Editorial

The New Face of AVU

The AVU has new leadership since August 2009. The new direction of the organization and its strategy are reflected in the AVU Business Plan 2009-2014 and Marketing and Communication Plan 2009-14. The AVU now puts a strong emphasis on impact and organizational sustainability through its concept of service-oriented framework. This allows the organization to fulfill its Mission and Vision without depending primarily on donor funding. This shift is a response to challenges that arose from securing donor funding in 2006 that caused a serious threat. More »

NEWS UPDATES

AVU Launches a Teacher Education Virtual Consortium

On 3rd of February 2010 the Hon. Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Wisconsin Senator Ludoro Tapela officially launched the AVU Education Consortium that will oversee a Virtual Training for Teachers in 10 African countries.

The launch preceded a two-day Teacher Education concluding meeting which was officially opened by the Senior Deputy Director, Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology Kenya, Mr. Kenny Muvakaka.

AVU signs a MOU with FAO

On 12th of March 2010 in Rome, the AVU Rector Dr. Bakary Diallo and FAO Assistant Director-General Mr. Halikis Ghasouri on behalf of Mr. Jim Butula, Deputy Director General Knowledge signed a partnership agreement aimed at widening access to education and communicating technologies for developing countries. The two organizations will share educational resources and integrate FAO e-learning courses in the AVU e-campus for Development and Peace. This partnership conforms to FAO's mandate for capacity development and enables the AVU to widen access to education and improve the quality of its learning programmes. More »

AfDB supports establishment of eLearning centres in 10 African countries

In a move to provide digital students with greater access to higher education opportunities, the African Virtual University (AVU) in partnership with the African Development Bank (AfDB) has launched four Open Distance and eLearning Centres to-date, at the University of Zambia, Jima University in Ethiopia, Kwanza University in Uganda and The Open University of Tanzania. Other launches are scheduled to take place early this year in Mozambique Universidade Pedagogica; Kenya - University of Nairobi; Senegal – UCAD; Madagascar - Universite Antananarivo and Somalia - Amanu University. More »

AVU elects a new Board Chair and adopts a new Charter

Professor Logoro Jose Utibu is the new chairperson of the AVU Board. He has replaced Professor Salas Lukbakambwa who has served for two years as the AVU chairman. Prof. Utibu is the Rector of the Universities Pedagogica in Mozambique whilst Prof. Lukbakambwa is the Rector of the National University of Rwanda.
Editorial

The New Face of AVU

The AVU has had new leadership since August 2007. The new direction of the organization and its strategy are reflected in the AVU Business Plan 2009-2014 and marketing and Communication Plan 2009-14. The AVU now puts a strong emphasis on impact and organizational sustainability through its concept of service oriented framework. This allows the organization to fulfill its Vision and Mission without depending primarily on donor funding.

AVU Rector, Dr Bakary Diallo

The AVU has wound up its degree programs previously brokered from the west, the last one being a Bachelor of Computer Science delivered in 8 Francophone countries. The emphasis is now on African based programs, capacity building, Open educational resources, and programs and projects that will sustain economic development and peace in Africa.

To strengthen its organizational structure, a 5-year Business Plan 2009 to 2014 that focuses on a clear strategy built on the new direction of the organization has been developed. AVU has adopted a new charter.

The AVU will frame many of its activities as services that are provided to the client/recipient for a fee, irrespective of who pays the fee. The fee may be paid by an individual, by an NGO, international organization or by a donor. The new programs and services include: diploma and certificate programs; 3rd party programs and courses; e-Conferencing and virtual meetings; 3rd party and custom Content Development. The AVU will also offer not for profit development services through its capacity building initiatives. These are: updating and developing content, Open Educational Resources, AVU Capacity Enhancement Program (ACEP), setting up or upgrading Learning Centers, developing professional networks such as the Teacher Education Virtual Consortium and communities of practice, research and development, Quality Assurance, and evaluation & benchmarking.

A Communication and Marketing Strategy Plan 2009-2014 has also been developed to support the AVU’s Vision, Mission, strategic objectives and its business plan. AVU has redesigned its website so as to revamp its presence and to make it a more efficient communication and marketing tool. The new website will include: AVU’s main website www.avu.org; an Open Educational Resource (OER) repository that will host 73 modules of Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Teacher Education, ICT in Education and ICT basic skills. The Repository will host other materials developed or acquired by the AVU. AVU will launch a web portal for its Virtual Campus for Development and Peace, which will deliver programs, courses and
online seminars that advance economic development and peace building in Africa. The Virtual Campus for Development and Peace will target learners from the formal and informal sector.

