

The College of William and Mary
African Studies Concentration

INTERIM REPORT OF THE AFRICAN STUDIES CFAC, 2004-05

Nwando Achebe, History, *Chair*

Context

The African Concentration Faculty Advisory Committee (CFAC) was conceived in Spring 1997. The founding members of the concentration were: Ismail Abdalla, Berhanu Abegaz, Stephen Ndegwa and Brad Weiss.

Faculty Additions and Catalog Update

In the past year we have welcomed Professors Magali Compan (Modern Languages) and Jenny Kehl (Government) and Mei Mei Sanford (Women's Studies and Black Studies) into the African Studies CFAC. We have also updated our list of courses, and forwarded it to the Reves Center.

Concentrators, Minors and Enrollees

Since May 2003, the African Studies Concentration has graduated three majors, Alicia Ranck, Jennifer Modell (2003), and Bronwen Watts (2005). We have a descent number of minors and our courses continue to be well-subscribed.

Activities

We have initiated dialogues with two schools in Africa, University of Cape Town, South Africa and the University of Ghana, Legon about setting up student exchanges as well as summer study abroad programs. We are working closely with the International Center to see that the first crop of students go to Africa in the summer of 2006.

We have also worked tirelessly to establish more visibility for the major on campus by introducing a series of African centered events. The first is an annual Spring Semester "African Studies Meet and Greet" gathering which brings together potential African Studies majors and minors with Africanist faculty on campus in an informal setting to break bread and talk about the major. On the strength of last year's gathering alone, we were able to sign up four African Studies majors immediately following our meeting. During the Fall semester 2004, we instituted the First African Film Festival at William and Mary. Billed as "Dinner and a Movie," this event too helped create stronger visibility on campus for the African Studies Concentration and in turn attracted additional majors.

The African Cultural Society, a student organization, is an active presence on campus. Every Spring semester (in cooperation with the faculty), they have an African Awareness Week to bring attention to the continent.

They have also expressed a strong desire in securing an "Africa House" on campus. An Africa House, even a small wing in one of the dorms, will provide them with a focal point for gathering

and study on Africa. It will also have the potential to make the College more attractive to African and African-American students who are currently either bypassing it for fear of social isolation, or dropping out once they get here.

Challenges and Problems

The fledgling African Studies Concentration is hobbled by several constraints, many of which are common to interdisciplinary programs and others, peculiar to it. The biggest problem by far is an uncertainty about the availability of faculty to teach the core courses on a regular basis. This is not a numbers problem per se since we do have adequate tenured and tenure-eligible faculty in nearly all the basic areas. It is rather a problem of ensuring that faculty who take research and/or other leaves are replaced by Africanists. A secondary problem is scheduling conflicts due to the lack of coordination among departments in setting course schedules.

Longstanding Wish List

Other areas where the African Studies CFAC wishes to explore include:

1. *Study Abroad: Summer and Semester*
 - Ghana—have done a pilot program.
 - S. Africa [U of Cape Town and Rhodes U]
 - Egypt [American U]
 - Nigeria
2. *Outreach*
 - Help Establish a Hampton Roads Consortium for African Studies: ODU, CNU, Hampton U, NSU (and possibly with UR and VCU).
 - Area Schools: Cultural Festivals; lectures, and demonstrations.
3. *Curriculum Development*
 - Key Courses: Find ways for a sustainable offering of the pilot Core Course (INTL 310) and Capstone Seminars.
 - Additional Courses: African Music, African Art, African Literature (Anglophone and Francophone).
4. *Faculty Development*
 - Seek matching funds for visiting Africanist scholars (e.g., Fulbright, USIA).
 - Funding for scholarly lecture series.

Current Members of the African Studies CFAC

Ismail Abdalla, History
Berhanu Abegaz, Economics
Nwando Achebe, History
Joanne Braxton, English

Magali Compan, Modern Languages
Norma Day-Vines, Education
Jenny Kehl, Government
Mei Mei Sanford, Black Studies and Women's Studies
Alemante G. Selassie, Law
Tamara Sonn, Religion
Brad Weiss, Anthropology