

Interview With Dr. Wolde-Ab Yisak

University Launches Post graduate program and departments prepare their strategic plans

Tirhas Teklay

University of Asmara has made/scored major accomplishments in the academic year 2003/2004, stated Dr. Wolde-ab Yisak in a short interview with our office.

“This has been an exiting year. We spent a great deal of energy on three important tasks. First, we have gone through a sustainable strategic planning process. Every department - both academic and administrative – has learned how to plan and build its program effectively from the bottom up,” said Dr. Wolde-Ab Yisak, when asked about this year’s major accomplishments at the university

A major component of the University strategic plan requires that every department generate at least 20% of its own financial resources. The newly reorganized Consultancy,

Training and Testing Center (CTTC) will spearhead the process of selling the university’s competence to the outside world and thereby providing the country with highly qualified professionals. Many consultancies have already opened at the CTTC and they are developing new contacts all the time.

The launch of a Research Master’s Program at the University is another of this year’s major achievements.

For the past decade, the university has expanded and consolidated its undergraduate programs, and now it is moving on to the next logical phase of development. The graduate program will integrate teaching, research, and service, filling the skills gap from which the country is suffering and also avoiding a serious brain drain, added Dr. Wolde-Ab.

Within the university’s current capacities, ten departments have been selected to initiate graduate

Administration, Management and others.

The third accomplishment outlined by Dr. Wolde-Ab, is the evolution of the University as a national research center. “Research will have an enormous impact in making the life of qualified intellectuals more meaningful,” said Dr. Wolde-Ab. All research in the near future will be based on one of five themes, which will be organized through new research centers. These include agriculture, development, national resources and environment, gender, and a Traditional Medicinal Plants and Drug Discovery Center. Each of these centers will involve collaboration between academic staff and graduate students from several departments.

Funding for the new centers is promising, particularly from the government of The Netherlands which is interested in providing major investments over the next four years. This environment will be healthy for the undergraduate students as well, observed Dr. Wolde-Ab. “A lot of the knowledge gained through research will be integrated into the undergraduate programs,” he noted.



Dr. Wolde-Ab Yisak, President, University of Asmara

studies in September of this year. These are the departments of Plant Science, Animal Science, Land Resources and Environment, English, Economics, Biology, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, Mathematics and Geography. Other departments are looking to start a Masters Program next year (2005) after they get new faculty members. These departments include Statistics and Demography, Archeology and Anthropology, Accounting, Public

Art Exhibit to Enliven Graduation Day

Graduating Artists Will Exhibit Their Work

Jennifer Wilder

Families and friends of graduating seniors will enjoy a special visual treat at graduation this year. Two graduating seniors, Mebratu Teklay and Lalemba Tsehaie, both trained and accomplished artists, will mount an exhibit of their work on graduation week for the pleasure of the many visitors to the University at that time. The paintings will be on display in Room D-125 (on the ground floor of the Law Faculty).

The paintings on display will reflect work by the artists over the past several years. Their focus is on the social and cultural life of the Eritrean people, depicting scenes from daily life, as well as landscapes that capture Eritrea's unique natural beauty.

Each of these artists has managed to combine his talent and love of art with a separate career. Mebrahtu who will graduate with a degree in Business Management, studied painting in 1997-98 under visiting Chinese artists through a program sponsored by the Ministry of Education, while earning a second

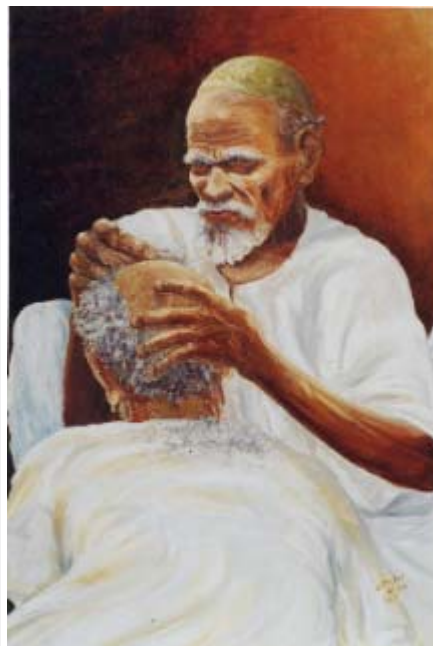


Artists Lalemba and Mebratu

certificate in Air Traffic Control in Addis Ababa. He took short courses in painting and drawing when he was younger and worked as an artist and art teacher in the early 1990s. He has shown his work at the Massawa Administration Hall, the Casa Degli Italiani in Asmara, and in Kuwait.

