

Enhancing UNT's Presence in Sub-Saharan Africa: Building Partnership with Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions

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Introduction

Africa is the second largest continent with 54 countries and a population of over one billion people. Although African countries have experienced a series of natural and man-made disasters in the past, there has been significant progress in key human development indicators.

Ethiopia, one of the world's oldest civilizations with a population of about 96 million (2015 estimate - [The World Fact book](#)), is the second-most populous country in Sub-Saharan Africa. The capital of Ethiopia and one of Africa's major diplomatic centers, Addis Ababa is home to 5 million people. In Ethiopia there has been significant progress toward reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and improving key human development indicators. The eight MDGs goals (ranging from combating disease and ensuring environmental sustainability to building partnerships for development), form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions.

Partnership for Enhancing African Countries' Capacity

In the current global knowledge economy, power and wealth are increasingly measured by one's ability to access and use information and knowledge. Higher learning institutions, especially those in developing countries such as Ethiopia, are core institutions that shape

competitiveness and link nations to the emerging global forces of the knowledge domain. Many progressive officials in African countries have already begun mobilizing global partners to improve education and IT infrastructure in their respective countries. Creating international partnerships and multifaceted synergetic activities enhance African HE institutions' ability to synchronize their own indigenous socioeconomic with the new demands of 21st century academic institutions and global labor market.

UNT's Partnership with Ethiopian Universities

Addis Ababa University (AAU), the country's leading academic and research institution, was founded in 1950 as University College of Addis Ababa. Currently, Addis Ababa University has thirteen campuses. It also maintains branches in many cities throughout Ethiopia. Addis Ababa University has more than 42,000 enrolled students (about 50% undergraduate students, 20% graduate students, and 30% continuing education students) in its thirteen campuses.

To explore the feasibility of implementing online education in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa University sent its delegations, including Dean of the School of Public Health and Dean of the School of Information Science, to the University of North Texas in 2012 and 2013. Following their visits, we

were able to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) which was signed by both AAU and UNT presidents in April 2014.

The MOU enable us to explore further opportunities for possible collaboration and partnership in areas ranging from joint course offerings and online instruction to special projects in the areas of digital libraries and health informatics.

At UNT, our greatest passion is to give a green light to greatness in all we do. With the support of UNT Libraries administration, two UNT faculty members visited Ethiopia and explored feasible ways to facilitate the partnership. Consequently, our collaboration with Ethiopian higher education institutions further supported by the seed money from the State Department: http://ethiopia.usembassy.gov/pr_045.html

Summary

Africa is rising as evident in its growing economy, rising middle class, and improved governance. Recognizing the central role of education in sustainable national development, African global partners emphasize the importance of proper development policies to ensure human security, peace and development to continue with the current positive trajectory of the development of Africa.

We strongly believe that this collaboration will lead to long-term relationships in various disciplines and help us to increase UNT's linkages with other top tier international partners in Africa. By expanding our reach through such international collaborative projects, UNT will be able to create an enriched and sustainable future for our students and world, while advancing educational excellence at home and abroad.

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