

Quality Matters

Vol. 1 No. 2 July 2006

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Center for Research and Quality Assurance
St. Mary's University College

In this Issue

From Editorial Desk (page 2)

News (page 3)

Interview (page 4)

Perspective (page 5)

Our Guests (page 6)

Reportage (page 7)

Puzzle and Fun Corner (p 8)

Quote of this Issue

“Quality is doing the right thing in the right way.”

(Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities)

This newsletter is published every three months by the Center for Research and Quality Assurance of St. Mary's University College. The main purpose of the newsletter is to keep the College community, interested groups, government and non-government organizations informed about the activities and endeavors within and outside the institution towards fostering research and quality in higher education.

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

SMUC's Quality Assessment Council Launched

As part of its institutional comprehensive quality assessment task, St. Mary's University College has established a Quality Assessment Council in April 2006. The Council, run by a director and four associate directors, aims at ensuring institutional quality college wide. Assessments at faculty and office level are being carried out by the five quality assessment units.

On the occasion of the Management and the Quality Assessment Council Joint Meeting, Ato Wondweson Tamirat, President of the University College, commended the Council for its effort towards improving quality education at St. Mary's. He further noted that the Council will be acting proactively in highly professional manner, referring the greater emphasis given by HERQA for institutional self assessment in higher education.

Director of the Quality Assessment Council and Center for Research and Quality Assurance of SMUC, Ato Elias Nour, gave a brief introduction on the different activities of the Council. The Council was established following a comprehensive institutional quality improvement training given by Dr. Laila E. Denoya, a Fulbright Senior Specialist. Considering a step by step approach, the Council has decided to limit its framework of operation to the five degree programs that are being offered in the conventional classroom-based mode of learning at SMUC.

Priority has been given to fundamental issues of establishing units and preparing their job description and, in this regard, five Quality Assessment Units, with a total of 30 members were formed. Outlining the planned mode of operation, the director expressed the Council's determination to work closely with all staff members towards assuring quality education at SMUC. ■

From Editorial Desk

St. Mary's has had external quality audit last year that focused on the teaching-learning process. This time around, we are heading towards a wider institutional self-assessment which doesn't only involve the learning-teaching process, but every aspect of the educational, support and administrative services that we provide to our regular, extension and distance students.

To this end, institutional self-assessment instruments have been distributed to students, academic staff and support staff. And, focus group discussion with our major external stakeholders will soon come by. SMUC Distance Education Division has prepared instruments that will be used for stakeholder satisfaction survey in addition to focus group discussion. Meanwhile, the instructor evaluation forms that have been filled by our students will serve as means of structured feedback towards sustained improvement.

We also had a Student Satisfaction Survey that was conducted four months back. It had limitations because it was a pilot survey that mainly targeted at certain departments, the Program Office and the Registrar's Office. Nevertheless, the Survey results have been communicated to the pertinent departments and offices. And of course, they have been promptly acted upon.

The current institutional self-assessment is wider than its predecessor, but still modest as compared to the series of comprehensive self-assessments yet to come. Apparently, the ongoing quality assessment endeavors are bound to show us where we are in light of required standards, in addition to which they can help us reflect and act upon the strengths to be nurtured and the weaknesses to be addressed. ■

Useful Links

Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (Ethiopia).
Website: www.higher.edu.et

PROPHE- Program for Research on Private Higher Education
[//www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/](http://www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/)

International Network for Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (INQAAHE)
Website: <http://www.inqaahe.org>

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (UK)
Website: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>

Center for International Research Higher Education
Website:
http://bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe

**All interested
are encouraged to
contribute to the
various columns
of the newsletter**

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HERQA to Carry out Quality Audit

Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) will carry out the first national Quality Audit of Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as from September 2006. In a two-day National Conference held on June 7 and 8, 2006, the Agency announced that it has planned to carry out quality audit in more than 30 Ethiopian public and private higher education institutions. Stakeholders who participated in the conference discussed the procedures and frameworks of self-assessment and quality audit in HEIs in Ethiopia.

