

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

**E-CONFERENCE ON ESTABLISHING A MUSEUM AT BUNDA
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE.**

**CONFERENCE HELD FROM
MAY 30 TO JUNE 04, 2004**

**Organised By
Buncoalumni
(Bunda College Alumni Yahoo Group)**

**E-Conference Report Submitted to
The Executive Committee
Alumni Association of Bunda College of Agriculture,
University of Malawi
LILONGWE, MALAWI.**

June 2004

Introduction

Buncoalumni, an internet based discussion forum (weblink) comprising former students of Bunda College of Agriculture, a constituent college of the University of Malawi hosted a virtual E-conference entitled ‘ **First E-conference on Establishing a Museum at Bunda College**’. The conference took place from May 30 to June 04, 2004. This document is a draft report on proceedings of the conference.

Members were invited to participate by sharing ideas on the need for the museum project, management of the initial set up, identification of donors, contents and information of the museum, location of the museum and drawing up of a project proposal. Three sessions were held, which lasted for one week and focussed on three main themes namely: (i) Project Justification (ii) Museum Contents and (iii) Project Management/Sustainability, these were coordinated by David Mkwambisi, Chimwemwe Soko and Mrs Agness Mangwera respectively and moderated by Mr Fanwell Bokosi. The roles of the coordinators were to introduce issues or questions for discussion, to follow-through the discussion, to review the issues raised during the discussion and to summarise main points raised. On the other hand, the moderator ensured that all participants’ emails were accessible to all members including ensuring adherence to guidelines and net etiquette.

About 15 out of the 50 active members of the forum participated in the discussion with notable contributors listed in appendix 1. The following is the summary of the proceedings and recommendation as agreed by the conference participants.

Theme I: Justification

Bunda College, just like its sister constituent colleges of the University of Malawi, has no museum to keep up with its noble birth some 40 years ago. Despite harbouring so many interesting things and records for both academic and development purposes, such an entity is not on any official plans and vision. It is expected that if the idea is initiated, and brought before the authorities, it can be fully supported as long as it is in line with the general college future programmes. It is expected that the museum that can start with issues of the college, can be expanded to include national as well as regional aspects for new students, visitors and the country. This programme can bring money as well as provide the much required luxury assets.

The following questions were raised and debated: **(Posting # 2046)**

1. Why do we need this Museum at Bunda
2. Who will benefit from this project
3. When do you think we can start the project
4. Who can initiate the establishment of the museum
5. Who are the key actors both here at the forum and outside the forum
6. Where do you think this should be located
7. Who can sponsor the first part of the project
8. Do we need a special committee for this project? Any names?
9. Any experience from such projects anywhere?

Theme I summary

Posting # 2056 (Bruce Sosola)

- Contacts should be made with department of antiquities to help us come up with a well-researched museum exhibition.
- Committee should comprise two members of current BSU, two members of Staff, one member of CTS, two members of Bunda Alumni association, curators and conservators at department of antiquities.
- It might need to hire a consultant to carry out research on Bunda Museum which would also encompass Bunda mountain, other historic sites around Bunda, the first tractor, the popular lecture by Dr Banda at Bunda, Mother Bunda.
- Let us know how UNIMA carries out projects like this to preserve natural and cultural heritage in Malawi.

Posting # 2059 (Hardwick Tchale)

- This idea is brilliant and novel, not just for UNIMA, but for the entire country (if not the region, with the exception of SA). Apart from its key role of preserving the treasures of Bunda's historical and fascinating heritage, such an idea has the potential of opening up Bunda to so many doors, both within and without, small and huge, for which (perhaps) Bunda's existence has been something of meagre or no significance at all. In addition, Aubrey Elliot, one of the renowned ethnographers, once said that it is important to capture the fascinating ways of life before the opportunity is lost for ever. Since its renaissance, Bunda has gone through a lot of transformation (in either direction), and the longer it takes to properly document such, the more difficult it becomes to capture the reality and vivid picture of the noble foundations upon which our college is based. History is best and learning from it is the best way to forge ahead.
- Bunda needed to do a little more to reach out to those that can practically (for the betterment of their lives and the nation) use the knowledge it generates. Apart from benefiting the elite, a Bunda Museum can be one of the best ways of continuously reaching out to the wider majority, from all spheres of life, but most importantly those that are the nearest (the nearer the dearer).
- Bunda can serve even better in its role of steering the agricultural sector, if it integrates itself with people, and this is one of the many ways through which such can be achieved.

