

M.Sc. in Nursing at the University of Asmara

Yoftahe Kibrom



Dr. Hibreniguss

Three students will enroll for a Master's Degree in Nursing at the University of Asmara's College of Health Sciences this April.

The two-year distance education program is an extension of the College's linkage program with the State University of New York at Stonybrook, which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The College has had linkage programs with the State University of New York, John Hopkins University, and the University of California at Berkeley since 1998. The universities have been involved in strengthening college facilities, curricula development, and staff development. The College, in its attempt to develop its manpower, has sent five students for

M.Sc. degrees and one for a Ph. D. to these partner universities.

The postgraduate program in Nursing at the College is also part of the College's staff development effort. The three graduate students to enroll in the program will specialize in Pediatric Nursing, Psychiatric Nursing, and Midwifery. They will, upon completion of their two-year studies, join the Department of Nursing.

Dr. Hibreniguss Terefe, Acting Dean of the College of Health Sciences, said that this will alleviate the acute staff shortage the department is facing.



Department of Nursing lab equipment

Another seven students, currently enrolled at the B.Sc. program in Nursing, will also start their M.Sc. studies after a semester.

The College decided to train its members here at the University through distance education, because it will be cost-effective enabling the College to train more students. It has received 10 computers to facilitate the postgraduate courses and another 12 for other College activities from Stonybrook. Visiting lecturers from the State University of New York will also take part in the postgraduate program.

The Nursing Department has a laboratory used for basic practical sessions. Students also visit medical institutions in town. "Since Nursing is directly related to patients," said Dr. Hibreniguss, "students go to different clinics."

Dr. Hibreniguss said, "Producing nurses at the M.Sc. level means changing the delivery of health system in the country."

He said it will also improve students' attitudes toward Nursing, as well as turn attention to local problems by undergoing research relevant to the country.

Education for Women: Overcoming Traditional Attitudes

Yosief Tekle

In many countries, women are kept in traditional roles, and the constraints on their lives are often ignored. Unequal access to education consigns many women to lives of low status and large families.

These inequalities exclude women from the full benefits of development and from making full contributions as citizens. Despite this, some women still manage to make outstanding achievements in their education, improving their own lives and those of other women.

One such exceptional woman is Dr. Sr. Lettedinghil Ogbamichael, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Asmara. Breaking from Eritrean norms, Sr. Lettedinghil

completed secondary school in Eritrea and earned undergraduate and masters degrees in the United States, and Ph.D. degrees in England. She came to work at the University of Asmara in 1993, after completing her masters degree.



Sister Lettedinghil

Challenges

Most women are taught to follow the traditional way, get married and raise a family. But Sr. Lettedinghil's parents always wanted her to study. Her village school around Ala ended at 2nd grade, and she was forced to attend 3rd grade in another school. She remembers that she was the only girl in 3rd grade. The new school, however, was a two-hour walk from her home, so her parents decided to allow her to live with an aunt in Dekemhare.

"While my father was taking me to Dekemhare, we met an old man. Father told him that he was taking me to school in Dekemhare; the man was shocked, saying it was silly to take a girl to school and a waste of time and energy."

Sr. Lettedinghil says that her parents really understood the value of education as compared to other families in her village. "Kids are reflections of their parents: the basic education comes from the family, not from schools. The family members, espe-

cially mothers, can have a big influence on whether a girl will achieve well in school," she says.

Traditional beliefs

There is a continuing belief that there is little benefit in educating a girl when she could be working in the marketplace or fields or looking after younger children at home.

Sr. Lettedinghil's education has enriched her life, but has also benefited hundreds of students. Her years of dedicated teaching have helped to prepare professionals who are now teaching young Eritreans across the country.

Sr. Lettedinghil advises women to focus on education, regardless of the many factors that discourage them. "I have had a full range of opportunity, and I took advantage of it since my mind was not diverted to something else," she said.

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A Vertical Expansion for the University of Asmara

Yofstah Kibrom

A proposed new Masters of Science in Economics promises a higher developmental impact for the College of Business and Economics (CBE) on the Eritrean economy. Through the production of more skilled economists at the M.Sc. level, the College's output level will be higher than ever before.