During the two - day conference, the agency presented documents which provide information and guidance to Higher Education Institutions on procedures and framework of conducting self-assessment and quality audit. It has also been emphasized that enhancement of quality and standards in higher education have become a prime concern.


During the reflection session participants thoroughly discussed HERQA's focus areas including: Governance and Management System in higher education institutions, Research and Outreach Activities, Academic and Support Staff, Student Admission and Support services, Program Relevance and Curriculum, Teaching, Learning and Assessment. The conference brought together about 100 participants. (Teshager Mersha)

MOE Organized 'Project Proposal Writing' Workshop

The Ministry of Education organized a seven-day workshop from June 28 to July 4 2006 on 'Project Proposal Writing' in collaboration with NUFFIC, a Netherlands Government Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education.

Twenty-seven participants from thirteen public and private colleges and universities (including St. Mary's Univeristy College) attended the workshop which is part of a series of workshops on 'Leadership and Management in Higher Education Institutions'. The workshop aimed at acquainting participants with the fundamental elements in writing project proposals. Particular emphasis was given to issues related to project cycle management, logical framework approach for project planning, approaches and tools for strategic analysis in writing project proposal, and criteria employed in evaluating project proposal.

During the workshop, the participants were engaged in series of group work and presentations. "It was highly interactive and participatory," said one of the participants from St. Mary's University College. (Abraham Getachew)



St. Mary's University College Community Social Support Forum

Invites all interested staff and faculty of SMUC to be members of the forum. Membership forms are available at departments.

For more information contact: CRQA

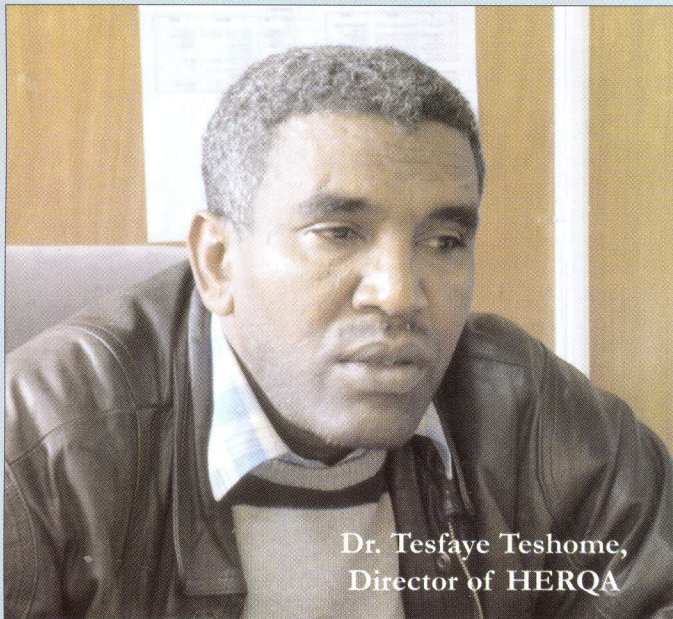
Interview

This column features interviews of people including government officials, policy makers, educators, presidents of universities or colleges.

The Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) was established in July 2003 to monitor and ensure Quality of Higher Education. According to Proclamation No. 351/2003, the agency has the mandate to periodically provide information to the public about the current situation of Higher Education Institutions and, ensure that higher education and training offered at any institution are in line with the economic, social and other appropriate policies of the country. Dawit Tilahun and Teshager Mersha (from *Quality Matters*) have interviewed Dr. Tesfaye Teshome, Director of HERQA. Excerpts:

Quality Matters: What are the major activities of HERQA?