- One other important factor that makes this a brilliant idea is the talk of autonomy of the colleges. Museum functions such as collecting, classifying, keeping, studying and exhibiting of information are not valueless. If managed well enough, such a project can become financially sustainable and even be able to support core college functions. After all, apart from core teaching and research functions, there is very little (if any) that Bunda offers in terms of campus recreation. This project can most likely fill that void.
- The Bunda Alumni should carry out the project, it should be our duty to show that pride and appreciation by doing whatever we can to support the achievement of such noble goals. Alumni to spearhead this idea because of two reasons: (i) it is from this group that I see booming levels of creativity and passion to serve and transform Bunda (ii) this idea falls outside the core academic and research functions of Bunda and it would be difficult for others to articulate the idea than its originators.
- A special committee comprised of a few members of the larger Alumni community (especially those that are well known and are either holding or have held positions of influence: so many names like Prof. Chimpamba and others), Bunda Authorities (at least a member or two from the College Management Committee) and you can co-opt other specialists in this field .This committee will be responsible for laying down all the modalities including the feasibility studies, and/or proposals for initial seed money (so many of our traditional donors would support this idea: USAID, NORAD, DFID, even UNESCO etc). This is a huge and very specialized undertaking and it deserves to be handled professionally right from the word go.
- Depends on how soon such a high calibre committee is put in place. We need to give the committee enough time and mandate to lay down their plans on the basis of sound information. This has a lot of implications (financial and otherwise) but because this will be spearheaded by the Alumni, most of whom are earners in their own right, the initial muscle to put up a committee and keep it up and running is entirely our responsibility. Through meagre contributions, we can raise the initial start-up fund.

Posting # 2068 (Kennedy Lweya)

- The museum is a noble idea that will help to preserve Bunda College's and the surrounding community's rich history and cultural heritage. It is noble because it will be the first University Museum in Malawi.
- Students from Bunda College, surrounding secondary and primary schools, the surrounding community and people of Malawi in general, staff and researchers from Malawi and outside the country and people from Southern Africa and across the globe coming in as tourists or otherwise.
- A Steering Committee should be set up with the responsibility to consult widely and prepare detailed proposals for funding of the museum's establishment. This committee will also oversee the project's completion.
- The Alumni can develop an initial proposal for seed funding. This seed-funding proposal can be marketed to donors and University Authorities. From then a Steering Committee comprised of people from various sectors can be set up to perform functions above.
- Seed funding is not very difficult to get at all. If we think locally, DFID Small Grants Scheme could easily give the money; Government through Dept of Antiquities; USAID; World Bank Country Office Malawi; UNESCO through Prof Chimphamba; JICA NORAD; The Beit Trust. The seed funding relies heavily on personal contacts and knowledge so it will be better to sell the idea through people who have such contacts
- Reading University has a University Museum for English Rural History; we can draw some lessons from them and others.
- The activity is public in nature and will be a public good. But, as with any ideas, those who hatch them generally should be tasked with seeing the project to take-off. This is why Alumni should develop a seed proposal, which will just outline the main tasks for seeing the project to a start. Detailed proposals will be develop using the seed money.
- For the moment, probably, the principal of Bunda College could be forwarded some issues arising from this discussion. He could help in identifying key people for consideration in the Steering Committee.

