



THE PEACE ADVOCATE



**An occasional newsletter about SMCM's Gambia PEACE program
Special *Tobaski* and Thanksgiving Issue
Number 8**

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 special *Tobaski* and Thanksgiving issue of *The PEACE Advocate* comes to you directly from The Gambia, West Africa. The St. Mary's program in The Gambia, West Africa has grown steadily since its inception in 1996. Its designation as an SMCM Signature Program in 2006 was in recognition for a full decade of mutually beneficial collaborative activity with a wide range of educational, research and service organizations in The Gambia. Every year, SMCM students, faculty, staff, and community members travel to The Gambia through this program. SMCM's PEACE program in The Gambia is uniquely positioned to enhance academic excellence at both the University of The Gambia and St. Mary's College of Maryland.

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
Kololi

2010 Fall Signature Semester

Eleven SMCM juniors and one sophomore begin their final month of the semester. The next month will be full. *Tobaski* is the big Muslim feast day on the

horizon, where Gambian sharing and caring is shown by giving away large amounts of meat from a sheep or other animal sacrificed in recognition of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his own son for Alla (<http://www.accessgambia.com/information/tobaski-feast-festival.html>). Next is a five day field trip titled "Saints & Soils: the ecology of Senegambian response to colonialism." Professor Rory Turner (Goucher College) will join us for much of the trip, and then return with us to Gambia for Thanksgiving. The end of the semester after exams concludes with a trip upriver to Niokolo Koba national park in Senegal (<http://www.niokolo.com/>) followed by a day on Gorée Island (<http://webworld.unesco.org/goree/en/index.shtml>). Students have been engaged in service-learning/directed research projects in Greater Banjul Upper Basic School, the National Agricultural Research Institute, the National Centre for Arts and Culture, the Gambia Family Planning Association, the Point News, Makasutu Wildlife Trust at Abuko, the Child Protection Alliance, and the Banjul City Council.

2011 Fall Signature Semester PEACE Professor Sought

The PEACE Professor tradition began with the designation of The Gambia PEACE program as a Signature Semester. Professors Ho Nguyen, Femi Ojo-Ade, Christy Wolovich, and Bill Roberts have served as the PEACE professor to the University of The Gambia. The PEACE professor teaches one seminar style course for all SMCM participants that is open to enrolment by UTG students. The professor also teaches one course that is generally identified by the UTG from their curriculum. The PEACE professor meets weekly with the student participants, and, together with the program director and the program coordinator, seeks to create an enabling environment for cultural and educational exchange. The term of service is mid-August until mid-December, 2011.

The person selected for this position will receive a RT ticket to The Gambia, a stipend, health insurance, and advances to help pay for food, transportation, and communication expenses. The program director and coordinator will provide as much support as possible for the next PEACE professor.

If you are interested, please contact the PEACE program director, wcroberts@smcm.edu.

Greet the UTG Students at SMCM

Be sure to say hello to UTG exchange student Jarrai Gassama, when you see her on campus. Many of you reading this should be able to practice either your Wolof or Mandinka language skills with Jarrai.

Next semester (spring 2011) you can say hello: *Nanga def?! Nakam?* (Wolof) or *A bei nyadi?* (Mandinka), when you see Sering Touray, an economics major and computer science minor who is also the Secretary General of the University of The Gambia Student Union, and the next UTG exchange student to attend SMCM (January, 2011).

SMCM alum serves in Peace Corps, The Gambia

Sonja Kubic (2010) was sworn in as an education volunteer in September, 2010, and is now living and working in Fatoto, a small town on the far eastern end of the country, south bank. One of her peers said recently about her, "Her *pulaar* (Fulfulde) is excellent, she was trying to translate the *Kite Runner* into the local language during her training."

ANTH 150, Gambian Languages and Cultures taught next spring

Bala Saho, the first Gambian to come to SMCM and take part in the 1998 Historic Archaeology Field school at Historic St. Mary's City, will teach Gambian Languages and Cultures (concentration on Wolof) during the spring semester, 2011. Since 1998, Bala has served as the Cultural Officer in the Research and Documentation Division of the National Centre (formerly Council) for Arts and Culture (NCAC). Bala earned an MA in African Studies with a major concentration in anthropology at the University of Illinois, and is currently completing his PhD in African History at the Michigan State University. He was named Director General of the NCAC in June, 2010.

This is an excellent preparatory course for any student considering fulfilling core curricular requirements for Experiencing the Liberal Arts in the World (ELAW) in The Gambia.