Dr. Tesfaye: Well, we are responsible for various things including guiding and regulating the country's higher education sector, ensuring a high quality and relevant higher education system in the country, and encouraging and assist-



Dr. Tesfaye Teshome,
Director of HERQA

“Quality is not simply inspection, but it is something that has to be perpetuated and maintained...”

ing the growth of an organizational culture in Ethiopia. To this end, we have been undertaking different activities. For example, we have organized workshops to keep afresh the issue of quality in the education system as a whole and to assist the higher education institutions establish their own quality control system and improve the quality of Higher Education in Ethiopia. We have, for example, organized a workshop in July 2005 in which participants from public and private higher education institutions participated. Making use of the opportunity, they shared views regarding the concept of quality and what it is meant by quality standards. We have taken the initiative in setting subject benchmarking even though this was not our mandate. Subject benchmarking in nine subjects including Maths, Chemistry and Agricultural Engineering has been sent to higher education institutions.

Moreover, we had in December 2005 organized a workshop on quality audit and the protocols that could be adopted in the Ethiopian Higher Education system have been discussed. As part of our objective to assist higher education institutions towards building their own quality system, we have also conducted a self assessment pilot project in four public and private universities and colleges including Adama University, Debu University, St. Mary's University College and Unity University College. A few weeks ago we also organized another workshop, June 7/2006.

How do you address the issue of relevance in your activity?

This is a good question. An institute has to check if its programs are relevant to the society. Some people believe that there is relevance if there is quality. In my opinion, this is not correct. You know what I am saying? We cannot equate quality with relevance. ➔

So, the fact that there is quality in a certain program does not mean the program is relevant to the society. If a Higher Education Institution plans, let us say, to launch the best quality program in Nuclear Science in Ethiopia, the plan is meaningless if it does not consider the relevance of the program to the Ethiopian society.

Some people say the quality of education in Ethiopia has significantly declined. What do you say about this?

People have concerns; HERQA appreciates that, but we need evidence.

How do you describe the partnership between HERQA and private higher education institutions?

We have very good relations with them. The existence of good partnership with all the stakeholders really matters, because we cannot ensure quality without the involvement of all the stakeholders in the area. Quality is not simply inspection, but it is something that has to be perpetuated and maintained through the participation of stakeholders. HERQA helps the institutions build their own system of quality assurance. Though our mandate is to ensure quality as an external body in the quality system of the institutions, we believe that the institutions themselves ensure the quality. We only set the standards and provide the support.

Our partnership has been expressed in many ways. In the workshops that we have had so far, for instance, they have actively participated in the process of drafting and endorsing the Higher Education Bill. In this process more than 36 percent of them have been represented.

What are the quality assessment methods/procedures that HERQA employs to ensure quality in the Ethiopian higher education system?

I have already said that even though we are mandated to ensure the quality of education, it is the institution itself that assures quality. Our role here is to check if the institution has a quality control system that properly functions. We also set benchmark standards and support the institutions towards achieving the goals.

Can you tell us about upcoming plans?

“Quality is not simply inspection ... HERQA helps the institutions build their own system of quality assurance.”

We have planned to do various things. One of them is auditing the institutional quality of some private and public universities and colleges as of September 2006.

How are you going to audit the quality institutions? And what are the criteria for an institution to be quality audited?

First, the institutions that will be quality audited will be informed and asked to submit the self assessment report beforehand. The quality audit of the higher education institutions will be conducted by peer assessors who will be given training before they are involved in the actual job.

However, we quality audit only those who send the self assessment report. We will also establish peer assessors.

Is there any advantage in being quality audited?

Higher Education Institutions will check the fulfillment of their mission, vision, etc. They make sure that they are providing quality education. The Government will give additional budget for those who meet the requirement; and budget will be denied for those who do not.

What are the main challenges of HERQA?

The major challenges that we are facing include lack of full understanding of the quality concept and full functioning of the Academic Development Resource Center (ADRC) as quality cells. There are also other challenges with respect to staff and autonomy.

“We believe that the institutions ensure the quality. We only set the standards and provide the supports.”

Our Guests

A Seminar on 'Landmarks in American History and Politics' was organized by the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in collaboration with St. Mary's University College. Professor Charles M. Hubbard is a Fulbright Senior Specialist and Professor of History at Lincoln Memorial University (Tennessee, United States). He was recently at St. Mary's University College to conduct a five-day seminar for history instructors and teachers from various Ethiopian Academic Institutions. The seminar was conducted from July 10th to 14th.

