

Quality Matters

Volume 6 No.23, August 2012

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA)

St. Mary's University College

In this Issue

From the Editorial Desk.....	2
News	3
Research Corner.....	4
Interview.....	5
Perspective.....	7

Quote of this issue

"High achievement always takes place in the framework of high expectations."

Jack Kinder

This newsletter is published every three months by the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA) of St Mary's University College (SMUC). The objective of the newsletter is to inform the SMUC community as well as interested public, private, non-governmental stakeholders about the activities and endeavors of the institution in fostering quality education and research in the Ethiopian Higher Education setting.

Tel.251-11-553 7999 / 8001

P.O.Box:1211

Email: ceiqa@smuc.edu.et

<http://www.smuc.edu.et>

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

4,597 Students Graduated

Saint Mary's University College graduated a total of 4,597 students who specialized in different fields of studies with the level of post graduate, degree, TEVT and certificate programs, from its regular and continuing streams. The graduation ceremony was held colorfully at three different places: Hilton Addis, National Theatre and Hawassa in the presence of guest of honors, delegates and the UC community.



The graduation ceremony of 195 post graduate students took place at Hilton Addis on Meskerem 6, 2005. The postgraduate program is being run in collaboration with Indria Gandhi National Open University. On the occasion, the President of Saint Mary's UC, Ato Wondowsen Tamirat (Associate Professor) said that the day marks a new chapter in the life of graduates. During the last three years, according to the President, students exerted their effort with all sorts of dedication to accomplish their studies, and time has come to change their personal and national visions into reality. A delegate from Indian Embassy, Mr. Sanjive Kanduri, expressed that the training students gained during their stay at the UC would enable

... Continued on Page 3

From the Editorial Desk

Envisioning the provision of quality education, SMUC usually implements its strategic plan (SP) assiduously. The priorities of the SP serve as the guiding principles of the UC. SMUC has established a strong tradition of implementing and monitoring SPs. Its culture of handling SP can provide useful insights for other new institutions, and it is good to share such a tradition mainly with other sisterly higher learning institutions.

The implementation of action plan, for instance, is executed at SMUC as follows. Units and offices formulate their action plan based on the five year SP and submit it to CEIQA (Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance Office). CEIQA is responsible for collecting all action plans from the major units of the UC. It gives comments using SMART measures as yardsticks regarding the content of each plan. Returning the plan for the major units after revising, it organizes a general session for all units and offices to come together for multi directional discussion: top down, bottom up and horizontal. The components of the action plan are usually deliberated and reviewed critically again by participants and amendments are made by the respective units and offices which pave the way for having refined ideas. These ideas serve as input for the effective implementation of its yearly action plan and the general SP.

CEIQA collects the edited action plan of each major unit and compiles and publishes it in the form of a book. Then, it distributes to units, offices and HERQA. In the meantime, CEIQA suggests useful ideas to major units and serves as a coordination center for educational improvement and quality assurance related issues. For example, it gives training to staff members on how to formulate action plan, performance plan and strategic plan. It also offers training on quality related issues to both the academic

community and external interested groups. It coordinates different staff development trainings for the academic staff.

The Office is also responsible for monitoring and evaluating the action plan of the major units. There is a monitoring and evaluation framework which the Office produced in 2007/8. The framework clearly identifies the scope of the monitoring and evaluation of the UC. The major areas forwarded for the M&E exercise entails audit, performance monitoring, performance evaluation/ assessment, quality audit, reporting and revising strategic and action plans. Seven types of M&E systems are identified: monthly progress reports, bi-annual monitoring reports, revised action /annual plans, annual reports/ reviews, revised strategic plan, midterm evaluation report and summative evaluation report to which the UC strictly adheres.

In relation to action plan, for instance, CEIQA makes visits to major units and produces quarterly reports and communicates the quarterly monitoring results to all units including the top management. It also assesses, measures and values the institutional performance of the first half, second half and the entire period plan implementation in reference to the SP.

Rigorous monitoring and evaluation system is indispensable for universities to transform their mission and vision into practice. If there are institutions which do not establish the system, they can draw lessons from those which already have the system and experience especially in conducting and handling regular monitoring and evaluation of action plans. Most colleges and universities have SP. Their difference lies in how they handle monitoring and evaluation. To avoid differences, it is good to share experiences.

