

# Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) Phase I, Year 1 Evaluation Report

**Reporting Period:** July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

The HESA project is in Year I of its four-year grant cycle. The goal of HESA is to provide opportunities for Catholic sisters in Africa to access higher education, both through online distance learning and onsite in Africa. HESA endeavors to ensure access to quality, affordable higher education leading to a bachelor's degree in a needed and relevant professional field for sisters in select African countries including Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and, in the future, Malawi. HESA's design recognizes that, given the limited enrollment capacities of African universities, the inadequate educational preparation of many sisters, and a general lack of funds, the high demand for professionally qualified leaders cannot entirely be addressed through conventional face-to-face education in Africa. The ultimate outcome of HESA is to provide, in a four-year period, 186 degrees and 48 two-year diplomas to sisters, leading them to become competent in a variety of disciplines including education, business administration, theology, nursing, social work and leadership and resource management.

The project objectives and related activities in Year I was as follows:

- To provide opportunities for Catholic sisters in seven African countries to access and obtain post-secondary credentials through on site and online distance learning.
- To increase the potential for African sisters to assume higher leadership responsibilities towards support of their ministries and congregations.
- To increase sisters' competencies and leadership capacities to improve the functioning of their congregations.

Several activities took place in Year I of the grant. Ultimately, a total of 127 sisters were enrolled for a degree or diploma program in eleven partnering colleges and universities in Africa and the United States (**Attachment I, Total Enrollment by College/University**). HESA recruiting is conducted collaboratively by the HESA staff in Africa, the secretaries general of the associations of women religious, and college/university admission offices, as well through liaisons with ASEC offices. Prior to the start of any academic program, HESA students are provided with an orientation. Online distance learning students participate in a three-week orientation, and the students enrolled onsite in Africa participate in a two-day orientation. For sisters entering Marywood University online, a three-week orientation was conducted in Kenya and Zambia (students from Uganda participated in Kenya). Additionally, for students entering Chestnut Hill College (CHC), a three-week orientation was held in Ghana. Both Ghanaian and Nigerian students completed the CHC orientation. Students attending onsite programs at universities in Africa attended two-day orientations conducted in Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and Ghana (**Attachment II, Orientation Schedules**).

To nurture mentoring skills and continue supporting HESA students to succeed, a two-day reflective learning workshop is built into the program. All students studying online or onsite meet annually for a

two-day reflective learning workshop. During the workshop, students evaluate their academic progress and performance with faculty from both African and American institutions. Facilitators are drawn from partnering universities so as to provide helpful guidance and essential skills for success. Expert faculty present on the following topics: time management, communication, writing skills, and technology. Additionally, participants are encouraged to share the challenges they meet, as well as the successes they enjoy, as students in HESA. Faculty and coordinators address identified challenges. Data gathered during reflective learning are helpful in shaping the program and in providing support to students in a timely manner. Reflective Learning workshops were held in Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, and Zambia (**Attachment IV, Reflective Learning Schedules and Facilitators**).

HESA students are majoring in a variety of academic fields. Specifically, the breakdown of students per field is as follows: Education, 68; Business Administration and Commerce, 11; Leadership and Resource Management, 13; Arts and Sciences, 24; and Theology, 5. Six sisters in a cohort to start this fall have not yet declared a major (**Attachment V, HESA Student Majors**).

HESA also seeks to attain enrollments from a variety of congregations. To ensure representation from the greatest variety of congregations, association secretaries are involved in the recruiting process. HESA students currently represent 71 congregations in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan, and Zambia (**Attachment VI, List of Congregations Served**).

Recognizing that they are actively engaged in teaching students in Africa, faculty are keen to learn from each other and have continued to be supportive in strengthening HESA as an academic endeavor. In order to better serve the students and develop professionally, faculty meetings are held each semester. In these meetings, faculty exchange ideas on suitable teaching methods and best practices. Faculty learns from each other, and the meetings have been a success (**Attachment VII, HESA Faculty Meeting Attendance & Schedule**). To prepare faculty to teach online to sisters in West Africa, a cultural workshop was organized for faculty at Chestnut Hill College. The facilitator of the workshop was Dr. Tata Mbugua, who specializes in international relations and is vastly experienced at teaching at the university level in both Africa and the US. ASEC Executive Director Sr. Jane Wakahiu, LOSF, also presented at the cultural workshop, where she addressed the culture of women religious in African nations. The goal of the workshop was to share African culture and to discuss the entry behaviors of the sisters. It was geared toward encouraging faculty to study African student cues, assumptions, and ways to address challenges that may arise (**Attachment VIII, Cultural Workshop Schedule**).