Lalemba too has been painting and exhibiting his work for many years, even while earning his degree in Anthropology and Archaeology. He has had solo shows at the Eritreo-German Center, the Zoba Administration Hall in Mendefera, and the Grande Italiani Hall in Dekemhare, and group shows in Kuwait, The CUA Hall and Casa Degli Italiani in Asmara, and the Administration Hall in Massawa. He taught for 6 years in the Education Department in the Liberated Zones of the E.P.L.F., served as an artist for the Department of Culture and later as a member of the Executive Committee of the Eritrean Fine Arts Association and as registrar and documentalist at the National Museum of Eritrea.

The exhibit is being generously sponsored by the University of Asmara. Information will be available and visitors interested in purchasing works will be able to contact the artists directly.



"Our heritage" - a painting by Lalemba Tsehaie

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Graduation: End of Education or Beginning of a New Challenge?

Yosief Tekle

He still remembers it as if it was yesterday, when he was a freshman, with a fresh mind determined to make a successful academic start. But today Daniel Tesfai is restless and busy buying suits, shoes, shirts, ties, and above all, making every preparation necessary for graduation day.

Four years ago his dream was to get a bachelor's degree; now it has become a reality. Daniel says, "Graduation day is a remarkable day because it is then when one reaps his/her fruit."

Graduation days are transition periods from the world of education to the world of work

At the University, graduation ceremony is one of the greatest celebrations of the academic year. The ceremony at University of Asmara and other universities of course, marks the end of a long period of extensive learning and research, and signals the commencement of a new period of intellectual growth that will take many to greater achievements ahead.

All family members and friends of graduates, who supported the graduates throughout their University life, should also enjoy graduation events.

In the 2003/2004 academic year of the University of Asmara, around 1,100 students, out of

which 190 women, will graduate in degree and diploma.

Graduation days are transition periods from the world of education to the world of work; but this is true only for some people. For others, it is a transition from one phase of education to another.

Most, however, would agree that graduation is not an end but rather the beginning of a new challenge, where one will continue to mature and learn from the world outside the university.

Many of the graduates of the University are now working in different ministries, organizations, companies, and other offices. The graduates have the chance to see what they learnt in the university displayed in real life. That helps them to check the level of knowledge they accumulated during their stay at the University.

Even though Daniel is delighted because he achieved a bachelor's degree, his ambition is more than that.

Graduation is not an end but rather the beginning of a new challenge.

"The fact that I was able to graduate does not mean that it is the end of my educational life. It is only the end of one phase in my life. I have a

feeling that I have to continue for a post-graduate degree," he says.

"The fact that I was able to graduate does not mean that it is the end of my educational life. It is only the end of one phase in my life."

For Daniel, and others like him, the emergence of new post-graduate programs at the University of Asmara next September may bring yet another higher educational training sooner than expected. With 10 departments starting programs this year, and others planning to launch in the near future, students at the University of Asmara will be able to realize their academic dreams sooner.

This year the University is graduating students in bachelor's degree, but after two years it will be graduating students in Masters Degree, if the post-graduate programs start coming fall as planned.

All of us in the University offer our greatest congratulations to this year's graduates and wish them happiness and success as they move on to new activities and challenges.

AEAS Attempting at Transforming the Agricultural System of Eritrea to Insure Food Security

Yoftahe Kibrom

The Association of Eritreans in Agricultural Sciences (AEAS), established in 1995 with the primary purpose of contributing to the growth and development of the agricultural profession in the country, intends to transform the agricultural system of Eritrea by playing an advisory role in agricultural policy making.

The Association was established with the help of people from the College of Agriculture (CoA), the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and Eritrean experts in the agricultural sciences outside Eritrea. The University has been a main actor in the Association.

“The University played a leading role at the inception of the Association,” said Dr. Tadesse Mehari, Director of Academic Affairs at the University.

Many of the members of the Association’s executive committee, including the chairperson, are from the College of Agriculture.

The Association occasionally organizes seminars and workshops to share ideas about ensuring food security in the country. Individuals from the MoA, the University, and NGO’s, as well as representatives of farmers from the zobas (administrative regions) attend the seminars and workshops.



Participants of the workshop on “Irrigation Development in Eritrea: Potentials and Constraints.”

