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Global Partners  
East and Southern Africa Regional Alliance:  
Collaborative Prospects

**Executive Summary**

This essay derives from the work of the Global Partners East and Southern Africa Regional Alliance Project to outline strategic possibilities for strengthening awareness and understanding of this important, understudied, and frequently misunderstood region. The countries in East and Southern Africa form a dynamic and intertwined region at the crossroads of trade, ideas, and people. This region of the world exemplifies the challenges and rewards of engaging an extensive cultural heritage with an increasingly globalized economy and society. A collaborative commitment to the region will make it possible for participating colleges to engage more fully in a range of complex and difficult issues confronting the world, and to enrich global understanding on their campuses. In this paper, the Global Partners East and Southern Africa Regional Alliance proposes collaborative initiatives that will promote greater awareness of this region in the classroom and beyond.

We have grouped the collaborative initiatives into three categories: (a) faculty development efforts to promote increased understanding of the region, (b) a consortial approach to managing study abroad in the region, and (c) actions to strengthen continuity between study abroad and campus learning.

**A. Curriculum and Faculty Development Efforts to Promote Increased Understanding of the Region**

- A consortial program that makes it possible for faculty from East and Southern Africa partner institutions to visit Global Partners campuses.
- A consortial effort to sustain and develop existing relationships with universities in the region as a means to promote faculty and curriculum development.

**B. A Consortial Approach to Managing Study Abroad in the Region**

- An active communication system among Global Partners international program officers to heighten the awareness of the off-campus study programs these colleges manage, and to encourage the development of a consortial preference system to help ensure stable enrollment in these programs.

- Collaboration in the management of study-abroad programs.

### C. Actions to Strengthen Continuity between Study Abroad and Campus Learning

- Creation of inter-campus and inter-consortial venues that allow students who have studied in the region to reflect on their experiences and share them with others, helping students understand their study-abroad experience as integrally linked to their on-campus learning.
- A pilot effort to teach Kiswahili and possibly another African language across campuses in real-time using video conferencing technology, providing valuable opportunities for language study to students preparing for or returning from study in the region.

All three groups of initiatives would yield a substantial increase in understanding of the region on participating Global Partners campuses. In addition, successful collaboration in any of these domains would confer broad recognition of participating institutions as national leaders in promoting increased knowledge of this region. In some instances, moreover, promising collaborative initiatives may offer the prospect of support from external funders. The East and Southern Africa Regional Alliance urges leaders of Global Partners institutions and their three consortial organizations – the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM), Associated Colleges of the South (ACS) and Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA) – to engage and support these initiatives to strengthen ties of understanding with this important region.

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The 42 colleges participating in the Global Partners Project have an opportunity to collaborate in strengthening the study of East and Southern Africa on their campuses. It is a region of the world that receives comparatively little attention in the curriculum, though it is deeply implicated in geopolitical developments that are of pressing concern and will continue to grow in importance. A collaborative commitment to the region will make it possible for participating colleges to engage more fully in a range of complex and difficult issues confronting the world, and to enrich global understanding on their campuses.

The historical efforts of individual Global Partners colleges and three consortial organizations – the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM), Associated Colleges of the South (ACS), and Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA) – have yielded significant relationships with universities and scholars in this region. These efforts provide solid foundations on which future collaborative activities and programs can build. Further, a collaborative initiative in African Studies can yield critical links to African-American and African Diaspora programs where they exist. In this paper, the Global Partners East and Southern Africa Regional Alliance proposes collaborative initiatives that will promote greater awareness of this region in the classroom and beyond.

