

Interact

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Knowledge co-generation: a case study from the University of Ibadan

Stella Odebode reports on a recent university-community project involving the versatile *Moringa Oleifera* tree.

A community comprises a group of people united by at least one common characteristic. This could include geography, shared interests, values, experiences, or traditions. Community engagement is a particularly important element of any successful rural development project.

The Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, is involved in the planting and processing of *Moringa Oleifera*, also known as the Drumstick Tree, with the aim of creating a source of income for rural women. The benefits and uses of the *Moringa* tree are

diverse – it can be used to produce fertilisers, domestic cleaning agents, dye, and bio gas, as well as being used as a foliar nutrient, a honey clarifier, and to help purify water.

As well as the planting and processing of the *Moringa* tree, a series of workshops was organised by the John MacArthur-sponsored Integrated Rural Development Project. One component of the project was to train local farmers in snail rearing and cane-rat rearing as further potential income-generating ventures. The workshops proved to be very successful. Both men and women in the rural Ile-Ogbo community of Osun state were trained in the production, potential uses, processing and marketing of the *Moringa* tree, as well as in snail rearing and cane-rat rearing.

During workshops, Professor Aken'ova – a professor in the Department of Agronomy – discussed the cultivation, techniques, nursery preparation, stem propagation, weeding, pruning, fruiting, diseases, and pest management of the *Moringa* tree.

Grace Oluwatoye, Chief Executive Officer of Lifebuilders – a non-governmental organisation – similarly discussed at length the processing of *Moringa* into different products, including oil, powder, seeds, tea, pods, flowers, fibre, pulp for paper, and soap.

The success of this project was due to the good relationship between the researchers from the University of Ibadan and the Ile-Ogbo community. This community has also cooperated on projects which form part of the faculty's Practical Year Training Programme – an essential part of the university's Bachelor of Agriculture degree.

The role of knowledge co-generation cannot be overemphasised when considering the effect on the rural community in particular. Both men and women from the community are now active participants. This, in turn, has enhanced the teaching, research and supervision of students in the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry at the University of Ibadan. ■

Dr Stella Odebode is a Reader in the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.



Fieldwork report:

Aboriginal Resource Center

Jill Treen, a student at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, reports on her field placement at the Aboriginal Resource Center.

Social science and humanities students at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) in Canada have an opportunity to conduct field placements in their final year of study. By working directly with a community partner or initiative, students are introduced to the diverse policies, practices, and populations associated with social services. While managing a series of self-directed goals and objectives, students explore the intersection of theory and practice while generating positive inroads in surrounding communities.

Jill Treen conducted her field placement with UOIT's newly-developed Aboriginal Resource Centre, and played an instrumental role in the development and implementation of its on-campus and off-campus promotional strategies.

My name is Jill Treen and I'm a fourth year legal studies student. I currently hold the position of Vice-President of the Aboriginal Student Circle, and I am completing my fieldwork practicum with the Aboriginal Resource Center (ARC).

I grew up knowing that I was part Aboriginal, but until recently I never truly identified. At 23, I assumed I knew who I was and what I believed in. When I was asked by a fellow student to join the Aboriginal Student Circle, I was apprehensive because I didn't want to offend others with the way that I looked or where I grew up. I naively assumed the majority of the other students would come from reserves. She assured me that the group would consist of a variety of different people who identify with different cultural backgrounds.

The ARC has helped me develop my native identity while receiving cultural support related to my education, career and personal development. The center offers me a welcoming gathering place to socialise, complete homework, and gather information about the current activities offered by the university and the surrounding community. It truly supports community involvement and the unity between cultures. This center would not be what it is without the wonderful work of the Aboriginal counsellors. With their continual support, they make the center an inviting space

that promotes self-growth, a better understanding of the Aboriginal culture, and provides educational resources.

I was fortunate enough to be able to complete my fieldwork practicum with the ARC and work alongside the counsellors. Recently, I was able to take part in the grand opening ceremonies. I was overwhelmed to see the support that streamed in from various Aboriginal communities.

I attribute a big part of my proud Aboriginal status to ARC and the Aboriginal Student Circle that was formed on campus. Through the support of fellow Aboriginal students and counsellors on campus, I have learned about my people's history and was given the opportunity to develop my native identity. I am a proud Metis woman. ■

A version of this article first appeared in the newsletter of the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities (Winter, 2012), University of Ontario Institute of Technology.

Jill Treen is a student at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Canada.

Global education: knowledge-based economies for 21st century nations

Going Global is a series of international educational conferences hosted by the British Council, offering an open forum for policymakers and practitioners from around the world to discuss issues facing the international education community.

In the 21st century, research and tertiary education systems play three key roles: they produce cutting-edge knowledge; they transfer, exchange and apply that to drive innovation; and they educate and provide skills to knowledge workers. Going Global 2013 will examine the extent to which these roles and systems are internationalised and what impact they have on the wealth, prosperity and wellbeing of nations, communities and cultures.

