

RUFORUM MONTHLY

ACADEMIC ONCOLOGIST BRINGS ALTRUISTIC DYNAMISM TO UGANDA MARTYRS UNIVERSITY



Dr. Charles Olweny, a globe-trotting oncologist who trained and worked on four continents – including as a professor of medicine in Winnipeg – decided seven years ago to leave Canada and return home to lead Uganda Martyrs University, a private Catholic institution. His leadership strategy is guided by five core principles, he told *University World News*. Uganda is undergoing a higher education boom. The result of introducing Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997 and Universal Secondary Education (USE) a decade later is a surplus of students looking for a univer-

sity placement.

Uganda's 30 public and private universities offer 50,000 spots for qualified secondary school graduates. More than 102,000 secondary school students sat for qualifying exams this year. But the demand for higher education is tempered by harsh economic reality, and even as students graduate many are unable to find jobs. No less a presence than Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has laid the blame for the country's high youth unemployment squarely at the feet of the higher education system.

The World Bank estimates that young people between 15 and 24 make up as much as 83% of the unemployed population. On a tour of the country last year, Museveni accused universities of not focusing on marketable skills, such as information technology and the sciences. Since 2006 Dr. Charles Olweny (72) has been trying to navigate this landscape. As Vice Chancellor of Uganda Martyrs University ([UMU](#)), he is responsible for strategically expanding his institution while maintaining a range of courses – some that meet the president's definition of marketable, such as agriculture and science, and some, for instance development studies, that do not. Olweny said they are no less important, though. Even as UMU is looking to develop two new campuses, he is also eager to experiment with new education models to ensure all the university's graduates are immediately employable. It is a challenge Olweny relishes.

A trained oncologist, he built a career across four continents – Africa, Australasia, Europe and North America – as an administrator, researcher and academic. He took an 80% pay cut to return to his native Uganda from Canada and help establish UMU as “the benchmark of all institutions of higher learning, not just in Uganda, but in the entire Great Lakes region”. Click [here](#) for the video link.

The main campus of the 19-year-old Uganda Martyrs University is Nkozi, west of the capital Kampala, just south of the equator. It also has a newer campus in the eastern town of Mbale. There are more than 2,000 students, nearly 500 of them resident on the main campus, and the others on distance learning and part-time postgraduate courses around the country. Among a growing number of private higher education institutions, UMU is well established, respected, outward looking and focused on quality.

Olweny's transition has come with some challenges. There were the expected ones – he is quick to highlight the constant search for funds – and those that he did not anticipate, including a battle to overcome institutional aversion to change.

In a wide-ranging and frequently funny discussion, Olweny spoke to *University World News* about

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- **RUFORUM Monthly** provides information on activities of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture.
- This **Monthly Brief** is available on the last week of every month ■

ANNOUNCEMENTS

3rd RUFORUM Biennial Conference. 24 – 28 September 2012. Entebbe, Uganda

African Network for Internationalisation of Education (ANIE) 4th ANIE Annual Conference. 26–28 September 2012 Pretoria, South Africa. [More](#)

Conference 2012: Growing the Bioeconomy – Social, Environmental and Economic Implications. 2 - 5 October 2012, Banff, Alberta, Canada

The International Conference on Management of Emergent Digital Ecosystems (MEDES) 28-31 October, 2012. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. [More](#)

Training of Trainers on Climate Change Adaptation for Agriculture & Natural Resource Management. October, 2012

Vacancies at EARTH University for the African faculty members available. [More](#)

More information on RUFORUM activities can be accessed on the RUFORUM BLOG at <http://ruforum.org/a/ruforumblog/>

For more information about the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), Contact: The **Newsletter Editor**, RUFORUM Secretariat, Plot 151 Garden Hill, Makerere University Main Campus, P.O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda. Fax: +256 414 534153; Tel: +256 414 535939; E-mail: secretariat@ruforum.org; or visit the RUFORUM Website at www.ruforum.org.



ACADEMIC ONCOLOGIST BRINGS ALTRUISTIC DYNAMISM TO CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

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the challenges for higher education in Uganda and how he is helping his institution to overcome them.

You trained as an oncologist and have spent your life all over the world in various positions. How did you end up in academia in Uganda?

As he describes it, Olweny's first love was medicine, not academia. Growing up in the 1940s and 1950s when Uganda was still a British Protectorate, he was responsible for keeping his family's medical box – dispensing aspirin when people had headaches, or quinine when they developed fevers.