The AVU has achieved remarkable results from July 2007 to January 2010. Over its 13 years of existence, the AVU has trained more than 40,000 students, has established 53 centers in 27 countries, and has acquired the largest eLearning network in Africa. In Somalia, AVU has graduated 4,000 students, 30% of whom are women. Our greatest asset is our ability to work across borders and language groups in Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone Africa; in conflict and post-conflict zones.

I call on all of you to work with the AVU in order to build on the remarkable gains of the organization, especially since 2007. Together we can increase access to quality education and training through eLearning.

**News Updates**

**AVU signs a MOU with Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

*From Left: AVU Rector Dr Bakary Diallo and FAO Assistant Director-General Mr. Hafez Ghane sign the agreement*

On 12th of March 2010 in Rome, FAO and the African Virtual University (AVU) signed a partnership agreement aimed at widening access to education and communications technologies in developing countries. The two organizations will share educational resources and integrate FAO eLearning courses in the AVU e-campus for Development and Peace. This partnership conforms to FAO's mandate for capacity development and enables the AVU to widen access to education and to improve the quality of its learning programs.
The agreement was signed at FAO headquarters in Rome by the AVU Rector Dr. Bakary Diallo, and FAO Assistant Director-General Mr. Hafez Ghanem on behalf of Mr. Jim Butler, Deputy Director General, Knowledge.

The signing ceremony was attended by the Director of the Office of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension Mr. Anton Mangstl, the Chief of Knowledge and Capacity Development Branch Mr. Stephen Rudgard, and other FAO officials who played a prominent role in consolidating this partnership.

Commenting on the agreement, Mr. Mangstl stated that in recent years, FAO has been actively consolidating partnerships with a number of academic institutions dealing with capacity development issues. "This partnership is extremely strategic for it helps enhance the human resources required for the economic and social advancement of developing countries," he said.

Dr. Diallo expressed satisfaction at what he described as "a relevant and important collaboration" which will be "so beneficial to Africa's young generations." He indicated that the AVU was proud to announce that it has established the largest network of eLearning institutions in Africa.

The AVU collaborates with more than 50 partner institutions in more than 27 African countries. Over its 13 years of existence, it has trained more than 40,000 students.

"The greatest asset of the AVU is its ability to work across borders and language groups in Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone Africa," underlined Dr. Diallo.

Courses

The UN agency based in Rome and the AVU will offer the most current and cutting-edge content for eLearning courses that integrate new ideas and new technologies. One of their major goals is the creation and dissemination of materials to promote the right to food, food safety and food security.

The distance learning programs will be delivered by qualified professors from local African Universities and certification would be granted by the AVU upon course completion.

The eLearning courses being provided by FAO include the Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK) for building capacity to better manage and exchange knowledge and information and a series of courses on food security developed by the EC/FAO program on Food Security Information for Decision Making.
They also include a course on the organization, management and procedures of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, and a series of courses on the right to adequate food.

The AVU will provide an annual report including relevant information and statistics on the different uses of the FAO eLearning lessons. The report will also provide information on the number of students, their geographic location, their organization or institution, and the total number of certificates or diplomas granted every year.

"There is no doubt that this information will be crucial to FAO for impact assessment and evaluation purposes," Mr. Mangstl said.

**AVU Launches a Teacher Education Virtual Consortium**

On the 3rd of February 2010 the Deputy Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education in Zimbabwe, Senator Lutho Tapela officially launched the AVU Teacher Education Consortium that will oversee a Virtual Training for Teachers.

The AVU will facilitate a virtual training program for teachers in 10 African Countries. The program is already running in the Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Senegal and Kyambogo University in Uganda. Other beneficiary countries are Kenya, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Somalia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The program is funded by the African Development Bank (AfDB) and partly by the UNDP.

Delegates from over 15 countries in Africa representing ministries of education, universities, teachers’ unions and strategic partners implemented strategies in each country, that will ensure the extension of the program to more universities and countries and the long term sustainability of this initiative.
The Teacher Education Virtual Consortium is a committee of the AVU Board of Directors. Its members include: Jimma University in Ethiopia; University of Nairobi in Kenya; Universite d’Antananarivo in Madagascar; Universidade Pedagogica in Mozambique; Universite Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD) in Senegal; Amoud University, University of Hargeisa and East African University in Somalia; Open University of Tanzania; Kyambogo University in Uganda; the University of Zambia; and the University of Zimbabwe.