This newsletter focuses on strategic planning of higher learning. Enjoy reading it!

News

Continued from page 1...

them to succeed in life, adding that their education would be instrumental in realizing the development of their country. He also appraised the tie which has been established between Indira Gandhi National Open University and SMUC as very successful.

Similarly, one thousand and seventy seven students graduated with degree and TEVT program at the National Theater on Pagume 5, 2004. The guest of honor, Dr. Ellene G/Medhin, informed graduates to exploit the favorable condition of the country by applying their knowledge and skill vigorously and dutifully to the betterment of the society. Addressing the graduates, Ato Wondowsen Tamirat (Associate Professor), advised them to work industriously to eradicate poverty from the country. He also reminded the grand contribution of the private institutions in Ethiopia through the expansion of access to those students who would not have been reached otherwise.

The institution also graduated 3,325 students with degree, diploma and certificate in continuing education program from both Addis Ababa and Hawassa campuses on September 23, 2005. The guest of honor, Dr. Sime Debella, Agricultural Science Researcher, recommended to graduates to create jobs. He also stressed the need for TVET graduates to be proactive in promoting new agricultural technologies. ■

Multi-Disciplinary Annual Seminar Held

Multi-disciplinary annual seminar was held here at the Multi-purpose Hall of SMUC on September 22, 2012.



Quality Matters, Vol. 6 No. 23 August 2012

Organized by Research and Knowledge Management Office of SMUC, nine papers were presented by researchers coming from different fields of studies. Members of St. Mary's community and invited guests participated at the seminar. The 4th in the series, the topics addressed in the seminar include papers related to agricultural land, conflict resolution, and social marketing. The opening and closing remarks at the seminar were made by Ato Tedla Haile, Executive V/President, and Dr. Wondimagegn Chekol, Director of the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance, SMUC, respectively. St. Mary's UC organizes and sponsors three annual conferences including this one. The others are the recently held annual conferences on Private Higher Education in Africa and the National Student Research Forum. ■

Public Lecture Delivered

A public lecture, conducted by Professor Ronald L. Jacobs from the University of Illinois, USA, was delivered here at St. Mary's main campus on September 05, 2012. The lecture focused on employee motivation and performance improvement. Professor Jacobs discussed, among others, the context in which organizations operate in the globalized world that they need to compete for customers on a global basis; adopt complex and flexible work design, and recruit, develop, and retain talented individuals.

Participants in the lecture were students, lecturers, and administrative staff from the four campuses of the university college. After the presentation, they raised different questions and the speaker addressed them in a participatory manner. The lecture was organized by SMUC in collaboration with the US Embassy in Addis Ababa. Mr. Robert Post, the Public Affairs Officer of the Embassy, gave introductory remarks while introducing Prof. Jacobs. ■

Research Corner

Research Title: An Evaluation of the Five Year Strategic Plan of Saint Mary's University College

Researcher: Dr. Wondemagegn Chekol, Shegaw G/Medhin and Atlabachew Getaye

Saint Mary's University College formulated its first strategic plan (SP) in 2007/8, and it served for the last five years as a roadmap. It contained seven major priorities. They were the pillars which guided the overall direction of the UC. The first SP was usually formulated with the intention of strengthening and enhancing the performance and quality of SMUC. However, the field of education is so fluid that an institution may not achieve what it plans as desired due to policy issues, curriculum, resources, budget, the quality and quantity of man power and their research skill, the potential of students, the link between the institution and other sectors, management skill, etc. Thus, the UC conducted a research to check whether the aspired components of the SP were enacted efficiently or not. The researchers developed seven specific objectives while evaluating the five year SP, and they used purposive sampling to select subjects.

