

# CAS AT FIFTY: THE SECOND 25 YEARS

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The Center's second quarter century began with the first Director to be appointed from outside UF, when the Peter Schmidt, an archaeologist, became Director in 1988. The Center's 1990 program review noted that the faculty ranks numbered about 100, thanks to a significant number of new faculty lines being filled by African specialists. As a result, the African curriculum consisted of 120 full African content courses and 160 additional courses with substantial content. The nearly decade old Department of African Languages and Literatures offered courses in four African languages through the third year and four additional languages were available on an on-demand basis. The most important developments in the core curriculum were a new Ph.D. program in African history, with the hiring of Steve Feierman, John Mason, and Barbara Cooper, and a doctoral program in African archaeology, with Schmidt, Steve Brandt, and Terry Childs. The library collection numbered some 80,000 volumes and now included special collections such as the George Fortune collection. New institutional linkages with the University of Dar es Salaam, centered on student and faculty exchanges, and Makerere University, with a focus on environmental sciences, law, and libraries, further testified to the Center's growth. The Center also enhanced its national visibility by serving as the host institution for the 1995 Annual ASA Meeting held in Orlando.

The 1990s witnessed a further growth and diversification of the Center, along with changes in its administration and the makeup of the faculty. In 1995, Ronald Cohen replaced Peter Schmidt as interim Director but fell ill and Goran Hyden stepped in until the appointment of political scientist Michael Chege as Director in 1996. The Assistant Director was anthropologist Catherine VerEecke, while the Outreach Director was political scientist Agnes Ngoma Leslie. Among the appointments in this period were: P.K. Nair ('87, Forest Resources & Conservation), Michael Leslie ('88, Journalism), Abe Goldman

('89, Geography), Barbara McDade ('90, Geography), Joan Frosch ('95, Theater & Dance), and Luise White ('98, History).

The growth and diversification of the faculty also led to new directions in research along with the continuation of longer established research programs. The topics of the Center's annual Carter Conference/Lecture Series during the '90s reflected these trends. The 1994 topic, "Transition in South Africa," dealt with a long-standing concern of Africanist scholars, that of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. The 1995 Carter Conference dealt with a newer scholarly



concern, that of addressing the various dimensions of "Entrepreneurship in Africa." In 1999, faculty members from the Center for Wetlands and the Department of Zoology organized a series of Carter Lectures on the theme of "Aquatic Conservation and Management in Africa." A similar growth and diversification took place in the doctoral program. Overall, UF awarded 92 PhDs based on African-related dissertations between 1990-2001.

Further enhancing the growth of African Studies at UF was the opening of the Harn Museum of Art in 1990, with one of its focal areas being African art and incorporating the already existing African art collection. The African art specialization

was enhanced with the appointment of Rebecca Nagy, an Ethiopian art history specialist, as director in 2002. A second development in the arts, this one in the performing arts, was the launch of the African Artist in Residence Program in 1995, beginning with Ghanaian master drummer Godwin Agbeli, and the Agbededi Africa performance company. This in turn eventually led to a permanent faculty position with the appointment of Mohamed DaCosta. A further major development was the launch of the on-line, open-access, peer-reviewed *African Studies Quarterly* (ASQ) in 1997.

The presence of the Harn and the performing arts program enhanced an already strong outreach program. For example, DaCosta took performances to the schools as part of the K-12 program. The Center conducted annual teacher summer institutes along with workshops over the course of the year. At the postsecondary level it ran faculty development workshops, sponsored regional Africanist conferences, and supported regional Africanists' research projects through its long-running Research Affiliates Program. The Outreach Program also worked with the business community through events such as a workshop on "Doing Business with Africa." The Center continued through the subsequent years to conduct an active outreach program to a wide range of audiences by drawing on the deep African resources of the university.

The new century brought further significant changes to UF African Studies. In 2002, political scientist Leonardo Villalón arrived at UF as the new Center director, joining an existing administrative staff with historian Todd Leedy as assistant director, Agnes Leslie as outreach director, and Corinna Greene as office manager. The African language program saw replacement appointments in Yoruba (Akintunde Akinoyemi, '01) and Akan (James Essegbey, '04) leading to six regularly taught African languages. The appointment of an African languages coordinator (Charles Bwenge, '04) and lecturers further solidified UF's commitment to teaching African languages.