“Faculty from the College of Agriculture play a major role in organizing such workshops,” said Dr. Tadesse.

In its annual General Assembly, the Association regularly assesses the nation’s agricultural system of the country, forwarding suggestions on improving agricultural policy and practice in the country. The Ministry of Agriculture provides an office for the Association.

The last workshop organized by the Association took place in August 2003. It was on “Irrigation Development in Eritrea: Potentials and Constraints.” Seventeen papers were presented and 130 people

participated. Workshop proceedings are being published.

The Association translates summaries of its workshops into Tigrigna for the benefit of farmers, the main actors in the field of agriculture in the country. The farmer representatives also share the information they gain in the workshops with their constituencies back in their zobas and villages.

“The members of the Association are also either researchers, policy makers or extension workers,” said Dr. Woldeslassie Ogubazghi, Chairperson of the Association and

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AEAS Attempting at Transforming ...

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Dean of the College of Agriculture. “So, they are always in direct contact with farmers to serve as a bridge between the Association and the farmers.”

The Association produces a biannual newsletter distributed among members, which publishes research findings in agricultural sciences and news on the activities of the Association to facilitate the transfer of information and sharing of ideas.

The CoA has the advantage of keeping track of its alumni through the Association. The relationship of the CoA and the Association, thus, benefits both the College and the Association. “The College shapes the Association, whereas the Association supports the College with feedback,” said Dr. Woldeselassie.



A workshop session at the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers hall

AEAS membership is open to all Eritreans and friends of Eritrea who subscribe to the goals and objectives of the Association and who hold a diploma or higher degree in agricultural sciences.

It has 490 registered members from various areas of specialization, including Plant Sciences, Animal Sciences, Soil and Water Conservation, Agricultural Engineering, Agricultural Economics and General Agriculture.

The Office of Public Relations and Communications invites staff, faculty and students to contribute to the University of Asmara 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.

Beautiful scene from upstairs of the Main Campus.

Department of Physics

Staff from Departments of Physics and Earth Science Department have observed the Venus Eclipse on 08 June 2004 using telescope and filter glass. One of the rarest events in planetary alignments has been in display.

The planet Venus, which is the second nearest to the Sun in our solar system, has been in linear alignment with the Earth and the Sun for 6 hours. Such transits of Venus across the disk of the Sun are among the rarest of planetary alignments. Indeed, only 6 events have occurred since the invention of the telescope (1631, 1639, 1761, 1769, 1874 and 1882). Every 122 years it reappears twice in 8 years time interval. The next expected transit of Venus will be on 08 June 2012.



Staff from Department of Physics looking at the Sun with the moderate telescope and filter glass.

This so-called Venus eclipse is different from the other eclipses such as Lunar and Solar Eclipses in that there is no significant region of Umbra and Penumbra formed on the

surface of the earth due to the blockage of the Sun's rays by the Venus. This is due to the smaller size of the Venus and distance from the Earth. As seen from the earth, Venus appears like a black spot and the phenomenon is called transit rather than eclipse.

Staff from the Department of Physics and Earth Science Department, have observed the event soon after they got the news. Prof. Iliia Kachirski, Head of the Department of Physics had arranged the procedure to his staff. Also Prof. Mengist Teklay from the Earth Science Department had supported the observers to focus and identify the object by locating the exact position of the Venus inside the disk of the Sun. They used hand telescope and dark glass filter to see the transit of Venus from the 4th floor of the Main campus. The scene was very fascinating and perceptible that any one could have seen it using a plastic or other translucent material; the dark spot on the surface of the Sun was Venus.

The events of the transit had been divided in to 5 phases (I, II, Greatest interval, III and IV). While some countries saw only some part of the phases, Eritrea was in the vicinity where the total transit was visible.

The Department of Physics has a young history of Astronomical Observatory. At the beginning of 1998 the honored Astronomer, Bengt Gustafsson had arranged to his students to see different stars and planets using his powerful telescope at the hill of Monguda , 15 Kms south of Asmara. When he explained



Transit of Venus across the disk of the Sun on June 08 2004

to his contemporary students about the feasibility of the installation of Astronomical Observatory in Eritrea, he assured them that the geographical location of Eritrea is suitable for the field of Astronomy. He also pointed out that the presence of high hills are excellent points of vantage from which an observer could descry a large group of stars at one time; the clear skies and similar day to night intervals are other favorable conditions to inaugurate the field of Astronomy in Eritrea.