To ensure that sisters continue to learn and to see that they make use of the emerging technology innovations that are the engine for delivering quality higher education, each sister was given a new laptop and textbooks. These tools proved effective in promoting student learning and success. The laptops provided to the sisters are of a high quality, and the sisters have not reported any issues with them. For those enrolled online, a modem was provided for internet access via cellular wireless providers.

Partnerships between African and American universities underscore a strong commitment to —and the necessity of — the development of sisters’ competencies in order to prepare a well-trained workforce for the Church in Africa. To ensure that collaborations are working well, meetings were held at partner colleges and

universities. Stakeholders shared their commitment to ensuring the success of the partnerships

developed for HESA. In January 2014, Sr. Jane visited Kisubi Brothers University College, Uganda, and in July 2014, meetings were held at the Catholic University College of Ghana (CUCG), Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), and Kenya and Kisubi Brothers University College (KBUC). Partners from the US continue to make efforts to visit partner colleges in Africa. Dr. Debora Chiaradonna, Chair of the Education Department at Chestnut Hill College, visited CUCG, Ghana in July 2014. Also, Sr. Jane and Dr. Donald Miller met with CUCG's Vice Chancellor, as well as some faculty from the university. In Kenya, a similar meeting occurred, and included CUEA's Vice Chancellor of Academics, the Directorate of Academic Linkages, and deans and faculty. Also, we attended a live session of the HESA orientation in Ghana, where 18 sisters from Nigeria and Ghana were in attendance. At CUEA we met 18 of the 26 students enrolled there; they shared their online and onsite experiences. At Tangaza College and Chemi Chemi Institute, meetings were held with both faculty and students. The students praised the HESA program as something that offered them a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Faculty, administrators and students alike acclaim the program as well as the channels provided to meet HESA students' needs and engage in online communication to address arising concerns (**Attachment XI, HESA Site Visit Report - Ghana, Uganda and Kenya**).

A component involving the purchase of laptops for the 267 SLDI Phase I participants was included in this HESA grant. Laptops were purchased and provided to SLDI alumnae; however, there are 36 laptops that still need to be purchased, there was miscalculation of SLDI graduates in Ghana, another order will be placed in order to top up the deficit.

### **HESA Year 1 Evaluation Report**

The goal of the HESA program is to increase access to higher education for sisters in Africa in order to advance their ministries of education, healthcare, social work and business administration. The HESA project, funded by a four-year grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, is expected to serve 233 Catholic sisters in seven sub-Saharan countries assisting them to acquire bachelor or associate degrees through partnerships between American and African universities. This evaluation report includes the grant year September 1, 2013 – August 31, 2014. During this period of time, 111 sisters (1C1, 1C2, 2C1, 3C1, 3C2, 4C1, 5C1, 6C1, 7C1, 9C1, 10C1, and Aga Kahn) from six countries were enrolled in a variety of academic programs at two American universities and eight African universities (16 Nigerian Sisters started classes at Veritas University in September and are not included in the evaluation).

#### Cohort Key

Cohort	Organization
1C1	Marywood University, USA
1C2	Marywood University, USA
2C1	Chestnut Hill University, USA
3C1	Saint Augustine University, Tanzania
3C2	Saint Augustine University, Tanzania
4C1	Tangaza University, Kenya
5C1	Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA), Kenya
6C1	Kisubi Brothers University, Uganda
7C1	Chemchemi Ya Uzima Institute of Formation, Kenya
9C1	Catholic University of South Sudan (CUSS)
10C1	Catholic University of Ghana (CUGH)

This is an objectives-oriented evaluation using both quantitative and qualitative data. Surveys were developed by the evaluator to assess **skills** pre/post trainings and **satisfaction** with workshops/training and online learning experiences. In addition, participants were asked to respond to open-ended questions related to challenges and success they have encountered in the program. Since the enrollment of the cohorts is staggered, the type and numbers of evaluations are not consistent across all cohorts. In addition, the evaluation will be limited to Cohorts 1C1, 1C2, 2C1, 3C1 and 4C1. Additional cohorts will be included in future reports as they enter and move through the program.