He went on to join the country's first postgraduate programme in medicine at Kampala's premier Makerere University. That was after he had already published four papers – two in peer-reviewed journals – during his undergraduate years at the institution. He later got his MD from Makerere.

Those articles “were in the area of oncology. And I didn't quite know that was an area that would attract me. But it was soon after I had done my masters degree that the dean of the faculty of medicine called me to his office and said: “We all believe you have a lot of talent.”

Olweny was offered a scholarship to study under Georg Klein – a cancer researcher and a member of the Nobel Committee – in Stockholm, Sweden.

That was the beginning of Olweny's globe-trotting career. He worked and trained in the US, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Australia. He also served as director of Uganda's Cancer Institute for more than a decade.

Before joining UMU, he had worked in Winnipeg, Canada, for 16 years, where he was a Professor of Medicine and Head of the Oncology Department at St Boniface General Hospital. It is a career that has consistently included work in academia, though Olweny is jokingly hard-pressed to explain why. “It's almost like people are asking me, ‘Why did you ever leave Australia to go to Canada in that cold weather?’ My reaction, very often was, ‘I think I need my head examined.’” But he said teaching had always attracted him, even as an undergraduate. So when an unexpected letter from UMU arrived in 2005, offering the deeply religious Olweny the vice-chancellorship of Uganda's flagship Catholic founded university, he decided – after months of soul-searching and a heated family discussion – to move into academia fulltime.

What is your leadership strategy?

What Olweny calls his “guiding principles” are the stuff of legend at UMU. Carefully rationalised and easily presented, they have been widely adopted by the staff, alongside the university motto – ‘In virtue and wisdom lead the world’. Print-outs of his five-point list are hung on walls around the university.

- Transparency;
- Accountability;
- Reliability;

- Action based on institutional ethos; and
- Quality

“I think that essentially guides my way of doing things. I brought those five [principles to UMU] and they have remained.” Click [here](#) for the video link. Quality, Olweny, is a major preoccupation of the university, not the least because it relies heavily on student fees for its financial survival.

The other quality he espouses is hard work. It is evident in how he structures his day – starting at 08h00 every morning and not ending until at least 19h30 every night. And those days are filled with meetings. Meetings with students, faculty or one of the five national and international boards he sits on.

“One of my kids, when they were growing up, he used to say they thought their dad was always eating meat, because I said, ‘I'm going for this meeting. I'm going for that meeting.’ They thought dad is always eating meat.”

He adopted his work habits while at university. A mentor at Medical School once told Olweny that his day should only really begin when everyone else was going home.

“Usually, that's the most productive two to three hours. Nobody knows you are in the office and there is limited disruptions. What I'm able to achieve between 16h30 and 19h30 is enormous. Very often it is much more than what I've achieved through the rest of the day.” Click [here](#) for the video link.

What major change have you brought to the university?

Immediately on arrival, Olweny upended UMU's educational philosophy. From his years at universities around the world, he said he had learned that most universities have a standard set of priorities: teaching, research and, then, community service.

“We have rearranged that. We have put research and scholarship first. And our No. 2 is community engagement. Not service, engagement. And we put teaching at the bottom.

“The reason is, we believe anybody can teach. You don't need to be a professor to be able to teach. But you need to be a researcher to be at a university and we need to engage the community.” Click [here](#) for the video link.

Less than a month into his tenure, Olweny established a community relations committee, which meets regularly to decide how the community and UMU can work together. The key product of that relationship has been an effort to lift a nearby village, Nindye, out of poverty.

“What we have done is every faculty has been told they must mainstream outreach into their curriculum.” Departments like Health Sciences and Education consult with the community and brainstorm ideas to help improve the lives of people living in Nindye.

The Faculty of Agriculture, for instance, is helping farmers

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improve yields and market their goods. The endeavour is modelled on the Millennium Villages Project, but draws on research conducted by UMU.

If the effort, which is being run in partnership with the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, is successful, Olweny plans to export it to other communities. Click [here](#) for the video link.

How have you positioned the university both for international recognition and to prepare students for Uganda's job market?

Nearly 25% of UMU's students are international. Most are drawn from East Africa, but a handful comes from the United States, Canada and Belgium.

