BEYOND THE LECTURE HALL: HIGHLIGHTING UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST’S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES - 2012

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ABSTRACT

The study looked at how the University of Cape Coast has been engaging with communities within the region. The paper is a desk top review of reports of activities of Faculties/Schools of the University of Cape Coast. These reports were submitted by the various faculties/schools to the Office of the Vice-Chancellor during the 2011/2012 academic year. The central region was the setting of the study. It was revealed that through the various faculties and schools interacting productively with the communities, there have been symbiotic benefits for both the university and the communities. While the communities remained a setting for practicum and social laboratories for students and faculty members, the university has also served as a source of employment for these communities. For instance, through the establishment of the Restaurants and the guest houses, the University has provided employment opportunities to majority of people in the Cape Coast Metropolis and this has led to improvement in their standard of living. The university has also been providing healthcare services, security and social amenities for these communities.

Keys words: University of Cape Coast, community, faculty and school.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As Watson (2007) states in the introduction to his book Managing Civic and Community Engagement that there is an international convergence of interest on issues about the purposes of universities and colleges and their role in a wider society. This interest is reflected in the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance's (AUCEA) position paper (2008), which emphasises that community engagement is a core responsibility of higher education and that Australia’s higher education sector must be recognised as a valuable intellectual resource that directly and intentionally contributes to national issues and priorities. The position paper goes on to define external communities as being composed of business, industry, schools, governments, non-governmental organisations, associations, indigenous and ethnic communities, and the general public. According to the report, community engagement is not a separate or distinct activity within a university but is:

expertise that produces mutual benefit...[expanding] the role of higher education from a passive producer of knowledge to an active participant in collaborative discovery activities that have diverse and immediate benefits to a variety of stakeholders.(AUCEA, 2008:2)

Thus, much of what might be termed the development –related activities of the university usually fall within the so-called ‘third mission’ which is variously referred to as ‘engagement’, ‘service ‘or ‘community outreach’. This could include academics’ serving on committees in the public or private sector, providing support to small business and many more for the community.

Universities across the globe are basically established to produce human capital through three main core functions: teaching, research and outreach or community and that universities in Africa and for that matter, Ghana, are not exception. In addition to the traditional roles of teaching and research, public universities in Ghana provide important services to the public as a
collateral benefit of a university’s presence in a community. Ghana currently has eight public universities and these are:

1. University of Ghana
2. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
3. University of Cape Coast
4. University of Education, Winneba
5. University of Development Studies
6. University of Mines and Technology
7. Ghana Telecom University
8. Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration

This paper aims at informing government, members of the higher education community and the broader community about University of Cape Coast and her engagement with the communities, especially, those within her catchment area.

1.2 UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST AN OVERVIEW

The University of Cape Coast was inaugurated on December 15, 1962 as a University College and placed in a special relationship with the University of Ghana. On October 1, 1971, the University attained the status of a full and independent university with the authority to confer its own degrees, diplomas and certificates by an Act of Parliament – the University of Cape Coast Act, 1971 (Act 390) and subsequently the University of Cape Coast Law 1992 (PNDC law 278).

The University of Cape Coast was established out of a need for highly qualified and skilled manpower in the teaching and development of the nation’s human capital. Thus it was established to train graduate teachers for second cycle institutions, Teacher Training Colleges, (now College of Education) and Technical Institutes, a mission that the two Universities existing at the time were ill-equipped to fulfill.

The University has since its establishment added to its functions programmes of study such as Educational Planning and Administration, Accounting, Management Studies and Human Resource Management, Nursing and Medicine, Tourism, Population, Environmental Science, Governance and Agricultural Science. It is, therefore, playing a unique and vital role in the nation’s efforts at strengthening the educational sector. At present, UCC has eight Faculties/Schools with a student population of over 38,000. They are:

- a) Faculty of Social Sciences
- b) Faculty of Arts
- c) Faculty of Education
- d) School of Agriculture
- e) School of Biological Sciences
- f) School of Physical Sciences
- g) School of Business
- h) School of Medical Sciences

There are also a number of centres and other units including the following:

- Centre for International Education
- Consultancy Unit
- Computer Centre
- ICT Centre
- Laser & Fiber Optics Centre

1.3 INSTITUTIONAL NARRATIVES ON THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

The University’s mission statement emphasises the role of the institution in the “… provision of comprehensive, liberal and professional programs that challenge learners to be creative, innovative and morally responsible citizens…. The University constantly seeks alternative ways to respond to changing needs. Through distance learning, it also extends expertise and facilities to train professionals for the education enterprise and business by employing modern technologies. The institution continues to expand its existing highly qualified academic and administrative staff, offering a conducive environment that motivates them to position the University to respond effectively to the development needs of a changing world” (Corporate Strategic Plan-2012-2017).

Over and above this emphasis on training and lifelong learning, the Mission also calls for all the three core functions of the University; teaching, research and community engagement to “expand its
existing highly qualified academic and administrative staff, offering a conducive environment that motivates them to position the University to respond effectively to the development needs of a changing world” (ibid).

In consonance with the University’s emphasis on embracing the wider community, the various faculties/schools of the University, apart from their contribution to the national development, have undertaken many projects/activities within and out of the Central Region and these are imparting positively on the communities.

2.1 ACTIVITIES OF FACULTIES/SCHOOLS

2.21 Faculty of Social Sciences

There are six departments in the Faculty of Social Sciences. They are: Department of Economics, Department of Geography and Regional Planning, Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Department of Population and Health, Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Institute for Development Studies.

The products of the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management work in various capacities in the tourism industry in Cape Coast and beyond as hotel managers, supervisors, tour guides travel agents etc. For example, the tour guide who conducted President Obama around the Cape Coast Castle is a graduate from the Department. The Department has developed a number of tourism-related facilities on campus to augment the hospitality facilities in Cape Coast. These include Sasakwa Conference Centre, Chalets and Restaurant and the Institute of Education Restaurant and Chalet. These facilities are open to the general public and tourists.

In collaboration with University of Surrey and DELPHE, the Department of Population and Health undertook training needs assessment for entry level staff in the industry as well as the facilitation of student internship programme. In line with this, four workshops have been held in Cape Coast, Sekondi-Takoradi, Accra and Kumasi. The Department has been actively involved in the planning and hosting of PANAFEST and World Tourism Day celebrations at both regional and national levels. Again, the Department, in collaboration with GTB, GiZ, CCMA and CEDECOM has been working towards the establishment of a destination management organization to coordinate tourism development in the Cape Coast Metropolis to fashion out a common vision for tourism development.

The research activities of the Department of Population and Health in the Region covers issues such as social dimension of HIV/AIDS, malaria, traffic-related morbidity and mortality, adolescent sexual and reproductive health, migration, refugee studies, poverty and health economies. It also has a joint project with Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) on peer education, which targets youth (19-24 years old) on campus and adolescence in Cape Coast and its environs. The Department has adopted Yamoransa as a social research laboratory for both graduate and undergraduate students. With this arrangement, all graduate and level 300 students are required to live in the community for at least one week to acquire field experience and to study aspects of population and health-related issues in a real, practical way.

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology with support from the Teaching and Learning Innovation Fund (TALIF) established a practicum as an alternative approach to teaching and learning and adopted Enyan Abaasa town as the social laboratory for studies in Rural Sociology and Sociology of Development. The practicum involved students engaging case community members to give them hands on experience in community development activities. The studies, visits and interactions with the community, which took place between November 2006 and February 2007, resulted in some benefits to the community. First, the Enyan Abaasa Market was rehabilitated and secondly, peer education workshops were jointly organised and managed by the community members, students and lecturers from the Department. The Enyan Abaasa community still remains the social laboratory for the Department and students and lecturers visit for practicum exercises.

The activities of the Institute for Development studies (IDS) in the areas of awareness creation to solve development problems and data gathering for policy decisions have been great. At the institutional and individual academic staff levels, much has been done in the country and the Central Region in particular.