## **COHORT EVALUATION**

### **Cohort 1C1 Marywood University, United States**

#### Cohort Description

Eighteen sisters enrolled at Marywood University online Spring 2013, and upon completing 21 credits, transferred to Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA), Spring 2014. The students completed two semesters at CUEA and began their third semester Fall 2014; each student is pursuing their undergraduate degree in Education.

#### Participant Description

Eighteen African sisters enrolled in the HESA program. The sisters represent 16 congregations from Kenya and Uganda. Sisters ranged in age from 28-57 with a mean age of 41 (SD = 9.55). Fifty percent of the participants worked in education, in either congregation or community settings; 22% worked in finance or bursar related positions; 22% worked at the administrative level; and 6 % worked in medical fields. The average length of time sisters served in their position was 4.1 years (SD = 3.14), with 61% in their current position for five years or fewer. The educational experience of the sisters varies. Eleven percent of participants have a high school diploma, 40% report having a 2-year college certificate and 50% report having a diploma. None of the participants have a bachelor's or master's degree. One-hundred percent of the participants were SLDI participants.

### **Cohort 1C2 Marywood University, United States**

#### Cohort Description

Seventeen students enrolled at Marywood University Spring 2014 with one student withdrawing just prior to completing the first semester. Sixteen students remain enrolled in the cohort and have completed 15 online credits during the Spring and Summer semesters. Students are scheduled to complete their online courses Fall 2015 and transfer to CUEA where they will continue to earn their undergraduate degree in education.

#### Participant Description

Sixteen sisters are enrolled in the program. The sisters represent 15 congregations from Kenya, Uganda, and Zambia. They range in age from 27-49 with a mean age of 36.68 (SD = 7.25). Eighty-one percent of participants work in education. The sisters have been in their current positions from one to 22 years. Seventy- one percent of the sisters are serving fewer than five years and the median number of years in a position is 3.5 years. The educational experience of the sisters varies; 62% hold a college diploma in education, 19% have completed a certificate and 19% have completed some post-secondary education. Nineteen percent of the participants were SLDI participants.

#### University 102

Participants attended a three-week orientation, University 102, in Kenya in Nov/Dec 2013. A pre-

orientation skills survey measured the students' self-assessment of skills necessary for online learning. A Likert type scale with response set (1-4) prompted the participants to indicate their current ability to perform the skill or complete the task independently.

The mean scores indicate that though many participants felt able to use Microsoft Word and email, they were not familiar with or able to complete the task in question independently.

University 102 Skills  
Assessment

	Pre Skills Mean (SD)
Email	2.82 (.854)
Skype	1.54 (.072)
Moodle	1.21 (.577)
MU Library	1.30 (.844)
Excel	2.17 (.993)
APA	1.33 (.754)
Word	3.03 (.917)
PowerPoint	2.34 (1.34)
Research	1.69 (1.03)

#### Orientation Workshop Assessment

A post-orientation assessment included questions related to the clarity of presentations, the environment, and technical support of the workshop. The participant mean score was 4.64 (SD = .511) on a five-point scale demonstrating strong positive agreement to questions and indicating satisfaction with both the content and environment of the workshop.

#### End of Semester Online Learning

An end of semester assessment was conducted (Spring 2014) to measure the students' online learning skills and general experience. A Likert type scale assessed some of the skills covered in University 102 and necessary for success in online classes (e.g., uploading assignments and writing a paper). The mean score on the assessment was 3.63 (SD = .331) on a four-point scale indicating confidence in the skills assessed and ability to complete related tasks.

In addition, a Likert type scale was used to measure the participants' semester experience including key areas such as peer support, workload balance, and technical difficulties. The mean score was 3.71 (SD = .211) on a four-point scale indicating overall satisfaction with their online experience.

Additionally sisters were asked to comment on things that were going well, issues that were not resolved, and additional supports needed to ensure success.

#### Positive Experiences

Though the sisters' comments were varied, an emphasis was placed on the availability of learning materials, peer support, and their ability to develop study skills

#### Challenges

Issues important to them included ongoing internet access and technology issues, lack of consistent online access to Marywood University's and Catholic University of East Africa's libraries and the

difficulty managing ministry workload and course work. Some participants were successful in delegating work and responsibilities to others and in other cases, their superiors were able to assist.

Additional Supports Needed

Support and resources needed included requests for online assistance to Marywood University’s and Catholic University of East Africa’s library in addition to a desire for all instructors to use chats, Google Hangouts, and Skype in their courses.