The CBE held a workshop between February 18 and 19 at the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers hall to finalize its curriculum for the M.Sc. in Economics to be launched in September.

The College held the workshop because the curriculum, designed by the College's Postgraduate Mission, had to be commented on by partners and stakeholders to check its relevance, before it was submitted to the University Senate for approval.

Dr. Melake, Head of the Department of Economics and Finance, said, "The workshop was also intended to identify research priorities of the country and stakeholders so that research is fine-tuned according to national needs."

Workshop participants said that the University policy of enhancing research capability and gen-

erating knowledge that can tackle development problems should be taken into account in preparing any curriculum. Eritrea specific topics should also be addressed, they commented.

The three pillars of the University of Asmara's educational philosophy are relevance, quality, and sustainability. Participants said that emphasis should be on applied research to address immediate problems "without compromising quality in output". This would promote high-quality need-driven research.

More than 90 individuals from stakeholders – various ministries as well as the private sector through the Eritrean Chamber of Commerce – and the University of Groningen in The Netherlands attended the workshop.



Dr. Melake, Head of Economics & Finance Department

The University of Groningen has long been a strong and valuable partner with several departments at the University

of Asmara in both research and teaching efforts.

The College had conducted a needs-assessment survey with its local linkage partners – various ministries as well as the private sector through the Eritrean Chamber of Commerce – to analyze specific national needs for trained economists. It also sent a Postgraduate Mission to the Netherlands, which reviewed various programs of different universities and held discussions with partners. Members of the mission then designed the proposed curriculum.

The program is designed taking the interests of the society into account. Dr. Melake said, "It is meant to address immediate and long-term needs of the society." It will also have high-caliber output with internationally competitive standards.

The curriculum for M.Sc. in Economics will be approved by the University Senate between June and July, and the two-year program will start with five students in September.

According to Dr Melake, the vertical expansion the University is making through the Master's programs is a 'considerable step forward' in the educational opportunities for Eritrean society.

UOA Scientific Team Participates with MIT in Earthquake Project

Yosief Tekle

Professors Ghebrebrhan Ogubazghi and Woldai Ghebreab are leading an effort at the University of Asmara, Department of Earth Sciences, to use satellite technology to measure crustal movements in the soil of Eritrea and surrounding areas that are associated with the active spreading of the Red Sea.

In mid-March, a joint team from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and University of Asmara installed a Global Positioning System (GPS) station near Shieb--the first such instrumentation in Eritrea. The new project is being coordinated by MIT and includes participation from Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The project makes use of an existing GPS network of satellites, which transmit information that enables anyone with a GPS receiver to determine their own location very accurately.

Professor Robert Reilinger, a scientist at MIT on the team, said that they would like to put additional stations around the Danakil to measure the tectonic movements of the area.

“The joint team needs to work at least for the coming four years to check the deformations and tectonic activities of this region,” Reilinger said.

The international effort involves



Professors Woldai and Reilinger shake hands

establishing GPS stations that continuously record their location. By comparing the station locations between Eritrea and Saudi Arabia, the project will directly measure the drift of Arabia away from Africa. Over a period of three years, the project expects to be able to detect motions as low as 2mm per year.

In addition, the project will use GPS to survey other sites throughout Eritrea to detect fault motions that could produce local earthquakes. “The localities of Massawa and Bada, which have recently been affected by earthquakes, will benefit from the introduction of this technology,” said Dr. Ghebreberhan.

The project is expected to provide quantitative information on the locations of the most dangerous faults and the likelihood of future earthquakes. Such information is very important for planning future building and infrastructure development, according to Reilinger.

Geologists have known for more than 30 years that Arabia has been drifting away from Africa and new ocean floor is being created along the

central part of the Red Sea. This has been occurring for about the past 15 million years (not long for geologists). This drift continues today and is responsible for earthquakes that have affected Eritrea in the past.

However, Reilinger said, scientists do not know how rapidly Arabia is moving away from Africa or where the faults between the Arabian and African continents are located. Once the location of faults and rate of drift are determined, scientists will be in a better position to predict the timing and severity of future earthquakes in the region.