"There are times in our history, when the United States, is misunderstood and improperly interpreted," says Professor Charles M. Hubbard. The seminar primarily focuses on introducing the participants to American history, culture and society.

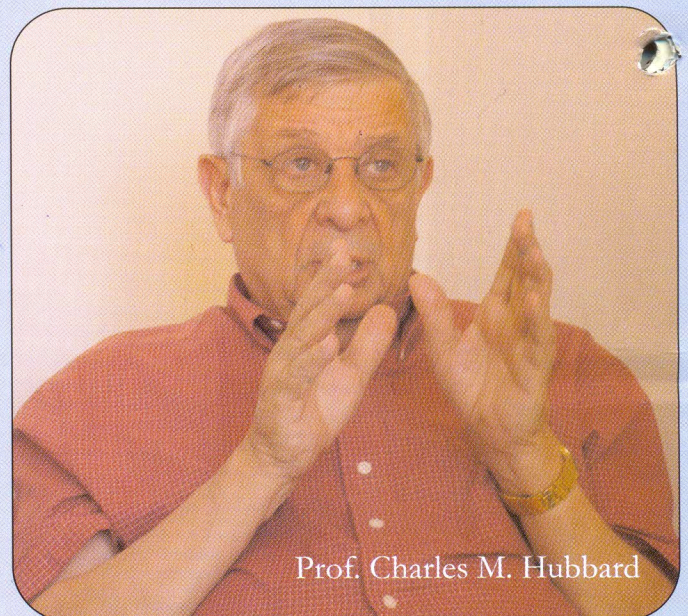
Professor Charles hopes that by responding to questions from seminar participants the American people can be reflected so that seminar participants can have a better understanding of the American people and their core values.

The Seminar has brought together about 50 instructors and teachers of history from various parts of the country. A range of topics including the British earliest encounters with what is now the United States, (which was British colonial America beginning around 1550), the early colonization process, the American break with Great Britain in 1776, and the evolution of American constitutional government were addressed.

Topics such as World War I and II, and the Cold war were covered. American Policy in the new millennium was also among topics of discussion.

The seminar participants, for the most part, were history teachers and instructors from throughout Ethiopia. Professor Hubbard was impressed with the knowledge and intellectual insights demonstrated in the discussion of a wide range of topics related to American histo-

ry and politics. A lively range of ideas between participants and Professor Hubbard clarified misunderstandings both about American political system and Ethiopian history.



Prof. Charles M. Hubbard

Dr. Hubbard said, "I am grateful for this opportunity, and want to express my appreciation for St. Mary's University College and the Public Affairs Office of the US Embassy for making it possible for me to enjoy this stimulating experience".

Dr. Charles M. Hubbard has worked with the Fulbright Foundation in several different capacities over the last decade.

**Seminar on
"Landmarks in American History
and Politics"**

Perspective

When I was recruited in the UK to be a Higher Diploma Leader in Ethiopia, I was told that this licensing program was created to support teacher educators in becoming reflective practitioners, developing teaching skills based on sound theoretical knowledge and experience. Furthermore, to become role models of good teaching practice, providing a high quality experience for student teachers, while addressing gender and disadvantage issues. This, I appreciate, is achieved through careful guidance and monitoring of the program's participants. The HDP is the only course in Ethiopia which is nationally moderated, a trend which is common in developed countries.

Naturally, no innovative program is without its difficulties: consistency across institutions and national standardization being significant challenges. However, considering the HDP is only 3 years old, I can say that it has made a great deal of progress and the handbook itself draws on well-established experiential learning theories, reflective practice research and student-centered teaching principles.