The international strategy capitalises on Olweny's own experiences working abroad. At UMU, he has forged partnerships with universities like Notre Dame, and also recruits staff from around the world.

"That's part of our strategy, just to be as international as we possibly can. We also take pride in forging strategic alliances...That gives us a fairly broad perspective."

As UMU seeks to expand its international presence, though, it also has to tailor its educational experience to preparing Ugandan students to find positions in a difficult job market. That can require two very different kinds of courses.

Olweny is using planned university expansion – introducing new campuses in northern and western Uganda – to deploy an unusual strategy addressing just that problem. "Every campus must be unique in character and not merely a replica of what takes place at our main campus," he said.

The plan is for the new eastern campus in Mbale to spearhead education. Gulu in the north will be a "hard work campus. In addition to regular academics, they will be doing hard work." The western campus will be a polytechnic. "We're thinking of motor vehicle mechanical engineering, medical equipment repair engineering, petroleum engineering and agricultural engineering." Click [here](#) for the video link.

With campuses tailored to specific skills, UMU can continue to attract local and international students to its varied programmes at the main Nkozi campus, while also offering the kind of vocational training that will allow entrepreneurial students to take advantage of gaps in regional markets.

In that vein, UMU also launched the Student Training Entrepreneurial Promotion (STEP) programme to teach students how to start their own businesses.

The increase in vocational offerings is critical in Uganda's current economic environment but, despite recent urgings from the president and others, it is not the only solution to graduating students who will be able to find jobs in Uganda.

Olweny keeps returning to another advantage that UMU graduates have over other university-educated job applicants. It starts with what he describes as a mythical radio

station that everyone in Uganda listens to, calling it WILL FM – the What Is In It For Me station.

"That's what is killing Uganda today. Everybody will [ask], what do I get out of this? That's the first question...Until that radio station is closed, this country is doomed."

He continued: "I've been singing to everybody, to the students, to the staff, and hopefully if the change can start there, it will spread in concentric circles and eventually it will catch up with everyone.

"At least I now know that most of my students, when they graduate, they will be grabbed. Especially by banks and other financial institutions. They'll say, 'Yes, those are guys with integrity.'" Click [here](#) for the video link.

What other challenges have you encountered as leader of UMU?

Like most private universities in Uganda, UMU has a constant struggle to raise enough money to cover its costs, while still offering an affordable education. The mantra Olweny shares with his staff is that "it's not business as usual".

That means more dialogue between different departments to guide financial decisions. He just finished hosting a conference that pulled together UMU's deans, associate deans and department heads to instil this message.

The other major hurdle, he said, is an attitude of complacency. "People don't want to change. They are happy with the *status quo*. You bring in a new idea, they think you are crazy."

Each innovation he introduces – from outsourcing campus security to creating an advancement office that would build greater alumni support – has been greeted with resistance, he said.

"They are beginning to accept [change], but we just have to keep reminding them." Click [here](#) for the video link.

What advice do you have for future academic leaders?

As with most of his answers, Olweny has a readymade list of advice for his successors. In essence, it boils down to three critical points:

"Do what you like to do. Do not do it because other people want you to do it. You would not succeed. You have to do what you want, what you like doing."

He also emphasised the importance of working within a group of people who support the same vision and adhere to the same value.

And finally, "not to lose sight that, in fact, we're training leaders of tomorrow". He added, somewhat implausibly given his groundbreaking work at UMU: "Our time is gone. My time is gone."

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A New Regional Master Program

MSc in Agrometeorology and Natural Risk Management

School of Natural Resource Management and Environmental Sciences, Haramaya University Ethiopia

Overview

Strengthening Agrometeorology and Natural Risk Management (NRM) is critical under the conditions of the increasing trend of climatic and non-climatic hazards and risk factors, which has been challenging the development efforts of Africa and the livelihood of its people. Human resources capacity can significantly contribute to generating sustainable solutions for the serious problems encountered in Ethiopia and in the region particularly in agricultural production and environmental protection.

