

Building Entrepreneurial Skills in Niger: Expanding Community Service Learning Abroad



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Internationalizing Higher Education



- **Rider University College of Business Administration received a BIE grant for 2008-2010**
 - *GOAL: To prepare globally competent individuals who have a comprehensive and actionable set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to deal effectively with the cultural, economic, political, and business issues associated with international trade activities.*
 1. Implement innovative curriculum design
 2. Integrate international work opportunities into the curriculum
 3. Develop new faculty development programs
 4. Increase business and community outreach
 5. Provide executive education to area professionals

Mobilizing Global Competency in Business



- **Objectives**

- 1. Implement innovative curriculum design**
- 2. Integrate international work opportunities into the curriculum**
3. Develop new faculty development programs
- 4. Increase business and community outreach**
5. Provide executive education to area professionals

Project – Collaborative Learning in West Africa



- Builds on the 13 year success of a Rider's outreach program, "Minding Our Business" (M.O.B.)
- Community outreach/Service learning
 - MOB: Seeks to advance the personal and vocational development of Trenton, NJ youth through entrepreneurship education and mentoring
 - **New Project:** Extend mentoring skills through collaborative learning workshops in Niger, partnering Rider students with Nigerien students to develop localized, implementable business plans

Project Beginnings



- **Request to develop a business skills program in Niger**
 - International Organization for Women & Development (IOWD)
 - ✦ Provides U.S. American volunteer doctors and midwives who conduct medical services and education in Niamey, Niger
 - ✦ Organization Founder has set up initial introductions for our program
 - Minister of Education, University President, Minister of Health, local business people, etc.
 - Private support from corporate individual
 - ✦ Proposed micro-financing and/or other support for program

M.O.B.



- **More than 285 Rider University students have mentored teams of Trenton youth through the process of starting and running their own businesses**
 - Student reflections provide evidence of a powerful learning experience and a positive impact on personal and vocational development
- **Participating Trenton students have demonstrated**
 - Positive changes in self esteem
 - Improvement in important work/life skills
 - Research on academic records data indicates that MOB participation reduces school absenteeism and tardiness

Niger



- The West African country of Niger is among the poorest in the world
- With an illiteracy rate of 85%, the country of Niger has a significant challenge in its ability to implement effective poverty reduction strategies
- A severe shortage of employment opportunities and business skills
- Founded in 1973, Universite Abdou Moumouni (Abdou Moumouni University) is the only public university in the country
 - Five academic areas: natural sciences, agronomy, social sciences, medicine, and economics and law

U.S. – Africa University Collaboration



- **Plan: Create an on-going relationship with the Abdou Moumouni University**
- **Faculty-led Study Tour Course Objectives (U.S. students):**
 - Introduce students to the developing nation of Niger, in West Africa.
 - Student implement business mentoring skills in a one-on-one relationship with Nigerien university students.
- **Course led by Rider faculty plus visiting executive whose focus is entrepreneurship**
- **Preliminary site visit is April 2009**
 - Visit University, select Nigerien students, meet with Nigerien officials, etc.

Proposed Intercultural Learning Outcomes



- **U.S. Student Learning Outcomes**

- Develop a sense of understanding and empathy for developing country issues
- Demonstrate knowledge about the country of Niger and its place in the global economy
- Implement general business and entrepreneurial mentoring skills
- Discuss the moral and ethical issues associated with working with individuals in a developing nation

- **Nigerien Student Learning Outcomes**

- Develop a self-sustaining business plan that can be put into action immediately
- Demonstrate knowledge about U.S. culture

Details for the Rider Study Tour



- *Four to six pre-trip classes* at Rider introduce students to the country of Niger; prepare them for service learning and mentoring
- *University/Service Learning* in Niger includes collaborating in entrepreneurial workshops, one-on-one mentoring, and field trip to market with Nigerien students, etc.
- *Business site visits* will include US Embassy, University of Niamey, local businesses and markets
- *Culture/history*: National museum, local villages, markets, national wildlife preserve, camel trek, canoe on Niger River
- *Evening activities*: dinners (i.e.; with doctors/midwives from IOWD, Peace Corps volunteers, Nigerien students, etc.); plus choices including local shows, music, discos, shopping.

Tentative Itinerary



Saturday, 1/9:	Depart NYC; Fly to Niger, West Africa	
Sunday, 1/10:	Arrive in Niamey, Capital of Niger in the evening, Welcome Dinner; Hotel Gaweye (5-star) for duration of stay in Niamey	(D)
Monday, 1/11:	U.S. Embassy, city tour, National museum, Evening Activity TBD	(BLD)
Tuesday, 1/12:	University Meetings; Camel Trek to local village, Evening Activity TBD	(BLD)
Wednesday, 1/13:	University/Service Learning/Mentoring, Visit to Boubon Pottery Market, Evening Activity TBD	(BLD)
Thursday, 1/14:	University/Service Learning/Mentoring, Evening Activity TBD	(BLD)
Friday, 1/15:	University/Service Learning/Mentoring, Canoe cruise on the Niger River – see Hippos Evening Activity TBD	(BLD)
Saturday, 1/16:	Weekend visit to “W” National Park (UNESCO); wildlife, archeology, geology, flora, fauna, birds, and more. <i>[Overnight at the Relai Hotel La Tapoa]</i>	(BLD)
Sunday, 1/17:	“W” National Park (UNESCO); see monkeys, elephants, buffalo, lions, and more; return to Niamey for Dinner	(BLD)
Monday, 1/18:	University/Service Learning/Mentoring, Evening Activity TBD	(BLD)
Tuesday, 1/19:	Nigerien/US student collaborative presentations; Afternoon visit to Koure Giraffe Preserve; Awards Dinner with Nigerien students; Depart Niger at 12:35am	(BLD)
Wednesday, 1/20:	Arrive USA 10:40am EST	

Service/Collaborative Learning Outcomes



- Learn about the economic challenges and opportunities facing Niger
- Collaborate with students at Niger's only public university, the Abdou Moumouni University
- Develop and use significant leadership and mentoring skills
- Contribute to the development of sustainable business plans in West Africa

Culture: Experiential Learning



- **Students learn experientially about the developing nation of Niger, West Africa**
 - Trek by camel to visit a local village
 - Visit local agricultural and handicraft markets
 - Network with visiting doctors, Peace Corps, and other volunteers
 - Visit the “W” National (UNESCO World Heritage) wildlife preserve to see the flora and fauna of West Africa
 - See hippos in the Niger River and giraffes in their natural environments