## **The Region's Importance**

The countries in East and Southern Africa form a dynamic and intertwined region at the crossroads of trade, ideas, and people. This region of the world exemplifies the challenges and rewards of engaging an extensive cultural heritage with an increasingly globalized economy and society. The proximity to Central Africa, the Middle East, the Indian Ocean rim, and the Asian sub-continent has created a multicultural population in which Swahili and other Bantu languages are spoken in addition to English – and in which Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and local religions exist in close proximity to one another. The area has an extraordinary level of biodiversity with equatorial rainforests, deserts, savanna, lakes, and mountains. There is a growing scientific consensus, based on findings in Ethiopia's Awash Valley, the Lake Turkana region in Kenya, as well as sites in Tanzania and South Africa, that *homo sapiens* made their first appearance in Africa less than 100,000 years ago. Within the last half-century, many countries of this region were still held by colonial powers, and the yoke of apartheid burdened South Africa and the then Rhodesia. East and Southern Africa has also become a global laboratory for engagement with a range of societal issues: hunger, poverty, third-world debt, economic development, racial and ethnic conflict, African and Islamic Diaspora. The region exemplifies a global challenge of maintaining a balance between economic growth and a concern for environmental issues such as deforestation and the disappearance of wildlife habitat. In addition, the region conveys the sense of urgency that attends the presence of diseases – including malaria, bilharzia, ebola and other hemorrhagic viruses, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic – all of which pose challenges both as medical issues and as matters of public policy and economic concern.

The Regional Alliance Project has examined the opportunities for specialized study of East and Southern Africa, while also considering how awareness and understanding of African issues can be increased for non-specialists. Some of the conclusions of the Regional Alliance group are that:

- The countries that make up this region are under-studied and deserving of more attention. Although many states in West Africa attract considerable attention within the realm of Francophone and African Diaspora studies, a thorough study of the East and Southern region is integral to a more complete understanding of the continent as a whole.
- A strengthened understanding of this region and of Africa generally has the potential to dispel many outdated or faulty assumptions growing out of racist or naïve ideas about the African continent.
- The region offers a rich array of material for the study of cultural, social, political, and economic problems, achievement and evolution. For example, religious studies could benefit from the inclusion of more non-Judeo-Christian religions into its frame of emphasis; literary studies could benefit by examining more closely an under-studied body of Anglophone literature; and political science could benefit from studies of multi-cultural nation-building, democratic initiatives, and conflict resolution taking place in the region.

- Recent world events have increased the strategic global significance of East and Southern Africa while providing a basis for understanding the process of social empowerment in a developing region. The emergence of global markets, for example, has impacted a number of local industries – including coffee, cut flowers, fish, tea, fruit, and nuts – some of which have achieved success in global export markets, while others have suffered from increased competition with other regions.
- The region offers settings for the scientific study of environmental issues that are likely to impact the quality of life on a global scale in the decades ahead.

### **Specific Initiatives**

The East and Southern Africa Regional Alliance proposes a series of collaborative actions that would enhance the knowledge and understanding of this region on Global Partners campuses. We have grouped the collaborative initiatives into three categories: (a) curriculum and faculty development efforts to promote increased understanding of the region, (b) a consortial approach to managing study abroad in the region, and (c) actions to strengthen continuity between study abroad and campus learning.

All three groups of initiatives would yield a substantial increase in understanding of the region on participating Global Partners campuses. In addition, successful collaboration in any of these domains would confer broad recognition of participating

institutions as national leaders in promoting increased knowledge of this region. In some instances, moreover, promising collaborative initiatives may offer the prospect of support from external funders.

#### A. Curriculum and Faculty Development Efforts to Promote Increased Understanding of the Region

- A consortial program that makes it possible for faculty from East and Southern Africa partner institutions to visit Global Partners campuses.
- A consortial effort to sustain and develop existing relationships with universities in the region as a means to promote curriculum and faculty development.

#### B. A Consortial Approach to Managing Study Abroad in the Region

- An active communication system among Global Partners international program officers to heighten the awareness of the off-campus study programs these colleges manage, and to encourage the development of a consortial preference system to help ensure stable enrollment in these programs.
- Collaboration in the management of study-abroad programs.

#### C. Actions to Strengthen Continuity between Study Abroad and Campus Learning

- Creation of inter-campus and inter-consortial venues that allow students who have studied in the region to reflect on their experiences and share them with others, helping students understand their study-abroad experience as integrally linked to their on-campus learning.
- A pilot effort to teach Kiswahili and possibly another African language across campuses in real-time using video conferencing technology, providing valuable opportunities for language study to students preparing for or returning from study in the region.

Each of these is discussed in turn below.