As to sources of data, the study employed both primary and secondary data. An interview and a questionnaire were the primary data sources. An open ended type of interview was conducted with the top management, faculty deans and department heads, members of the committee that produced the first Strategic Plan. From members of the committee that prepared the first Strategic Plan, six team members and the President of the UC who had been engaged actively from the conception to the preparation and implementation of the SP were selected intentionally and interviewed with six cassettes which were then transcribed into 65 pages, aiming at generating appropriate data regarding the successes and weaknesses of the five-year SP. A questionnaire was also distributed to different delegated staff members. The Top

Management, heads of major units, faculty deans, department heads were the target groups for the questionnaire. A critical analysis of document analysis was the secondary data source. Secondary data such as various monthly and quarterly monitoring reports, five annual plans, five annual performance reports and monitoring and evaluation framework documents were analyzed critically.

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive statistics such as mean and percentages were employed. The responses of the interview and questionnaire were analyzed thematically. Moreover, the contents of the various documents related to the five-year SP were analyzed critically. This enabled the researchers to triangulate ideas from various sources.

The findings revealed that at the preparation stage, the core team considered the basic requirements of SP formulation by identifying the purpose (mission and vision), forming workgroup (core team and taskforce), benchmarking contents (local and international ideas) and collecting internal and external data (environmental scan and SWOT analysis). The annual plans operationalized the priorities of the SP successfully. In the five academic years, the UC executed 2060 activities. The highest number of activities fell under SPs one and three, which indicates that the UC gave emphasis to teaching, research and technology.

The UC has established a strong culture of monitoring and evaluation. There is a M&E framework which dictates CEIQA to conduct seven types of M&E of which most of them were effective. Moreover, all members of the UC community had positive attitude to M&E, and the leadership had strong commitment and insight about M&E. Recognition of performances was given on the basis of the findings of CEIQA, and so were corrective measures which made the decisions of the UC performance based. Besides, the UC published its performance and action plans on a yearly basis. This made the UC exceptional in assuring quality at national level.

The UC had, however, data handling problems. Pertinent and useful data were not easily accessible. ■

Interview

This column features interviews of people including government officials, policy makers, educators, and presidents of universities and colleges as well as students on quality related issues. In this edition of the newsletter, we interviewed Ato Tedla Haile, Executive V/President, of Saint Mary's, on the implementation of the first strategic planning of the UC. We had an interesting stay with him. Enjoy our conversation!



Quality Matters: How important is a Strategic Plan for higher education in general and for St. Mary's in particular?

Ato Tedla: A strategic plan is like a road map that would lead you to the intended destination. Without it, an institution cannot be sure of attaining its goals. It might take the wrong path and find itself in an unknown land. This kind of journey forces one to be back to square one, after wasting one's time, energy and money. The analogy might sound simplistic, but it best describes what a strategic plan is all about.

With that in mind, any higher education institution worth the name can in no way underrate the significance of a strategic plan; St. Mary's is no exception. The differences among institutions of higher learning could be attributed to the presence and effective implementation of a well-thought-out strategic plan.

Quality Matters: How did you go about the preparation, creation, implementation and evaluation of SMUC's SP?

Ato Tedla: To be frank, we had little knowledge about a strategic plan at the beginning and we thought of having selected staff members go through training on concepts and key features of a strategic plan. Prior to that nearly forty of our academic and administrative staff had training on quality audit processes in a higher education institution. This helped us gear our strategic plan toward including quality issues essential to the effective implementation of planned activities pertaining to higher education.

Having had the basic tenets of a strategic plan, we formed committees who represented employees and students to work on the details of the strategic plan informed by the vision and mission that guide St. Mary's. Of all the activities, the SWOT analysis took much time; for it involved stakeholders across the country due to the distance education programs we run. After consolidating the documents by the strategic plan steering committee at institutional level, it was presented for deliberations by Academic Commissions, Councils and the Senate. After the deliberations of the respective organs of the University College, the SP became an institutional document duly approved to guide every activity undertaken by the UC.

While the SP is a five-year plan, every department and office had to produce their annual plans, derived from the strategic document. This has been done for subsequent

years upon the completion of the implementation of an action plan of a specific year. It has also been closely monitored by the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA). The center makes quarterly visits to the offices to monitor performances in line with their respective annual plans. In addition, a bi-annual performance review sessions are held to ensure the execution of annual plans.

Quality Matters: What were the major focus areas of the UC's first SP?