**Cohort 2C1 Chestnut Hill, United States**

Participant Description

Seventeen African sisters enrolled in the HESA program. The sisters represent 15 congregations from Ghana and Nigeria. They range in age from 26-51 with a mean age of 37 (SD = 6.36). Fifty percent worked at the administrative level, 40% worked in finance and 10% in counseling/education. The average length of time at their position was 3.16 years (SD = 2.76), with 90% in their current position for five years or fewer. The educational experience of the sisters varies. Forty-one percent of participants have a high school diploma, 35% report having a 2-year college certificate and 24% report having a diploma. None of the participants have a bachelor’s or master’s degree. Five of the participants were former SLDI participants.

University 102 Skills Assessment

	Pre Skills Mean (SD)	Post Skills Mean (SD)
Email	2.93 (.90)	3.67 (.76)
Skype	2.06 (1.20)	3.85 (.50)
Moodle	1.63 (.81)	3.98 (.05)
MU Library	1.40 (.68)	3.64 (.50)
Excel	1.58 (.78)	3.76 (.32)
APA	1.29 (.68)	3.69 (.52)
Word	2.52 (1.05)	3.96 (.10)
Power Point	1.87 (.99)	3.96 (.10)
Research	1.45 (.70)	3.73 (.46)

Orientation Workshop Assessment

This evaluation included questions related to the clarity of presentations, the environment, and technical support. Participant mean score was 4.64 (SD = .511) on a five-point scale demonstrating strong positive agreement to questions.

**Cohort 3C1 St. Augustine University, Tanzania**

Cohort Description

Eight students enrolled in Saint Augustine University after completing orientation on September 7-9, 2013 at St. Augustine University, Mwanza, Tanzania. Seven students are enrolled in the Education program with one student studying Business Administration. Students have completed three semesters having started classes Fall 2013.

### Participant Description

Eight sisters are enrolled in this program and represent eight congregations from Tanzania. They range in age from 23-51 with a mean age of 31 years. Sixty-two percent hold a current position as a teacher. The average length of time in their current position is 5.37 years and ranges from one to eleven years. Two of the participants have a college diploma; one holds a certificate and five have completed high school.

An orientation workshop was held in September 2013. A post orientation assessment included questions about clarity of presentations, learning environment, and topics presented. A Likert type agreement response set (1-5) was used. The mean score was 4.68 (SD =.253) indicating satisfaction with the content, presentation and learning environment.

An end of first semester assessment of learning was conducted June 2014. The survey was used to assess general satisfaction and course expectations using Likert type agreement scale responses of 1-4. The mean score on the general assessment was 3.81 (SD =.272) demonstrating satisfaction with general course content and expectation. All participants are full time students. Sisters were asked to identify current obstacles to success. The consistent response was lack of financial resources for textbooks and internet use.

### **Cohort 4C1 Tangaza College, Kenya**

#### Cohort Description

Thirteen students began this cohort with an orientation held in Nairobi, Kenya December 13-16, 2013. Students have completed two semesters and will begin their third semester Fall 2014. Eleven students will graduate from Tangaza in December 2014; this will be the first cohort/students to complete the HESA program. The remaining two students are scheduled to graduate at a later date.

#### Participant Description

Thirteen sisters are enrolled in this program representing 11 congregations of Kenya. Sisters range in age from 36-50 with a mean age of 40.38 (SD = 5.18). Sixty-one percent (8) currently hold positions in finance. The other participants hold positions in administrative or support rolls. Average length of time in their current position is 4.66 years (SD=3.31). Sixty-one percent of the sisters have obtained a college certificate in business/finance. The other 39% have completed some post high school education.

A three-day orientation was held at the Tumani Center, Nairobi, Kenya December 13-15, 2013. Students began their study at Tangaza in Spring 2014. A post-orientation assessment included questions about clarity of presentation, learning environment, and technology. A Likert type scale (1-4) assessing agreement to positive statements was used. The mean score was 4.71 (SD = .337) indicating satisfaction with the orientation.

In addition, participants' comments about the orientation included positive sentiments on time management topics and the opportunity to form relationships with the other participants. Most participants felt prepared to enter the Tangaza program, though some felt they lacked experience in computer and study skills.

