

Partnerships Between JMU and African Countries Committee – Ghana Fall 2023 Report

Membership

Chair(s): David Owusu-Ansah & Bayo Ogundipe

Members: Katie Sensabaugh (CGE), Ryan Corriston (CVPA), Linda Thomas (Dean, TGS); Melinda Adams (CAL A-dean), Andrea Knopp (Nursing School & CHBS), Delores Phillips (AAAD Director)

Charge: This committee is charged to review the historic JMU Ghana Summer Abroad program and make recommendations for its enhancement in the context of exploring new advantages and opportunities.

The JMU Ghana Abroad program, the first educational experience for our students on the continent of Africa, started in 1997. In partnership with the Language Center at the University of Ghana (UG), we have conducted our summer academic engagements and internships each year, except the two years of COVID-19. Through its Institute of African Studies (IAS), the University of Ghana also serves as an international hub for researchers and scholar since 1963. Over the years, respective directors of the Language Center at the university organized for our students' presentations by UG faculty. Other program activities that are not directly associated with the university (such as internships and volunteer sites) are integral components of the Ghana summer experience.

Because of the Ghana summer program, new opportunities and calls for partnership(s) are opening up to us. The need to re-evaluate our opportunities in Ghana is consistent with our institutional goals and objectives in the context of becoming the national model of an engaged university. In this framework, we can explore opportunities for further internationalization, faculty research and collaborations, recruitment of students and student exchanges—not to mention enhancing our inclusive excellence commitments.

Summary of Current Semester Activity:

- The full committee met on 13 December at which JY Zhou (Executive Director for CGE) joined us to discuss the MoU process and the role CGE will play. JY's visit was suggested from a separate meeting that I (David Owusu-Ansah) had with the provost to give her a private update.
- At the 13 December meeting, language for the MoU with the University of Ghana and the University of Health and Allied Studies at Ho, Ghana (UHAS) was discussed.
- We also discussed the central core of the provost charge to the committee.
- All activities leading to the 13 December meeting and agenda were the results of prior subcommittee meetings in which Bayo Ogundipe and Andrea Knopp joined me (David Owusu-Ansah) to initiate. 1) Zoom meeting with VC of Ho, David Owusu-Ansah conversations with Assistant Registrar for International Programs at the University of Ghana (UG), and with the Director of the internationally respected Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana.

- The committee is currently finalizing the language of the MoU with Ho and UG. We will discuss them at a later-to-be-scheduled meeting in January 2024.
- The MoU will be circulated with committee members once done and shared with the provost for comment before sending it to our partners in Ghana for their comment.
- We hope to have the final approved draft by March and made ready for signatures.
- Provost to be in Ghana in June 2024 for familiarization with our partners.
- At various stages of our conversations, we have reached out to the Office of the University Legal Advisor to seek directives and clarifications.

Future Work Planned:

- On 13 December, at our end of semester meeting, the committee introduced broader questions relating to the charge. Questions that emerged for future agenda and committee conversation/exploration include the following:
 - What identity does JMU want to present to our partners in Ghana?
 - What is JMU trying to accomplish with the partnerships?
 - What can we share with our partners in Ghana and how would this be done?
 - Exploration of departments, units, centers and institutes at JMU and UG and UHAS that we would like to engage and why?
- These are issues we as a committee would like to explore and have some answers for the provost to consider.
- Identification of JMU personnel that must be included as representatives for various responsibilities.
- By timeline, the general report will be ready by later in the spring, but it is the committee's view that JMU must target to have solid relations with our partners by the close of two to three years.