Ato Tedla: Our first SP had seven strategic directions, of which enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, research, outreach activities, and strengthening the human resources were the prominent ones.

Quality Matters: What benefits does the SP bring to the UC to enhance quality education to achieve the set institutional goals?

Ato Tedla: The SP serves as a reference point. Every activity is aligned to it. Without it, the entire institutional core activities may have witnessed disastrous results because we would not have known what to attain, when and how. The three question words are embedded in each strategic direction. Performance verification requires yardsticks by which planned activities are measured.

Quality Matters: What factors make the UC peculiar from other private institutions in relation to structure and quality education?

Ato Tedla: What makes the UC peculiar is the value it gives to its human capital. It is almost two years now since the UC, with the help of the Ministry of Education, has created opportunity for its staff to pursue their studies in diverse PhD programs at Addis Ababa University. It spares no effort to create a friendly

environment that would make the campus community feel like being at home. There is a system at work, which makes employees and students have their voices heard. No person in management position is inaccessible to any one on campus. The organizational structure is there to show duties and responsibilities of those in charge toward serving stakeholders rather than have them locked in their offices.

Quality Matters: Would you share with us the major achievements of the UC, which stem from the SP in relation to teaching, research, and community services?

Ato Tedla: From the start, the UC has viewed education as a public good; and hence the urge to live up to the expectations of the public. To this end, the major achievements can be stated in the light of the three pillars, which guide our activities; teaching-learning, research, and outreach activities. It is almost seven years now since we have established an internal quality assurance office, which monitors the performance of the academic and administrative offices. This is an achievement that guarantees the maintenance of quality services in a sustainable way. Related to this is our Testing Center, which is entrusted with giving training to our teachers on test blue print preparation and exam item development. It is also charged with internal exit exam preparation and administration, which has now become compulsory for our students. The center has brought about significant changes in the attitude of both students and teachers toward the importance of exit exams. Still another addition to our services is the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, which offers training to potential entrepreneurs and to those who seek to upgrade their knowledge and skills.

...Continue on page 11

Perspective

HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ITS DIFFERENCE FROM THE BUSINESS SECTOR



By : ATLABACHEW GETAYE

getayeatlabachew@yahoo.com

The term strategy is a Greek word derived from stratos (army) and agein (to lead), applied in the military, to mean according to Torres (2001, p. 15) in Margaret (2008), “as the science of planning and directing large-scale military operations, of maneuvering forces into the most advantageous position prior to actual engagement with the enemy”. The term refers to overall plan, not to specific plans of winning war. The idea of thinking big and focusing on long term goal were its original meanings which still remain true after being adopted in the fields of business and education while formulating all round design. The turbulent and competitive environment compelled the business field to apply strategic planning at the beginning, followed by the public and education sectors later.

There is a need, however, to understand differences in the style of planning between sectors and the changes which take place in the way we define knowledge and execute planning. Between the business and education sectors, there are differences in terms of objective, customers’ interest, income sources and types of stakeholders. So, before transferring experience from business to education enterprise, there is a need to understand their differences carefully not to end up in educational fads and frills. Further, there are changes in the way we view knowledge and in the manner we formulate educational planning.

In terms of goal, the business field has a clear objective- making profit. Nevertheless, it is not as simple as the business field to spell out the goal of educational

enterprise. It serves as change agents of people through its teaching and learning. Students come to a higher learning with diverse interests: to add values, to make money out of their education, to fulfill a different life mission, etc. Their different attitudes and expectations require innovative and, at times, maverick thinking. What makes educational planning more difficult is that students’ interest is in a state of change. There is a need to manage and challenge both the past and the present and sometimes to unlearn intentionally the past to create a better future for students with the help of SP. Students join these days higher learning institution primarily to secure jobs by outsmarting their competitors in the job market which is an additional burden for educational institutions. Institutions are, therefore, expected to equip students with the best and, if possible, with exceptional knowledge, attitude and skills. In developing countries like ours, people learn to beef up their livelihood, generating income through education. An effective institution should, thus, be like Ethiopian gold winning athletes. Successful Ethiopian athletes always run not for bronze and silver but for gold. Like the best Ethiopian athletes who always run for gold, an educational strategic planning of an institution should be designed to have a bright future for students. In other words, the goal of educational institution requires the consideration of many factors to make learners innovative and problem solvers, which in turn enable to win their competitors hands down.



