



# NEWS

March 2011

The Centre for Community School to be established in Faculty of Education

## Centre a first of its kind

The application to establish the Centre for the Community School (CSS), which will be located in the Faculty, was approved in Senate earlier this month. The creation of this entity is timely, as its core purposes align with both the university's mission to be a relevant and engaged institution in South African society, as well as the current focus on addressing the serious education challenges in the country. It is also the first centre of its kind, with this focus, to be established in South Africa.

The Centre will focus on developing and expanding the knowledge base of *community schools* in the country – a grouping of schools that are engaged in simultaneous efforts to improve teaching and learning, as well as address some of the social challenges that affect these core processes. These schools work to achieve their objectives by building active partnerships with parents, community members, and other education stakeholders.

The Centre will aim to:

- Connect to schools across the province that are involved in a range of school and community activities to leverage their impact on a broader scale.
- Draw from the work of these schools as a quantitative and qualitative knowledge base to identify best practices, develop a research agenda, and generally inform the work of the Centre.
- Promote, strengthen, and support the work of community schools in the Eastern Cape through the Centre's convening capacity, research production, and public awareness efforts.
- Serve as a national resource centre that elevates the concept of the community school as a credible, replicable and sustainable model for educational improvement in South Africa.

Recognizing that the answers to society's most challenging questions lie at the crossroads of the disciplines, the work of the Centre will be cross-disciplinary and inclusive. The Centre will draw on expertise and experience from a range of other areas and departments at NMMU including psychology, health, and development studies in shaping the scope of research projects and engagement activities in support of Community Schools. Dr Al Witten, involved from the inception and initial application process, will be assisting in driving the project forward.



*Dr Al Witten is assisting in driving the CSS project.*

### Manyano Community Schools Network

In November 2010, the first Manyano Community Schools Conference was held, which focused on the work that schools were engaged in to support the academic and social development of their learners. There was widespread acknowledgement that these schools were doing important work that represents a model of school improvement in the Eastern Cape and South Africa. Conference delegates requested that the schools establish relationships that would enable them to continue to learn from and support each other. Other schools would also be invited to join them and form a community of practice.

The first such meeting will be held tomorrow, 26 March, where the discussion will focus on ways in which schools can connect with each other and identify the kinds of activities they would like to participate in. All are welcome. We hope this will be a growing and vibrant learning community with a strong focus on school improvement.

Date: Saturday, 26 March 2011

Time: 09h00 – 12h00

Venue: Missionvale Campus, Seminar Room, SMATE Building 419

# Experiences of a lifetime...

Letters from 3 of our students who participated in the 2010 International Exchange Programme

## Carmen Filmer

Where to begin? Wow, what an experience, definitely an overload of information and experiences! Samantha and I left to an unheard of location in **Norway** for four months... We were not sure what to expect and how to go about our travels, but all turned out well. We arrived in the small town of Kristiansand warmly welcomed and accepted into the university.

We were blown away by the hospitality of Agder University and everything they had planned for us. We were enrolled in the NORSEC programme which takes a look at Norwegian culture and society. This was a huge eye opener: learning about a totally new and different culture to South African traditions.



*Carmen (front, second from left) out on excursion exploring Norway*

We had the opportunity to go on a number of excursions with the university and on these we were shown the true beauty of this country. We got to see the fjords, visit traditional Norwegian homes and even stay in locations with no running water or electricity. We also had the opportunity to visit Norway's capital, Oslo.

As a number of the students in the NORSEC programme were education students we visited Norwegian schools. This was interesting as they adopt a totally different view to education. Their schooling system

focuses on the learners as a whole and is not ability focused. The learners are given their own levels of work and are able to choose the level that they are most comfortable to work at. A huge focus of education is outdoor and socially focused.

What a learning curve for me, to be introduced into a totally new culture and lifestyle, one which I have learnt a whole lot from.

## Samantha Cain

**Norway** was for some time my home away from home and during this time I experienced many walking trips, icy streets and snowy forests. Norway opened her arms to me and embraced me with warmth, even in the coldest weather.

While being in Norway I was lucky to be able to experience their schooling system and see the way they educate their children. Norwegian schools are known to be some of the best, and the majority of their children excel towards the end of their educational careers, mainly thanks to the nurturing they receive in the foundation and intermediate phases. What I learnt from that is the Norwegians seem to focus more on the social aspect, rather than academic. Nurturing their children seems more important than anything else.

Norway is a country that provides many opportunities for all that live there - educationally, medically and socially.

While in Norway, at the University of Agder, they arranged many trips showing us aspects of Norway including the fjords, mountains, hills and seas. Our 'buddies' made us feel welcome and involved everyone.

Norway was an experience that has educated me, in all facets, and was an experience of a lifetime.



*Samantha (front, in blue jacket) with her friends on a sea trip*

## Zimasa Ndibi

After covering almost 16,000 km, being on airplanes for over 16 hours, traveling from Johannesburg to **Minneapolis (USA)** via Amsterdam, we reached our final destination. Half way though, I remember wanting to go back home, thinking that the trip was not worth it. My feet were swollen, I was exhausted and I had a banging headache, I just couldn't see how things would not get worse from there. Thank God things never go my way and I had to continue the trip because I had the time of my life!

