MESSIAH COLLEGE

SPRING 2009 | The newsletter of the Collaboratory

DOKIMOI ERGATAI

the Collaboratory for strategic partnerships and applied research

The business of caring

The microeconomic group combines business and missions to serve underprivileged communities

By Sara Mueller '10

With many Americans focused on the current domestic economy, it is easy to overlook economic crises in other countries. While Americans face increasing unemployment rates, developing countries look to a future of continued poverty and trying to make ends meet.

Though these economic issues of great magnitude may seem insurmountable, students in the Collaboratory's microeconomic development (MED) group are using their business skills to help make a difference. Microeconomics zeroes in on a specific area of economics, in this case, small businesses and business practices.

Focusing on the country of Zambia, MED group members—a variety of business, political science, marketing, social work, and international business majors—are using knowledge and skills from their fields of study to help Zambians develop business practices that will help sustain and develop their economy.

Both passionate about helping developing nations, Nathan Geiger '07 and Liz Barr '07 worked together to develop the MED group.

The group's first project was based on former engineering professor Job Ebenezer's idea of a paper-making business in Zambia. This became the Zambia Paper Project, which the group continues to work on. The purpose of the paper project is to help Zambians earn an income by making paper out of local grasses that they can then sell to tourists.

"The project has grown incredibly over the past couple of years," says Laura Grovatt '09, leader of the MED group.

As the project grew, the MED group expanded in size as well. The group now boasts upward of 15 members. When Grovatt stepped in as leader of the group in the fall of 2008, many of the original MED members had graduated. With only three members remaining, the future of the MED group did not look good.

At the beginning of the 2008 school year, "I was going into this hoping that God was going to provide," says Grovatt. And God did provide. By the end of Welcome Week for first-year Messiah College students, Grovatt and her group had recruited 12 new members.

With a large number of new members, the MED group has been able to grow and take on additional projects.

For the past year and a half, the group has been working on a microfinance project. This project will culminate in an association that provides a model in which villagers can pool their savings and take out loans against their own savings. A microfinance institution has been a long-term goal of the MED group since its founding in 2006.

"Realistically I saw that goal as being years away . . . It's just so cool to see it all come together this quickly and this well," Grovatt says.

MED group members provide business training to community members in Simaubi, Zambia. Matt Nissley '08 reviews the financial portion of a business plan written by several women at the workshop.

"It is a pretty big ambition," says Larry Williams '11, leader of the microfinance team, "but we're going to do it."

This summer, the MED group will send a team of five students to Simaubi, Zambia, to set up a village savings and loan association. The goal of this project is to teach villagers basic business and personal savings skills and to lay the foundation for the microfinance institution.

In addition to providing small loans to entrepreneurs, the savings and loan association will also help villagers build self-reliance, empower the poor to provide for their households, and develop a community that is interdependent.

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INSIDE

The Collaboratory for Strategic Partnerships and Applied Research

MISSION
To partner with organizations, businesses, and communities in our region and around the world for projects in mathematical and information sciences, engineering, and business that serve disadvantaged people and care for the earth; and to develop our members' abilities and vocational vision for lifelong servant-leadership, and the courage to act on convictions.

VISION
Increasing hope and transforming lives through education, collaboration, innovation, and service.

IDENTITY
The Collaboratory is an organization of Christian students, educators, and professionals affiliated with Messiah College. We aspire to fulfill biblical mandates to foster justice, empower the poor, reconcile adversaries, and care for the earth, in the context of scholastic engagement in our fields of study. As God enables us to serve others, we seek to grow as disciples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, serve as God's stewards over the resources of our academic disciplines, and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God.

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Disability Resources: Andrew Betteridge
Education: Katherine Patton
Energy: Dean Eastlake
Microeconomic Development: Laura Grovatt
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Word from the manager: The treasure of hope

Collaboratory students and educators engage in many projects that increase hope and transform lives, ranging from the creation of small-scale biodiesel in the local Harrisburg area to setting up a village savings and loan association in Simaubi, Zambia. As you read through the pages of this newsletter, you will see that we have been quite busy this year. We are not only interested in hands-on service, but intentionally make time to ensure that our work is rooted in our deep faith in Christ. Every Monday night during the academic year, we gather as an organization for a time of discipleship and reflection. Attendance at these meetings typically tops one hundred of our members. It is a vital window of time for us as we come together and remember why we are doing what we are doing.