#### A. Curriculum and Faculty Development Efforts to Promote Increased Understanding of the Region

*A consortial effort to sustain and develop existing relationships with universities in the region as a means to promote curriculum and faculty development.* A central principle in the development of a an African presence on Global Partners campuses has been to cultivate campus interest “one faculty member at a time.” What is required here is a consortial structure to maintain communication with partner universities in the region, helping provide faculty members from Global Partners institutions with opportunities to travel to East and Southern Africa to conduct research, develop professional contacts,



lecture, or teach. Through the past several years, funding from the Mellon Foundation has substantially enriched the opportunities for faculty development through travel grants. We do not envision that Global Partners institutions will necessarily be in a position to replicate this level of activity from their own resources – though experience has shown that travel grants of some \$2,500 can yield remarkable enrichments to a faculty member’s professional interests and teaching. What does warrant continued consortial support, however, is increased attention to building relationships in the region through such means as the International Learning Center in Nairobi or the ACM Program in Dar es Salaam. These networks offer continuing points of contact and reference for Global Partners institutions and their faculty. A similar means of developing such relationships is to devote consortial energy to the development of real-time audio links and Internet conversations with African-based faculty and U. S. classrooms.

*A consortial program that makes it possible for faculty from East and Southern African partner institutions to visit Global Partners campuses.* This recommendation is closely related to the preceding one. We propose the development of a common fund to make possible occasional visits of university faculty from Kenya, Tanzania, and possibly other East and Southern African nations to Global Partners campuses. Such arrangements yield a reciprocal advantage, allowing Global Partners institutions to benefit from the presence of a scholarly and cultural ambassador, while providing African scholars with direct experience of campuses in the U.S. that differ greatly from the institutions in which they were trained. Global Partners institutions with a strong interest in bringing scholars or others from the region to their campuses would take

leadership in initiating invitations to visitors who would be available for lectures, performances, classes, consultations, or sabbatical replacements on nearby campuses. The length of time a faculty member might remain in the U.S. could extend from two weeks to a semester or a full academic year, depending on the educational purposes the partnering campuses sought to fulfill through the visitor's presence. Such purposes might include the use of visitors to give guest lectures or research presentations, to supervise independent study projects on neighboring campuses, or to conduct joint research with a member of the host faculty. The current difficulty in obtaining visas for citizens of this region to enter the U.S. underscores the potential benefit of institutional collaboration in bringing African scholars to U.S. campuses.

#### B. A Consortial Approach to Managing Study Abroad in the Region

*An active communication system among Global Partners international program officers to heighten the awareness of off-campus study programs these colleges manage, and encourage the development of a consortial preference system.* A survey distributed to off-campus study officers of Global Partners institutions in the summer of 2003 yielded a remarkable finding about study abroad in this region. Nearly three-quarters of the programs students of Global Partners institutions choose for study abroad in East and Southern Africa were managed either by ACM or by one of the Global Partners institutions. The ratio contrasts sharply with many other regions of the world in which relatively few students choose to enroll in study-abroad programs managed by Global Partners colleges. This dominance of Global Partners institutions in the market of

program providers in East and Southern Africa creates a special opportunity to test the potential of a consortial preference system.

We propose to develop a network to distribute information about the off-campus study programs these colleges manage in the region. Such a network might be spurred initially by the development of a white paper identifying favored programs. A network of this kind, facilitated through the Web and an e-mail discussion group, would foster a system of favored providers for off-campus study programs managed by Global Partners institutions. The number of Global Partners institution students who choose study-abroad programs in East or Southern Africa is comparatively small; one result is that not all the programs managed by Global Partners institutions are filled to capacity on a regular basis. Such a system will help a campus to identify the short- or long-term programs of other Global Partners institutions that address particular needs from the standpoint of curriculum or other perspectives.

We believe that managing and sending colleges can negotiate agreements that result in price discounts to Global Partners institutions and their students. Sending colleges would have an assurance of program quality from the knowledge that the managing institution is a liberal arts college of similar mission and stature. Managing colleges would in turn gain greater assurance of filling their off-campus programs to capacity on a regular basis.

*Collaboration in the management of study-abroad programs.* A preferential system of this sort could also result in the decision of two or more institutions to collaborate in the operation of off-campus programs in the region, or to merge or combine existing but underused programs. A related set of arrangements could also

make it possible for faculty of one institution to teach in a program managed by another Global Partners institution, helping ensure a stable pool of faculty to lead a given program while expanding the range of professional development opportunities available to faculty with an interest in this region. Such arrangements among Global Partners campuses could ultimately lead to the development of more systematic agreements to offer the equivalent of consortial programs.