When we arrived we didn't know what day or date it was but we were super excited that the travelling was over and the journey was truly beginning.



*Zimasa poses at the St Cloud State Univ. campus map, her home for 6 weeks*

Upon arrival

at the airport, we were warmly welcomed by the Director of St Cloud State University's (SCSU) Multicultural Student Services (MSS) and, to our surprise, another NMMU student who had been there a month already.

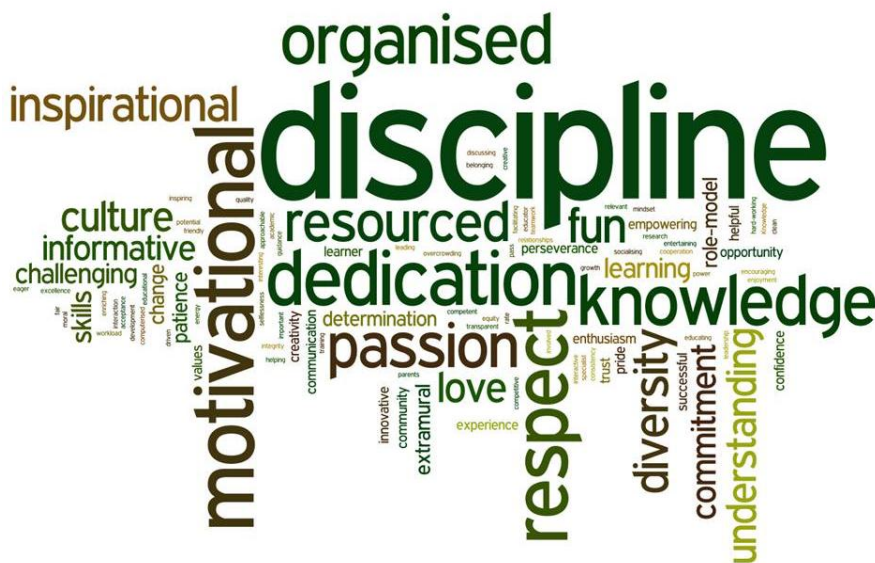
From the next day, or 'day 1' as we refer to it, free time was a thing of the past; every moment was occupied. Not to worry though, we were not complaining.

Most of our time was spent at schools doing teaching practice. I was at Tech High School, a wonderful and well-resourced school. It's just such a pity that excellent school doesn't necessarily mean excellent learners. I interacted well with my mentor teachers, they were keen to learn from me as I was to learn from them, but I can't say the same about the learners though, the way they are portrayed on movies and television is exactly how they are; simple and hard headed.

At the university we had to give presentations and visit classes. The students and lecturers made varsity life such a pleasure; we got along with them very well. Lecturers were very accommodating and helpful to us - they treated us like important guests rather than visiting students and in the end we built a friendship with them not just a student lecturer relationship. We also spent our time at the university visiting different societies because we wanted to be engaged with different aspects of the university not just academics, and it is here where we made friendships with people from all over the world, i.e. Serbia, Pakistan, China, Somalia, Ethiopia and many others including the USA. As I said, I had the time of my life at SCSU - it is an experience I will forever be grateful for, it taught me a lot and made me a better person.

The purpose of this approach is to both enhance the quality of the research proposals as a result of external feedback, and also to enhance and stimulate the research culture within the faculty.

In a recent PGED201 lecture, Les Meiring tasked the PGCE group to create a word cloud: they had to write down 5 words that they considered to be important for a school to be successful. This is the result...



In his presentation, Hugh offered some personal reflections drawn from his recent research with B Ed FET mathematics students, as well as several ideas around key issues in the re-curriculation process.

Longstanding NMMU international partners from the University of Goteborg (Sweden) have obtained a large grant to continue their work with the faculty. Discussions are underway to map out collaborative projects in the areas of science education, multi-literacy research, social justice research, use of videography for teacher education, HIV/AIDs, and other possibilities.

The ITE School participated in the *Working World Extravaganza* held from 9-12 March at the Feathermarket Hall. Hundreds of local school learners attended, many displaying a keen interest in teaching.



To date, 4 hubs have been established: Science Education, Maths Education, School Improvement and Gr 8 Literacy. Two more are in the pipeline: Humanising Pedagogy and Blended Learning/Technology in Education.



## Resource Centre News



Five new computers were placed in the Resource Centre during March, increasing the number of available PCs in the centre for our students to seven.



The Resource Centre remains a vibrant and stimulating space for students to work, gather information and utilize resources

## Social News



**The ITE School has established a Facebook page!**

Go to <http://www.facebook.com/pages/NMMU-Faculty-of-Education-guiding-tomorrow/158366774221680> and 'LIKE' the page.

Contact **Mary-Anne Laufs** (x2424), the site administrator, to add or post any appropriate content – photo's, news, reminders, notifications, ...



*Issa and Gerard tied the knot on 19<sup>th</sup> March in Jeffreys Bay. Congratulations!*



*Congratulations Bronwyn & Jacques!  
They got married on 12<sup>th</sup> March, with Prof Hugh Glover officiating the ceremony.*



*Logan and Charles join Lars (a visiting academic from Sweden) for an impromptu lunchtime concert*