The 2009 spring semester Collaboratory Monday night meeting was kicked off with an address offered by Nancy Patrick, associate professor of special education and coordinator of special education at Messiah College. Patrick spoke about hope as the primary distinguishing characteristic that Christian workers possess and extend. As followers of Christ, we are transformed by our hope in a risen savior who is real, responsive to our prayers, active in our world, and returning for us. And this hope is what we have to offer to a world plagued by poverty, injustice, violence, and despair. It is contagious, it is winsome, and it is the antidote to our brokenness.

In Luke 12:35–36, Jesus encourages his disciples, "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him." Our hope keeps us in a state of constant readiness, because we are truly expectant that Christ will come again and make all things new. Such confidence in a better future drives us to serve faithfully while we wait for Jesus to fulfill his promise to the children of God.

We bid you to join us on our journey as we strive to be faithful stewards of the resources that God has invested in us, working with perseverance and holding out the treasure of authentic hope that we have in Christ. As you read about the origins of the Collaboratory in our alumni profile and marvel at how we have expanded as an organization, with student members from every department on campus and projects that have become integrated into the curriculum at Messiah College, share our hope—for we are waiting, actively and with eager anticipation, for a risen savior. And our labor is not in vain.

Here's to hope!

Deborah Tepley

Deborah Tepley
Manager of the Collaboratory

A sliding glass door of educational possibilities

Site team introduces new learning materials to Burkinabè students and teachers

By Alison Roncin '09

This past January, the Collaboratory sent one of its largest and most diverse site teams yet to Burkina Faso, West Africa. The team was comprised of 13 students and faculty who engaged in six different projects, including the repair of tricycles for physically handicapped people, an arithmetic and finance workshop for Burkinabè pastors to teach them how to manage church funds, and an education survey administered as a student senior project. Two projects, highlighted below, were conducted at the Center for the Advancement of the Handicapped Primary School (CAH) in Mahadaga, which enrolls about 200 children with physical and learning disabilities.

Aimee Kocher '09 (left) and Katie Ogden '11 show children pictures of life in Mahadaga and listen as the children provide the story. Bethany Blackwood '11 translates the children's stories from French to English.

Strengthening Mathematical Literacy Project

The key proponents of this project, Bethany Blackwood '11, student site team leader; Jeff Slye '10; and Angela Hare, associate professor of mathematics and site team advisor, visited CAH to interact with local primary school teachers and share with them U.S. mathematics teaching strategies, such as the use of games and technology in the classroom.

For the past two years, students in the education group have worked with CAH teachers "to help develop and provide a variety of learning materials that are designed to connect concrete experience to abstract thinking," explains Hare.

"The kids usually write on slates and just sit in their seats, but research here shows that using things like technology can improve learning," says Blackwood.

The Bee-Bot® incorporates light, sound, and vibration to help blind and deaf students understand basic math concepts.

The Messiah students presented a variety of games involving shapes, patterns, and counting concepts to local primary school teachers as suggestions for enhancing mathematical learning in the classroom.

At the mini workshop, the team also introduced teachers to the Bee-Bot®, a small robotic toy that can move forward, backward, and turn 90 degrees. The device incorporates light, sound, and vibration to help blind and deaf students understand basic math concepts.

With a grant from the World Forgotten Children's Foundation, the group was able to supply $3,000 worth of learning tools for blind children, including special drawing boards and a thermal printer to create raised images.

During their visit, the team saw the materials in use several times. "The CAH teachers and children were extremely grateful for the materials," says Hare.

Literacy Project

"Children's books should be a mirror, a window, and a sliding glass door," says Anita Voelker, associate professor of education, explaining a literature-based approach to reading instruction. "They're missing the mirror in Mahadaga."