The source of income is the other difference. The business field gets its income from sales of goods and services rendered to customers and clients; whereas the education sector has varied sources such as government grants, student fees, sponsoring organizations and alumni contributions. These require from educational institutions the development of an effective communication with various organizations to acquire funds. The income of customers buys finished items. On the other hand, the income of students does not buy education; it rather pays the cost for the provision of educational services. Consequently, educational planners need to concentrate on the quality of the process of education to retain the already enrolled students and to attract new ones.

Moreover, the business field always plans in reference to the customer, and yet the education sector has always different groups of stakeholders: students, instructors, top and middle line managers, parents and the community, which makes its planning too complicated for it should get the consent of all constituencies. Unlike the past where the top management along with planning department used to formulate the possible mission and vision of an institution and hand down to the middle line and academic staff to be implemented, these days, all groups come together to foresee their organization's future and exert their maximum effort to put into effect the agreed upon goals. Administrators manage and instructors teach and, at the same time, both come together to envision the mission and vision of their institution so as to offer quality education to their students applying their deep insights and high minded thoughts. This way of doing enable to build consensus around the educational strategic priorities, provide the basis for resource allocation and plan operation, define baseline for controlling outcomes and help to monitor and evaluate the performance of departments, offices and units.

Knowing the difference between the business and education field is not enough. Knowledge itself is always in a state of transformation, and planners should consider the changes. There is a shift, for example, from finite knowledge to infinite knowledge, from certainty and predictability to uncertainty and unpredictability, from specific specialization to multidisciplinary and holistic field of study, from positivism and structuralism to post structuralism and postmodernism, from an entirely western mode of thinking to new forms of discourse between the western and the local wisdom. And planners should update themselves to make adjustments.

There is one more change- the planning approach itself. The change is from traditional to modern type. Unlike the traditional planning, which is input oriented, technocratic, neutral, linear, rigid, routine, document based and obedient, modern planning follows result oriented, participatory approach, resource mobilization style, iterative planning, flexible implementation, change oriented technique, process based approach and performance type of monitoring.

Therefore, educational planners should know all the above and other changes before they engage themselves in strategic planning.

The definition of SP varies from one field of study to another and from one writer to another in substance, abstraction and level of acceptance. Generally speaking, it is working towards the same goal by organizing one's resources. Strategic planning is a systematic process of organizing the present by predicting the overall desires that an organization wants to attain in the future. It is a roadmap which leads towards the aspired destination, overcoming all the hurdles that arise along the way to an institution's future. It is not a document of today, but a preparation for the future. Bryson and Alston (1996:3) argue that strategic planning is a "disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape

and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future". As to its merit, Zhongqiu and Junwei (n.y :871) explain that "Its principal purpose is to connect the future of higher education institutions with the predictable changes of circumstances, and to make the gained volume of resource greater than the consumed ones...".

Strategic planning provides general idea regarding the major activities that should be executed to materialize the mission and vision of an institution. It simply traces the path in the form of hypothesis without specifying the detailed actions, and it should under-way through regular modifications and adaptations in response to the internal and external factors of an institution. Metaphorically speaking, it is like a sailor who wants to know about the port where he wants to arrive at, adapting and resisting along his way the winds, storms and pirates, designing appropriate actions during his voyage.

Specific and detailed actions and steps are found in the action or operational plans. It is here all sorts of nifty ideas are implemented. Action plan specifies the day to day tasks of an organization. According to Shapiro (n.y:4), "It is the process of planning what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, by whom it needs to be done, and what resources or inputs are needed to do it. It is the process of operationalizing the strategic objectives." The action plan states the desired goals, describes the strategic activities, specifies the responsible body, and articulates the basis of measurement, duration and cost.

