

Multi-functional platforms in Mali

by Micheal Gallant
Engineers Without Borders

Globally, women's work, while being extremely important, is often very demanding and frequently undervalued. Nowhere is this more true than in the developing countries in Africa, where rural women frequently work more than 12 hours a day and get paid less than one dollar per day to perform menial tasks that are essential for the survival of their families.

This workload can lead to deteriorating health for many women that ultimately affects the health of their families and the health of the whole community. Therefore, according to the United Nations Development Programme, easing the work-load of rural women in developing countries is a priority in combating the abject poverty faced by millions of people every day. Giving the opportunity for rural women to have a few extra hours per day to tend to their children, to educate themselves or their children, or to generate extra income through starting small businesses can change the course of a whole community towards improved health, education, and life expectancy.

In January 2005, I am heading to Mali in West Africa with Engineers Without Borders Canada (EWB) to work on an initiative designed to relieve some of the arduous burden of women's menial work. Mali is located in West Africa and is roughly the same size as Quebec, but with a population of approximately 12.3 million people. With almost 91 percent of the population living on an income of less than two dollars per day and with a life expectancy of 48.5 years, Mali is considered to be one of the poorest countries in Africa.

I will be working on a project

that involves Multi-Functional Platforms (MFPs) that provide rural women with a simple and affordable source of energy. The MFP supports an eight to 10 horsepower diesel engine that can power different tools such as cereal grinding mills, dehuskers, oil presses, and joinery and carpentry tools. It can also generate electricity to power lights and water-distribution pumps. The platform is paid for (at 50 per cent of the cost - \$2000 USD) and managed by rural women through a Women Management Committee. The impacts from the MFP are diverse, but the most important is that it frees a woman's time - providing free hours that can be used for education, health and child care, as well as generating extra income.

"Before the platform we used to have to be up sometimes at 3:30 in the morning to fetch and carry water. Now with the water pump and the water points inside the village, we can get up at six in the morning. It is 'NYESUMA!' (a Bambara term for well being)," said a Women Management Committee member.

My work with the MFP program will likely involve assessing the impact of Mali's 500 currently operational MFPs on achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goals, planning a conference to gather together all persons involved in the management and organization of the MFP program in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Ghana, and/or researching the expansion of the MFP program into East Africa (Zambia, Tanzanian, Kenya, etc). The Malian government is currently planning to introduce 1500 more MFPs into rural communities in the next five years; therefore much work needs to be done to understand the impacts they are having on rural women's lives and the lives of the community as a whole.

Canada's first non-profit university to open in 2007

by Eric Szeto
The Ubyyssey
(Univ of British Columbia)

VANCOUVER (CUP) -- The president of Canada's first non-profit, private university said the school isn't serving as an antithesis to large public universities - instead, it's an alternative.

Quest University is taking a novel approach to education by providing its students with a broadened curriculum that includes liberal arts and science courses, while maintaining small class sizes - contrary to the criticisms many large public institutions now face.

Rather than acting as a factory line for producing diplomas, Quest U's purpose will be to provide a fulfilling undergraduate experience, said the school's CEO and founding director, David Strangway.

"The system in Canada needs to have different kinds of insti-

tutions meeting different needs, meeting different demands from its society - and we've had a tendency for students to be clones of each other," he said.

In addition, he said lectures will be "highly engaging," as class sizes at Quest U will be no larger than 25. This is significantly less than many first-year classes at major institutions, which can at times climb to 160, he added.

"The whole idea of this thing is small and intensive."

Strangway's brainchild was first conceived shortly after his tenure as president of UBC. With articles like the Maclean's University Report highlighting the problem of keeping classes small and intimate with consistently scarce funding, Strangway recognized that the diminishing quality of education was undermining the undergrad experience. He set out to create an institution that would address these deficiencies.

"I think there's a real problem with the public system," said Strangway, "Something has to

give."

Going to Quest U carries a hefty price tag, however - \$32,000 per student for two semesters. This will include tuition and room and board, though much of it will be subsidized by a scholarship program, putting the cost at a little more than \$25,000. That is approximately equivalent to what an UBC international student currently pays for tuition, room and board.

Strangway noted that not everybody will flourish in the environment that Quest U is trying to provide. He feels that people have their own needs, and doubts that everybody will succeed at a place like Quest U.

"Different kinds of places will suit different kinds of people. This isn't going to be a place for every student," he said. "Some students will thrive in a big place... others will thrive in a much more intense environment."

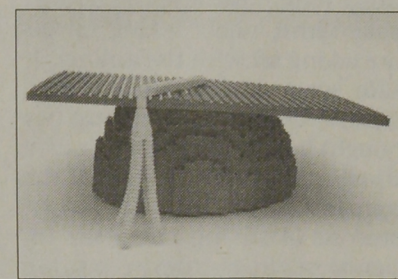
Jack Lee, communications director at Quest U, credits Strangway's vision and experience as the for-

mer head of UBC as factors that will make the school a success.