People in Eritrea have been experiencing the art of observing astronomical objects. The Solar Eclipse, corona due to clouds in May 10, 1991, (two weeks before the day of independence), and the periodic comet launched in March 1994 were two good examples observed by people with the naked eye.

The Department of Physics still has one moderate telescope and plans to invite interested observers to see stellar bodies in the future.

The National Museum: A Cultural Heritage and a Research Center

Yoftahe Kibrom

With its precious and old paleontological, archaeological and ethnographic collections, the National Museum of Eritrea proves itself a heritage to the country. Its collections include a one-million-year old skull, and stone tools and pottery that were used 3000 years back

The Museum's frequent visitors include students from high schools and Italian schools in Asmara, as well as the University of Asmara's College of Social Sciences.

"Students come here for educational purposes," said Mr. Rezene Russom, Manager at the Museum's Cultural Resources Department. The Museum serves as a research center for senior University students. "Many students from the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology of the University conduct research here every year," said Rezene.

The students come in groups as well as on an individual basis. When students, organized by their teachers, visit the Museum as a group, they have to apply in advance to let the Museum staff arrange the tour and prepare guides for them. The staff of 18 is well-equipped to provide informative visits for students of every age.

The Museum also receives groups of American students with Eritrean professors on research visits. Mr. Rezene said, "Inspired by Eritreans,



Ethnographic collections in the Museum

they develop an interest in Eritrea and stay here for two to three weeks."

They also visit archaeological sites around the country during their stay. The Museum provides them with tour guides to show them around.

The National Museum arranges visits to archaeological sites such as Qohaito and Metera for participants of workshops organized by different ministries and institutions in the country, as well as diplomats on official visit to Eritrea. In cooperation with the youth and women's unions in the country, it co-organizes trips to those sites for members of the Eritrean diaspora.

There are thousands of archaeological sites around the country, and the Museum is trying to get some of them included in the world heritage list. At an international conference on modern heritage organized by UNESCO and held in Asmara in March 2004, the

museum suggested that Asmara be included in the list of modern heritage sites, and it expects a positive move.

However, Mr. Rezene said that they should have a national inventory to know the number and kinds of sites the country has. "We can then plan what to do, when and where," he said.

This would also enable the Museum to play a role in tourism and become a big employer. There is a plan for each of the six administrative regions in the country to have a museum of its own and one was opened in Massawa in 2000. The National Museum would then give advice and technical support to the regional museums.

The National Museum is open for visitors from 9:00 to 11:00am and from 3:00 to 5:00pm everyday except on Wednesdays and entertains visitors free of charge.

College of Education Teams Become Champions

Yosief Tekle



The College of Education beat Engineering-A with a score of 5-1 at the finals of the intercollegiate soccer competitions on June 21, 2004.

Education's success not only has come in football, but also in basketball, where they again beat Engineering 62-38 in the finals.

The competitions on both football and basketball were lovely and spirited. Many fans were giving their support to their respective teams.

In football, eight teams participated from the Colleges of Science, Agriculture, Health Science, Education, Law, Business and Economics, and two teams from Engineering. Those that reached semi-finals were Science, Education, and the two Engineering teams.

In basketball, four colleges competed: Engineering, Education,

Science, and Social Sciences. At the ultimate stages of the encounter, Engineering and Education reached the finals.

Competitions in volleyball did not take place because too few colleges were interested in participating, said Ato Teklemariam Ahferom (coach) of the Sports Department.

Also, athletics was not held due to "lack of human power and shortage of time."

Earlier, it was announced that the tournaments in chess and table tennis had already been finished and the winners were identified. In chess, Degol Ghirmay, 4th year Electrical Engineering student, stood first, Esey Ghirmay of Mechanical Engineering second and Mewa'el Ghebregabiher from Journalism third. In table tennis, 26 players participated, out of which, Tsehay

Ghebre'amlak from the Faculty of Law stood first, Efrem Zeferu from Civil Engineering second, and Amanuel Estifanos from Electrical Engineering third.

The intercollegiate competitions began in April 2004 with opening games in chess and table tennis and were concluded in June 2004 with closing games in football.

Ato Teklemariam said they plan to start the intercollegiate competitions next year by the beginning of October and will continue throughout the year. "If we start earlier, we'll have a chance to attract many colleges because the students are free from assignments, studies, and exams," he said. "We are pushing more on such intercollegiate competitions as it helps students to develop friendships and healthy minds."