Nothing is more important to me than expanding the spirit of reciprocity that has been a hallmark of our relationships over the years. We want to learn as much as we want to teach.
Provost Terry Sullivan has approved the establishment of a new African Studies Center (ASC), which will begin operations on July 1, 2008. The center will join other centers and programs within the International Institute, but will also have an important relationship with U-M’s 38-year-old Center for Afroamerican and African Studies (CAAS).

“Working with CAAS and Africanists across the campus, we have laid the foundation for what promises to be one of the country’s strongest and most innovative programs dealing with Africa,” said Mark Tessler, Director of the International Institute.

The plan for the ASC was developed during 2006-2007 by a committee appointed the Provost and chaired by Mark Tessler and Kevin Gaines. As part of the planning process, the committee prepared an inventory of University of Michigan faculty with teaching and research interests relating to Africa. There are about 120 faculty members, located in 40 different academic units, whose teaching and scholarship devote attention to Africa.

New African Studies Center to Open in July

The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

at the reception—a discussion that continued long after everyone else had left the event. The visit to South Africa included a reception hosted by the U.S. Consul General in Johannesburg, Steven Coffman, a U-M alumnus, and lectures by Coleman at both the University of Pretoria and the University of Cape Town. In addition to Coleman’s visits to the Universities of Pretoria, Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Cape Town, and the Western Cape, side delegations visited the Universities at Fort Hare and Kwa-Zulu Natal. During the visit to Cape Town, Coleman and the delegation were received by UCT Vice-Chancellor Njabulo S. Ndebele, who will be on campus in April to receive an honorary U-M degree. In her Cape Town speech President Coleman noted,

“Scholarship knows no borders. By our very nature, universities are at the forefront of globalization and cooperation. By establishing the African Studies Center, we want to make the whole of our African intellectual activity greater than the sum of the parts. And we look to the universities of South Africa as partners. Nothing is more important to me than expanding the spirit of reciprocity that has been a hallmark of our relationships over the years. We want to learn as much as we want to teach.

Collaboration is imperative to all the work of the University of Michigan in South Africa. From heritage initiatives and social science research to sharing medical curricula, we want this expanse of intellectual and clinical activity to grow and flourish, for the benefit of South Africans and Americans alike.”

President Coleman and other faculty and administrators met with counterparts at a number of universities in each country and discussed plans for collaborative scholarly projects in the social sciences, humanities, and professions. They also made plans for African scholars and students to visit Michigan, and counterparts at Michigan to visit Ghana and South Africa.

During its first year of operation, led by Interim Director Kelly Askew and a steering committee, the African Studies Center will sponsor on-campus events and activities to serve faculty and students, organize a major international conference to establish the center’s visibility, and conduct a search for a permanent director. The center will also support the Africa-oriented instruction in CAAS, as well as course development in other units. Finally, the center will assist in coordinating and administering the collaborative initiatives being developed in connection with President Coleman’s trip to Ghana and South Africa.

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