A Season for Caring and Sharing

Mod Talla Ceesay came to SMCM during the 2008 spring semester. A history major from the UTG, Mod Talla befriended many people at SMCM during the semester. He returned to Gambia and, upon completion of his requirements for a degree with a history major from the UTG, was awarded the History prize at the commencement exercises, 2010. He also was given a promotion to principal at his own school. However, Mod Talla was severely debilitated by a hip infection, and had to be medically evacuated to Dakar for treatment. After he has completed a long, intensive antibiotics treatment, he will be eligible for prosthetic surgery on his hip.

The Gambia Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education helped Mod Talla with an interest free loan, but it may not be sufficient to cover the cost of his ongoing treatment. Further, the payment arrangements for Mod Talla's loan will take half his already meager salary.

If you know Mod Talla, or even if you don't, if you could give the financial equivalent of one drink of good cheer to a fund that will help Mod Talla meet the challenges ahead of him, you will receive many *dua* (blessings) from the Senegambia.

Please contact LaRita Hagar (ldhagar@smcm.edu) if you wish to make a donation to Mod Talla.

PEACE program strengthens connections between Payap U and UTG

The first UTG student selected to study at Payap University, Ms. Mariama Ceesay (SP 2008) graduated from the UTG as the best female science student in 2010. This semester (FA 2010), the sixth consecutive UTG student, Ms. Awa Sillah, is entering her final month of study at Payap before returning to Senegambia and the UTG to continue her studies. UTG student Seedy Drammeh (Development Studies major) will be only the second UTG male student to study at Payap during the spring semester, 2011.

Mr. Thanawuth Kittivan (aka Champ) will be the first Payap student to study with the SMCM PEACE program in The Gambia, spring 2011. Champ is an English major in his final semester at Payap, who has received approval to complete research for his senior seminar paper in The Gambia. Happy Camp will be the venue for US American, Thai and Gambian cultural interactions during the spring semester, 2011!

Gambia Social and Health Assessment (G-SAHA) study update

Professors Debbie O'Donnell (PI) and Bill Roberts were featured at the second UTG Seminar Series for the 2010-11 academic year on Wednesday, October 6. Their presentation, "Preliminary Findings of the Gambian Social and Health Assessment Survey (G-SAHA)," will be given again to the UTG Social Science student club on Friday, November 12, and the basis for a presentation next March at the annual meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology in Seattle, Washington.

The G-SAHA research team recently completed an additional round of data collection at Essau Senior Secondary School in Niimi district, and is collecting data at Nusrat Senior Secondary School in Serekunda. This effort will bring the total number of senior secondary schools surveyed to six (just under 10% of all senior secondary schools in The Gambia) and the number of students to just over 950.

Five SMCM Students plan to study in The Gambia, Spring 2011

A cohort of five students majoring in biology (2), psychology (1) and anthropology (2) have been accepted for study through the PEACE program in The Gambia for the spring semester, 2011. The students will leave January 15, 2011 to begin their four and a half month program in The Gambia. For the first time, SMCM students will have a University of Payap student joining them for the program. Two MAT students will join the group in late March, 2011, for a six-week student teaching experience at Greater Banjul Upper Basic School (grades 7 – 9).

Goucher College Faculty member to visit The Gambia

Professor Rory Turner (Goucher College), son of the famous anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner (UVa), will visit Senegambia between November 20 – 28. Professor Turner will join the group on its "Saints and Soils" field trip to Senegal, share Thanksgiving with PEACE program participants and partners on Thursday,

November 25, and visit the UTG before returning to Baltimore. This visit is another step in the process towards formalizing an agreement between Goucher and SMCM so that in the future Goucher students will be able to join their SMCM peers for a semester of study in The Gambia through the PEACE program.

Educational Studies submits Fulbright-Hays Application

Professor Katy Arnett submitted an application in October for the EGRETS project to Fulbright-Hays. One of the primary aims of the EGRETS (Exploring Gambian Resources for English Teaching in Schools) project is to focus approaches used in the Gambian educational context to provide English language and subject content learning to Gambian students. For the vast majority of Gambian school children, the English language is a second or third language (not their mother tongue), which presents interesting parallels with the fastest growing demographic in US American schools, English Language Learners (ELLs). The PEACE program congratulates Katy and her colleagues on their efforts and will provide all the support possible support to ensure the success of their project if funded, *inshallah!*

2011 Fall Signature Semester

Time to begin thinking about study abroad in Senegambia next fall! The Fall Signature program dates (approximately) are August 19 – December 14, 2011. The Signature Semester will be led by an SMCM faculty member yet to be selected, working in collaboration with the outstanding PEACE program team: Yamai Secka-Jack (coordinator), Baboucarr Jallow (language and culture coordinator), and language and culture instructors Nalsatou Konteh Jatta and Awa Ceesay.

If you have questions about the program, please check the website (www.smcm.edu/gambia) or contact program director Bill Roberts (wroberts@smcm.edu).

Wishing you PEACE and Good Cheer
for *Tobaski* and Thanksgiving!