### C. Actions to Strengthen Continuity between Study Abroad and Campus Learning

*Creation of inter-campus and inter-consortial venues that allow students who have studied in the region to reflect on their experiences and share them with others.*

Among liberal arts colleges a prevailing concern is that students have the opportunity to engage in critical reflection about their study-abroad experience in relation to their programs of learning on campus. Because the number of those who study in this region is comparatively small, a student might well return to a home campus that lacks a robust cohort of students with whom to share and reflect on the study-abroad experience. For this region particularly, there is considerable value in a consortial effort to build a critical mass of students and faculty with an interest in the region. Some of this community-building could be achieved through such means as Web sites and list-serves. Beyond this step, however, there is a need for a periodic inter-campus, inter-consortial forum that allows students returning from this region – along with faculty members, and other interested students preparing for study abroad – to convene and share the results of their study. These events would encourage students to develop presentations that engage the

tools of one or more academic disciplines to reflect critically on issues encountered during their study in the region. Such events could readily adopt the model of an undergraduate research forum, strengthening faculty-student mentoring opportunities while building a network of students and faculty across Global Partners institutions with a strong interest in the region.

*A pilot effort to teach Kiswahili and possibly another African language across campuses in real-time using video conferencing technology.* The study of language is one of the most powerful means by which students can gain an understanding of a nation or culture other than their own. Students with an interest in this region are disadvantaged, however, by the scarcity of offerings in Swahili or other languages of East or Southern Africa on Global Partners campuses. On most campuses the volume of demand for instruction in this language does not begin to justify a single institution's investment in even a part-time faculty position.

We propose to develop a model for teaching Swahili and possibly another language in real-time across two or three Global Partners campuses using video conferencing technology. Partnering institutions would share the costs of appointing an instructor to teach the language course across two or more campuses using real-time interactive audio and video connections. The design and operation of such a partnership would benefit from existing models that would be carefully studied: a partnership between Kenyon College and Denison University to offer courses in Japanese and Arabic, as well as an ACS initiative to teach classics across different campuses. Five Colleges Incorporated, in Massachusetts, is just introducing a model of "mentored"

teaching of Swahili, and we expect this program will also provide modeling principles.

Kalamazoo College has embarked on a pilot effort to teach Kiswahili across campuses using video conference technology to link one or more partner campuses. At the time of this writing, Kalamazoo is actively seeking partner institutions to explore the potential of this instructional method, and it has received expressions of interest from Earlham, Hope, Knox, Millsaps, and Wooster. This project holds the potential of conjoining an initiative within Global Partners with a kind of technological collaboration encouraged by the Mellon-Funded regional technology centers under the auspices of the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education (NITLE).

### **Collaborative Design Principles**

In exploring possible collaborations to advance the state of educational and cultural exchange with East and Southern Africa, we have been guided by the following principles.

- *Build on existing relationships that have been developed with universities within these nations.* Given the limited funds available to Global Partners institutions and the length of time required to foster connections with universities abroad, the most effective strategy at this stage is to strengthen the ties that already exist through two substantial initiatives: the International Learning Center at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, managed by

Kalamazoo College; and the ACM program at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

- *Design Global Partners activities that offer a clear benefit to the institution as a whole.* In the course of the Global Partners Project, part of the funding provided by the Mellon Foundation has focused on professional development for faculty. The awarding of individual travel grants has helped foster faculty research and teaching interests in the region. Inherent in this approach is the principle of growing scholarly interest “one faculty member at a time.” In the time since Global Partners began, nearly 50 faculty members of Global Partners institutions have traveled to East Africa with the support of grant funds. In many cases these activities have also led to the development of contacts and joint research projects with faculty members of East African universities. It is clear that in the future, support for study in this region must be understood to confer a benefit that extends beyond individual participants to the faculty and students of any participating institution as a whole.
- *Make it possible for collaboration to work on different levels for different institutions.* We do not expect that every institution will have the same degree of interest in any proposal. In some cases a comparatively small number of institutions may be the primary participants in a consortial link. Others may emerge as models of collaboration on a scale that involve perhaps a dozen

institutions. A few initiatives may ultimately engage all 42 institutions in some way.