The goals of the consortium include development of Distance eLearning centres, Capacity enhancement for members; as well as for the development and management of distance learning programs.

Teacher Education Program concluding meeting
A two day Teacher Education Program concluding meeting was held from 20-3 February in Nairobi. The meeting was officially opened by the Senior Deputy Director, ministry of Higher Education Science and technology in Kenya, Ms Fenny Mwakisha. Delegates from over 14 countries in Africa and the USA representing ministries of education, universities, teacher unions and strategic partners addressed the best implementation strategies in each country, the extension of the program to more universities and countries and the long term sustainability of this initiative.

Delegates from over 14 African countries and the USA. With them is the Senior Deputy Director, Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology Kenya, Ms Fenny Mwakisha (in purple) and Deputy Minister of Higher Tertiary Education, Zimbabwe Senator Lutho Tapela

AVU elects new Board chair and adopts a new charter

Professor Rogerio Uthui is the new chairperson of the AVU Board. He has replaced Professor Silas Lwakabamba who has served for five years as the AVU chairman. Prof. Uthui is the Rector of the
Universidade Pedagogica in Mozambique while Prof. Lwakabamba is the Rector of the National university of Rwanda. Dr Gregoire Njejimana, Rector Université Lumière de Bujumbura Burundi, member representative for Central Africa Region is the Vice Chair while Dr Bakary Diallo, Rector African Virtual University is the Secretary. Other board members are Prof. Suleiman Gulaid, President Amoud University Somalia, member representative for Eastern Africa Region; Prof. Ezra K. Maritim, former Vice-Chancellor, Egerton University, Kenya, co-opted member; and Prof Ann Floyd, former Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Open University of United Kingdom, co-opted member.

AVU General Assembly

The AVU General Assembly was held on 4th February 2010 in Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting was attended by Vice chancellors and their representatives from over 14 institutions in Africa. The AVU adopted a new charter.
AfDB supports establishment of eLearning centers in 10 African countries

In a move designed to provide African students with greater access to higher-education opportunities, the African Virtual University (AVU) in partnership with the African Development Bank (AfDB) have launched Open Distance and eLearning Centers in 10 African countries at the University of Zimbabwe, University of Zambia, Jimma University in Ethiopia, Kyambogo University in Uganda and Open University of Tanzania. Other launches are scheduled to take place early this year in: Mozambique- Universidade Pedagogica; Kenya - University of Nairobi; Senegal – Universite Chiekh Anta Diop (UCAD); Madagascar - Universite Antananarivo; and Somalia - Amoud University.
One of the AfDB supported eLearning centers

The centers will enable more universities to mainstream eLearning into their existing curricula, create a community of peers that will generate original research on eLearning methodologies and it will also help universities generate a long-term and sustainable revenue base.

The new centers will add to AVU’s network that now has over 50 eLearning Centers which are set up within the framework of the AVU Multinational Project funded by the AfDB. The centers will act as physical hub for the creation, organization and sharing of knowledge and the development of eLearning programs. Additionally, they will serve as: a training facility for staff in the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the development, delivery and management of eLearning; a delivery point for the current and future ODeL programs (e.g. the Teacher Education Program); the physical location where staff are able to conduct research and participate in collaborative work in ODeL; and guarantee long-term sustainability by enabling the university to generate revenue.

This initiative marks another milestone for AVU, which was originally established to address the digital divide by helping Africa overcome geographic, technological, political and financial obstacles that often hindered students’ access to higher-education. Since it’s inception in 1997, AVU has pioneered an innovative learning platform, the AVU Learning Architecture designed specifically to adapt eLearning to the unique African context. In the last decade, AVU has also established the largest network of eLearning institutions in Sub Saharan Africa in over 27 countries.

AVU participates in an eLearning Conference

The AVU participated in a Regional Education ELearning Conference organized by the Ministry of Education Kenya. The conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya from 29-31 March 2010. The theme of the conference was “Transforming Education through Elearning”.
AVU exhibited publicity materials and showcased its distance and Elearning activities and services in Africa. The conference was a capacity building event as well as an opportunity for education managers in Kenya to reflect on the technology path.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

**AVU eLearning Day**

The 2nd AVU eLearning Day will take place in Lusaka, Zambia, on 26th May 2010. This event will be used to market AVU services in order to increase AVU’s enrolment, membership, donor support and funding, as well as to sensitize about the change of focus and management at AVU.

