





Tanzania field school

Shaping Students and Communities in Tanzania

Summer 2007: 13 students and two professors from UC Denver are awakened in the middle of the night by noises normally only heard in a zoo. Although many lie awake in their tents, one among them sleeps peacefully.

Charles Musiba, assistant professor of anthropology, was born in Tanzania, Africa, and now directs UCD's Tanzania Field School.



He's been taking students to his country for 11 years.

The field school is located in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in northern Tanzania and, according to all accounts, it offers

students and professors a rare experience, including international research partnerships, extraordinarily diverse types of research and a strong connection to the local community.

And, of high importance to students, it costs much less than most other field schools.

All of those benefits and partnerships are the result of Musiba's relationships with locals, his passion for the country and his drive to create global citizens of his students.

In the Beginning

"I was myself a graduate student and saw that I could become a bridge to Tanzania and help my fellow graduate students gain access to new areas for their research," says Musiba. "But most existing field schools in Africa are very expensive. Those run at schools like Rutgers, Harvard and Yale cost between \$6,000 to \$7,000 just for tuition, not counting airfare."

Musiba began collaborating with people he knew in Tanzania, and they smoothed out a normally difficult process. "They do most of our logistics. They help us get our students residence and research permits. We negotiated lower fees to get access to the national park. The people who help us are friends of mine

going way back to when I was an undergrad."

Musiba also reached out to universities around the globe, including the University of Kyoto in Japan and the Bugando University College of Health Sciences in Mwanza, Tanzania.

"When I talk to people at anthropology meetings and tell them that our field school only costs about \$4,500, I tell them that it's because we do a lot of cost sharing with these partners."



TanzaniaphotostakenbyassistantprofessorCharlesMusiba

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Take and Give

While these partnerships may serve to lower the cost of the trip, they also benefit the community. Musiba strongly believes that the relationships he establishes must be reciprocal.

Students, both undergraduates and graduates, and professors at the school may study malaria, tuberculosis, fossils, geography, geology, culture, health care, ecology, child development, conservation or primates. They may even arrive planning to study one thing, only to discover that the nearby Enduleni Hospital, where Musiba has also established friendships, has different needs.

“I was originally planning to participate in the malaria mapping project, but the hospital needed someone to do HIV research,” says Hillary Bell, a master’s candidate in medical anthropology. “I took it! I looked at the rate of sexually transmitted infections as it related to HIV transmission.”

Bell became so hooked on the research that she is changing her master’s thesis. She was studying the mental health of American Indians and Alaskan natives but now plans to return to Tanzania in 2008 to continue the research she started.

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Deborah Thomas, associate professor of geography and environmental sciences, is most excited about the ability of researchers to react to needs at the local level.

Among other things, Thomas conducts “health mapping,” a technique that creates layers of maps that can capture information about the environment, topography, water sources and land use and relate that to where populations are infected with certain diseases to better understand the relationship between the environment and the disease distribution. During the 2007 trip, she was able to map malaria data from the area and share her findings with Enduleni Hospital.

“It was immediately helpful to them and that’s the most exciting piece!” she says, explaining that the information helped the health care workers plan where to hold clinics.

Thomas also said that the hospital’s director will use the maps in other ways. “They can start to predict when malaria outbreaks might happen. They may also use the maps to show that they’re involved in research, which gains a reputation for the hospital. And, they can use them as leverage for funding.”

Musiba says all of the studies are helpful to the community, including curriculum development for local school teachers, primate conservation assistance for the national park and many health studies for the hospital.

Long-Term Outcomes

Because of the give-and-take nature of the field school, Musiba and Thomas both work to keep the studies moving forward year-to-year. The result is a long-term impact on the community and richer field experiences for the students. “These collaborations make our field school more viable,” says Musiba. “We contribute to the community, not overburden it.”

OnlineResources



Tanzania Field School

The Tanzania Field School is a unique educational experience that forever shapes the students involved. Find out more about the people involved in this project, the kinds of research they do and how to get more involved.

 To learn more, visit www.cudenver.edu/clas/Tanzania





Yet, Musiba admits that he feels the deepest personal reward simply by introducing students to a completely different culture.

Kay Dirling, a senior anthropology major, says that she floated among many of the studies being conducted at the field school, fascinated by the myriad types of research available for her to explore. But, she says, the piece that will stay with her the longest was the local culture.

"It definitely opened my eyes to what life is like for other people," says Dirling. "I've been out of the country before, but frankly Europe doesn't count. They're just like us. In Tanzania, I saw kids using old Prestone containers for water, driving cattle across the road. It was a really different way of life."

"I see these students becoming education ambassadors," Musiba says. "And that makes me feel closer to fulfilling a dream I've always

had: international educational access for every student in the world. My own experiences have shaped my way of thinking. I see myself as a global citizen with a global responsibility, which is critical in this fast-changing world."

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Ngorongoro Conservation Area


Called the eighth wonder of the world, the 8,300-sq.-km. Ngorongoro Conservation Area in northern Tanzania is richly diverse in geography, wildlife, people and archaeology. It is located near Mount Kilimanjaro and borders the Serengeti.

 To learn more, visit www.ngorongoro-crater-africa.org



Olduvai Gorge

The geology of the Olduvai Gorge in northern Tanzania cuts through several layers of strata with four distinct beds. Fossils from the area were excavated by Louis and Mary Leakey in the mid-1950s, bringing attention to the field of paleoanthropology.

 To learn more, visit <http://ngorongorocrater.com/Attractions/olduvaigorge.php>