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OU hosts students from University of Botswana

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

A partnership between Oakland University and the University of Botswana made it possible for Cecilia Seema and Kayi Ntinda to study counseling at OU during the winter 2008 semester. Seema and Ntinda have been at Oakland University since Jan. 2 attending classes, studying and working in the School of Education and Human Services Counseling Center.

The School of Education and Human Services signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Botswana in August to further the schools' collaboration efforts, which began in 2006. The schools have already participated in video conferences, student e-mail exchanges, faculty visits and now a student exchange.

In the future, the SEHS and University of Botswana hope to have more student and faculty exchanges and collaborations in research, scholarship, teaching and service.

Both Seema, a master's student, and Ntinda, a Ph.D. candidate, study at the University of Botswana. OU Counseling Department Chair Luellen Ramey and Phil O'Dwyer visited the University of Botswana in the fall and learned the two were interested in attending Oakland University. They were able to get the students into a program evaluation course, an advance consultation course and secure internships with the Counseling Center for them.

"The content here is more in-depth than back home," Seema said. "I have learned a lot and I would definitely want to come here to do my Ph.D."

Seema is interested in working with the community, mostly families and couples. She also has an interest in helping those with HIV and AIDS.

"I was able to visit HIV/AIDS sites and I can implement some of what I learned there. The courses here have equipped me with more tools to counsel for HIV/AIDS at home," Seema said. She also feels more confident in her ability to write grants and evaluate programs after her time at OU. "Many same-sex relationship issues are not as open at home. I now feel I would be bold enough to support those in same-sex relationships and teach them about safe sex."

Ntinda would like to work with the community as well, mostly with street children and orphans.

"My Ph.D. program is research-based. I haven't had time to do coursework," Ntinda said. "I love this program for that. It's so rich."

Ntinda said having the Counseling Center also provided a unique opportunity for hands-on experiences. She said at the University of Botswana, there is a small center similar to the Counseling Center but only two students are able to work at it.

"It's been wonderful having these students with us this semester," Ramey said. "We feel the classes that were selected for them provided them with an in-depth look at a new topic. In addition, the experience of being mentored in the Counseling Center really connected them more to the program and the people within the Counseling Department."

The students did face challenges while studying at OU. Ntinda, from Zambia, had never seen snow and she wasn't prepared for the cold temperatures. Both students found a lack of transportation made it difficult to explore any areas off campus.

Chris Tidimane, a doctoral student in counseling from the University of Botswana studying at OU, was able to help Seema and Ntinda adjust to many things in the United States, including the societal adjustment.

This semester, the Counseling Department and the University of Botswana also participated in a video conference, presented by the University of Botswana's faculty member in counseling, Dan Bush on the topic of cultural differences in counseling in Botswana.

"It's easy for anyone, anywhere to become culturally encapsulated if they don't reach out to other cultures. Being able to interact with the students from the University of Botswana and learning their point of view only enhances what our students can experience," Ramey said.

In May, three Oakland University students will travel to the University of Botswana to study there. Watch The News at OU for more information.

For more information on OU's Counseling Department, visit the [School of Education and Human Services](#) Web site.

SUMMARY

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