### **Reflective Learning Workshop 2014**

In order to provide an opportunity for the students to assess their higher education experience to date

and re- evaluate their academic goals, three-day reflective learning workshops were held in Kenya facilitated by faculty from Marywood University and Catholic University of East Africa. Four locations hosted workshops and participants attended the workshops that were most accessible to them.

Ten questions on the post reflective learning workshop evaluation assessed the content and environment of the workshops and are reported in aggregate. A Likert type scale (1-4) assessing agreement to positive statements was used. The mean scores across workshops indicated satisfaction with content and environment.

Workshop Location	Mean Score (SD)	Cohort Participants
Tanzania	4.72 (.218)	3C1
Kenya	4.48 (.430)	1C1, 1C2, 4C1, 5C1
Zambia	4.94 (.089)	1C2
Uganda	4.88 (.011)	1C1, 1C2

In addition, participants were asked to respond to questions related to performance of their laptop computer, future topics to be covered, and challenges and successes in their specific programs. Overall, sisters expressed appreciation for the HESA program. Common themes reported included the following:

### **Challenges**

#### Academic Courses and Content

- A need for additional chat room participation to learn what was important in the readings.
- All courses should have chat sessions.
- Chat sessions are desirable but chats scheduled during the day are often difficult to participate in.
- The psychology course was “compacted”. It was difficult to complete reading assignments each week and the assignments were too long to accomplish in a week.
- Studying alone.

#### Time Management and Technology

- Sisters expressed difficulty with time management and meeting deadlines due to work load and environmental distractions.
- Network problems during timed tests and live chats hindered progress.
- Retrieving information from CUEA and Marywood libraries was problematic at times.
- Sisters continued to experience problems with computers or modems.
- Insufficient knowledge of technology caused students to fall behind.

### **Successes and Positive Aspects of the Program**

- Students are provided with the basics needed to participate including good computers, modems and internet bundles. Additionally, the use of BlueJeans and Skype and technology worked well.
- Supportive coordinators and encouragement from HESA personnel. CUEA faculty have been helpful.
- The orientation courses prepared the sisters well.
- Able to learn, chat, and discuss with fellow students and faculty.
- Increase in skills and acquired knowledge the students could use immediately.

- Wonderful, available, committed, selfless instructors. Instructors are flexible, understanding, and considerate.
- Support from CUEA and Marywood librarians.

### **Suggestions for Improvement and Future Courses**

- The most important comment and request by sisters was the need for HESA administrators to help superiors to understand that sisters' workloads are the same for students attending online as for those attending in person. This may include writing letters to superiors indicating a student is having difficulty and may require more release time from duties.
- Provide tentative program for the year so that sisters may plan with their communities and that superiors are aware and can adjust accordingly.
- More Skype sessions are needed.
- Bring cohort together twice per semester.
- Make sure reading materials are available and flash drives are properly loaded.
- Provide more instruction on how to access library resources.

### **Project is progressing toward the *ultimate desired impact* outlined in your grant proposal.**

Ultimately HESA is on course, and the Year I objectives have been attained—not only to provide degrees, but also skilled women who can move forward development agendas in their countries. As of September 21, 2014, the number of sisters enrolled in HESA is 127. Of the 13 sisters enrolled for a diploma in Leadership and Resource Management, eleven will graduate on December 6, 2014. These students are eligible to continue for another two years to acquire a degree. Two of thirteen sisters at Tangaza College were successfully admitted; however, we were later informed that they did not meet admission criteria per government regulations. Given that they had started classes, it was not ideal to let them continue. The ASEC Board provided financial support for them to acquire a certificate in Leadership and Resource Management, after which they will continue on with the diploma. Unfortunately, per government regulations, they will not be allowed to acquire a degree.

### **Notable *successes* during this reporting period and plans to build upon these**

- A total of 127 sisters working in seven Africa countries and from 71 congregations are enrolled at any of the 11 partner colleges and universities. Students major in nine disciplines, including 68 in Teacher Education; Theology, 5; Business Administration and Accounting, 11; Social Work, Arts, and Social Sciences, 23; Nursing, 1; and Leadership and Resource Management, 13.
- Sisters taking online distance learning courses acclaim the program and its success, though it was challenging at the beginning. Sixteen sisters enrolled at Marywood University in January 2014 completed 18 credits by the summer of 2014 (**Attachment XII HESA Marywood Online Courses Matrix**).
- Enormous successes have been reported by all stakeholders (i.e. the students, faculty, leadership conferences, and college/university administrators). For many of the sisters, acquiring a degree through HESA is a dream come true. HESA achieved a 99% retention rate for each of the enrolled cohorts. Of the 127 enrolled in Year I, only one student dropped out.