Other significant appointments were in English (Apollo Amoko, '03), anthropology (Brenda Chalfin, '01), geography (Brian Child, '04), and history (Sue O'Brien, '03). The library collection under the guidance of Africana bibliographers Peter Malanchuk and Dan Reboussin, had grown to 120,000 volumes and 500 periodicals.

Villalón's appointment led to an expanded interest in West Africa, especially the Sahelian countries. One outgrowth was the establishment of the Sahel Research Group in 2012, which has thrived as a focal point for faculty and graduate student research. In addition to Villalón, the SRG includes linguist Fiona McLaughlin (appointed '02), economist Renata Serra ('04), anthropologist Abdoulaye Kane ('04), comparative literature specialist Alioune Sow ('04), Sarah McKune ('13) in public and environmental health, and political scientist Sebastian Elischer ('15).

The Carter Lectures and Conferences again reflected the faculty's research and teaching interests. South Africa continued to be an area of interest, as indicated by the 2006 topic commemorating the centenary of Gwen Carter's birth, "Law, Politics, and Society in South Africa: The Politics of Inequality Then and Now." The strength of our African language program led to the 2009 conference "African Creative Expressions: Mother Tongue and Other Tongues." The wars and violence that seemed so much part of the political landscape led to 2005's "States of Violence: The Conduct of War in Africa." The 2004 Carter Conference on "Movement (R) evolution: Contemporary African Dance" signified the established African performing arts program, while the strengthened African art history program led to the 2007 "African Visual Cultures: Crossing Disciplines, Crossing Regions" in conjunction with UF's hosting of the ACASA Triennial Symposium on African Art at the Harn Museum.

The Center's developing research and teaching focus on environmental and conservation issues led to the 2010 Carter

Conference, "Bridging Conservation and Development in Latin America and Africa: Changing Contexts, Changing Strategies," which was a joint endeavor with the UF Tropical Conservation and Development (TCD) Program and the Center for Latin American Studies. The collaboration among these programs had the previous year led to UF being selected as one of the two US universities to receive a MacArthur Foundation award to establish a master's programs in Sustainable Development Practice (MDPs). The Center's growing involvement with UF's Emerging Pathogens Institute and the Department of Environmental and Global Health provided further cross-fertilization for its concern with environmental and conservation issues.

The tenth director, Abe Goldman, was appointed in 2011 to lead a center with a stable administrative core and a sound funding basis from the university as well as external grants, with continuing Title VI funding but also ongoing faculty grants from USAID, NSF, the Gates Foundation, and NASA among others. The size of the faculty had continued to expand, with 108 Africanist faculty in 41 departments and schools across 13 colleges as well as the library, etc. Academic year instruction was available in seven African languages, and in 2011 the Center launched the externally funded intensive summer African Language Initiative teaching two languages, a number that had expanded to eight by 2016 in the renamed African Flagship Language Initiative. Among the newly appointed faculty were anthropologist Alyson Young ('08) and Terje Østebø in religion ('11).

One of the new research and training directions undertaken by the Center was the development of innovative programs around thematic interdisciplinary



working groups of faculty and students. These groups hosted conferences and speakers and held workshops. For example, the 2012 Carter Conference on "Health and Development in Africa" and the 2015 Conference on "Schools of Architecture and Africa: Connecting Disciplines in Design and Development" both emerged from the relevant working groups.

The University recognized the institutional importance of African Studies in its Preeminence Initiative launched in 2013 to bolster UF's effort to become an international leader in more than two dozen areas, including health, agriculture, computing and education. Preeminent senior positions were allocated to African Studies related disciplines for interdisciplinary work in the general area of "Public Health and Social Change in Africa." The first of the appointments was historian Nancy Hunt ('15), who joins the 105 Africanist faculty members in 45 departments and schools across the university. An additional search is underway in spring 2016, as the search for a new director to join the ongoing administrative team of Leedy, Leslie, and administrative coordinator Ikeade Akinyemi. The Center heads into its third quarter century in an excellent position to continue building expertise, growing capacity, and disseminating knowledge for African Studies at UF, regionally, nationally, and globally in a new era.

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