



THE PEACE ADVOCATE



An occasional newsletter about SMCM's Gambia PEACE program

Mission: To expand the exchange of SMCM and other non-Gambian students, faculty and staff with the University of The Gambia and other educational institutions in The Gambia and Senegal to increase understanding and enhance academic excellence among all partners.

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *The Peace Advocate*. St. Mary's program in The Gambia, West Africa has grown steadily since I led the first study tour in 1996. Its designation as a Signature Program in 2006 was recognition of a full decade of mutually beneficial collaborative activity with a wide range of educational, research and service organizations in The Gambia. Students, faculty, staff, and community members have traveled to The Gambia. Four Gambian students are now seeking degrees from the College. Fortuitously, the College's strategic goal to internationalize coincides with the creation of The Gambia's first national university.

I wish everybody could travel to The Gambia. I served there as a Peace Corps public health volunteer (1979-81), a researcher (1984), and consultant (1993-94) before conceptualizing a study tour in 1995. This newsletter informs you about and invites you to support our PEACE program. Enjoy, and contact me if I can answer any questions.

Bill Roberts, CRG

Current Events

Thirteen SMCM students form the largest fall semester cohort to date to engage in the *Signature Seminars Semester* in The Gambia. They live in *Happy Camp* and take classes in the Alliance Franco-Gambienne with their peers from the University of The Gambia. All students are enrolled in Femi Ojo-Ade's course

African leaders of the Modern Era, and can choose three additional courses among: *Human Rights in Africa*, *Islam in Africa*, *Traditional African Religions*, *African History*, *Resource and Environmental Management in The Gambia*, and *Poverty and Development in the Third World*. All students study the Wolof language and Gambian culture, for a total of 18 hours of academic credit.

Four Gambian students are studying at SMCM this fall. Jerro Saidykhan is the recipient of the UTG PEACE exchange student scholar for the fall, 2007. Welcome back to Marie Rose Thorpe and Rachel Mendy, who came to SMCM last spring as Gambia YMCA interns, and are now full-time students. Farimang Jawara begins his first semester towards earning a degree from SMCM.

Gambian art major Ya Haddy Njie, who is now in her third year at SMCM, is a participant in the fall Signature Program at CMRS/Oxford, and will return to us in the spring.

2008 Spring Service-Learning Semester

The PEACE program's 2008 spring service-learning semester in The Gambia begins on January 7 and runs through June 15, 2008. Students have an intensive orientation to the country during the first month. All students enroll in a 4 credit *Wolof language and Gambian culture* course, and choose three additional courses from offerings at the University of The Gambia. I work with the PEACE program's Gambian staff to develop a 4 credit service-learning course specifically matched to each student's interest. The cost for students is equivalent to in-state tuition plus the purchase of a RT ticket to The Gambia. LaRita Hagar in the International Education office and Bill Roberts can answer questions about the program, as can the many students and faculty who have studied or visited there.

2008 Summer Field Study Program

The 2008 Summer Field Study Program (May 21 – July 15, 2008) will be led by Professors Bill Roberts (anthropology) and Deborah O'Donnell (psychology). The seven-week, eight-credit program begins with an intensive introduction to Gambian society, language and culture, followed by a week long trip along the length of the country. Students, assisted by SMCM faculty and Gambian mentors, undertake their own first hand research during the final month. The two major research options for students include either archaeological excavation at the World Heritage site of Juffureh/Albreda led by Syracuse University archaeologist Liza Gijanto, or ethnographic research mentored by Bill Roberts or Deborah O'Donnell. The DVD *Tubabs in Africa* is a video documentary of the 2002 field study program that features students learning about women's gardens, Gambian fishermen, and child delivery in The Gambia. Contact either Bill Roberts, Deborah O'Donnell, or LaRita Hagar for answers to questions about the 2008 program.

Recent Events 2006-2007

Professor Ho Nguyen successfully led a cohort of seven SMCM students for the College's inaugural Signature Semester program in the fall of 2006.

Six students participated in the spring 2007 service-learning semester in Gambia. SMCM students took classes at the university, studied Gambian language and culture, and worked with Gambian organizations that included: The Child Protection Alliance, the Gambian National Assembly, the Serekunda Health Center, and Banjul Upper Basic School.

Five SMCM students studied the Wolof language at St. Mary's College during the summer, 2007. The course was taught by Bala Saho. Bala was the first Gambian to attend the HSMC/SMCM historic archaeology field school (1998), and currently is pursuing his PhD in African History at Michigan State University.

SMCM faculty members Roy Hopkins (psychology), Jeff Byrd (biology), Katherine Socha (mathematics) and Julie King (anthropology) visited The Gambia for the first time this past May. Al Hovland (chemistry) and Terry Leonard (library) made their second trip to The Gambia, and Femi Ojo-Ade (international languages and cultures) joined us from Nigeria. SMCM faculty met their UTG faculty counterparts and UTG students, and Terry Leonard organized a donation of supplies for the UTG and its library. We also enjoyed the experience of role reversal while in Gambia. Faculty members learned from the expertise and experiences acquired by our own students who were taking part in the service-learning semester.

Upcoming Events

A cohort of thirteen Nitze scholar students enrolled in their Leadership and Service seminar this fall will travel to Senegal and Gambia after Christmas.

We look forward to hosting another exchange student from the UTG next spring semester, and possibly two interns from the Gambia YMCA.

Bala Saho has indicated his willingness to teach the Wolof language next summer at SMCM. This will be a great opportunity for students planning to go to Gambia in the fall, 2008.

The PEACE program hopes to offer an opportunity for one or two SMCM faculty to travel to The Gambia next summer while the field study program is taking place and experience the program first hand. These faculty would also be encouraged to explore possibilities for professional development or teaching at the UTG. Stay tuned for details.