'What factors should be represented in the educational SP?' is the most fundamental question that planners should be of critical. Both local and global issues should be blended appropriately, and the four pillars of education suggested in the UNESCO report

such as to know, to do, to be and to live together should be represented in a balanced manner. Besides, educational planners should treat the following crucial question seriously: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How do we get there? How we will know when we arrived there?

The process of strategic planning involves preparation, assessment, creation, communication, implementation and evaluation not in a linear manner but in an iterative way. At the preparation stage, planners lay the foundation by identifying the purpose of the SP, stakeholders, needed information, resources, timeline and pertinent data that appraise the internal and external environment of an institution. At this stage, team members of the SP should raise the following questions: What is the purpose of our strategic planning effort? What is the schedule for the strategic planning process? What resources do we have for the SP process? What resources do we lack, and how can we obtain them? What internal and external data do we have that can inform the process? Then, assessment follows. Here, SWOT analysis is made regarding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of an institution. A thorough analysis, in relation to an institution's position, performance, problems and potential (internal factors) and forces which affect the functioning of an institution (external factors), is made. The third stage refers to creation. The core team identifies the priorities of the SP and writes the document by explaining and describing the contents of the SP. During communication, an institution shares its strategic plan and related program documents and products with program stakeholders with the help of both lean and rich media. Implementation is the fifth step where by the SP is put into action. While implementing, an institution should ensure that there are experienced and motivated academic staff, sufficient funding, enough resources, friendly working atmosphere, regular professional

development provision and up to date technology. Monitoring and evaluation which is the last step facilitates the effectiveness of an institution by proposing practical actions after analyzing data and grading performances of the implementation of priorities, identified in the SP. It should inform stakeholders the extent to which they achieved the SMART objectives in their annual action plan. Stakeholders should get useful insights to make the required adjustments. Recognition to efficient performances and corrective feedback to poor performances should be given on the basis of the monitoring and evaluation results. To do so, an institution should first identify the appropriate type of monitoring and evaluation framework which can enable to assess information periodically to know the progress of performances of departments, units and offices.

Educational planners not only should know the steps but also should know the key elements of SP. An SP starts with the formulation of vision and mission. The vision statement explains the rationale for the existence of the institution, adding the ideal state of affairs an organization would like ultimately to achieve. The mission statement contains the overall goal of an institution, the method it uses to reach to its goal and the basic principles and values that guide to the fulfillment of the mission. Next, environmental scan trails. SP is sensitive to the environment. There is a need to scan the internal and external environment critically. After environmental scan, gap analysis follows: an institution assesses the difference between the current position and its aspired future to fill the gaps. Benchmarking is the other important feature which involves the comparison and contrast of the operations, performances and practices of an institution against other local and international institutions to

draw lessons and incorporate refined and best practices in the SP. Then, the essential strategic issues would be identified followed by the formulation of strategic goals, action plans and tactics, giving room to flexibility to accommodate unanticipated issues. Evaluation and review of the SP are the other indispensable components. By doing all the above, it is assumed that SP would become the norm of an institution. Stakeholders are expected to carry out the activities of an institution by checking the best fit among the institution, environment and available resources.

To realize the above steps and processes, good governance and committed leadership are imperative to facilitate the development, communication, implementation and evaluation of the goals set in the mission and vision of an institution. The leadership should create friendly atmosphere by valuing and respecting the views of the stakeholders and by taking timely response to the need of the academic community, students and would be employers.

...Continued to page 12

Managing Editor

Atlabachew Getaye

Layout Designer

Robel Tegene

Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA)

St. Mary's University College (SMUC)

Tel. 251-115-53 79 99 / 53 80 01 ext. 145

P.O.Box:1211

Email:ceiqa@smuc.edu.et

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

If you have comments on this issue of the newsletter or would like to contribute to future issues, please contact our office on 011 553 79 99, 011 553 80 01 Ext 145
Email: ceiqa@smuc.edu.et

Continued from Page 6...

Regarding research, a lot has been done to date; these include the annual conference on Private Higher Education Institutions, the annual Multi-disciplinary Conference and the annual Student Research Forum. St. Mary's has also contributed to the academic community by publishing three bi-annual peer-reviewed journals: Mizan Law Review, Journal of Business and Administrative Studies, and Journal of Agriculture and Development.

