

WORLD EDUCATION NEWS & REVISION

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Regional News

Africa

REUNION

■ The University of the Indian Ocean commenced its first degree program last April — a master's in business administration (MBA). Classes are conducted in both English and French.

The university, which opened in January 1998 as a regional institution, is sponsored by five island nations situated off the coast of east Africa: Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion and the Seychelles. Although the school has no physical campus (it is being advertised as a university without walls), the MBA program is currently based at the University of Mauritius.

The program takes one year to complete and includes a four-month internship.

At present, there are eight schools taking part in the University of the Indian Ocean project: six in Madagascar, one in Mauritius and one in Reunion. Comoros and the Seychelles do not have colleges or universities of their own. The main office for the University of the Indian Ocean is located in St. Denis, the capital of Reunion.

The European Union has pledged financial support for the university during the next three years.

— *Chronicle of Higher Education*
April 16, 1999

SOMALIA

■ In 1997, the first university

was opened in the self-proclaimed "Republic of Somaliland," a former British protectorate situated in northwest Somalia. Local authorities have managed to restore law and order in this fledgling republic, which no country has formally recognized yet, while the rest of Somalia remains embroiled in intertribal conflict.

Amoud University currently enrolls 66 students, including 10 women. Students who have been accepted at Amoud must complete two semesters of intensive English-language training before starting regular classes, which are taught in English.

While construction of a permanent campus is being carried out in the town of Boroma, the university is temporarily holding classes at a local school.

— *Chronicle of Higher Education*
Jan. 15, 1999

The Americas

ARGENTINA

■ Thousands of students at the University of Buenos Aires and other state universities around the country launched a strike following proposed cutbacks in state funding for education.

In accordance with a structural adjustment plan sponsored by the International Monetary Fund, the government has agreed to trim \$280 million from the education budget.

— *New York Times*
May 7, 1999

CANADA

■ In Toronto, university professors, students and alumni have formed a coalition to address the problem of what they call "chronic postsecondary school underfunding."

Universities in Ontario receive the lowest public funding per capita in all Canada. Years of financial neglect have resulted in deteriorating buildings and have led to overcrowding, escalating tuition costs and fleeing professors. According to the Friends of Ontario Universities, an organization of alumni associations, Ontario's institutions of higher education presently require an additional \$600 million (about \$50 per student) in funding to reach the national average.

A spokesman for the organization warned that, unless public

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Regional News

funding for universities increases dramatically during the next few years, fewer and fewer students can expect to have access to higher education.

In just the last four years alone, tuition has climbed by more than 60 percent. The new coalition was sure to press the issue with MPP (Member of Provincial Parliament) candidates during the June elections.

In April, the Council of Ontario Universities petitioned the provincial government to invest between \$1.2 billion and \$1.8 billion a year to prepare for the deluge of enrollments expected in 2003.

— *The Toronto Star*
 April 13, 1999

EL SALVADOR

■ Romero University, located in the northern province of Chalatenango, opened in 1993 with the aim of serving the rural community and stemming the outflow of local talent.

Romero currently enrolls 500 students and offers five-year professional degrees — called *licenciaturas* — in agricultural engineering, education and law. Tuition is \$34 a month. The university also has degree programs in technical fields such as agricultural and veterinary sciences. Both of these programs take two-and-a-half years to complete.

The Ministry of Education recently denied Romero University permission to grant additional technical degrees in accounting, business administration and computer science because it lacks the necessary support systems (like telephone lines).

Although the university only has 11 classrooms and a biology lab, more facilities are being planned. Reverend Gabriel Rodriguez, the university's acting rector, wants to add a philosophy department that would enable Chalatenango to retain its seminary students.

Each year Chalatenango produces about 1,600 high school graduates. Until the university was built, students who wanted to continue their education had to go to San Salvador, the capital. Many left the country altogether. A recent study revealed that 14.8 percent of all Salvadorians living in Los Angeles originated from Chalatenango — a region that comprises only about 3.5 percent of El Salvador's population.

— *Chronicle of Higher Education*
 May 7, 1999

MEXICO

■ Latin America's largest institution of higher education, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, has been crippled by three consecutive weeks of strikes. Students have barricaded themselves around the off-campus buildings, where they are scheduled to take final exams.

The strikers are protesting the university's plans to increase tuition from the U.S. equivalent of 2 cents a

semester to \$90. This is the first tuition hike in 50 years.

— *New York Times*,
May 13, 1999

UNITED STATES

■ *U.S. News and World Report* recently published a list of warning signs that could help students and college officials distinguish between legitimate institutions and phony “diploma mills.”

Signs to look for:

1) Misspellings and/or grammatical mistakes in the catalogues.

2) Overemphasis on degree titles following a professor's name (for example, Dr. John Smith, Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.).

3) Students are asked to send application forms, other documents, checks, etc., to rented post-office boxes.

4) Tuition charged by the degree instead of by the credit hour, course or semester.

5) Discounts offered for enrolling in two or more programs at once.

6) Credits given for activities such as model shipbuilding, yoga, watching TV, etc.

7) Degree programs that can be completed in a very short time. A court order recently shut down Columbia State University for offering phony bachelor's degrees that could be earned in only 27 days.

8) Little or no interaction between students and professors.

9) A long list of accrediting agencies not recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

10) Overemphasis on the program's accessibility and the long-term benefits of having a degree in today's competitive job market.

— www.usnews.com/usnews/hycu/28dipbox.htm

Asia-Pacific

CHINA

■ The Ministry of Education

announced that adult higher-learning institutions recruited an estimated 900,000 students through the national entrance exams held May 8 and 9. According to ministry statistics, the number of students recruited this year is about the same as last year.

Schools of higher learning for adults largely accommodate students who fail national college and university entrance exams. Applicants who fall into this category and are looking to enter undergraduate programs must possess a high school diploma and have at least two years of work experience. However, those who have been designated as “model workers” by the state can be recruited into adult higher-learning institutions without taking the exams.

The national entrance examina-

tions encompass the full educational spectrum and include the arts, humanities, sciences and special skills.

— *China Daily*
Feb. 15, 1999

■ The East China University of Science and Technology in Shanghai offers courses jointly with a Hong Kong-based company called the Asia Pacific Institute of Continuing and Higher Education. Students enrolling in the program are charged by the credit. Each credit costs HK\$1,200.00 (US\$155).

The Chinese Ministry of Education has authorized these institutions to offer a nonacademic adult-education program in Hong Kong from which students can earn a certificate of completion.

The institutions are not authorized to award other academic certificates, and students cannot earn credits for course work completed in this program. Moreover, these courses are not equivalent to the baccalaureate courses offered at the Shanghai campus.

Hence, the Ministry of Education has blacklisted this program as a “credit degree mill” and advises evaluators to be on the lookout for transcripts from the East China University of Science and Technology that were issued in Hong Kong.

— *Correspondence from the*
Ministry of Education
The People's Republic of China

INDIA

■ India's University of Grants Commission (UGC) has developed

The Ministry of Education ... advises evaluators to be on the lookout for transcripts from the East China University of Science and Technology.

a new set of criteria to allocate funding to higher-education institutions based on performance rather than need.

Under the new scheme, universities will be assessed according to examination results, quality of research and student-teacher ratios. Athletic and cultural achievements will also be taken into account. The UGC will also be watching closely to see whether universities stick to the academic calendar and administer exams on time.

The purpose of the UGC plan is to get Indian universities to work for their funding instead of automatically depending on government subsidies. Hence, institutions of higher education will have a clear incentive to enhance their performance levels.

According to UGC officials, the current system, which allows universities to project their financial needs for each year, has resulted in excessive waste and inefficiency. It is not unusual for funds to be used for purposes other than what they were earmarked for.

The plan has been greeted with mixed reactions. While some institutions have applauded it, many state universities are concerned that such a move would result in a two-tiered university system in India. Others feel that the real reason behind the UGC scheme is not so much to improve the quality of higher education, but to decrease government funding for universities with the aim of making them more self-sufficient.

— *The Times Higher Education Supplement*
Feb. 5, 1999

■ The UGC has blacklisted the following Indian institutions of higher education as “fake”:

Commercial University Limited, Daryaganj, Delhi

DDB Sanskrit University, Trichi, Tamil Nadu

Gandhi Hindi Vidyapith, Prayag, Allahabad

Indian Education Council of UP, Lucknow

Maharana Pratap Shiksha Niketan Vishwav-

idyalya, UP

Mahila Gram Vidyapith (Women's University), Prayag, Allahabad, UP

Maithili University/Vishwavidyalaya, Darbhanga, Bihar

National University of Electro Complex Homeopathy, Kanpur

National University, Nagpur, Maharashtra

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose University (Open University), Aligarh, UP

Raja Arabic University, Nagpur

St. Johns University, Kerala

United Nations University, Delhi

Urdu University, Bhopal

Varanaseya Sanskrit Vishwavidyalaya, Varanasi and Jagatpuri in Delhi

Vocational University, Delhi

Uttar Pradesh Vishwavidyalaya, UP

While some of these schools have been in operation for the past 10 years, none of them is recognized by the UGC. The UGC further reports that it does not recognize degrees awarded by these institutions and that holders of such degrees will not be considered eligible for graduate programs in any legitimate university.

— *University News*
Feb. 15, 1999

PAKISTAN

■ Pakistan's first all-women's university opened last December

in the town of Rawalpindi. Fatima Jinnah Women's University currently enrolls 355 students, but officials expect this number to reach 6,000 in seven years. All students, administrators and instructors at the school are women.

The university offers degree programs in business administration, computer science, economics, English, fine arts and Islamic studies. It hopes to attract women throughout the Muslim world and will endeavor to establish links with institutions in other countries.

— *Chronicle of Higher Education*
Jan. 15, 1999

SINGAPORE

■ In 1997, the government announced plans to reshape the National University of Singapore and the Nanyang Technological University into “world class” institutions — the Harvard and MIT of the East.

Since then, both universities have announced the following curricular reforms:

1) Undergraduate curricula are being restructured to allow students to take classes outside their chosen fields of specialization.

2) Measures have been taken to develop assessment criteria other than relying solely on written examinations.

3) Efforts are also underway to bring more creativity and thinking skills into the curriculum.

Another objective is to expand graduate enrollments and increase research output, particularly in the science and engineering fields. To help achieve this goal, talented Singaporeans as well as non-nationals working overseas are being actively recruited to embark on research and development careers in Singapore.

The government has also announced that a local “science hub” is under construction and should be fully operational within 15 years. The facility will house research institutes, including branch

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The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the eWENR website. The title is "eWORLD education NEWS & REVIEWS". Below the title, it says "January/February 1999 Volume 12, Issue 1". There is a "CONTENTS" section with the following items: "REGIONAL NEWS Africa (cover page)", "The Arabians", "Asia Pacific", "Europe", "PRACTICAL INFORMATION Using the European Credit Transfer System", and "RESEARCH". The page also features a "REGIONAL NEWS Africa" section with a sub-section for "SOUTH AFRICA" and a paragraph of text about university cutbacks in South Africa.

campuses of Johns Hopkins University and the French business school INSEAD.

Finally, local universities are aiming to bolster foreign enrollments by launching recruitment drives in Southeast Asia, as well as in India, China, South Africa and Mauritius.

Additional efforts to improve higher education in Singapore also included upgrading two fine-arts colleges: the La Salle-SIA College of Fine Arts and the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. The government stated that these reforms would better enable the country to "compete in the next century as a creative nation with additional sets of skills and capabilities."

— *International Higher Education*
Winter, 1999

E. Europe and the Newly Independent States

LATVIA

■ The Ministry of Education and Science recently launched a "strategic program of educational advancement," called Education 1998-2003.

During the past two years, reformers have stressed the need to emulate western European models of higher education and to upgrade the country's educational system to better prepare students for the job market.

In particular, Education 1998-2003 will focus on: improving the overall quality of education; utilizing resources more effectively; expanding access to education; and institutional development.

In other news, the Latvian Education Computerized System Project was launched in 1997. The main objective of the project, which is being carried out by the University of Latvia, is to comput-

erize many of the country's educational institutions while developing an information network and operating system.

It is being implemented in three stages (1997-1999):

Stage one, launched in 1997, facilitated the organization of com-

puter-skills training programs for teachers in three secondary schools and the computerization of school subjects.

Stage two, which began in 1998, established 38 regional centers for teacher training and also promoted the computerization of subjects at the national level.

Stage three, to be implemented this year, will endeavor to provide all secondary schools with computers connected to a single network and to the Internet.

— *Le Magazine*
1998, Issue 9

RUSSIA

■ In December 1998, the University of the Russian Academy of Education, formally known as the Russian Open University, received full accreditation status from the government.

The university, located in Moscow, has been given the right to award degrees recognized by the Ministry of General and Professional Education of the Russian Federation. Its accreditation status is valid until Oct. 22, 2003.

— *Correspondence from the Ministry of General and Professional Education of the Russian Federation*

Middle East

ISRAEL

■ On April 27, Israel's Council on Higher Education voted in favor of allowing all academic institutions — not just universities —

Israel's Council on Higher Education voted in favor of allowing all academic institutions — not just universities — to offer master's degree programs.

to offer master's degree programs. The decision drew much criticism from university leaders who argue that such a move would bring down standards, making it easier for students in Israel to earn such degrees.

At the crux of the matter, however, are the recent cutbacks in university budgets for research in the social sciences and natural sciences.

Dwindling funds have impelled many of the country's top academics and researchers to leave in search of better opportunities overseas.

Hence, diverting resources and money into the new college master's programs threatens to lure enrollments away from the universities, while generally reducing levels of teaching and research. *Ha'aretz* magazine predicts that the council's decision regarding additional master's degree programs will ignite a "higher-education revolution" in Israel in the years to come.

However, the winds of change were evident in this respect with the recent proliferation of smaller colleges established to accommodate Israelis who were denied access to the big universities.

— *Ha'aretz Online*
May 3, 1999