“As part of the project,” said the professor, “UOA scientists will develop expertise in all aspects of GPS technology, which will allow them to carry on and expand their geological work in the future.”

GPS is becoming widely used in a variety of other applications, including surveying, vehicle navigation (land, sea, air, space), resource exploration, ecological studies, farming, and measurements for construction projects. The UOA group is expected to become a local source of information on GPS, as this technology becomes more widely used in Eritrea.

University Extension Program

Tirhas Teklay

The Consultancy, Training and Testing Center (CTTC) of the University of Asmara is extending its role in providing educational opportunities for many citizens, and especially for those who would like to pursue a Bachelor's degree through an Extension Program.

After Eritrea's independence in 1991, the University of Asmara was revitalizing itself in building its capacity in every aspect. At that time it was unable to run an extension program, even if the demand had been there. Now the University has strengthened its capacity and human resources to initiate this program.

After making an in-depth needs assessment study, both inside and outside the University, on how many students are available, how much they are willing to pay, and what fields of study they would like to pursue, the CTTC decided to open this program.

In this semester, the departments of Accounting, Business Management, Economics and Finance, Public Administration,

Journalism & Mass Communication, and English are offering classes.

This program is the same as the day degree program in its curriculum and in its course offerings. It differs from the day program in that students are allowed to join the extension program



Dr. Bissrat Ghebru

with a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0, based on two matriculation sittings, provided they fulfill the other requirements. Students must have a GPA of 2.4 to be accepted to the day degree program at the University.

Students taking courses at CTTC must pay 305 Nacfa per credit. When asked about the high fees, Dr. Bissrat Ghebru, Director of the CTTC said, "We didn't plan to make the fees high. But our internal research at the University revealed that the government spends nearly 12,000 Nacfa a year to educate

one student in the non-science based departments. Based on that cost, we decided to charge 305 Nacfa / credit. So, we are not above any other price that is paid for higher education. Unfortunately, there is a very little we can do. As a new institute we need to cover our costs. But if people are eager enough to seek this education, they have to look hard for scholarship funds."

Dr. Bissrat, added that the University hopes ministries will create 2-3 scholarships a year to help their employees. The money should not be the issue, as the opportunity should be seen as a positive thing.

In order to make the life of the students easy and to facilitate the learning process, the CTTC opened a new branch office in the University. Thus, students are advised not only to visit the CTTC, but also they can visit the coordinator of the extension programs at the University. The office is going to be open even in the evening hours.

Stakeholders Conference in Education

Tirhas Teklay

The Faculty of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Curriculum and Instruction/School of Education, New Mexico State University, USA, held a conference at the Eritro-German Centre, from March 11th to 12th, 2004. The purpose of the conference was to discuss issues regarding profiles of school directors, future education graduate programs and special needs education.

In the opening address, Dr. Tadesse Mehari, delegate of Dr. Wolde-Ab Yisak, president of the University of Asmara, said that the conference was probably the first of its kind, as it was held at a crucial time when the University was making preparations to embark on Masters programs, in some selected fields of study.

The conference was chaired by Sr. Lettedenghil Ogbamicael, Dean of the Faculty of Education, and Dr. Alex A. Dumbuya, a visiting professor from the New Mexico State University. Dr. Alex played a key role in establishing the linkage, helping organize the conference and finding sponsors.

Among the papers presented at the conference was a proposal for a masters program in Educational Leadership (Educational Administration). Preliminary research shows a discrepancy between the ideal school direc-



Conference participants at Eritro-German Auditorium

tor and the actual situation of most directors in Eritrea. Participants also voiced a need for teacher licensing. Moreover, a panel discussed the need for education graduate programs in subject area specialities, particularly in the natural and social science subjects.

Papers on middle school education and special needs education were presented. Special needs education is a teaching strategy used to help children with some obvious physical disabilities, such as blindness or deafness. However, the study indicated that there are multi-form disabilities that need identification and special treatment.

The conference was well attended and participants included: academic staff from the University of Asmara, Ministry of Education personnel, school directors and representatives from the

Institute of Technology, Mai-Nefhi.

