UWM to Provide Training for Nigerian State Administrators

Milwaukee – The Nigerian coastal state of Akwa Ibom wanted training programs to make its public employees more skilled in administrative best practices. This search brought them to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Continuing Education and the creation of a customized training program.

During a recent visit to UWM by a delegation of government officials from Akwa Ibom, an agreement was reached through which UWM will provide advanced training to middle and senior management of the government there.

Mrs. Grace Anwana, Head of Service for Akwa Ibom, and UWM Chancellor Carlos Santiago signed an agreement initiating the program. A pilot phase involves a series of training sessions to be delivered in July and in October of this year. The administrators targeted for this training are those who have six to 10 years on the job and who are expected to remain in service for at least another 10-12 years.

Mrs. Anwana said she anticipates a successful and productive relationship with the university. “The School of Continuing Education training programs offer exactly the kind of skills I want our administrators to develop.” As Head of Service, Mrs. Anwana oversees civil service level staff management and management policies. This includes human resources development and training.

“We are very impressed with the qualities and skills of public employees in the United States,” Mrs. Anwana said. “I want this program to train our mid-career people so they can apply what they learn and can help to create a more efficient and effective level of public administration.”

The training will be developed and presented at the UWM School of Continuing Education through the Public Administration program. According to Shirley Bufford, Governmental Affairs Program Manager: “We will customize training programs in human resource management, decision making strategy, financial management, leadership development and others areas.” Bufford said the pilot programs will be a series of seven workshops presented to a group of 10 government workers from Akwa Ibom.

Based on results of the pilot program, a long-term agreement could be developed. Mrs. Anwana indicated that there were approximately 2,000 to 3,000 state employees who could be eligible for this training.

Professor Mordecai Lee, also of the Governmental Affairs Department, said he is eager for the program to get started. “This is a really exciting opportunity for us,” he said. “It’s thrilling to think that our training programs here will go to help improve the quality of public administration in Akwa Ibom, Nigeria.”

Akwa Ibom is one of Nigeria’s 36 states. Nigeria was granted independence from Britain in 1960. After years of military rule, a new constitution was adopted in 1999, and a peaceful transition to civilian government was completed. Nigeria, an OPEC member, is experiencing its longest period of civilian rule since independence. The general elections of April 2007 marked the first civilian-to-civilian transfer of power in the country's history.

The UWM/Akwa Ibom connection was initiated after the government officials had done an Internet search. They contacted Associate Professor Dr. John Ndon of the UWM College of Health Sciences. He is a Nigerian native from Akwa Ibom. “I have enjoyed the benefits of living and working in the U.S. for the past 22 years,” he said. “Now I want to start sending some of those benefits back home.”

Ndon described the proposed training program as a process of planting seeds. “Nigeria and its states are working toward a governmental structure that emulates the U.S. system,” he explained. “Sending trained administrators back home is like planting seeds. They will start to apply new skills and knowledge and they will teach others. The benefits spread and grow as government and civic administration continues to gain strength and efficiency.”

The training begins in July with a seven-day series of one-day workshops. The series repeats in October and after that the program will be evaluated and, if needed, fine tuned before more series are scheduled.

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