expectations as a Bloomington middle-school student.

Pro-Vice Chancellor E. Kweku Osam, who did his undergraduate work in linguistics at UG with Samuel Obeng, director of IU’s African Studies Program, proudly mentioned that three current UG linguists received their training at IU.

“Indiana University has been critical in the life of this university and in developing our faculty,” Osam told members of the IU delegation during a meeting in which leaders from both schools discussed ways to expand a partnership between IU and UG that dates back two decades.

IU has deep ties to Ghana, where more than 100 IU students studied abroad last year. Additionally, more than 20 students from Ghana were admitted to IU this fall.

In 2011 the IU Kelley School of Business’s innovative Global Business and Social Enterprise began sending Kelley M.B.A. students to the country to act as business consultants to local entrepreneurs.

IU’s Mathers Museum of World Cultures has multiple ties to Ghana scholars. Most recently, IU art history graduate student and Mathers collaborator Brittany Sheldon, who is currently in Ghana, has developed an exhibition based on her research on traditional decoratively painted houses. Her exhibition, State of an Art: Contemporary Ghanaian Bambolse, will be presented this fall at the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board.

All in attendance at the meetings agreed that there was room to expand the ties between their respective universities, particularly in IU’s areas of strengths—including those in African language instruction, information technology, and public health.