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Educating Women To Excel

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Meredith professor supports consortium in Kenya to form new biology course

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John Mecham, professor of biology at Meredith, spent a portion of winter break in Kenya working with faculty from four other colleges to support a consortium aiming to build a new biology course at each school.

Mecham worked with professors from Bennett College, North Carolina Wesleyan, University of South Carolina-Sumter and Kenyatta University, located in Kenya. The course, "Life Science in Context: Sub-Saharan Africa," will be an introductory biology course designed to attract women and minorities to the field. The course will adapt to

and implement the Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities (SENCER) model.

Mecham has applied for a grant from the National Science Foundation to aid in funding for the project. If the grant is accepted, the course could be on the schedule at Meredith as soon as fall 2005.

"This course will help reach this goal by providing experiential, inquiry-based learning and meaningful opportunities for civic engagement that promote cultural and gender-based sensitivity and understanding," Mecham reported.



photo courtesy John Mecham

Professor Mecham works alongside Benson Njorooge in Kenya

Meredith's Weekly Weather

WEDNESDAY APRIL 7

Mostly Sunny
High 76/ Low 55

THURSDAY APRIL 8

Showers
High 71/ Low 47

FRIDAY APRIL 9

Mostly Sunny
High 69/ Low 42

SATURDAY APRIL 10

Partly Cloudy
High 64/ Low 47

SUNDAY APRIL 11

Showers
High 62/ Low 55

MONDAY APRIL 12

Rainy
High 66/ Low 48

TUESDAY APRIL 13

Showers
High 63/ Low 44

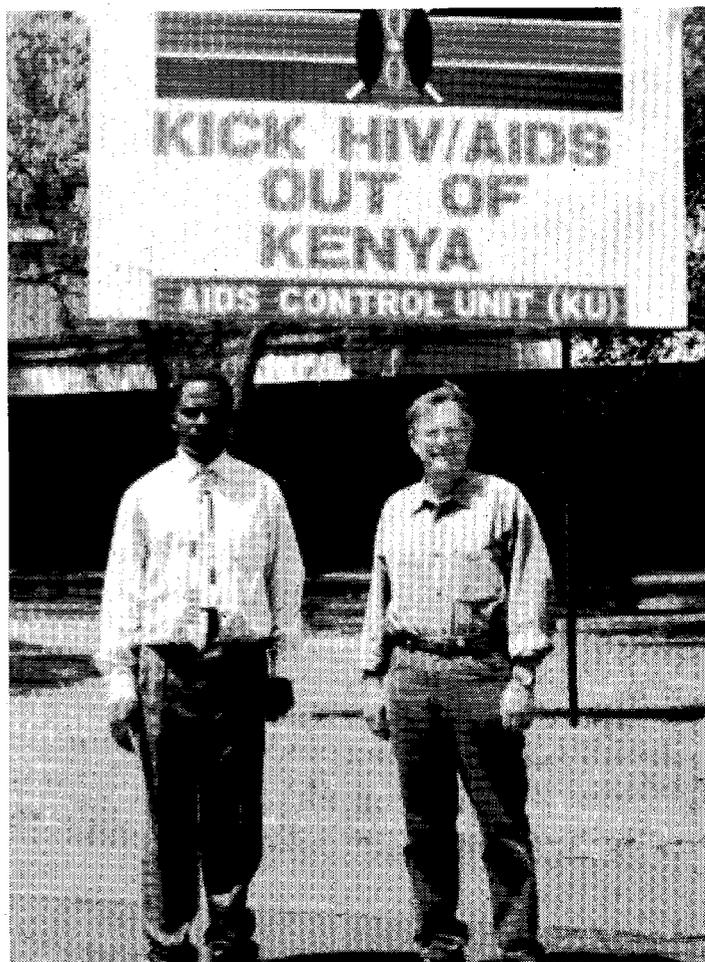


photo courtesy John Mecham

Owino and Mecham outside AIDS control unit at Kenyatta University.

While in Kenya, Mecham was able to speak with people affected by parasitic infections such as filariasis and schistosomiasis, which affect a large percentage of the population in Kenya. Mecham has studied tropical parasitic diseases for many years and was excited to see the effects in person. Interpreters aided in interviews with Kenyan natives suffering from tropical diseases.

Mecham worked closely with Dr. Phillip Owino, a plant pathologist at Kenyatta University during the trip. Owino and Mecham met in 2002 and again in 2003 in California at the SENCER Institute. Owino directs the HIV/AIDS control unit at Kenyatta University. While

at the university, Mecham conducted a workshop on the application of a test for counting human white blood cells that are targeted by the HIV virus.

Owino visited Meredith, as well as Duke University and several area high schools, last week with the Talanta Puppetry Troupe from the AIDS Control Unit at Kenyatta University. The troupe consists of Gilbert Asoka, Jack Omondi, and Joab Onyango. The group visited four classes on campus, performing their educational puppet show. The group conducted workshops on using puppetry for social change, and hosted forums on the AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa.