



## 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.

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This is the third 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. Three Gambian students are now earning 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

### **A Review of 2008**

It's been almost a year since the last issue of *The PEACE Advocate* came out. Much has happened. In February, 2008, (former) Vice Chancellor Andreas Steigen, his wife Elsa, (former) Director for International Affairs Gumbo Touray, and the University Registrar Sam Lamin Jaiteh visited the College. The delegation greatly appreciated our hospitality and collegiality, and encouraged

the College's senior administration to come to Gambia and sign a revised Memorandum of Understanding between our two institutions. In September, Vice President for Development Torre Meringolo and Assistant Vice President for Academic Administration Mark Heidrich went to Gambia and signed the new MOU.

During the spring semester, 2008, four SMCM students participated in the service-learning semester at the UTG. Their internship/directed research work sites included The Point Newspaper as copy editor (english major), the infant ward at the Pediatrics Unit of the Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital (biology major), Campama Psychiatric Hospital and Polyclinic at Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital (psychology major), and the Divisional Health Headquarters and Serekunda Health Center (anthropology major). Three MAT students taught at Greater Banjul Upper Basic (middle school). They returned from the Gambia in May 2008 after many challenging and uplifting experiences over the course of their four and a half months. They have contributed new ideas about how to improve and strengthen the program.

UTG PEACE exchange student scholar Mod Talla Ceesay (history/sociology) returned to The Gambia after a very successful and fulfilling spring semester, 2008. Mod Talla made lasting friends at St. Mary's who are supporting his recommendation for sponsoring Gambian students struggling to pay school fees.

St. Mary's partnered with Payap University and sponsored UTG biology major Mariama Ceesay to spend the spring semester studying in the Thai Studies program. Unfortunately, no SMCM students went to Payap last spring (that has changed with spring 2009), but Mariama has formed an international student club since returning to Gambia and has met all subsequent SMCM students who study in Gambia.

Eleven students took part in the 2008 Gambia Summer Field Study Program, from May 24 – July 12, 2008. The program is generally led by Professors Bill Roberts (anthropology) and Deborah O'Donnell (psychology). Professor Teresa Field responded to University of The Gambia Vice Chancellor Andreas Steigen's idea about a "teach for The Gambia" program for UTG graduates, and traveled with the students to Gambia and met her counterparts at Gambia College and the UTG. The seven-week, eight-credit program included an intensive introduction to Gambian society, language and culture, followed by a week-long trip along the length of the country. Student majors from anthropology, biology, chemistry, economics, French, and psychology assisted by SMCM faculty and Gambian mentors, undertook their own first-hand research during the final month. Psychology professor Roy Hopkins joined the group for the final month.

Several students worked with Orlando Ridout V (Maryland Historical Trust) and Bob Agee on a feasibility study for the creation of an historic district in the Gambian capital Banjul. Syracuse University archaeologist Liza Gijanto conducted the first urban excavations in the Banjul ward of Half-Die, named for the impact of a cholera epidemic.

Dean of Students, Laura Bayless, Assistant Dean of Students, Joanne Goldwater and International Education Associate, Jane Hambel traveled to The Gambia for two weeks in June. They spent part of their trip in The Gambia and concluded their trip in Dakar, Senegal.

Chair of Syracuse University's Anthropology department, Christopher DeCorse, joined the group at World Heritage Site Gorée Island just before the students and Professor Hopkins returned to the United States. DeCorse and wife Maggie, Gijanto and Roberts joined UTG alum and Cultural Officer for the NCAC's Research and Documentation Division, Bakary Sagnia, and did a reconnaissance of historical archaeology sites along the river. Together, St. Mary's College and Syracuse University will create an opportunity for a future UTG graduate to earn an advanced degree and training to become the Gambia's first archaeologist.

PEACE professor emeritus Femi Ojo-Ade led the return of seven SMCM students to Gambia in August. Femi completed his third semester in The Gambia and continued his efforts to develop the University of The Gambia's French and History programs. Dr. Pierre Gomez, head of the French Unit at the University of The Gambia, is the new academic liaison for the SMCM/UTG PEACE program.

Gambian SMCM student, Rachel Mendy returned to her homeland as the first Overseas Resident Assistant at Happy Camp, Kanifing Estate. Six other SMCM students spent four months at Happy Camp as the third Signature Semester cohort. Students had a choice of seminar sized courses taught by UTG faculty in African History, Human Rights in Africa, and Environmental Management. Professor Ojo-Ade taught African Leaders in the Modern World a second time. Students were also able to select regular UTG courses if they wished. Everyone enrolled in a 4-credit *Wolof language and Gambian culture* course. Two students registered for the service-learning internship/directed research course and worked at the Child Protection Alliance and a lower basic school (primary school). Everyone returned on December 15, 2008, after a visit to Gorée Island.

UTG PEACE exchange student scholar, Sulayman Jammeh (economics), completed the fall semester at St. Mary's College. He enjoyed meeting all the members of the SMCM community who had visited Gambia and made an effort to meet him. Sulayman then spent a month with his brother in Wisconsin. He returned to Gambia on the same plane as the spring 2009 service-learning semester cohort, January 15, 2009.

UTG student Majula Sagnia (economics) studied at Payap University during the fall with the SMCM cohort led by Professor Ho Nguyen. She is the second UTG student to study there in what has been a successful program between Payap, SMCM, and the UTG.

Finally, PhD candidate in African History, Assan Sarr (Michigan State U), returned to SMCM as Gambian PEACE scholar in residence. Assan was the first UTG student to participate in the summer historic archaeology program at

Historic St. Mary's in 2003. While at SMCM Assan wrote several chapters of his dissertation, helped teach a Peoples and Cultures of Senegambia class, and offered to teach Wolof to SMCM students going to Gambia.

### **2009 Spring Service-Learning Semester in The Gambia**

Professor Ojo-Ade led eleven SMCM students to The Gambia last week. They have begun an intense orientation to the country, beginning daily Wolof language and Gambian culture classes. During the first week they meet faculty, staff and students from the University of The Gambia, and will take part in the coming weekend's convocation. Next week they will begin meeting with representatives from potential internship sites, and classes at the UTG. Students return May 31, concluding with several days in Dakar at Gorée Island.

UTG PEACE exchange student scholar, Malang Fanneh (history), began the spring semester at St. Mary's College last week, while his peer Bintou Sonko is the third UTG student to study in the Thai Studies program at Payap University in Chiang Mai.

### **Upcoming Events**

A Gambian delegation is headed to the Society for Applied Anthropology annual meeting in Santa Fe in March as part of a dual session that will include five SMCM students who studied in Gambia in 2008. Most of the delegation will visit the College after the meetings.

Gambian student Ya Haddy Njie, senior art major, should graduate in May, *inshallah*. Welcome back PEACE program student associate Marie Rose Thorpe, a sophomore human studies major and Nitze Scholar, who helped with this newsletter, and Rachel Mendy, a sophomore independent student designed major.

### **Fall 2009 Signature Semester in The Gambia**

A Senegambian environmental/wildlife studies theme is being planned for the fall semester. Visiting Biology Professor Christy Wolovich will hopefully continue her relationship with the SMCM as the next PEACE professor at the University of The Gambia, offering an Ecology and Conservation seminar course. UTG faculty will offer seminar courses in Environmental Management (chemistry) and African Literature. Students will have access to a full complement of UTG courses, or the service-learning internship/directed research, and the Wolof Language and Gambian culture course.

St. Mary's College provides round trip airfare to The Gambia for students accepted into the program. Applications for the fall 2009 semester are due to the International Education Office March 1, 2009.