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University of Botswana Council approves Modular Global Master's in Development Practice (MDP)

MDP Stakeholders' Meeting prior to Council Session welcomes New Modular Graduate Programmes and commends UB

GABORONE, March 5 - After its global launch at the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS) a month ago, the Council of the University of Botswana approved UB's version of the Global Master's in Development Practice (MDP) Programme.

As one of the nine universities selected by the MacArthur Foundation (MAF) for delivery in 2010, the University of Botswana has been awarded 2.5 million Pula (330,000 US\$) for seed funding in July last year. There was widespread global interest in establishing the MDPs with more than 70 universities submitting proposals, and the quality and diversity of the proposals indicate strong interest in expanding inter-disciplinary development studies around the world.

The MDP is a cross-disciplinary programme providing skills and knowledge required to better identify and address the global challenges of sustainable development, such as poverty, population, health, conservation, climate change, and human rights. Core courses cover the natural, social, health, and management sciences. A global course on Integrated Approaches to Sustainable Development underpins the holistic nature and collaborative approach. Practical field training and academic programs are being launched in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and the Americas. The MacArthur Foundation (MAF) committed 16 million US\$ over the period from 2009 to 2013 to create MDP programmes at over 20 universities worldwide and with it a global network of faculty, students, expert practitioners and partner organisations.

The establishment of Global MDP programmes has been a key recommendation of the International Commission on Education for Development Professionals. It set out in 2007 to challenge the narrow scope of current respective programmes available and to broaden the training and knowledge base accordingly. By acquiring interdisciplinary knowledge as well as practical skills via two intensive practical field-training experiences, students are equipped to work across different fields to design and manage integrated development interventions and to implement appropriate policies to support sustainable development. Hence, the MDP will provide training and competencies beyond the typical classroom study of economics and management found in most development studies programs.

"The pillars of Vision 2016 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) require a broader relevance in the University graduates" accentuates also Prof. B. K. Otlhogile, Vice Chancellor of the University of Botswana, "we believe that our graduates need to leave UB fully knowing they are a part of the wider African and global citizenship. The Master's in Development Practice will help achieve this aim and provides an exceptional opportunity to further promote both agendas."

However, UB's MDP framework considerably differs from other partners' programmes by integrating a compulsory in-company research project and by its modular mode. By departing from full-time delivery, UB's MDP will allow professional capacity development for participants living outside the capital's catchment area, from Botswana as well as from other member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). An accreditation of UB's modular MDP with a European agency is under way, making it particularly convenient and attractive for international exchange students and/or regional volunteers to engage in part of UB's MDP and to take worldwide recognised credits back to their home institutions. The MDP also integrates Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas for participants only interested in selected MDP course modules.

Earlier in the week, stakeholders from ministries, the public and private sector met with UB's MDP coordinators to be informed about benefits of the new programme, the second modular programme after the recently approved modular MBA and Executive MBA. UB's new breed of graduate programmes will be delivered via intensive block modules with limited residential requirements (1-3 weeks) per calendar quarter. This will provide life-long-learning opportunities for citizens residential/employed outside Gaborone. It will boost support for organisations in regard to their staff development, recruitment and retention needs by enabling convenient access to the programmes, less time-consuming and less costly compared to academic competitors in the region.

All stakeholders actively contributed in the discussion, commended UB for taking the MDP programme on board and for commencing modular delivery in August 2010. The stakeholders further agreed to establish a special advisory board to guide the collaborations and support pledged for the MDP, but also for similarly structured upcoming modular programmes.

Further Info: www.ub.bw; www.ubotho.net

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