For example, I have noticed change in each and every one of the participants on my course at St. Mary's University College. Some more than others, of course, but transformation nonetheless. Instructors who previously relied solely on lecture style methods of teaching have now been convinced of the merits of group work, microteaching, fun activities in the class such as 'warmers', competitions and

the like. We call these 'Active Learning Methods'. The assumption behind this is that students learn more efficiently when they are actively engaged and when the tasks they are being given in the classroom are relevant and meaningful. This has stemmed from the program's principle (based on sound international research) that learner-centeredness is crucial to effective learning - a conviction held particularly with regards to adult learning.

And I too have changed. My responsibility as facilitator and role model has been fuelled by the complexities of working in a developing country. I am challenged to 'practice what I preach' while guiding participants through the various practical tasks they are required to accomplish.

Personally, the greatest reward so far was when a candidate excitedly told me that he had rediscovered his passion for teaching. I strongly believe that passion is the root to motivation, which is the starting point to striving for quality - the foundation of success.

I have no doubt that the HDP, if implemented in the manner directed, serves, and will continue to serve educational quality in Ethiopia. It does so through carefully planned reflective tasks paired with various research projects and experience sharing. An assumption is made that experiential learning, reflective practice and expertise sharing is the path to improvement, which in turn leads to excellence. In my opinion, the HDP sets the foundation for this development.



Karen Waters

**Influencing Quality through
the Higher Diploma
Program (HDP) in Ethiopia:
A Personal Reflection**

Standards for Ethiopian Law Schools

A two-day Legal Education and Training Reform workshop of stakeholders was held at the Ministry of Capacity Building on May 29 and 30th 2006. The workshop discussed the draft document prepared with a view to enhancing standards and quality in legal education and training. The workshop was presided by H.E. Ato Tefera Walwa, Minister of Capacity Building and Chairman of the Steering Committee for Legal Education and Training Reform Program which is a component unit of the Ethiopian Justice Reform Program.

The major target audience of the focus group discussion was the institutional leadership of Higher Education Institutions, which included presidents and vice presidents of seven public universities and presidents and academic deans of two private university colleges including St. Mary's. Also present at the workshop were the Vice-president of the Federal Supreme Court, Vice-Minister of Education in charge of Higher Education, Presidents/ Vice-presidents of Regional State Supreme Courts, and Heads of Justice Bureaus.

The workshop covered presentations from members of the Technical Committee comprised deans/academic staff of law schools and stakeholders. The presentations and the discussion on the draft document aimed at gathering feedback from stakeholders.

The three presentations given on Monday morning (May 29th) dwelt upon the reform study process and foreign visits. At the end of the presentations workshop participants were asked to discuss on the draft document with a

view to contributing further inputs and ultimately make the document their own.

The second part of the presentation conducted on Monday afternoon addressed the issue of problems in legal education pertaining to curriculum, delivery and assessment, research, publications and consultancy, after which causes, consequences and conclusions were presented. Suggestions and comments were forwarded following the presentations.

Minimum Standards in Legal Education and Training was the topic of the presentations and discussion during the second day of the workshop. The presentations covered vision, mission, objectives, core values and Minimum Standards on Curriculum, Delivery, Assessment, Research & Publications, Leadership, Organization and Management.

Heated discussion was made on the issues addressed during which the issue of autonomy of Law Schools attracted much attention. The major comments and suggestions made during the second day of the workshop included (inter alia): the role that legal education and law schools should play in nurturing and enhancing the development of the legal profession, and the necessity of pedagogic training to law instructors. Moreover, it was suggested that the legal education reform document ought to be scaled up to other faculties. However, there were participants who stressed the need for caution in the process of implementing autonomy of law schools.

Members of the Steering Committee and the Technical Committee for Legal Education and Training Reform gave clarification to most of the issues raised in due course of the discussion. They stressed the need to upgrade legal education and noted the significance of the draft document in this regard and also expressed the need to uplift the competence



and integrity of the legal profession so that members of the profession would not be governed by the values of their clients such as profit making but rather by higher standards of professional ethics and integrity. Members of the Steering Committee and the Technical Committee explained that legal education is the concern of the entire justice system, and underlined the necessity of autonomy for law schools in various spheres of leadership and management.

