Words from the Director

It gives me a distinct pleasure to address the African Studies Center’s community. I am honored by my appointment as Director of our distinguished African Studies Center. I am grateful to Dean Najam, Professor Longman, who led the center skillfully for the past eight years, and the faculty and staff who have sustained the center’s tradition of excellence.

The center is pleased to welcome two new colleagues: Cosmas Ochieng and Mahesh Karra. Professor Ochieng’s interests lie in the theory, policy and practice of development; global climate change and environmental policy; science, technology and innovation policy; and the political economy of African development. Professor Karra’s interests focus on development economics, health economics, quantitative methods, and applied demography. Please join me in welcoming our colleagues who bring new expertise to the center and the Pardee School of Global Studies.

The Wolof poet, Muusaa Ka, once wrote: “challenge is the price of great achievement.” His words continue to inspire me. Thus, I see the current transition of the center as forecasting a bright future. Maintaining the center’s status as a premier Africa-focused Title VI National Resource Center in the next competition is one of the first challenges we face. The second is becoming a world leader in the training of a new generation of experts who combine the optimal disciplinary, language, and cultural skills necessary to understand and engage Africa more effectively.

My priorities cannot all be listed here. But they include: (1) expanding our growing strength in research and teaching on Islam and Ajami in Africa, (2) developing long-term multipurpose linkages with African institutions that serve our faculty and students, (3) engaging more African diaspora communities and organizations in America, and (4) enhancing the center’s global stature by developing joint projects with reputable international organizations that focus on Africa, and supporting innovative research and teaching initiatives that elucidate the interconnections between Africa and other parts of the world (especially the Americas).

As the center goes through the process of preparing for the next Title VI competition, and planning other pioneering initiatives, I invite you to keep me posted on your projects. With a collective Harambe (Swahili: pulling together), as Maestro Parker Shipton would say, I look forward to working with you to make the center reach a new height of excellence in Africa-focused research, teaching, and service within and beyond the United States.

Fallou Ngom
Director, African Studies Center

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