The ACU, who have worked with the British Council in various reciprocal partner relationships, are proud once again to support this event, and hope to deliver sessions on internationalising tertiary education structures and systems and developing skilled knowledge workers, as well as exhibiting our work and that of our membership on various policy issues.

Going Global 2013 will take place from 4-6 March 2013 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. For further information, visit <http://ihe.britishcouncil.org/going-global>

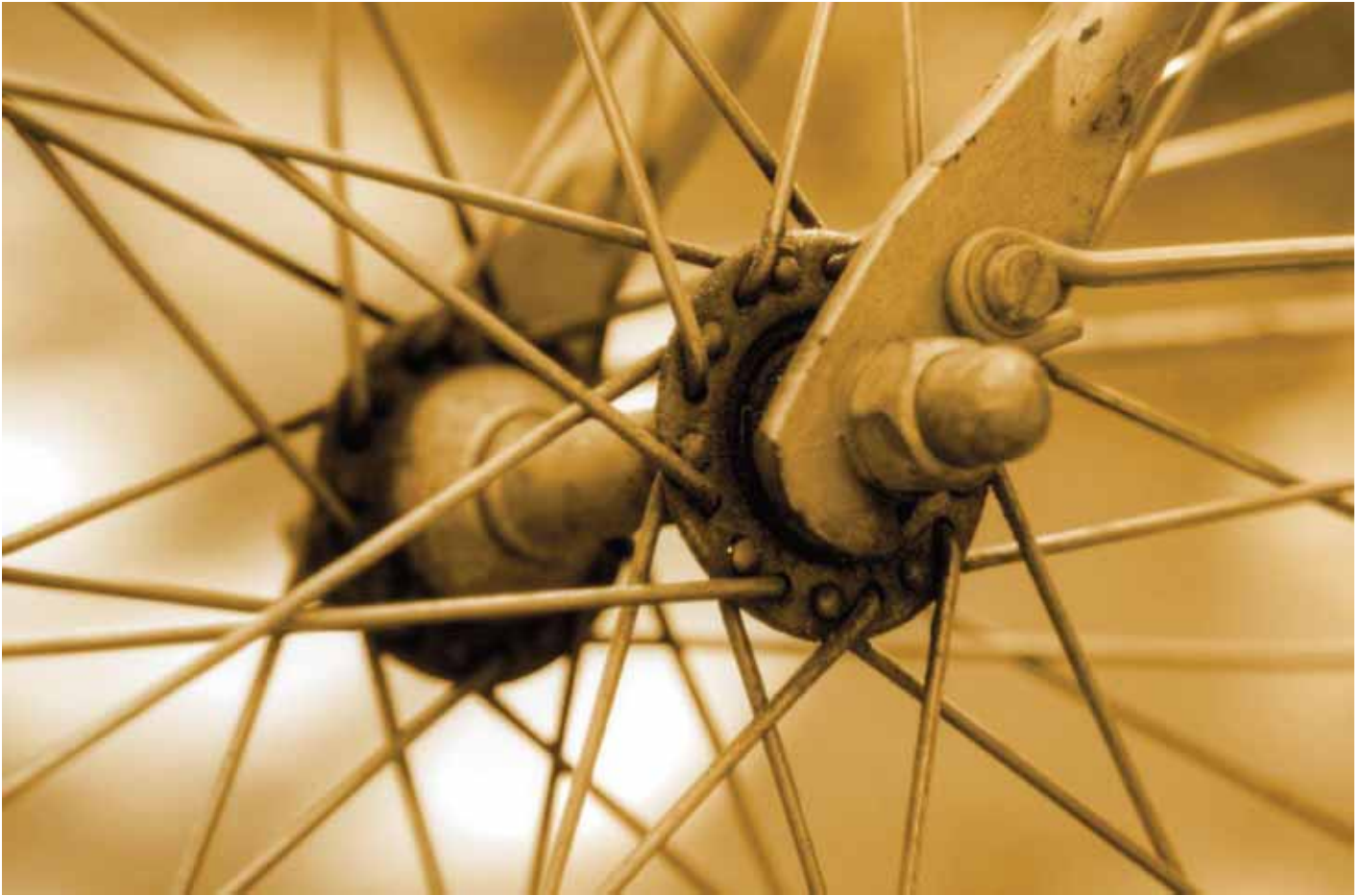
ACU Centenary and new website launch

Two exciting new developments were launched at the 2012 ACU Conference of Executive Heads, held in Jamaica in November.

The conference saw the opening of the ACU Centenary celebrations, under the theme 'Future forward: design, develop, deliver'. Through this theme, the ACU will address the important debates on the future of international higher education, examining what lies ahead in the sector and engaging in meaningful debates with our members to tackle some of the challenges they face.

The second development was the re-launch of the ACU's website. As well as being a hub for the wealth of resources, research and expertise the ACU has to offer, the brand new website will allow members to view and amend their membership details, follow up-to-the-minute developments on Twitter and, along with an engaged community, become more effectively involved in the higher education debate via the online discussion forum and other social media.

