



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.

This is the second issue of *The Peace Advocate*. St. Mary's program in The Gambia, West Africa has grown steadily since 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.

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

Four St. Mary's students arrived in The Gambia on January 14, 2008 to begin their five-month program of language, culture and service-oriented learning. Based in Happy Camp, Kanifing Estates, the students completed an intensive orientation to the country and are currently enrolled in a 4-credit *Wolof language and Gambian culture* course. Students have registered for three or more courses at the University of The Gambia. All students volunteer in a Gambian school, and all will begin a 4-credit service-learning course in the following areas:

orphan services, pediatrics, malaria control and education, education and English language learning. Professor emeritus Femi Ojo-Ade is in The Gambia with the cohort teaching two courses at the UTG and assisting with development of the University's French and History programs.

Three SMCM students in the MAT program received scholarships to support a two-month student teacher internship in The Gambia. The students plan to leave in March. They will live in Happy Camp and teach at Greater Banjul Upper Basic School, located near the UTG offices in Kanifing about a 25-minute walk from the SMCM residence.

Twelve SMCM students returned in mid-December (2007) from the *Signature Semester* in The Gambia. Nine of the students were Nitze scholars, and this was the largest semester cohort to live in Gambia. Students returned after many challenging and uplifting experiences over the course of their three and a half months in country, full of ideas about how to improve and strengthen the program. There will be a reception in the near future for all students who have been or are thinking about going to Gambia for a semester program.

Thirteen Nitze scholar students were led on a 19-day Senegambian safari by Professors Bill Roberts, Michael Taber and Deborah O'Donnell from December 28, 2007 – January 15, 2008. PEACE program language coordinator Baboucarr Jallow accompanied the group on its 1600 kilometer trip through holy sites in Touba, Kaolack and Medina Gounass, as well as a visit to the largest Senegalese nature reserve in Niokolo Koba, and from there onward as far as Bassari country on the frontier with *Moyenne* Guinea. Watch for the forthcoming publication, *Tubab Cadeaux*.

UTG PEACE exchange student scholar Jerro Saikyhan returned to The Gambia after a very successful and fulfilling fall semester, 2007. The current UTG PEACE exchange student scholar, Mod Talla Ceesay, arrived at St. Mary's on January 7, 2008. He is enjoying meeting all the members of the SMCM community who have visited Gambia and have made an effort to meet him. Mod Talla is a history major and hopes to one day become a demographer. He is taking classes in history and sociology this spring.

The PEACE program provided a scholarship to UTG student Mariama Ceesay for RT airfare to attend the spring semester at SMCM's Signature partner Payap University. Payap is providing Mariama with a scholarship for tuition, room and board for the semester. Mariama is the first African student to attend Payap University.

Welcome back for a second semester Marie Rose Thorpe, Rachel Mendy and Farimang Jawara. Gambian art major Ya Haddy Njie returned to SMCM after a fall semester at CMRS/Oxford.

Visit to SMCM by University of The Gambia Senior Administration

University of The Gambia Vice Chancellor Andreas Steigen (University of Bergen, Norway) will lead a delegation from the UTG to St. Mary's College next month. The group consists of his wife, Elsa Steigen, UTG Registrar Sam Lamin Jaiteh, and UTG Director for International Affairs and Information Gumbo Touray. The delegation arrives February 20 for a four-day visit before leaving for St. Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Look for an e-mail soon with the delegation's itinerary and invitations about when and where you can come meet our partners in PEACE. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to help welcome our friends from Gambia, and come talk about how you can contribute to not only a program, but the creation of a new national university culture on the other side of the Atlantic.

2008 Summer Field Study Program Deadline Approaches

The deadline for the 2008 Gambia Summer Field Study Program (May 24 – July 12, 2008) is February 15. This year's program 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.

2008 Fall Signature Semester in The Gambia

PEACE Professor Femi Ojo-Ade leads the third Signature Semester in The Gambia next fall from August 15 – December 15, 2008. All students will have their RT airfare paid for by the College, and live in Happy Camp, Kanifing Estate.

Last year the UTG Faculty Senate endorsed the Signature Semester, so that next fall's courses will appear on the UTG timetable and be available for credit to UTG students. I expect the seminars will fully enroll at 25 SMCM and UTG students.

Next semester's program will continue to improve upon previous experience by offering additional and revised courses. Examples of courses that will be offered next fall semester include the following:

Gambian Language and Culture (4 credits), Baboucarr Jallow
Service-learning Internship/Directed Research (4 credits), Bill Roberts/Yamai
Secka-Jack
Biology Field Study: Gambian Environmental Management Issues (2 credits),
Ebrima Njie
African Leaders in the Modern Era (4 credits), Femi Ojo-Ade
Human Rights in Africa (4 credits), Aboubacarr Senghore
Islam in Africa (4 credits), Oumar Jah
Poverty and Development in The Gambia (4 credits), Gumbo Touray

We anticipate students will also be able to take regular course offerings from all the courses available through UTG.

Contact Bill Roberts, LaRita Hagar and Jane Hambel if you have questions about the fall program.

Upcoming Events

The PEACE program still hopes to announce 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. Interested faculty members are encouraged to explore possibilities for professional development or teaching at the UTG. Plan to come meet the Gambia delegation and see whether your interests and expertise can be matched with the UTG's expressed need for summer semester courses.