The main objective of the AVU eLearning Day is to promote eLearning in Africa. Presentations focus on unraveling what eLearning is and how it works. The AVU will particularly showcases success stories of several eLearning activities including the continental Teacher Education Program; the Training of Trainers; the deployment of eLearning centers; Quality Assurance; the Virtual Consortium project and the Campus for Development Project.

The first AVU eLearning Day was launched in May 2009 in Dakar, Senegal. In December 2007, the AVU and the organizers of eLearning Africa ICWE, had signed a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation, to collaboratively build awareness and capacities across the continent, foster strong continental and inter-continental networks, support the emerging eLearning Communities of Practice and stimulate research and development cooperation.

**AVU Regional Office**

The AVU regional Office is located in the heart of Francophone Africa in Dakar Senegal. The Office has been instrumental to the expansion of the AVU network in Francophone Africa. Senegal has signed the charter and the AVU enjoys a diplomatic status in this strategic country.

*Sidiki Traore, Head eLearning Dakar Regional Office*
Dakar Office as the gateway to francophone Africa

The Dakar office has been the gateway to francophone Africa. The Dakar office has not only significantly increased the AVU’s network but also has contributed to position the AVU as one of the major players in Open and Distance and eLearning in Francophone Africa.

- The Office has been working closely with Francophone partner institutions in strengthening and extending the AVU’s Francophone network.
- The Office has successfully delivered the Computer Science Degree and short courses from renowned Universities to Francophone Africa. This has created a pool of competent computer scientists working to contribute to the social and economic development of their respective countries. Trained technical coordinators have obtained better opportunities after leaving the AVU Learning centres. The AVU Learning Centres symbols of pride in eLearning in some Francophone Universities because they have provided new methodologies in distance eLearning. The Learning Centre Managers are usually consulted for advice on matters related to Distance Learning in their countries.
- The AVU Capacity Enhancement Program (ACEP) has provided skills in eLearning to academics, professors, technicians and administrators in over nine francophone countries. Wireless training provided to young men and women in Senegal, Guinea and Ivory Coast has contributed in job creation in those countries and upgraded the skills of many professionals in that field.

AVU Rector, Dr Bakary Diallo (Back fourth), with AVU headquarters and Dakar regional office staff
AVU to launch new programs

The AVU will launch new certificate courses. This will include:

**Certificate in Teacher Education**

This continental Program is designed to upgrade the ICTS Skills of Mathematics and Science Teachers. The program will be launched at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) and University of Nairobi. This program focuses on increasing the quantity and quality of Mathematics, Science and ICT teachers through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) both in and across the curriculum. The goal of the program is to enhance the capacity of teachers in the use of ICTs as a tool for teaching and learning Mathematics and Science; increase the number of qualified and effective Mathematics and Science teachers; and develop the capacity of teachers to teach ICTs as a discipline. It will also focus on enhancing the eLearning capacity of teachers and teacher instructors in order to enable them to reach more students especially those who are in sparsely populated and hard to reach areas and the disadvantaged students like females, the financially challenged and the physically challenged. The program is scheduled to start this year.

This will include:

**Certificate in ICT Basic Skills**

The ICT basic skills will be delivered face-to-face in the access points such as the ODeL centers and the AVU Learning Centers.

**Certificate in Integration of ICT in Math and Science**

The program will be delivered through a mixed mode: synchronous, asynchronous, and face-to-face. The first module of this program can be taught entirety online (synchronous and asynchronous).

The AVU Continental Program is designed to upgrade the ICTS Skills of Math and Science Teachers.

**Certificate in Renewable Energy**

Two certificates are being developed and will be offered in April 2010. This will be an innovation for the AVU because it will be an AVU owned product. All Intellectual propriety will belong to the AVU. Consultants will be hired to design the course. Professors and experts will be hired to teach the certificates. The certificate will be a joint accreditation between the AVU and all its partner institutions involved.

**Certificate in Entrepreneurship**

Negotiations are underway between the Open University of Catalonia in Spain, *le Collectif des Femmes contre l'immigration clandestine de Thiaroye –sur mer a Dakar* (Women Association against illegal immigration in Dakar, Senegal) and the AVU to launch a Certificate in Entrepreneurship.