Sr. Dorica Kavimba from Zambia was unable to balance work and studies; specifically, her community was unable to adjust her position, given that she was the only one qualified (though without a degree). We will continue supporting HESA students to succeed.

- Each of the students received high-quality laptops. They described the laptops as tools that are enabling them to attend classes while continuing to serve in their ministries and providing most needed technology skills.
- Stakeholders from partner colleges/universities have been incredible in planning and finding ways to support HESA students to succeed. Partners are adept in providing helpful ideas. Recognizing HESA's growth and the complexity of the program, the ASEC Board is proactive in providing the needed support. The ASEC Board approved the hiring of a full-time HESA coordinator.
- The evaluation team has been incredible in gathering and analyzing information to provide interventions where necessary. Faculty members at all universities continue to be praised by students. Superiors in Africa commend the HESA program, and request program expansion into a variety of majors and disciplines. Overall, HESA continues to grow stronger and more sisters are waiting to be considered. Partners feel part and parcel of HESA.
- Successful site visits and meetings were held with partners in Africa. On January 6, 2014, a meeting was held at Kisubi Brothers University College, Uganda, which resulted in the signing of the Framework of Reference between ASEC and KBUC. As a result of this agreement, a cohort of eight sisters is enrolled at KBUC for a bachelor's degree in Business Administration onsite.
- A cohort system has proved most ideal. Given that sisters are nontraditional students, through this system they find their own niche and gain support from each other.
- It is also notable that HESA students report high levels of satisfaction, not only with the opportunity to study, but also with the curricular model of study and with the quality of support they receive from faculty, administrators, and their colleagues. On January 20, 2014, during a meeting held at CUEA with HESA students enrolled at CUEA and Marywood, CUEA's Vice Chancellor, faculty and the Director of Academic Linkages all observed that although all HESA students are nontraditional, they have adjusted well to an academic environment and are improving their grades steadily. They revealed high levels of satisfaction for both students and faculty.
- A successful site visit was conducted in July 2014, in which HESA partners met with HESA students and university officials in Ghana, Uganda and Kenya. Persons present at the meeting and site visit included Hilton Foundation representative Dr. Donald Miller, Sr. Jane, HESA coordinators based in Africa, and university officials. HESA students shared their academic experiences. Also we met faculty and administrators at the partner universities. The students' results indicated that HESA students have adjusted accordingly and they are performing beyond our expectations.
- Successful Reflective Learning workshops were held in Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, and

Tanzania. Participants reported having perfected technology skills since orientation, including chats, PowerPoint, Skype, Google Hangouts, email, and using video. Also, they held meetings during the semesters to network with their cohort and to discuss academic issues. Generally, students reported having improved their teaching/learning skills, as well as the spirit of teamwork. Students acclaimed instructors, and used the following statements to describe their interactions: regarding instructors, students commented that they were available and committed, simple, flexible, understanding and considerate; they described interaction among the students as enriching; and, finally, of the availability of laptops, students noted that modems and internet data eased their work and saved time. Students felt encouraged and supported by their coordinators, superiors, community members, and classmates, who made it possible for them to succeed.

- Additionally, the students acknowledged, and expressed appreciation for, the assistance they received from Marywood University librarians and the follow-up support they received from CUEA and Marywood faculty. They acclaimed the librarians and faculty for their commitment and hard work to support the students. Students described the orientation course as pace-setting, and confirmed that it prepared them to appropriately undertake their courses. Also, they indicated that there was amicable flow of communication from administrators, faculty and students.