As one of the pioneer universities in Ethiopia, Haramaya University has fully committed to take the initiative to launch an MSc program in Agrometeorology and NRM. The aim is to develop and strengthen the regional human resources and institutional capacity in impact-

oriented training and research in Agrometeorology and NRM as an entry point towards food self-sufficiency through sustainable use of resources and management of climatic and non-climatic hazards or risks in the Eastern, Central and Southern Africa region. Because of the regional demand for

this capacity, Haramaya University will work with the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM: A Network of 29 African Universities in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa), to train for the wider Eastern, Central and Southern African region. Feedback from various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders consulted during the curriculum development process were used to enrich the curriculum. The Program a key output of a RUFORUM Nurturing Grant (RU 2011 NG 03– Development of Master of Science Program in

Agro-meteorology and Natural Risk Management at Haramaya) is now ready to accept the first batch of 10 potential candidates in October, 2012.

Admission

Admission to the MSc program requires candidates to have a BSc degree or its equivalent in Climatology/Agrometeorology, Soil Science, Natural Resource Management, Environmental Science, Plant Science, Horticulture, Ecology, Irrigation Agronomy/Engineering, Soil and Water Conservation/Engineering, Dry-land Agriculture, Arid Land Resources, Range Management and Eco-tourism, Forestry, Physics, Chemistry, Geology, Biology, Geography and other related fields. In addition, applicants must fulfil other admission criteria of the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) of Haramaya University.

Structure and Duration

The course will last in a minimum of 4 semesters (2 years). The candidate shall be required to take 25 credit hours of core courses; and 2 additional elective courses (one course in each semester). He/she shall undertake the mandatory research project (Thesis Research) equivalent to six credit hours and prepare a thesis research manuscript which shall be defended as per the procedures of the SGS.

Learning Outcomes

Graduates of this programme will be able to:

1. Have knowledge and skills, and capacity to be flexible to address problems associated with food insecurity and natural disaster, climate change and other operational problems facing African countries;
2. Apply modern tools and techniques in Agrometeorology and NRM, and also work for continuous refinement and upgrading of existing practices;
3. Make decision on sustainable development to ensure food security and healthier climate and environment;
4. Monitor climate change, and other natural and man-made hazards including land degradation, deforestation, water pollution and others;
5. Carry out environmental impact assessment and auditing of development projects;
6. Communicate effectively on weather forecasting, early warning, and disaster preparedness and risk management to diversity of stakeholders including farming and pastoral communities and policy makers; and
7. Manage government/private enterprises, distribution systems, teaching and research institutions.



20 automated weather stations donated by WFP have been set up around rural Ethiopia to help monitor climate change risk. Copyright: WFP/Niels Balzer



The Dry Lake Haramaya



UNIVERSITÄT HOHENHEIM



Hohenheim, August 6, 2012

The Food Security Center awards up to 20 scholarships for postdoctoral researchers and PhD students in 2013 and invites applications for the PhD Program "Global Food Security"

The Food Security Center (FSC) is a university center of excellence in development collaboration at the University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart, Germany. FSC is one of five excellence centers of the program "exceed – Higher Education Excellence in Development Cooperation", which is supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) with funds of the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany. FSC's mission is to make effective and innovative scientific contributions in research, teaching, and policy advice to eradicate hunger and achieve food security in collaboration with partner research and education organizations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and national and international development and research organizations. Thematically, FSC's activities deal with issues of sustainable food availability, food access, food use, and food utilization. More information is available from www.foodsecurity.de.

In 2013, FSC will award up to 20 scholarships for postdoctoral researchers and PhD students for a period of 4 to 6 months. The Center wishes to attract outstanding PhD students and postdoctoral fellows pursuing a career in academia or development collaboration.

In addition, FSC invites applications for the PhD Program "Global Food Security" at the University of Hohenheim. The PhD program will start in September 2013 and will last for 37 months, to September 2016. The program aims at increasing the students' previously gained scientific knowledge and skills relevant to food security related issues. The approval of application does not include a scholarship.

The application deadline for the scholarship program and for the PhD program is September 29, 2012. For further information please visit our webpage at: www.foodsecurity.de and go to: Scholarships & PhD program.