Two students, Aimee Kocher '09 and Katie Ogden '11, worked toward providing this missing element by creating a book incorporating photographs of life in Mahadaga. They used a strategy called shared writing where the children provide words for the pictures.

> "Children's books should be a mirror, a window, and a sliding glass door. They're missing the mirror in Mahadaga."

"Our goal was to provide a culturally appropriate resource to be used for literacy practices. Since the [CAH] library has few books that contain West African images, story-lines, photographs, etc., we wanted to create something the children could relate to," says Kocher.

"Everyone loved seeing people and other scenes they were familiar with. They got really excited and made comments when they recognized someone in a photograph. It definitely kept their attention!" Kocher says.

"We didn't do anything amazing. It was just a small way of saying to the teachers there, 'we want to help you and walk alongside you,'" Voelker says of their role in educating the children. "Being salt and light doesn't mean you're changing the world," she says, "It means you're changing that moment of the world."

Fueling the future

The biodiesel team takes on an innovative project with global applications

By Ashley Pim '10

Biodiesel team member Stephen Bray '10 (second from the left) explains the Collaboratory's small-scale biodiesel production at the Pennsylvania State Farm Show.

Every year Messiah College Dining Services produces around two thousand gallons of grease and used vegetable oil. At most colleges, and indeed in most places, such a disgusting food byproduct would go to waste. However, the biodiesel team of the Collaboratory has devised a small-scale, portable processor capable of turning waste product, such as vegetable oil from Messiah College Dining Services, into a fuel source than can be used to power diesel engines.

This technology, called biodiesel, holds great contemporary importance because it reduces dependence on foreign oil in a sustainable way. This environmentally friendly process releases no new carbon into the atmosphere since the plants that provide vegetable oil absorb the carbon released upon burning through photosynthesis.

The biodiesel team is currently utilizing funds received from donors and a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to set up a small-scale research and development lab. They are experimenting with testing techniques and modifying the processor design so it will consistently produce diesel fuel certifiable by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards.

At the end of the three years, the team hopes to have identified possible locations to implement biodiesel production facilities. The project has great potential for both domestic and international applications, particularly because the processor is designed so that a person or small community can produce the fuel themselves, which is a much more economic alternative to purchasing fuel.

With such a large-scale project underway, the team found itself in need of a manager who could commit to overseeing the project full-time and manage the grant. Mike Zummo '06 was selected for the position of project manager, a role which involves "making sure funds are being directed appropriately, doing a lot of research, and making sure we are keeping up with deadlines and timelines of the grant," says Zummo. "A lot of it is networking and meeting with other biodiesel producers and members of the community." In addition, Zummo says he works at "doing the back work and groundwork so that the students can get things done when they get here."

Andy Derr '10 and Luke Witmer '08 surveyed the Democratic Republic of the Congo last summer to explore the possibilities of partnering with an impoverished community there to engage in biodiesel production.

Biodiesel team leader Andy Derr '10 also pointed out the importance of Zummo's role in mentoring students, which Zummo believes is the biggest difference between this and his previous position in a corporate management setting.

Though the grant can only be used for domestic purposes, the project has long-range implications both here and abroad. This past summer, for example, Derr and Luke Witmer '08 surveyed the Democratic Republic of the Congo to explore the possibilities of partnering with an impoverished community there to engage in biodiesel production. This would allow Congolese people to convert oil from the abundance of palm trees in the area into biodiesel. Closer to home, Zummo says, "there has been talk of using our technology not only in some faraway place like the Congo, but also partnering with a city like Harrisburg," making it possible for people in the Messiah College area to recycle their own waste vegetable oil to make fuel.

Locally, the team attended the Pennsylvania State Farm Show this year in order to educate the community on small-scale biodiesel production. It was also a great networking opportunity. The team feels they were successful, as they got to meet and talk with members of the community involved with biodiesel production, as well as professors from other local colleges and universities such as Pennsylvania State University and Wilson College.