To experience the new site and learn more about the Centenary celebrations, visit www.acu.ac.uk



Hubs of knowledge creation: exploring the potential for knowledge co-generation within the post-secondary academy

As societies move towards the democratisation of knowledge creation, **Connie Nelson** and **Mirella Stroink** argue that university systems, structures and processes need to adapt accordingly.

Universities are hubs of knowledge creation and dissemination. The role of the university in society is to be a place of exploration, reflection, experimentation and innovation. The epistemological frameworks, disciplinary categories, and university structures that we adopt in the service of knowledge creation give shape both to the process and products of knowledge creation. These frameworks and structures evolved to their present form because they have been useful to universities in fulfilling their role. This role of the university in society remains unchanged, but the context in which that role is fulfilled is changing.

The frameworks and structures of the present university system evolved in an era when the printing press was the primary vehicle for the widespread sharing of ideas and information. Today, people can access a uni-

erse of knowledge, information and ideas from their fingertips, and are increasingly able to do so freely and from virtually anywhere. Slow, linear knowledge is good during times of consistency or a constant climate; however, we are moving away from such times and the process of knowledge creation needs to adapt accordingly. Flexibility and fluidity of knowledge and speed of knowledge creation are required under times of rapid change. Moreover, we can no longer assume that knowledge creation is the exclusive domain of intensely-educated elites in universities. Instead, knowledge creation is happening all around us.

Universities' attention to community engagement is raising interesting questions of how, and by whom, knowledge is most effectively created and disseminated. Through community service learning, for example, knowledge flowing from the university may

be blended with localised knowledge to enhance its applicability. More transformative is when communities begin to move beyond the mere utilisation of university-based knowledge creation and dissemination to become creators of knowledge themselves. Our experience in community engagement to date demonstrates that we are on the threshold of knowledge creation and dissemination as reciprocal activities between the university and the community, through service-learning, graduate student supervision, and community-based research. Current university goals of civic training for students and of placing more emphasis on public interest can be augmented through reciprocal knowledge creation.

This movement towards the democratisation of knowledge creation may stem in part from broader changes in society, such as the explosion of global digital interconnectedness. In a world where information can be created and traded globally, instantly, and cheaply – and through a diversity of media – ►

knowledge creation is no longer seen as the exclusive domain of academia. Together, as one community with a diversity of skills and resources, an abundance of innovation and new knowledge can emerge that is grounded in place and relevant to the issues of the community. As such, the ancient role of the university as a hub of knowledge creation remains intact. What changes is the context, and the university is challenged to redefine and restructure itself to adapt to this changed context.

The degree and programme structure that presently shapes the process and content of university learning, as well as the perceived purpose of this learning and the very people who feel eligible to benefit from this learning, presents another challenge to the relevance of our current university structure. With time delimited block programmes, degrees, and disciplinary silos, knowledge creation and university learning are funnelled through a rigid structure. With a more flexible and fluid approach, the university could serve as the knowledge creation hub to which all people seeking new knowledge and advanced thought could be drawn. Beginning with the individual learner, the university could weave the optimum learning experience around that individual by drawing on resources both within and outside of the given university – and even outside of academia as a whole. The student's learning could be recognised through an online transcript or record of learning experiences, and the knowledge creation that they engage in may or may not be tied to a particular degree or programme. This way, citizens or organisations who are seeking new knowledge to address particular community

needs can work within the university to create that knowledge through their own sequence of learning goals and research questions. The resulting knowledge can be reviewed and recognised formally and disseminated through university mechanisms. Meanwhile, more traditional students seeking an expansion of thought through an established degree programme may still do so, while tailor-fitting their experience to their learning goals – goals that may include community engagement. By interconnecting the various learners, traditional students may benefit from having their courses brought to life by engaging directly with the knowledge needs of the community members moving within the university system alongside them.

As the global population becomes increasingly interconnected by advanced digital technologies, and the scale and reach of our environmental, economic, and social problems expand, we are called to recognise the profound interdependence of all human and natural systems. In adapting to the reality of this interconnectedness, many of our social and organisational structures are being reconsidered and redesigned to meet their objectives in ways that work fluidly with the dynamics of complex systems. The university is no exception. With structures and practices that evolved in the era of the printing press still largely in operation, the university system is in need of reconsideration. The original and essential function of a university is in greater demand than ever. There is a tremendous need for innovation and adaptive solutions to challenges throughout society. Furthermore, the limits of human thought and consciousness are being pressed in new and complex

ways. The university, therefore, has an essential role to play as part of the community fabric. By reconsidering the structures and practices that shape our approach to this role, we could discover vastly more effective and efficient ways of mobilising knowledge and innovation for the coming generations. ■

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**With a more flexible and fluid approach,
the university could serve as the
knowledge creation hub to which all people
seeking new knowledge and advanced
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