Consensus among workshop participants was expressed regarding the need to break the cyclic pattern of problems in legal education. And it was suggested that the inclusion of cer-

tain courses in the category of core courses, the need to make certain stipulations normative rather than rigid, and other comments can be accommodated in the draft document.

While closing the workshop, H.E. Ato Tefera Walwa, underlined that legal education reform is not only the demand of law schools, but also the concern of all stakeholders. ■

Our next issue will cover the second workshop (held at Ethiopian Management Institute on July 17th and 18th 2006). Over one hundred law instructors from public and private law schools have participated in this workshop.

Recent Good Practices

The Quality Assessment Council of SMUC has identified four activities undertaken during the last two months by different offices of SMUC and has decided that they deserve recognition as good practices.

* The Literary and Cultural Forum organized by the Department of Languages of SMUC deserves exceptional recognition and appreciation;

* The External Relations Office deserves appreciation in its effective facilitative role during the documentary gathering for the ETV- Channel 2 Program that reported SMUC activities;

* The opening of the Student Wellness Development Center is also a recent good practice that needs to be appreciated;

* The proposal and options of solution submitted by the Registrar Office to improve the working hours of the Office with a view of serving Extension students is good practice towards customer services.

Answers to puzzle #1

The first issue of 'Quality Matters' contained a puzzle of ten questions. The answers to the puzzle are:

- 1) CUSH
- 2) ARCHANIDA
- 3) CORSICA
- 4) NITROGIN
- 5) THALERD
- 6) SENGHOR
- 7) RHODESIA
- 8) SIKHISM
- 9) VISCOSITY
- 10) OTHELO

The following four people have made good attempts. But none of them have completed the puzzle without mistake. CRQA appreciates their participation.

- 1) Abel Shimelis, IT student of St. Mary's University College
- 2) Kalkidan Amare, Sales Executive in the Emirates Airlines
- 3) Yakob Adane, Management student of St. Mary's University College
- 4) Fikadu Haile, from the Department Accounting of St. Mary's University College

Puzzle and Fun Corner

The answer for the following questions are hidden in the puzzle. Find them and circle them on the puzzle (Note: answers may appear horizontally, vertically or diagonally). If you complete this puzzle without any mistakes and get it to CRQA of St. Mary's University College within a week's time, you will receive a prize, and if you successfully complete three consecutive puzzles, you will be entitled to get substantial prize.

- 1) Ethiopian philosopher (mid 5th century AD), who slept with his mother, disguised as another man.
- 2) Ugandan military dictator who ruled the country from 1971 to 1979.
- 3) The person who declared Iran an Islamic Republic in 1979.
- 4) The term for massive sheet of ice usually found in high land altitudes
- 5) Body of the water representing the shortest distance between Africa and Europe.
- 6) Eating disorder characterized by episodic uncontrolled eating followed by self induced vomiting with the goal of avoiding weight gain.
- 7) Ethiopian Patriarch killed by the Italians.
- 8) A severe tropical storm with winds exceeding 119 kms per hour originating in the tropical regions of the Atlantic Ocean or Caribbean Sea. It usually produces heavy rains.
- 9) The branch of Philosophy that studies beauty and art.
- 10) Writer and political activist who was killed by the military government of Nigeria on the 10th November 1995.

The Chemistry Lesson

A chemistry teacher wanted to teach his 5th grade class a lesson about the evils of liquor, so he produced an experiment that involved a glass of water, a glass of whiskey and two worms.