Outreach services, as a key component of the UC's mission, are led by an office, which caters to the needs of stakeholders. Although the UC has reached out to service seekers at local and national level, the Kebele and Kifle Ketema in which we are located are the primary beneficiaries of our training packages.

Quality Matters: What were the challenges the UC encountered while implementing the previous SP, and how did you overcome them?

Ato Tedla: There were testing moments during the implementation of the SP. One was when distance education programs were suspended for a year at national level, and the other was when the private sector was banned from running the Law program. Paying salaries to the employees without registering new students was a challenge indeed. The sky rocketing prices of stationery items have added to the problems we faced. However, we sorted out alternative strategies that would enable us retain the staff. For instance, we ventured into general education, K-12, widening our services and extending the quality services we rendered at tertiary level. In addition, we've joined the publishing industry focusing on primary readers.

Fortunately, the external quality audit initiated by HERQA has ended the moratorium imposed on distance education allowing us to continue running our programs.

Quality Matters: What lessons have you learnt from the implementation of the first SP?

Ato Tedla: Well, the previous SP has now become an essential reference material and a repository of knowledge from which every one of us at St. Mary's have learnt a great deal. One is the open-mindedness to grab opportunities, while at the same time handling challenges with tact. The other is the hard work we passed through to put in place a system that would enhance our quality services effectively. Although costly, strengthening our quality system in the coming five years more than it was in the preceding SP will certainly be what we anticipate.

Quality Matters: Thank you very much for sharing about the implementation of the UC's SP!

Ato Tedla: Thank you!

Virtual Links

Ethiopian Ministry of Education
Web site: [http:// www.moe.gov.et](http://www.moe.gov.et)
Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (Ethiopia)
Website: www.higher.edu.et
PROPHE- Programme for Research on Private Higher Education
Website: www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/
International Network for Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (INQAHE)
Website: [http:// www.inqahe.org](http://www.inqahe.org)
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (UK)
Website: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>
Center for International Research on Higher Education
Website: http://bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe
Quality and Standards Authority of Ethiopia
Website: <http://www.qsae.org/>
International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa
Website: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>
International Network for Higher Education in Africa (NHEA)
Website: <http://www.bc.edu>
International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in higher Education
Website: <http://www.inqahe.nl>
European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
Website: <http://www.enqa.eu>
Asian Pacific Quality Network
Website: <http://www.apqn.org>

Continued from page 10...

Passing through all these steps and fulfilling all the requirements of an SP, you will not be disappointed if I add one more point which educational planners always say: there is no perfect plan!

References

- Bryson, J and Alston, F.K. (1999). Creating and implementing your strategic plan: a workbook for public and non profit organizations. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- International Institute for Educational Planning. (2010). Strategic Planning: Concept and rationale (Working Paper1), Paris.
- Margaret, L.D. (2008). "The Value of Evaluation: A Case Study of Evaluating Strategic Plan Initiatives." PhD Dissertation, Purdue University, Unpublished.
- Organization and Human Resource Counseling. (2008). A Guide to Strategic Planning. Ohio State University. Accessed on September 12, 2011, at www.hr.osu.edu/ohrc.
- Palmer, D and Kaplan, S.(n.y.). A Framework for Strategic Innovation: Blending strategy and creative exploration to discover future business opportunities. Accessed on September 21, 2011 at www.innovationpoint.com.
- Shapiro, J. (2001). Action Planning. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation Accessed on October 2, 2011 at <http://www.civicus.org>.
- Southern University at New Orleans. (2009). Strategic Planning Handbook and Managers Implementation Tools.
- Wondemagegn Chekol, Shegaw G/Medhin and Atlabachew Getaye. (2011). "An Evaluation of the Five Year Strategic Planning of Saint Mary's University College." CEIQA, Unpublished.
- Zhongquiu, C and Junwei, Z. (n.y.). On the Development Strategy and Plan of Higher Education. Henan Polytechnic University.

St. Mary's University College

For More Information please visit our website:

www.smuc.edu.et

Center for Educational Improvement and
Quality Assurance (CEIQA)

Tel: (251) 115537999

P.O.Box: 1211

Addis Ababa