Link between IU East and University of Namibia Regional Campus Thrives

In the fall of 2002, Indiana University's Center for International Education and Development Assistance (CIEDA) was awarded a partnership grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to set up a link with a branch campus of the University of Namibia (UNAM). The focus was on general university administration in the context of managing the relationship between a main campus and a regional campus. Indiana University East (IUE) in Richmond was chosen to partner with UNAM’s Northern Campus (NC) in Oshakati, given their similar status as small regional campuses of comparable size.

The partnership includes 20 short-term administrator and faculty exchanges between the NC and IUE over a two-year period, including visits to the respective main campuses in Bloomington and Windhoek. The Oshakati campus is in the disadvantaged northern part of Namibia and was founded in 1998 to address the region’s problems of access to higher education, economic development, and community involvement. Over the past few years, most NC classes have been delivered from the main campus via interactive video. To date, the campus has been successful in creating economic and educational opportunities in the region and in developing innovative programs that reach out to the community. Grants from the Ford Foundation and contacts with nonprofit development organizations have further assisted the NC in developing their strategic plan for the region.

With the participation of IUE over the past year and a half, the partnership has been able to train and support essential managerial and administrative personnel, especially in advancing an understanding of how financial, material, and technological resources may be managed. The two-way exchanges between Richmond/Bloomington and Oshakati/Windhoek have been from three to six weeks long.

The first NC administrator arrived in fall 2002. Paulina Ungwanga, director of the NC, visited the IUE campus to discuss especially those issues in regional campus administration that would transfer to the NC. Said IUE Chancellor David Fulton of her visit, “In essence, we wanted to show Paulina how IU East works since we share a mission very similar to the Northern Campus in Namibia.” She was followed by a visit from UNAM Vice Chancellor Lazarus Hangula, who spent 10 days visiting both IU campuses.

In spring 2003, Fulton and Suzi Shapiro, director of IUE’s Teaching and Learning Center spent their time in Namibia discussing university administration, technology, distance education, and teaching with UNAM/NC staff. UNAM’s Carin Slabbert, registrar for the Center for Distance Education, and Alois Feldersbacher, assistant registrar, came to Indiana to discuss registration issues that arise between main and regional campuses, with special regard to distance education.

In May of last year, UNAM hosted an important southern Africa regional conference, Universities and Communities Engaged in Development (UCED 2003), on the role of higher education institutions in empowering their communities, which IU’s Charlie Nelms, then vice president for student development and diversity; Patrick O’Meara, dean for International Programs; and Shawn Reynolds, CIEDA associate director, attended.

In September 2003, Itah Kandjii Murangi, director of UNAM’s International Relations and Programs Office, spent some time at both IU campuses, discussing issues of future academic linkages involving IU/UNAM faculty and students and student leadership training—also under her office. She said that although the UNAM campus has benefited from past linkages with both U.S. and European universities, these had been more academically focused, and she welcomed the cross-fertilization that is occurring in the IU East–NC partnership concerning both academic and administrative components.

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"Most of the Americans that we have met were friendly and helpful to us, helping us form a new point of view about America and the people here," said Zeyad Tariq Jassim, a graduate of the University of Mosul, who hopes to continue his studies in applied linguistics and translation studies. Rawand Darwesh, head of the English news department for Kurdistan Television, was particularly pleased to be present in the United States during a presidential election year and to witness the democratic process firsthand. Dalia Kaikhasraw, who hopes to get a master's degree in public health, was sure that under the "old" system, she would have never been chosen to come to the United States. As for Shaheen Jihad from Baghdad, getting used to the small town life of Bloomington was proving to be a big adjustment.

IU has a long tradition of welcoming international Fulbright students and visiting Fulbright scholars and of developing orientation and academic training programs for the Fulbright student program, which is administered by the International Institute of Education (IIE). Every year, CELT receives a number of Fulbright students to train before they are eventually placed by IIE into graduate programs nationwide, including IU. This year, in addition to the Iraqis, there are two Fulbright students from Africa and two from Latin America.

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As part of the exchange activities last fall was a shipment of more than 400 books on nursing, engineering, and children's literature sent by IUE’s Teaching and Learning Center to the brand-new library of the Northern Campus in Oshakati.

Other UNAM/NC administrators to IU in fall were Erika Maass, coordinator for Student Learning and Development; Charlotte Keyter, deputy head of the Department of Math, Science, and Sports Education; and Joseph Ndinoshiho, NC administrator and librarian.

IU's Jeremy Dunning of the School of Continuing Studies has gone on the exchange to talk about developing CD-ROMs for distance education and administrative purposes. Dwight Burlingame of the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University to lead a workshop on fundraising, and Karen Hallett of the School of Education's Office of Instructional Consulting to speak of the appropriate use of technology in teaching. Scheduled from UNAM for summer 2004 are Matthew Ngihangwa, NC campus administrator, and Noel Mouton of the bursar's office, both concerned with budgeting and financial matters.

UNAM's Northern Campus is now poised to develop and expand its academic offerings and consider more traditional degree-granting programs. "The next step in the relationship," says Reynolds, "is to find a way to improve academic programs at the Northern Campus. A new grant might even look at new uses of technology and adapting content from IU courses to Namibia's unique environment."

As for IUE, the benefit of the partnership has been a unique opportunity to internationalize its administrators by giving them hands-on experience in a developing country. Says IUE Chancellor Fulton, "This is a wonderful opportunity for IU East to address issues of diversity and internationalism from a unique perspective."

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