The conference generated useful observations and recommendations. As a follow up, one academic staff from the Faculty of Education will visit New Mexico State University and observe how they run it. Later, one or two staff members from the New Mexico State will visit Asmara, observe how we serve the Faculty and possibly give workshops on how to run it better. If all goes as planned, graduate assistants from the Faculty will be able to attain their Masters and/or Ph.D. degrees from the University of New Mexico State, at no cost to Eritrea, said Sr. Lettedenghil.

Ciao Bella – Italian Spoken Here!

Yosief Tekle

The Modern European Languages Unit at the University of Asmara launched new non-credit classes in Italian language this semester.

Already the first-year course has more than 200 registered students and staff members. “We had to turn away the second-year students because we can not accommodate the large numbers who wish to learn Italian,” said Signora Elisa Solomone, the Italian instructor. “We’ll allow second-year students to take the courses next fall”.



Signora Elisa Solomone

Signora Solomone said that it is important to offer Italian language because many people, especially the youth, like to know the language. Many are familiar with Italian, as there are a lot of Italian words used in Eritrea, which may increase their interest in knowing the language, she added.

Though Italian language is given in Italian schools in Asmara, there was concern that it was not given at university level. The language could be useful for

future employment as well as enjoyment.

For the time being, the non-credit Italian courses will be offered for four years. Signora Solomone hopes that Italian will become a credit course in the near future. She also expects to have a minor course in Italian language, so that some people can specialize in it in the future.

Meanwhile the University Senate approved a minor in French language, which will consist of 10 courses and will be operational by September 2004.

By 2005, the university also plans to start classes in German. “We are in touch with the German Embassy’s Cultural Exchange Bureau,” said Prof Tej Dhar, Dean of the College of Arts. “The embassy promised to cooperate in any way it can, and we expect to bring in a German language expert by February 2005.”

Ammonites: Walking on Fossils at UOA

Aman Fikre, Department of Earth Sciences, 3rd year

Have you ever noticed loop-like structures on the floors and stairs of the main building of the University of Asmara? If you have, you seem to be a good paleontologist.

More than 40 fragments of these loop-like structures, which are scientifically known as ammonites, have been preserved in the red fossiliferous limestone of the beautiful university tiles. Ammonites are one of the important ancient guide fossils, which were not lucky enough to survive until today.

They suffered mass extinction at the end of the Cretaceous period, which was 65 million years ago.

Since ammonites existed during a specific time in geologic history—Devonian to Cretaceous (408 to 65 million years ago)—they are widely used by



Ammonites in university main building

paleontologists as age correlation index fossils. The fact that there is no red fossiliferous limestone in Eritrea makes the presence of these ammonites on the university floors interesting.

Normally, we would be confused about the origin of these tiles. Instructors in the Earth Sciences Department suspect that these tiles were imported from Italy. However, it was Prof Thomas Krenser, a new member of the Earth Sciences Department, who proved this suspicion. He said, "I have seen these rocks in the Alps."

Prof Krenser told us that they are part of the Jurassic (208 to 144 million years ago) fossiliferous limestones found in the Dolomite mountains in the northern part of Italy. These index fossils are commonly known as Ammonitico-Rosso in the Italian literature.

The University of Asmara was founded as The Holy Family University Institute in 1958 by members of the Italian missionary congregation Piae Madres Nigritiae or Camboni Sisters. The perseverance and determination of the Camboni Sisters was unflagging. They managed to secure the necessary funds to begin construction on a new building to house the growing number of students (486 by 1963). In 1964, Emperor Haile Selassie attended the ceremony laying the first stone for today's Main Building. We can thank the Camboni Sisters for bringing these ammonites to Asmara.

New Appointments

Academic Appointments

Dr. Ilya Kachirski was appointed as Head of the Department of Physics.

The Office of Public Relations and Communications invites staff, faculty and students to contribute to the University of Asmara's monthly News Bulletin and other publications. We welcome everyone to use our office.

You can visit the University of Asmara website at www.uoa.edu.er for updated information on the University's activities.