Posting # 2078 (Fanwell Bokosi)

- On the issue of administration, the logical step is to contact people at Alumni Association first who will in turn consult the College Administration. Once they have bought into the idea then we will jointly own the project. Of course bearing in mind that there is a thin line between the college management and alumni because most of these people in the Alumni are also in big positions in the management of the college.
- Even when we are contacting the Alumni on ground zero we must have a draft of what we want to do. It is good to go to them and be able to say, we want to carry out this project, which will take this shape, because we believe that it will do the following and so on. In other words let us produce from what we have so far a concept paper that should form the basis of the first contact with ground zero.
- Once the idea has been taken over/together with the Alumni Association then the main committee should be formed. This will auger well with the concept of participation.
- NORAD and others including USAID should be contacted as well. We have a case for UASID if we can remember that the College was established with the American Funding and it would be nice to get them on board as early as possible. We could use this project as a sign of appreciation to work that USAID did in funding the college.
- He reminded that the first class of Bunda College of Agriculture did not start at Bunda but at Dedza Secondary School before it moved to Bunda in 1967. This might be important to include

Posting # 2080 (Hastings Zidana)

- The actors should include the alumni on this forum, the alumni not on this forum but we are aware of their capabilities, the administration at Bunda and any adviser supplied by the Department of antiquities.

It should be located within Bunda College campus preferably not as far as the students for easy access. Bunda should supply a small space for the time being so that materials start to be mobilized and be displayed on that small space while looking for funds to construct a new building for this purpose. A small house in front of hockey stadium was proposed

- Apart from the other sponsors already mentioned, alumni association should organise activities for fund raising special for this activity.
- On the first manager of the project, Alumni can choose the coordinator the best way will be to vote out of the proposed names by alumni. The best coordinator will be the one who knows the root of the issue; my suggestion is the coordinator should come from this group. A special committee is needed but a lean one at the moment for easy coordination. The names should include representative from administration Bunda, even if he is just an observer at the time being so that they are involved from the start.
- He mentioned that their University has got a museum, which has got all the departments of University represented. The school students are the ones who take care of the displays, and explaining to the visitors. Under the guidance of one professor and one teacher assistant.
- The museum should be run private Apart from the other sponsors mentioned we should also add, ICDF through ROC embassy in Lilongwe (He can assist on this one). We should also consult staff at Blantyre museum they can enlighten us on possible sponsors and technical know how.

Posting # 2090 (Thom Munthali)

- This project is pretty good though not a priority over other important issues that the coordinator highlighted on his list of issues to be brainstormed and seen done through this electronic conference series. However, this issue is so unique making it worthwhile for all the alumni to want to be associated with as pioneers.
- This initiative should in no way be left in the hands of the Alumni Executive Association. This association is as good as dead than alive. They are good at talking and not seeing things through. A separate steering committee has to see this through but may wish to work with the remnants of the Alumni Association.
- MORE IMPORTANTLY, a draft committee from this forum has to be instituted IMMEDIATELY. It should be given time to go into recess, communicate privately, share areas to write on and then bring a feed-back of its first well-researched The draft, after being polished by the forum, will be taken to Malawi this June end by Mkwambisi for lobbying and will form the working basis of the steering committee to be formed. The following to be in the Draft committee: Fanwell, Bruce, Hardwirik, Thom, Ken, Agnes (names arbitrarily chosen in the interest of time and progress). Mkwambisi should then coordinate the putting together of the draft.

Posting # 2094 (Jeremiah Kang'ombe)

He suggested to include all donors who have so far assisted Bunda since its opening in Dedza-To be contacted and their organizations appreciated. Which he said they are so many and not forget the Japanese!!

PART 2: MUSEUM: CONTENTS

Theme II: Museum Contents

This session will essentially look at what things we want the museum to capture and conserve for future generations. These things should have a special and unique influence on Bunda: The things that Bunda as a college is recognised with. With this in mind, let us think aloud trying to suggest things relating to sporting equipment/issues, historical documents, natural resources Bunda has such as the mountain and other related things, Life history of both professors and students (we've had special things done by selected students that could serve as wonderful stories for generations to come), We may also think of capturing the student directory (having a list of students since the college opened in 1967). The above listed things are just serving as a guide to the direction we may take. I always cherish the creativity the members on this forum have & have no doubt that interesting things will be suggested by the end of the day.