"It's just a higher level of engagement," Lee said. "A private university can do some of those leading-edge things that the large institutions can't possibly do," he said.

When 2007 rolls around, Quest U hopes to have around 160 students enrolled - reaching a cap of 640 by 2010, and never exceeding 1200.

Strangway also debunked notions that the university would one day become a huge academic institution. "If it grew too big, instead of expanding this one, we'd probably create another one," he said.



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instructor generally does submit [evidence]. As well, "if the committee doesn't feel they can make a decision, they can hold the case. They'll wait until they get the information."

Whether Langmaid counsels the student beforehand or not, it is his job - and number one priority - to ensure that students' appeals are dealt with fairly.

"My argument is that the burden of proof is upon the person making the very serious accusation against another person... If there is not clear evidence brought before the committee, then I make it very clear that they should be very careful [not to] convict somebody if there's no evidence. As far as I'm

concerned, if it's just the student's word against the professor's word, that is a classic example of that," explains Langmaid.

From what Dawoud can recall, the midterm was multiple choice, perhaps with some short answer questions. He has requested proof, in the form of the exam itself, "multiple times", but was only ever informed of the committee's decision to assign him an 'F' for the exam in question and to add a notation to his academic transcript until April 30, 2006 or graduation, whichever comes first.

Dawoud was supposed to have graduated in April. He planned to go home to the United Arab Emirates, where his father had set up a job for him, beginning in September.

Dawoud had to return this semester for one business course to complete his degree in Business Administration.

"I lost my job," he says. "I had fights with my parents about it."

While Dawoud's parents believe that he didn't cheat on the exam, they no longer wish for him to return home because they feel he won't be able to find work.

"My parents don't want me anymore, to go home, because there's no job for me... They believe me, but still, nobody else is going to believe me."

Having graduated last week, Dawoud packed up and moved to Calgary this Saturday.

This offence has been deleted from your permanent academic record.

City recycling program delayed but could be running early next year

by Brendan Doyle

Fredericton residents are still waiting for the recycling depots promised by City Council last January.

It's been 11 months since Council passed a motion to change the way garbage and recyclables are collected in Fredericton and the city is still without collection bins.

The city's proposal was to install four recycling bins at convenient locations throughout Fredericton. 11 months later, the city is still trying to find locations for the bins.

City Council's original motion was made January 10, 2005. At that Council meeting, a large number of affected residents and business owners voiced their con-

cerns; many students were also in attendance to show their support for those against the amendment.

Citizens and business owners suggested to Council that amending the garbage collection by-law would amount to double taxation - apartment owners pay municipal taxes which cover a wide range of services, including garbage removal.

Council countered that apartment owners pay the same municipal taxes as other businesses in Fredericton; any additional, "double" tax comes from property taxes levied by the provincial government.

City Councilors also pointed out that apartment buildings are businesses, like any other, and should not have their garbage removed for free. Councilor Walter Brown stated that almost half of the city's apartment buildings already use private collection services - Council is just leveling the playing field by amending the garbage collection by-law.

Clouding the issue were a number of rumors. The chief culprit was the idea that the city was levying a \$10 fee on each apartment in a building with five or more units. City Hall has esti-

mated that the cost to apartment building owners for private collection services would range between \$7 and \$10. It was up to landlords to choose if the cost of collection would be passed along to tenants.

When asked why the by-law was changed to apply to buildings with five units or more, Council pointed out that many building owners are able to deduct the cost of private collection from their income taxes; those who rent units from their own home are not.

Fredericton stands to save more than \$250,000 annually from the change in garbage collection - more than enough to cover the cost of the new recycling initiative.

Roughly one-third of Fredericton residents live in apartments; they must now haul their recyclables to local for-profit depots or throw them out with the trash. But this may change soon.

At their September 12 meeting, Council passed a motion approving the purchase of the four recycling bins from Maritime Disposal Inc. (MDI). The service will cost the city approximately \$150 per tonne, plus tax, and each unit will cost almost \$18,000. Council

has approved \$71,580.00, plus tax, for the four bins which will be serviced under a contract with MDI; the contract will be for five years from the date of delivery of the containers.

Mark Hymers, Senior Engineer at the City's Engineering and Public Works Department, is overseeing the new recycling initiative.

"We are still in the process of negotiating to get three sites in the city. We don't anticipate that being a problem at all. We are hoping to actually have a launch of this program... by late fall."

Though negotiations are ongoing and the bins have not yet been set up, City Hall expects the process to be completed early next year. Part of the delay is finding convenient, universally-accessible locations.

"We have in mind places where you're going to have a fair amount of traffic flow," said Hymers. "If it's not convenient, you're just not going to get the participation. It's very important to make it as convenient for the public as possible."

Some have speculated that the city is looking at locations at or near local grocery stores on both sides of the river.



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