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AFSAAP PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Recent AFSAAP Activities: June 2011

Fernanda Claudio

The Federal Government's new era of engagement with the countries of Africa is well underway in 2011, and the AFSAAP is centrally involved in one crucial aspect: education. With the recent scaling-up of Australian government interest in the countries of Africa, and the concomitant increase in the aid and development budget targeted at the area, the role of education has been greatly enhanced. The AFSAAP knows education. We are an organisation of scholars. But more than that we are an organisation of committed scholars that, collectively, has a great deal of experience internationally. Many of our members have acquired their degrees elsewhere, myself included at McGill University and the London School of Economics. Others have conducted major research in African countries, contributing significantly to knowledge of Africa-centred studies in Australian universities. Many others have, over the years, rowed against the tide and insisted on teaching Africa-centred content in Australian universities. It is for all these reasons that the AFSAAP is well-placed and well-equipped to participate in the management of the scaled-up **Australia Awards for Africa Program 2010-2015**. I am very excited to announce that the AFSAAP will join with GRM International in Brisbane to manage these scholarships. I have recently signed the partnership contract on behalf of AFSAAP opening a new chapter in the specific role of our organisation as the premier Africa scholars network in Australasia. In the first year of the scholarships program, Australia will welcome 400 African students, with numbers increasing to 1000 per year by 2013.

The specific roles that the AFSAAP will play in the AAAP are as follows:

1. **On-Award pastoral care:** AFSAAP will facilitate access to members for the in-Australia GRM funded Pastoral Care Officer to provide a "mentoring and buddying" system for African scholarship recipients studying in Australia;
2. **On-award Reintegration and Networking:** On completion of study and on return home, AFSAAP will encourage scholars to foster Australian alumni networks in their respective countries and to build links between African and Australian tertiary institutions;
3. **Participation in Award Selection Panels:** assist with liaison of

African academics required for awardee selection panels across Africa;
4. **Data collection and AAAP monitoring and Evaluation**

Under the negotiated agreement, all African scholarship recipients will be funded to become members of AFSAAP, thereby increasing our numbers and networks dramatically. It is hoped that with so many new members from a variety of African countries, our existing members can create new and fruitful research links with individuals and institutions in Africa. I urge all of our members to do their utmost to make all African scholarship students feel welcome in Australia.

On 12 May 2011, members of the AFSAAP Executive Committee attended the **Universities Roundtable “Australian Strategic Teamwork in Africa”** sponsored by the University of Sydney and AusAID. This event was designed as a brainstorming session between universities, including the AFSAAP, to discuss new directions in Africa-centred scholarship in Australia. The AFSAAP contributed with a request for funding of its 7th edition of the *Directory of Africanists*, the only document of its kind in Australasia, and an important resource for scholars, government and media. We also suggested that universities collaborate to establish a website of virtual Africa-centred research clusters to which our members and others could contribute. The objective of this site is to facilitate the development of research projects across universities. Thirdly, we reiterated a proposal, outlined in the AFSAAP submission to the **Parliamentary Inquiry into Australia’s Relationship with the Countries of Africa**, that an Africa Studies Centre is created within Australia based on a “hub and spokes” model in which a physical institution housed at a university is complemented by “spokes” in the form of outlying branches situated virtually or physically in various parts of Australia. In this way, the geographical locations of Africa-centered scholars could be accounted for. Finally, following the Roundtable, on 13 May 2011, members of the AFSAAP Executive Committee also attended the **University of Sydney International Forum on Africa, “Building Bridges between Australia and Africa”**. This was an event at which Australia’s foreign policy toward Africa was showcased in a speech made by Kevin Rudd, the Foreign Minister. Mr Rudd reiterated his support for an enhanced Australian relationship in the realms of business, social equity, political engagement, effective development, and human capital in the form of the AAAP. A speech was also delivered by Betty Mould-Idriss, the Ghanaian Education of Minister, outlining a hope for a new “partnership of equals” between Australia and Ghana. The AFSAAP welcomes and supports Australia’s new Africa policies.