"It was a very positive experience. We got to talk to the public about Messiah, the engineering department, and the Collaboratory," says Zummo. He adds, the team got to see "their work acknowledged

Fueling, continued on page 5

David Owen: An important figure in Collaboratory history

By Alison Roncin '09

The Collaboratory, now a large interdisciplinary organization comprised of over 140 student members working on numerous projects, humbly began with two students and their senior engineering project. David Owen '97 was one of those students.

Owen, an electrical engineering major, and his senior project partner Greg Holmes '97 unknowingly laid the groundwork for more than a decade's worth of student project work (and still counting!) when they chose to design a solar electricity system for a Serving In Mission (SIM) medical clinic in Mahadaga, Burkina Faso.

A year before, in January 1996, Owen's advisor, David Vader, professor of engineering and current director of the Collaboratory, along with several other Messiah College students and faculty members had visited the clinic. An old, unreliable diesel generator powered the lighting and a water pump at the facility. The SIM missionaries asked the team if they would consider designing a solar electricity system to replace it. Vader proposed that senior engineering students work on designing the system, and Owen and Holmes adopted it as their senior project.

"It was a really practical project," Owen says. "A lot of it was figuring out what to buy and putting it together. When you're working on a real world project and talking tens of thousands of dollars, it's more like a real job."

In January 1998, Owen had the opportunity to travel with a team to Mahadaga to install what he and Holmes had designed. "It was humbling to go and build it," says Owen. "We thought we knew how everything was going to work out, but a lot of things came up that we didn't anticipate. It was humbling in a real-world practical way."

At the end of their time in Mahadaga, the team got a chance to see how the people at the facility had already benefited from their successful work. Owen explained that the old system limited the clinic's use of electricity to only a few hours in the evening. The new system still limited the amount of electricity available to the clinic, but it allowed nurses to use it whenever they chose to. "One of the really neat things was right before we left, not long after we first got the system set up, they delivered a baby in the middle of the night and they could use the lights. Before they would have had to use flashlights," says Owen.

Their experience in Mahadaga led other students on the solar project team to discuss ways of enabling similar projects in many academic disciplines, which eventually became the Collaboratory. The relationship Owen and his team formed with the people in Mahadaga paved the way for many more student projects to follow in their footsteps.

Looking back on how the Collaboratory has grown and what students have accomplished since that first project, Owen says, "We tried hard but we didn't do everything perfectly. It's great that there is a long-term relationship where students continue to go back and support those same projects. If no one went back to fix things, the system we built wouldn't be usable anymore, but that didn't happen. It's really neat that it turned into something big."

The first Collaboratory site team traveled to Mahadaga, Burkina Faso, in 1998. First row: David Owen '97, Professor David Vader, adjunct faculty member Bob Clancy. Second row: mechanical engineering technician, John Meyer, Jonathan Knight '99, Bryan Ondrasik '00, Delsi Atchina '98, Doug Wewer '99. Third row: Phil Sorensen '99, Ben Claggett '99, Matt Walsh '00.

Since graduation, Owen has earned a Ph.D. in computer science from West Virginia University and is in his second year of teaching at Messiah College. He has now become re-involved in the organization he helped initiate, this time volunteering his skills and knowledge in computer programming as an advisor of the Wireless Enabled Remote Co-presence (WERC) Project of the communications group.

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The abundance of palm trees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo provides an excellent source of palm oil to convert into biodiesel.

and respected by the community. Not many people have a portable processor like we do, so a lot of people were really interested in us." Derr agrees, saying that "people are very interested in what we're doing at Messiah. Our presence there was great, and we will definitely be going back."

A project like this depends on a strong base of students willing to dedicate their time and energy to bettering people's lives. "I give a lot of credit to the students in the past six or seven years who have worked on this project because they have made it easy for us to move forward," says Zummo. As for his team now, Zummo says he is "proud to work with them," adding that "it's incredible to see a group of students doing something like this. They're so passionate. They're what keep me going."

