

FROM THE DIRECTOR

ABE GOLDMAN



It is a great pleasure to present the University of Florida's Center for African Studies (CAS) 2014-15 Research Report. The year 2014 marked the 50th anniversary of the Center for African Studies at the University of Florida, and former Center Director and Emeritus Professor Hunt Davis reviews some highlights of the Center's history below. We're extremely gratified at the continuing growth in the scope and diversity of research on Africa carried out by faculty and students at UF, as well as the increasing number of students and faculty involved in Africa-related teaching and research. With their efforts and involvement, CAS has become one of the largest and most diverse academic centers for African Studies in the US and in the world.

The research summaries in this report represent a sample of some of the scope of work on Africa being carried out at the University of Florida. Our faculty and graduate students as well as visiting scholars are involved in research that spans the continent geographically and ranges in focus from multiple areas of the humanities to the natural

sciences, conservation, and health; from aspects of political, social, economic, and linguistic change to the human and environmental impacts in Africa of climate change, disease, and globalization.

A major objective of CAS is to bring together scholars from numerous backgrounds and perspectives to identify and address important questions of intellectual and applied significance. We've been particularly pleased by the involvement of researchers in professional schools – including among others architecture, public health, medicine, veterinary science, agriculture, forestry, law, journalism, and education – together with those from the social and natural sciences and humanities, in cross-disciplinary research on and in Africa. The Center and our faculty and students have also consistently encouraged and supported collaboration with colleagues throughout Africa, and we have been enriched by both short and longer term visits by scholars and researchers from various parts of Africa and elsewhere.

In addition to graduate student and faculty research, CAS together with the CIBER program at UF's College of Business funded four innovative "Research Tutorial Abroad" grants in summer 2014 that allowed UF faculty members to bring undergraduate students to their research sites in Africa for a formative field research experience. These included Rose Lugano, whose students investigated self-employed women's financing innovations in Mombasa; Fiona McLaughlin, whose students studied the linguistic ecology of Dakar's markets; Esther Obonyo, whose students examined affordable housing options in urban Tanzania; and Jill Sonke, whose students explored arts and visual literacy in Uganda. UF students also participate in field research and instructional programs focused on archaeology in Ethiopia, ecology and conservation in Kenya and Swaziland, and UF's study abroad programs in Dar es Salaam and elsewhere.

CAS also continued its strong

commitment to the Masters in Development Practice (MDP) degree, jointly offered with the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Florida. MDP admitted its fifth class in 2014, and many of the MDP students have been or plan to be involved in development projects and efforts in Africa.

Finally, UF's Program in African Languages, which is closely linked to CAS as well as UF's Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures (LLC), hosted a fourth summer of intensive African language instruction through the African Flagship Languages Initiative (AFLI). Graduate and undergraduate students from UF and numerous other universities received innovative immersive instruction in five African languages.

We are also very pleased to acknowledge the support we receive from various sources. Most notably, CAS was again granted funding as a Title VI National Resource Center for African Studies in 2014, one of only ten in the country. This grant helps us continue many of our programs and supports students through Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships. We are also extremely grateful for the consistent support for the Center from the University of Florida, particularly the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Office of Research, the International Center, and the Office of the Provost. Numerous individual donors, listed later in the report continue to support our activities and students and help us to prepare scholars and researchers who have deep understanding of and commitment to African peoples, societies, and environments.

Finally, we note with sadness the passing in January 2015 of Dr. Madelyn Lockhart, former Dean of the Graduate School at UF and a great friend of the Center for African Studies. We were very happy that was able to attend (and join the dancing) our annual party and 50th anniversary celebration in October 2014.