### **Challenges encountered during this reporting and plan to respond to them**

- Given that sisters enrolled in HESA are non-traditional students, a few of them had difficulties acclimating to academic life and the use of technology. We created a support system, where students taking online classes convened on weekends to network and complete their assignments. Students appreciated this and felt supported. Also, the partner universities in Africa have been supportive of students enrolled online at Marywood University. The Directorate of Academic Linkages at CUEA created a buddy support system, pairing students so they can study together and learn to solve some academic difficulties. The system is working well and fostering support, relationships, and networking. When a student faces a challenge, she is encouraged to run it by her support team. Students praise the buddy system; it has allowed them to persist in the program.
- internet access for some of the sisters has been sporadic, making it difficult for them to complete their assignments by the due date. To address the situation, we organized weekend meetings at the association centers in order for these students to complete their assignments. Also, coordinators worked with cellular providers to determine which modems are most suitable for students located at different localities. To solve this problem, we provided appropriate modems with high internet connectivity. This alleviated the challenge.
- Given that HESA is implemented in seven countries, there are several government regulations and university systems that must be navigated. HESA must ensure that HESA students adhere to all applicable governmental and institutional policies. A new government regulation enacted in Nigeria disrupted admission to Veritas University in the spring of 2014. With the new regulation, students applying for entry to Nigerian universities have to apply through the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB). The enactment led to changes in HESA

implementation. We planned for eight students, four from Ghana and four from Nigeria, to enter Veritas University in January, 2014; however, enactment of the new policy by the Nigerian government made it difficult for students to enter Veritas University per our schedule. All HESA applicants were deferred to apply through the JAMB system. As a result, sisters from Ghana found it very difficult to enter Veritas University. To address the situation, plans were put in place for sisters in Ghana who were to attend Veritas University to instead enter Catholic University College of Ghana. Six sisters are enrolled for onsite program at CUCG and 16 Nigerian Sisters started classes at Veritas University in September. In summary, the new governmental policy in Nigeria delayed until September our plans for sisters to enter programs in January, 2014. A similar situation has been reported in Tanzania, where we expected a cohort of eight to start in August, 2014. However, given that all of the sisters scheduled to attend St. Augustine University are from Tanzania, they were able to begin classes in September 2014 with minimal delay.

- The political situations in South Sudan and Nigeria have also presented challenges. Since December 2013, political upheavals in South Sudan led many congregations to withdraw sisters from that country. HESA planned for a cohort of seven sisters to enter the Catholic University of South Sudan. Due to the political situation in the region, we decided that the sisters from South Sudan will instead attend a University in Kenya or Uganda.
- The main challenges reported by HESA students, particularly those taking online classes, were related to time management and striking a balance between academics and work in their ministries. Often, this is most evident during participants' first semester in the program. To alleviate this situation, a time management component has been integrated into both the orientation and the reflective learning workshops. Another challenge identified by the sisters was limited access to library resources, given that they have to travel to access CUEA or KBUC libraries. Participants are encouraged to use online library tools to access materials they need at Marywood University, Catholic University of East Africa, and Kisubi Brothers University College. Also, some students expressed that studying online can be somewhat lonely. To address this at CUEA, the university has introduced a buddy system for students studying online at Marywood. Through this system, the students are paired to support each other. Students have adjusted effectively.
- A final student challenge is with technology. Namely, a few students continue to find technology challenging, although there has been great progress compared to when they started the program. Additionally, they reported that some of the modems did not work well. We identified the cellular providers that had higher reception in some areas over others, and participants were provided with improved modems based on this knowledge. Also, cellphone companies provided higher quality internet bundles, making it is easier for participants to access the internet. Students reported that HESA's immediate response to this and other challenges motivated them, and led to their success in the program.

### **Completion of the project as outlined in your proposal**

HESA is on track and we anticipate accomplishing the program goals within the schedule. The major concerns and issues that arose, thus far, have been addressed accordingly. Despite changes in admission procedures in both Nigeria and Tanzania via the Joint Admission and Matriculation

Board (JAMB), students have successfully completed admission procedures and are now enrolled in the universities there. The political situations in both Nigeria and South Sudan have been daunting. Students from South Sudan will be enrolled in universities in Kenya or Uganda. Also, most of the sisters seeking admission via the HESA program fall short of university admission per government rules and regulations. We are working to provide bridging programs so that they can effectively matriculate to university via HESA.

### **Publications about the Project**

Sr. Jane will be presenting her research, “Overcoming Barriers: Building Women Leaders Via Distance Learning Education”, at the International Leadership Association Conference to be held in San Diego from October 31 to November 2, 2014. Also, during HESA Year I, Sr. Jane published “Efficacy of online distance learning: Lessons from the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa program” in the *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Educational Sciences*. The work is cited below (**ATTACHMENT XIII**):

Wakahiu, J. & Kangethe, S. (2014). Efficacy of online distance learning: Lessons from the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa program. *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Educational Sciences*, 2(1), 1-25

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