"There's going to be a lot that happens here with the biodiesel group," Zummo says. With a group like this—and such a huge supply of vegetable oil—it's no wonder he's so confident.

The fusion of class and society

Integrated Project Curriculum bridges gap between academics and Collaboratory service

By Tim Chilcote '09

Fulfilling both a need in Honduras and their academic requirements, Billy Bellows '09 and Dan Barlow '09 put together a contact tank as part of their dual engineering and Collaboratory Village Water Ozonization System Project.

David Vader, professor of engineering and director of the Collaboratory, has noticed over his years of experience that "people in our culture tend to compartmentalize work and faith." While there are many opportunities for students and faculty to serve at Messiah College, the Integrated Project Curriculum (IPC) provides the structure for educators and students in engineering to harmonize the realms of Christian discipleship and their academic discipline.

Vader describes the IPC as "a strategy for expanding the opportunity in the Collaboratory to more members of the Messiah College community and increasing our capacity to serve others outside of our community." The IPC is designed specifically for the engineering curriculum at this point, integrating projects into eight courses within the engineering department. The IPC connects classroom theory to active service, thereby bridging the gap between academics, stewardship, and ministry.

Since 2007, all engineering students have been required to participate in the IPC and complete group projects, but many volunteer additional time for the Collaboratory. For example, Billy Bellows '09 and Dan Barlow '09, two water group members working on the Village Water Ozonization System (VWOS) Project, have assisted in engineering a water purification system to provide clean water to communities in Honduras. The system uses filters and an ozone generator to kill viruses and bacteria in tap water. With this purification technology, the group plans to provide Hondurans with clean water at a much more affordable price than local bottled water companies.

As part of the first class offered the IPC in 2006, Bellows took advantage of the opportunity. "For me, I decided that this was something I really wanted to do. It would give me more time to work on projects that I already was working on with the Collaboratory. The project transition was seamless and things have worked out great," he says.

An interesting IPC project emerged this past summer involving wireless technology. Working on this project, Adelani Osunsakin '10 combines his academics with his commitment to serving the Collaboratory. As a communications group member, Osunsakin builds prototypes for the Wireless Enabled Remote Co-presence (WERC) Project. Designed for people with Asperger's Syndrome, the wireless technology uses an iPhone or PDA paired with an audio headset and a micro-camera to transmit data through the internet to an off-site coach. The coach can watch, listen to, and monitor patients and provide guidance from a remote location.

"I'm glad to be helping patients with autism and providing a means of communication through technology," Osunsakin says.

While the engineering department continually refines the IPC model, several other majors have started to integrate academic requirements with Collaboratory work as well. For instance, students taking the consumer behavior class partner with the Collaboratory's microeconomic development group to support a grocery business serving inner city Harrisburg, Pa. This past fall, in a small business development course, Barlow worked on a class team that developed a complete business plan for a water supply business based in a rural Honduran community.

The IPC provides a great way for engineering students to combine academic requirements with faith-driven service, but regardless of major or official curriculum, the Collaboratory provides an abundance of service opportunities for all students within their respective disciplines.

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Elizabeth Susmann: sharing in the Malians' stories

By Julie DeLuca '09

Elizabeth Susmann '10 wants to share the stories of the Malians she and her teammates met and loved while serving this past January.

Susmann became a member of the disability resources group a year and a half ago when they were recruiting new members. Now she can't imagine not being a part of it. She is involved in several Mali Water and Disabilities Study projects, including water study, water transport and use, and latrine sanitation. "Even though I'm not an engineering major, I can still help to brainstorm ideas; my ideas are just as valuable as my teammates'," she says.

As a student majoring in elementary and special education, Susmann says she only needed the willingness to go and serve. This past January, she did just that by going and serving our clients in Mali.

The team consisted of three students and one faculty advisor. Susmann and her teammates collected data by taking notes on suggestions for the project's improvements and its successes. She listened to the stories of the people in the communities who were asked about water pump accessibility, latrine sanitation, and the functionality of equipment previously installed by other teams.