The Institute has established a social laboratory at the Ejumako-Enyan-Essiam District Assembly. The objective for the social laboratory is to assist graduate students to research into topics based on real problems in the District and make
recommendations that when implemented, could minimise development problems in the District. By so doing, the students can link theory to practice. A number of students have completed their MPhil theses on various issues on development in the District. Again, it is envisaged that topics on different issues selected from the same social setting would lead to the accumulation of a coherent body of knowledge which could be used for policy advocacy.

Research Fellows at the Institute continue to serve on Boards and Committees in organizations and departments in the region to provide technical advice to improve their quality of service delivery. The individual staff has been involved in research activities aimed at resolving social, environmental, economic and other challenges confronting the region.

2.1.2 Faculty of Arts

The Faculty of Arts has ten Departments and these are: English, French, Ghanaian Languages and Linguistics, Classics and Philosophy, Music and Dance, Region and Human Values, African Studies, Communication Studies, Theater and Film Studies and History. The activities of these Departments serve as the connecting tissue in the entire programme. The Departments of History, Religion and Human values and African Studies have been involved in the identification and development of tourist sites in the Region. In addition, UCC in collaboration with CEDECOM is to put up a Museum on the University of Cape Coast campus. The project which is the brain child of CEDECOM would boost tourism in the Region, and also serve the academic purposes of the University.

The Department of Music has a Recording Studio and the Department has extended its services to composers within and outside the University Community. Some members of the Department have been paying visit to the local psychiatric hospital at Ankaful to practice music therapy on patients.

2.1.3 Faculty of Education

The Faculty is the largest faculty in the University in terms of student enrolment. The Faculty consists of the following Departments: Basic Education, Educational Foundation, Vocational & Technical Education, Arts & Social Sciences Education, Health, Physical Education and Recreation. Others are; Institute of Education, Institutes of Educational Planning and Administration, Centre for Continuing Education and Counseling Service Centre.

The Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation provides coaching and supervision to Central Regional schools sports resulting in the Region dominating in national competitions over the years. Coaching and supervision is also provided to local teams such as Dwarfs and Elmina Sharks.

The Child Development Research and Referral Unit of the Department of Educational Foundations has collaborated with certain selected schools in the Cape - Coast Metropolis namely; University Primary School; Ola Presbyterian School; Methodist Special School and Duakro Primary School to identify learning disabled pupils to assist them academically. The Unit appointed liaison officers in each school to serve as a link between the various schools and the Unit. The Unit has also developed a system to help children with disability in the Cape Coast Metropolis by:

- Holding regular meetings with parents of children with disability in the Cape Coast Metropolis to brainstorm on how these children could be helped.
- Instituting in-service training for teachers in various schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis on how to handle learning disabled pupils in the class.
- Visiting these children occasionally at home to interact with them and learn at firsthand how they are treated at home. This is normally done with the assistance of National Service Personnel.

2.1.4 School of Agriculture

The School of Agriculture has since its inception worked closely with farmers in helping to address their numerous problems. The focus has primarily been on the Central and Western Regions of Ghana, although it is obvious that the impact is being felt throughout Ghana.

The following are some areas where UCC through the School has been most visible in the community:

- Farm Visits from Basic and High Schools: The teaching and Research Farm of the School serves as a laboratory for many schools within and outside the region. Their students visit and learn from the UCC. Many teachers also fall on the UCC during examination periods for
assistance in collecting specimens for practical tests.
- Production of high quality farm produce: Many residents of the campus and Cape Coast have come to depend on high quality and hygienically produced vegetables, eggs, fresh meat and processed meat products from the School’s Farm and the Meat Processing Unit.
- Laboratory Services: The School assists farmers with analysis of feed and soil samples to boost production on their farms at reasonable rates. They also make individual visits to discuss their problem and plans with staff. Palm kernel waste (from way-side local processors) has been stabilized and incorporated as a valuable feed ingredient in poultry and pig feeds on the UCC farm and is being extended together with MoFA to other farmers.
- The Research-Extension Linkage (RELS): These are working committees of research scientists of UCC and extension staff of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoFA). Through the RELs, problems identified by farmers and extension staff are researched into by the scientists and provide solutions for farmers.
- Technology Village: This is a Centre for demonstration of improved methods for processing and extraction of most local foods such as gari, palm oil and smoked meats. Improved techniques in farming of grasscutters, snails and mushrooms are also demonstrated. The Village is used as a training centre by the Ministry of Agriculture for farmers. In conjunction with an Italian Group of Research Scientists, a small veterinary unit has been established and this provides advice on animal health problems as well as treatment of diseases.
- Ghana Association of Agricultural Students (GAAS-UCC): This student body undertakes educational programmes in and around the University campus, especially among the surrounding residential communities. During their Annual “Green Week” celebrations, they mount educational programmes on scientific agricultural production, Health (including HIV-AIDS) and literacy. They also run a regular programme on Radio ATL (100.5FM) in Cape Coast through which they educate and assist the general public with solutions to agriculture-related problems.
- National Germplasm Collection and Crop Breeding Programme: The School is actively involved in collection of germplasm to cover most agricultural crops e.g. grains, legumes, roots and tubers for preservation against any unforeseen disaster with existing cultivated varieties. The UCC has developed new varieties of crops that have been evaluated and grown and preferred by farmers in the Central and Western Regions. These high yielding varieties of most crops have given farmers up to 10 times the yields from commonly known local varieties, helping to feed millions of hungry Ghanaians.

2.1.5 School of Biological Sciences

The School of Biological Sciences consists of the following Departments: Nursing, Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, Fisheries and Aquatic Science, Environmental Science, Entomology and Wildlife, Biochemistry and Human Biology. The School has initiated and been involved in a number of projects that are community-based, geared toward poverty alleviation and improved livelihoods through some of its departments. Some of the activities are being undertaken in collaboration with other institutions in the Region. For example, the Department of Human Biology, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, is undertaking a research on malaria control in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

The School, in collaboration with Ankaful Prisons is undertaking a project in Tissue Culture/multiplication in the production of pineapples for export. The aim is to generate enough funds for the maintenance of inmates and provision of other infrastructure projects at the prison.

The University of Rhodes Island in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences is training personnel to monitor coastal wetlands in the Western Region. This is in anticipation of the effect of the oil exploration and production on the Coastal Wetlands.

The School coordinates pollination projects for three major crops (Maize, Mango and Cocoa)
within three (3) communities (Mankessim and its environs; Dodowa and its environs and Kubease/Bobiri and its environs). Many rural farmers in Mankessim area have received several trainings in best practices that will enhance pollinator presence on the crops to increase the quantity and quality of their crop yields. Significant among them is how to distinguish friendly insect pollinators (bees) from pests, as well as how to apply agro chemicals in order to minimize negative impact on pollinators.

The School, through the Department of Entomology and Wildlife has an International Stingless Bee Centre (ISBC) and this is a project that researches into and keeps stingless bees for pollination and sustainable utilization of their medicinal hive products. As a result of this project, five farming communities around the Kakum National Park have received training in Stingless bee keeping and a meliponiary has been built for one of the communities at Mfuom. Significant to this project is the establishment of the INTERNATIONAL STINGLESS BEE CENTRE (ISBC) at Abrafo near the Kakum National Park in the Central Region of Ghana. The ISBC is a centre of excellence nicely landscaped with bee gardens consisting of stingless bee sanctuary with 10 stingless bee species being cultured in 4 mini-sheds, a 100-seating capacity training hall, a laboratory, an office, a store, a kitchen, a workshop, and washroom facilities. It also comprises a one kilometre bee walkway into the serene secondary forest. The centre is the only one in Africa and among a few in the world. The centre which was originally aimed at training rural farmers in stingless bee keeping for their sustainable utilization in pollination and medicinal hive products, now has added components of research, and public education since stingless bees are very important for biodiversity conservation and for growing forests. The ISBC has also attracted tourists from across the world and locally. It is now turning out to be a centre for ecotourism in the Central region and Ghana.

The Department of Entomology and Wildlife has a Butterfly Sanctuary at the Kakum National Park. At the request of the Ghana Heritage and Conservation Trust (GHCT - Cape Coast), the Department of Entomology and Wildlife established a Butterfly Sanctuary and Garden for GHCT within a secondary forest next to the Kakum National Park. The School has been collaborating with the Cape Coast Metropolitan Assembly (CCMA) to resuscitate and manage the Fosu Lagoon sustainably. In this regard the School has been asked by the CCMA to submit a proposal, which has been done.