SUMMARY OF SESSION 2:

With special honour here is a summary of the session

2. Like earlier said, I appreciate your contribution on the topic.

The members who contributed pretty much talked of the same things we could capture in the proposed museum. These were interesting as they have a great attachment to the agricultural college.

These are the issues raised.

1. Collecting the agricultural equipment used in the stone age, iron age and the modern mechanized equipment. Example of equipments like fishing gears from old age to motorised trawling nets should be exhibited.

2. Communication systems like old type of phones which were used in Nchenachena when the first fish farm was constructed during the colonial time. Ground levelling equipments used in agriculture, fisheries and forestry, old to latest ones.

3. Drug boxes used by verts. Badizo used by verts or pictures of the same. These displays should have stories attached to them such as:

Time it was used

How to handle the material

Advantages and disadvantages of equipment.

The important role the instrument has played

towards the people of Malawi.
Which new material replaced this one.
Where was the equipment found.
Who donated the equipment to the museum, when and why.

Apart from the physical displays the museum should also have an audio video part where old tapes of agriculture activities can be displayed, even playing old MBC agriculture extension programmes.

4. Directory/database for both students & members of staff
5. Other historical documents that could be appropriate
6. relevant info. like why Bunda was built where it is, people that originally occupied that land and where they were relocated etc.etc..

In short amayi and abambo these were the things that cropped up.

PART 3: MUSEUM: MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION: E-CONFERENCE HELD FROM 3RD JUNE 16:00HR TO 16 HR ON 4TH JUNE

Coordinotor: Agnes Mwangwela

CONTRIBUTORS:

Thomas Munthali

Fanwel Bokosi

Hsating Zidana

David Mkwambisi

Numeri Geresomo

Management of the Museum

1. Management of the Pre Establishment Phase

This is the work of the committee and as such we need to be sure of the steps that needs to be taken. In this part the issues are:

- a. Who will manage the process of consultation?
- b. Who will manage the preparation of the proposal?
- c. Who will manage the fundraising and how

Bunda Alumni Association should have the responsibility of managing the project. However, a separate account should be opened for the project and maintained by Bunda College. Donors are happy to work with well-established institutions; most of these donors proposed here have even special ledgers for Bunda. The budget should categorized into capita and running costs. This then can be presented to donors who can sponsor particular aspects.

There is need to consult with the wider Alumni who are not part of this forum. Those of us who had made pledges on the forum could honour those pledges and that could serve as seed money for this project and show that we are committed when meeting with the official at Ground zero.

On the building, we might not need to start with a new building. According to session 2, some of the issues can be developed and initiated even in a small old building. That can be our first step. Starting collecting information of students and photos. This might require one or two computers and someone to design the system. My proposal is to convince the admin to give us one house/flats used by my Masters students in those days or where Kalimbira was staying behind Matiya's Squash Court. Those are enough for these projects.

2. Management of the actual museum

In this section it is going to be the responsibility of the established museum. During the process of establishment of the museum the following should be considered:

- (i) What are the advantages and disadvantages of having the College Administration also managing this project
- (ii) What will be the working relationship between the museum and college administration.
- (iii.) Since this project will be a national cultural and educational heritage, Government may get involved in the form through provision of qualified personnel. This would lessen the need for highly paid and yet rare curators in the country. What the donors would have to do then is to fund the start up costs

3. Museums are very difficult to establish in that they require major investment in the initial stages and that is where the major part of the project is. Once established the maintenance costs are not as huge as the initial investment and this is where a link with the national budget would help. In any case agriculture is a very important part of the economy of Malawi. It would also be nice to actually link this to the whole agricultural history in Malawi. Issues like the evolution of farming methods and tools and we can actually convince the donors and government that this project is not only for Bunda but the whole country as well, we need to understand and preserve the heritage of the main economic activity of the country and the only reason we will have it at Bunda is that it is the only Agricultural institution of the highest level in our country.