

This just in from our classmate Jethro Pettit in Burkina Faso re: HASA's African education funds. Jethro is a longtime activist, development worker, humanitarian and thinker (now at Sussex University in the UK). – David Goodman '82

Dear David et al,

Thanks so much for sharing this... I didn't know about HASA and think it is a really great idea. For the first time in 25 years, I feel inspired to make a gift to Harvard, if it can be restricted in this way. I thought I would send this response to encourage others, and also copy Paula Tavrow so you would know that I've just signed up to HASA and would like to be involved. I'm writing from a provincial town in Burkina Faso, where I'm doing field work this month with a team of 12 Burkinabe researchers... some of whom have aspirations, but not the resources (or in some cases the qualifications or language), to study abroad.

Over the past few years I've become more involved in graduate teaching at Sussex University (Institute of Development Studies) in the UK, with students from around the world including some from Africa. But the Africans are always way outnumbered by Asians, Latin Americans, North Americans, Europeans and others... for the simple reason that they cannot afford the fees, or find a scholarship. And our tuition fees are a fraction of those charged by Harvard (\$20k for an MA, v \$50k+ ? at Harvard), excluding travel and living expenses.

There is also the problem, in some cases, of low qualifications due to lack of resources in African universities. I've heard stories from African students who NEVER used their university library as undergrads because there were no books. Instead they just memorised their lecture notes and regurgitated during exams. There are many issues of the quality of teaching and learning that need to be addressed.

The challenge of supporting higher education in Africa is enormous, and I hope that HASA will be able to pressure Harvard to take the next step and form a partnership with one or more African universities, especially those which themselves are committed to supporting development efforts in their own countries and communities. Most international aid for education is targeted at the primary and secondary levels... which is good, but there has been a surge of interest in education in many African countries, and so also rising needs and expectations at the higher education level.

There is also a growing movement worldwide to pressure universities to take more of a direct responsibility in their own communities and, where possible, with communities in other parts of the world (for example the boom in "service learning" programs in the US, which is starting to catch on in the UK). I think it is encouraging that Harvard, with guidance and pressure from HASA, is moving in this direction in relation to Africa. Paula, let me know how I can support HASA's efforts and please keep me posted. Feel free to reprint of these thoughts in your publicity, website, etc. Sorry I am unlikely to be at the reunion in June.

with warm best wishes to all,

Jethro Pettit '82