During the three weeks, Susmann had expected to see more tangible change. But then she realized that transformation is not seen on a surface level, but rather in the stories of the people she served.

One of those stories is of an 80-year-old woman who no longer has to crawl back and forth to the latrine, thanks to the walker and seat constructed by preceding teams. "Our story intersected with theirs at this one point. Being able to witness stories like that is so meaningful," says Susmann. "Their needs need to be the focus of our work."

The Mali team is doing transformational work, but God also transforms all of those involved in the process. "God is at work in our world, but transformation is a process that cannot begin until we have been transformed; we first have to let God transform us."

Elizabeth Susmann '10 (center) along with teammates Sarah Jarnecki '11, Professor Ray Norman, and Zach Crane '10, served the people of Mali as they continued the Water and Disabilities Study Project.

Business, continued from page 1

"Where this village savings and loan association differs from microfinance is that it's not giving out loans to people, it's teaching the people how to save the money that they have," says Williams.

Two of the main focuses of this summer's trip are to provide training for the association and to work on the art cooperative for the Zambia Paper Project, which was set up on a previous trip. The team hopes to train Zambians in marketing and business skills so that the villagers will be able to make a better profit on their paper. Additionally, the group hopes to meet with other microfinance organizations in and around Simaubi to conduct more research for future projects and make valuable contacts.

The MED group is also sending a team member to Honduras this summer to work with the water group on the Village Water Ozonization System (VWOS) Project. The VWOS is a water purification system that is economically, environmentally, and culturally sustainable. Sarah Baranik '12 will oversee the business end of the system as the site team hands the system over to local Hondurans to run as a non-profit business that provides clean water to the community. She will develop a business skills guide to aid the Hondurans as they run this new business.

Not only is the MED group focused on business issues in developing nations but also on those issues that are closer to home. Recently, the group began work on a project in conjunction with the only inner city grocery store in Harrisburg, Pa., Save-A-Lot.

Save-A-Lot's unique social mission is to provide a convenient and enjoyable shopping experience to its low-income shoppers.

Currently partnering with David Hagenbuch, assistant professor of marketing, and his consumer behavior class, the MED group is working to interview the customers at the store and administer a survey. The purpose of this survey is to discover the reasons customers buy, or don't buy, certain products. This research will help store owner Henry Edwards conduct better business in Harrisburg.

The group hopes that their research will help Edwards provide the products specifically needed by the store's consumers. By supplying only the products his customers need, Edwards can then pass his savings on to the consumer.

The work that the MED group does is about helping the world's poorest citizens and getting them back on their feet. "It's real people helping real people," says Williams.

"You're actually impacting people now," says Grovatt. "It's not this abstract thing where in the future I can be this Christian business person." For the MED group it is all about helping real people right now.

STUDENT VOICES

What has the Collaboratory taught you about service?

Daniel McCurdy '11

Biology education major
Disabilities resources group, Mali Water Project
"The Collaboratory has taught me that service is giving of myself to others while at the same time allowing others to serve me, thereby providing a reflection of Christ to each other. In essence I must serve as Christ has served us, in love."

Sarah Baranik '12

Spanish and business major
Water group and MED group
"The Collaboratory has taught me that service is not just about doing, it is about knowing and being as well. We cannot serve well unless we know the needs of those we are serving, and we certainly cannot share God's love if we do not first know love ourselves. I've learned that in order to serve to my fullest potential, I must have a mindset of humility and compassion as well as a willingness to be transformed through the work I'm doing."

Ashley Pim '10

English and environmental science major
Staff group, publications team
"I've learned a lot about the unity that comes through service. There's amazing power in a God who can take a group of very different people with different talents, interests, and personalities, and unite them toward a common goal."

Dan Custer '09

Adventure education and Bible major
Staff group, Christian ministries team
"The Collaboratory has helped me understand that service is not something done to someone in need. Rather, it is a self-less, reciprocal relationship of holistic giving. It is not only about giving money or building houses, but also about opening one's self to what other people genuinely have to offer."

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THE COLLABORATORY FOR
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