

Partnerships Between JMU and African Countries Committee
Rwandan Subcommittee
Spring 2023 Report

Membership

Chair(s): Mike Davis and Brian Zugelder

Members: Emeka Anaza, Rory DePaolis, Nelson Girinshuti, John Hathcoat, Joe Kush, Paul Mabrey, Clemence Mbabazi, Cara Meixner, Besi Mujonja, Jean Michel Habineza, Emily Snyder

Charge: The Rwanda subcommittee supports and coordinates efforts to expand JMU partnerships with governmental and higher education institutions in Rwanda by focusing on identifying, growing, and maintaining university partnerships. These efforts include faculty development and exchanges, student study abroad experiences and internships, and institution to institution collaborations.

Please find the summary of Rwanda related activities that occurred during the Spring 2023 trip during the 2022-2023 academic year.

Given discussions with partnerships for the future, members of the JMU Libraries staff, the Graduate School, the Center for Assessment Research Studies (CARS), and possibly CGE might be asked to join on future trips.

Spring Visit: This trip was a follow up from our previous trips in Spring of 2019 and 2020, as well as our most recent trip in October of 2022. The past trips focused on greatly enhancing our connections in Rwanda through multiple groups, where this trip focused mainly on formalizing our partnerships with the Ministry of Education. This most recent trip occurred in April of 2023 and included representatives from the College of Education and Office of Research and Scholarship.

The delegation and their respective offices/titles are as follows:

- Bryan Zugelder- Associate Dean for the College of Education
- Oris Griffin- Associate Dean for the College of Education
- Besi Muhonja- Associate Vice Provost for Scholarship and Research Development

During this visit, connections were strengthened between JMU's College of Education and the Ministry of Education for Rwanda. Through this, partnerships are being built for Rwandan teachers, The University of Rwanda, and iDebate Rwanda. Other partnerships can be created in the future through additional considerations with Mastercard, Global Education Partnership, Carnegie Mellon, and others as outlined later in this report. With some of the connections that we have made in Rwanda, the growing appreciation for JMU from iDebate, as well as from JMU to our partnerships, is immense. Students from the iDebate Rwanda team will be traveling to JMU in the fall to begin their Graduate degrees. The iDebate team will also be

traveling to the United States for their visit to JMU. The connections created hope to continue as we grow these partnerships and programs more in the next few years.

The focus of our work in Rwanda will have a dual focus related to what our partners need and what resources we can provide. Specific outcomes and objectives explored are listed below under each of our partnership opportunities. The remainder of this report is organized into plans for future partnerships as well as growth of the connection given the Spring 2023 trip, with other considerations to continue or build.

Plans for Future Partnerships

2023-2024 Enrollment into Teacher Leadership

Through the built connection between JMU and the Ministry of Education, the work to allow teachers from Rwanda to gain JMU Graduate Certificates for Teacher Leadership was very important. The Ministry will select teachers in Rwanda to complete the JMU online graduate certification program, and receive a one-week, in-person training from College of Education faculty during the 2023-2024 academic year. The program, while meeting the same course objectives will be contextualized for Rwanda teachers, made possible by input from seasoned teachers in Kigali and surrounding areas. The Ministry of Education plans to provide 50% scholarship for 10 Rwanda teachers to participate. The College of Education will provide the other 50%. The College of education had planned on at least 7 from Rwanda, but the Rwandan Ministry of Education would like to include 10 in this inaugural cohort.

University of Rwanda and JMU College of Education Partnership

The College of Education at University of Rwanda plans to partner with JMU to provide faculty exchanges, where JMU faculty can serve on dissertation committees for University of Rwanda PhD students. This will provide JMU CoE faculty with opportunities to build capacity in doctoral dissertation committees as JMU prepares for its inaugural EdD program, under review with SCHEV. JMU will share information on how faculty are provided with support in teaching, scholarship, and service (CFI and college-level programming). The Rwanda Journal of Education has opportunities for JMU faculty to serve as journal reviewers; this journal is housed at the University of Rwanda. Likewise, journal editors housed at JMU will be connected with faculty at University of Rwanda for expanding journal reviewers. JMU faculty will have the opportunity to present/participate in the University of Rwanda's International Conference through virtual sessions. Finally, College of Education stakeholders, both from University of Rwanda and JMU, plan to conduct virtual meetings to compare curriculum at the undergraduate and graduate levels related to teacher education, teacher leadership, and school administration. University of Rwanda has been tasked with being the country's premier "R1" type of institution. We can learn from their center structures and faculty development especially in the area of scholarship.

iDebate Rwanda and National Connections

Focus group of practicing teachers who are also connected to iDebate Rwanda provided JMU visitors with input on how Rwanda teachers are faced with opportunities, challenges, and view themselves as change agents in schools. This focus group has provided information to help JMU faculty plan with faculty from east Africa as we offer the online cohorts of teachers in Rwanda and Kenya in 2023-2024. In strong partnership with iDebate Rwanda, the teacher leadership program serves as an opportunity to conduct a pilot for teacher development that can inform sustainable, Ministry of Education-supported funding, to scale up partnerships with JMU, especially as partnerships with University of Rwanda and JMU faculty continue to collaborate. The Ministry of Education is focused on assessment of outcomes related to its strategic plan, as well as measuring the impact of teacher development. This provides potential for partnerships with JMU departments. There is an intersection between the Ministry of Education's priorities and the Secretary of Education in Virginia's priorities. When the Minister of Education visits the US (Washington, D.C.) in September, it would be important for JMU to host the Minister at JMU for a visit with stakeholders from the Rwanda task force and other university and state-level leaders. When the JMU team was in Rwanda in October, connections were made with Dr. Rose from the higher education council. It will be critical for follow-up conversations, facilitated by Mike Davis, including CoE, Research & Scholarship, and other key stakeholders at JMU. Finally, there is a need for JMU CoE leadership to meet with the Ministry of Education teacher development officer on support for early career teachers (the Virginia New Teacher Support Program processes on professional practice progressions can inform this work). A follow-up discussion will be scheduled in late April.

Other Considerations

Long-term partnerships pose potential as there are funding opportunities for collaboration between JMU and Rwanda through key foundations. Mastercard has invested millions in Rwanda and other African countries. Additionally, Global Education Partnership has funding opportunities through 2029 for universities to partner with the Ministry of Education to strengthen teaching and learning in Rwanda. There are opportunities for strong grant projects between JMU and Rwanda, especially as foundations like Carnegie Mellon and others are committed to US institutions partnering with African countries.