Dr. Detlef Virchow, Executive Manager

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Email: fsc-scholarships@uni-hohenheim.de

Website for Scholarships & PhD program: <https://fsc.uni-hohenheim.de/77676.html>

SHARING EXPERIENCES UNDER THE RUFORUM GRANTS PROJECTS



Dr. Noble Banadda is the Principal Investigator of a RUFORUM supported Graduates Research Grant (RU 2011 GRG 15) focusing on *"Investigating contamination risks associated with wrapping indigenous foods in polyethylene bags during cooking"*. RUFORUM Grant catalyzed acquisition of useful software (Fluent) for graduate research and training. Fluent is used by thousands of universities and colleges in over 60 countries. This is because Fluent provides outstanding value, laying the foundation for educational and other opportunities that arise from using best-in-class engineering simulation tools. Colleagues doing research in the following areas may find fluent particularly useful in Meteorological phenomena (rain, wind, floods, fires); Environmental hazards (air pollution, water pollution, transport of contaminants in water and foods); Heating, ventilation and air conditioning of buildings and cars; Interactions of various objects in water/air; Complex flows in furnaces, heat exchangers, chemical reactors etc; Processes in human body (blood flow, breathing, drinking). The software was previously not used in the region.

In our project, we intend to model the migration of food contaminants during thermal processing. The idea is that mathematical models which describe physical processes of practical interest are of great use as replacement for, or auxiliaries to, the experimental study of the actual process. Thus, models describing the mass transfer of additives and other contaminants from packaging materials and/or wrapping material to foods represent invaluable tools for industry professionals and regulators alike in ensuring food safety.

For more information on this software, Dr. Nobel Banadda can be contacted by email at banadda@agric.mak.ac.ug

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY SELECTED IN THE PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE INTRA-ACP ACADEMIC MOBILITY SCHEME 2012

Makerere University's proposal entitled "Sharing Capacity to Build Capacity for Quality Graduate Training in Agriculture in African Universities" has been selected for funding under the Intra ACP Academic Mobility Scheme Africa (Mwalimu Nyerere) and Caribbean & Pacific, Call for proposals EACEA/11/12. The partners and Programmes involved in this project include:

1. Makerere University (PhD Agricultural and Rural Innovations, PhD Plant Breeding and Biotechnology & MSc Plant Breeding and Seed Systems).
2. Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (MSc. Research Methods).
3. Haramaya University (MSc. Agrometeorology and Risk Management).
4. Eduardo Mondlane University (MSc Agricultural Economics).
5. University of Malawi, Bunda College of Agriculture (MSc Aquaculture and Fisheries Science).
6. Stellenbosch University (PhD Agricultural Sciences & MSc Food Science).
7. University of d'Abomey Calavi (MSc Management of Natural Resources and Bioversity).

8. University of Cape Coast (MPhil Agricultural Extension). Other partner universities include; University of Port Harcourt, University of Burundi, University of Gezira and University of Zambia

The proposal aims to:

- Create mobility of Students (MSc and PhD) and Staff to the partner university ; and
- Support visiting lecturers among the partner Universities to support development of MSc programmes and quality assurance of research and training programmes.

According to information available, the Intra-ACP Agency received 25 proposals under the Intra-ACP Call and six projects were selected for funding. Proposals were assessed with the assistance of the independent academic experts. The selection decision was based on the quality of the proposal, its relative position in comparison with the other proposals received, the budget available as well as the extent to which it addresses the award criteria indicated in the call for proposals. The Agency will publish the version of the projects description on the Intra-ACP website. Please click here for more information on the calls: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/intra_acp_mobility/funding/2012/selection/selection_call_11_12_en.php



Partnerships and Networking for Strengthening Agricultural Innovation

**The 3rd RUFORUM Biennial Conference,
24th – 28th September 2012**



We are pleased to inform you that the Third RUFORUM Biennial Conference will be held on the 24-28 September, 2012 in Entebbe, Uganda in conjunction with the RUFORUM Annual General Meeting. Please note these dates and block them to schedule your attendance to this important event.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BIENNIAL CONFERENCE:

OVERALL CONFERENCE THEME: Partnerships and Networking for Strengthening Agricultural Innovation and Higher Education

1. Showcasing RUFORUM success stories
2. Exciting Side Events and Parallel Sessions
3. Exhibition/Market Place scheduled for 27th September 2012
4. Launching of the TEAM Africa Tertiary Education for Agriculture Mechanism for Africa initiative - created to improve the capacity of Tertiary Agricultural Education institutions to respond to the current challenges of agricultural development

IMPORTANT DEADLINES:

- Conference Registration: 30th July 2012;
- Special sessions submission: 30th July 2012;
- Exhibition Registration: 15th August 2012; and
- **Extended Abstracts: CLOSED**

Please make booking for exhibitions to : Dr. Paul Nampala. Email: p.nampala@ruforum.org

[Please click here to access more information on the conference >>](#)