2.1.6 School of Physical Sciences
The School of Physical Sciences has the following Departments: Physics, Optometry, Maths and Statistics, Laboratory Technology, Computer Science and Information Technology and Chemistry.

The Department of Laboratory Technology is in collaboration with the Food and Drugs Board to establish a Centre in Cape Coast to serve the people of the Western and the Central regions. The School, through its Glass Blowing Centre, manufactures test tubes for distribution to junior high schools and senior high schools in and around Cape Coast.

In partnership with the Optical Foundation, the Department of Optometry has received equipment to enhance academic and clinical training. Through this, the Department has rehabilitated the eye clinic department at the University Hospital. The place is now operation and it is opened to the general public as well.

As part of their outreach programme, the Department is also providing quality eye care services for communities such as Ekumfi Asaafa, Abaasa, Efutu Koforidua in the region.

2.1.7 School of Business

The School of Business consists of two departments and a Unit namely: Department of Accounting and Finance, Department of Management Studies and Professional and Management Development Unit (PMDU).

The School, as part of its community engagement programme, educates and provides career counseling for students in selected deprived senior high schools in the region.

The School, through its departments, has established committees whose remit is to engage with the community, especially, with secondary schools and artisans in Cape Coast and the Central Region and to bring to them benefits of the knowledge, competencies and skills of staff.

2.1.8 School of Medical Sciences (SMS)

In line with the ethos of the University of Cape Coast, one of the core values of the School of Medical Sciences is to make education and the training of human capacity relevant to the needs of the community. The major burden of health care in
Ghana is diseases that are preventable. Thus, SMS has instituted the Community-Based-Experienced and Service Programme (COBES). The programme focuses on the role of social, cultural and environmental factors in health and in diseases affecting individuals, groups and populations.

The themes of COBES postings include identification of the health problems of the community, disease mapping procedures, socio-demographic and environmental factors affecting health, basic community entry strategies, social services and organisations which address health issues in the community. The program allows the students to engage the community leaders as well as the community members in general for a greater understanding of the health conditions. During their stay in the community they also work with the community leaders in identifying some of their social and health needs and also involve them in finding solutions to the identified problems.

In COBES, students spend periods of up to six weeks living in and interacting with selected rural communities. The postings are designed to help them learn and understand the interrelationship between health and development, and the factors affecting health of the community, especially from the community’s own perspective.

The students serve as role models for the youth in the community. The female students, especially, educate the youth in such communities about teenage pregnancy and encourage them to take education serious.

During COBES postings, students also have an opportunity to work with the employees at the Child Health Program in conducting school health programs at the basic schools. The medical students participate in weighing the school children, assessing their health status, their development and growth. The students get the opportunity to participate in school-based immunisation programmes together with the community. These experiences tremendously enrich the knowledge and skills of the students and offer a sense of reality that could have alienated these young doctors from the reality.

The School also undertakes specialised operation in the region which hitherto were done in Korle-Bu.

3.1 METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study was to highlight the community engagement activities of the University of Cape Coast. The paper was a desk top review of reports of activities of Faculties/Schools of the University of Cape Coast. These reports were submitted by the various faculties/schools to the Office of the Vice-Chancellor during the 2011/2012 academic year.

5.1 CONCLUSION

The paper looked at how the University of Cape Coast, through its Faculties and Schools, has been engaging with communities within the region. Through these productive interactions with the University, the communities have gained a wide range of benefits. For instance, through the establishment of the Restaurants and the guest houses, the University has provided employment opportunities to majority of people in the Cape Coast Metropolis and this has led to improvement in their standard of living.

In conclusion, it is noted that universities’ engagement with the public remains one of the most tangible ways universities can demonstrate their impact in the society.

6.1 REFERENCES

4. University of Cape Coast Corporate Strategic Plan-2012-2017
Community Engagement Alliance Position Paper 2008-2010