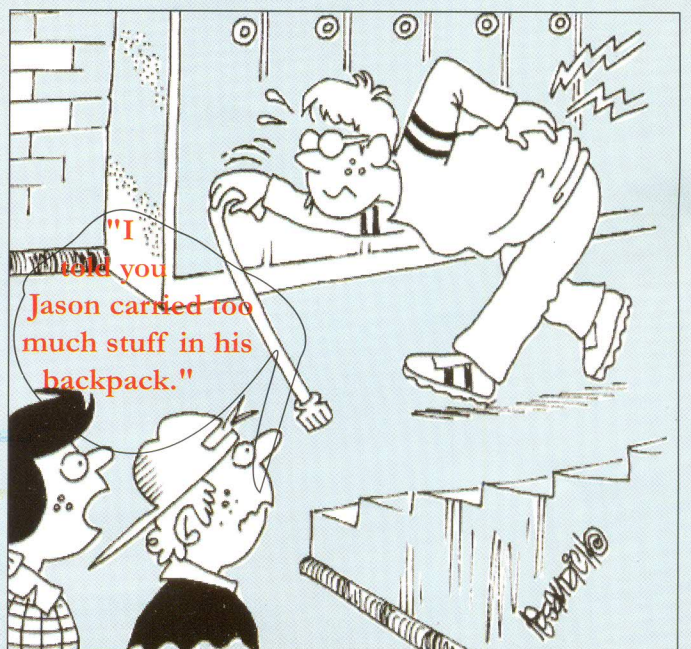
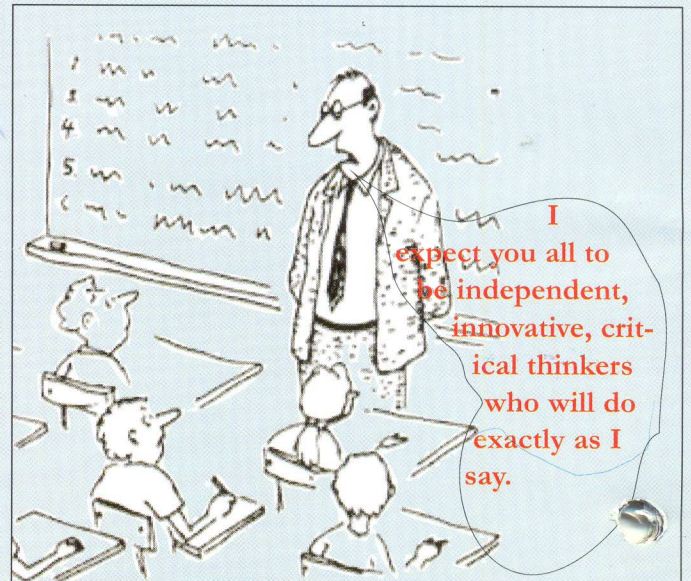
"Now, class. Observe the worms closely," said the teacher putting a worm first into the water. The worm in the water writhed about, happy as a worm in water could be.

The second worm, he put into the whiskey. It writhed painfully, and quickly sank to the bottom, dead as a door nail.

"Now, what lesson can we derive from this experiment?" the teacher asked.

Johnny, who naturally sits at the back, raised his hand and wisely, responded, "Drink whiskey and you won't get worms."

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Center for Research and Quality Assurance

Research Grant Scheme

St. Mary's University College supports students researchers preparing their undergraduate and graduate thesis on Private Higher Education Institutions in Ethiopia. Research undertakings under this program are expected to meet the interests of practitioners and policy makers.

Priority research topics under this funding scheme are:

- * Planning, financing and managing Private Higher Education Institutions in Ethiopia
- * Policy and regulatory issues in Private Higher Education Institutions
- * Challenges and prospects of Private Higher Education Institutions in Ethiopia
- * Quality education in Private Higher Education Institutions
- * Teaching methods and practice in Private Higher Education Institutions
- * Evaluating learning outcomes in Private Higher Education Institutions
- * Student services in Private Higher Education Institutions
- * Other issues related to Private Higher Education Institutions

Prospective researchers should submit their proposal before December 15 every year to:

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Inquiries may be directed to: research@stmarycollege.edu.et. Application form can be downloaded from our website <http://www.stmarycollege.edu.et/page/research.htm>

St. Mary's University College

The 4th National Conference on Private Higher Education Institutions in Ethiopia

Organized and Sponsored by
St. Mary's University College

Scheduled to be held on
August 18 and 19, 2006
UN-ECA Hall
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

For more information contact:

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