## **Ways and Means**

Achieving these goals clearly requires a degree of commitment from participating institutions. In some cases that commitment would naturally fall on those institutions most directly involved. The effort to teach Kiswahili across campuses using electronic technology, for example, will necessarily involve a small number of institutions initially, though the number of partners could grow as more campus acquire the equipment and achieve the threshold of interest and support that makes their participation possible. In other cases the achievement of common purposes might reasonably entail a broad sharing of efforts and resources among the 42 Global Partners colleges and the three consortial organizations participating in the project: ACM, ACS, and GLCA. There are many variables in determining actual costs to individual institutions; at this point we provide only a general sketch of the extent of such commitments:

### *Opportunities for U.S. and African faculty members to visit campuses overseas.*

The direct costs of such visits would be shared by institutions that actually bring a scholar from the region to their campuses. Indirect costs would be a comparatively small consortial investment in the relationships that Global Partners institutions have developed with East and Southern African universities. The existing networks of relationships that Global Partners institutions have developed in Kenya and Tanzania provide important



contacts that can facilitate faculty research and lecture visits in both directions. Dividing the modest cost of sustaining this and possibly two or three similar international centers by the 42 institutions in the Global Partners Project, it becomes clear that a consortial approach can be cost-effective.

*Heightened awareness of collaborative possibilities in off-campus programs.* One of the most effective steps that Global Partners institutions can take collectively is to make a standing investment in the communication function. We propose that ACM, ACS, and GLCA continue to share responsibility for conveying and helping promote East and Southern Africa studies collaborations. Responsibilities would be to help foster relations between faculty of U.S. and African institutions; to promote opportunities for hosting a faculty member from an African partner as well as opportunities for U.S. faculty seeking contacts in Africa. In addition, these organizations would actively distribute information about available off-campus study programs, helping publicize openings that other Global Partners campuses might fill at discounted rates. Finally, through their communication functions, these organizations could assist the efforts of individual institutions in obtaining visa clearance for African visitors, helping wherever possible to ease the difficulty and inconvenience created by current security measures for entry into the U.S. The costs of these commitments would vary, according to the allocation of staff within and among these consortial organizations.

*Inter-consortial student research venue.* Many Global Partners institutions convene annual forums that provide their students with the opportunity to present results

of individual research projects. The inter-consortial forum we envision would extend that model, drawing together in a single location students as well as faculty members who have an interest in the region for research presentations and exchanges. In any given year, such an event would likely take place on a host campus that offers reasonable proximity to other Global Partners campuses. The costs of undertaking such an event would be comparable to other conferences that ACM, ACS, and GLCA convene or support. A tri-consortial event offers the advantage of greater scale, more extensive networking opportunities, and ultimately greater visibility in the study of East and Southern Africa across Global Partners institutions.

*Teaching language with interactive technology.* Institutions that engage in this partnership would need first to ensure that they have the necessary facilities to establish an interactive link. The start-up costs for this effort are comparatively modest, ranging from \$15,000 to \$20,000 for equipment for each participating college. Some Global Partners campuses already have the equipment to participate in such a program. The presence of this interactive technology, moreover, can help fulfill a range of other instructional purposes among the partnering campuses, serving as a general spur to collaborative projects. Partnering institutions would share in the cost of appointing a faculty member at one of the campuses.

### **Sustaining the Vitality**

We believe the proposals emerging from the East and Southern Africa Regional Alliance warrant continued development and support among of Global Partners

institutions and their three consortial organizations. The benefits of continued collaboration are clear. Collaboration greatly increases the opportunities for these campuses to heighten awareness and understanding of this region, making it possible for any participating institution to sustain a more robust and notable profile of activities concerning the region on its campus. Such activities heighten the stature and recognition of Global Partners campuses, both individually and collectively as institutions committed to diversity and to genuine engagement with the unfamiliar as an integral part of a liberal arts education. Finally, an active profile of collaborative efforts focusing on this region can position these institutions as strong candidates for external funding from a variety of sources.

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This essay derives from the work of the Global Partners East and Southern Africa Regional Alliance Project. In the course of the past two years, this group has met periodically to identify ways in which institutional collaboration among Global Partners campuses can improve the quality and effectiveness of educational programming focusing on the East and Southern Africa region. The following individuals are participants in the East and Southern Africa Regional Alliance Project and have contributed to the formulation of the essay's central themes:

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