



CUSAG

The Cultural Systems Analysis Group

Community Action Anthropology

## **The University of Maryland-University of the West Indies Memorandum of Understanding**

### For Media Release

On Friday, May 1, the Cultural Systems Analysis Group (CuSAG) of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Maryland, College Park held a fundraising dinner, during which three new CuSAG initiatives related to its ongoing work in Jamaica were announced: (1) a newly established University of Maryland, College Park - University of the West Indies Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to facilitate the research, training, and service activities of CuSAG, other University System of Maryland institutions, and others with Caribbean<sup>1</sup> interests; (2) the development of a Cross National Collaborative on Youth Health and Gender Issues that proposes collaborative research, training, and service to be facilitated through this Agreement; and (3) the establishment of the CuSAG Student Support Fund to help allay the expenses of students who wish to participate in CuSAG's and its collaborator's research, training, or service activities.

CuSAG is also working with colleagues in the two universities to establish what is tentatively being called a "Cross National Collaborative on Youth Health Issues." One of the most immediate initiatives of the Collaborative is to promote a cross national internship/student exchange program, and possibilities for faculty exchanges. A proposal is being shared to initially look for funding support for research, training, and technical assistance activities in two areas of youth health: (1) reproductive and sexual health issues (e.g. early pregnancy and parenting, HIV/AIDS, and other STIs, etc.) and (2) violence crime, incarceration, and reentry (VCIR). These two topic areas were selected because they are ongoing research activities in which CuSAG is involved, and because for the past five years, Dr. Tony Whitehead, CuSAG's Director, has taken US students to Jamaica where they intern for 3 ½ weeks with NGOs involved in sexual and reproductive health issues. As the Collaborative grows, however, research and technical assistance activities are expected to expand according to the research activities and interests of participating faculty members from both University systems.

A special guest at the May 1 dinner was His Excellency Anthony Johnson, Ambassador to Jamaica, who attended the dinner and congratulated CuSAG Director Professor Tony Whitehead for his efforts in facilitating prospective collaborative efforts between the two university systems.

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<sup>1</sup> While CuSAG's work has focused primarily in Jamaica, the collaborative activities that are being planned as part of this MOU will extend to relationships beyond Jamaica and the UWI campus at Mona, Jamaica, to Barbados and Trinidad-Tobago which also has UWI campuses, and to the other 11 English speaking Caribbean countries through UWI's Open Campus programs.

## Photograph from May 1, 2009 Caribbean Dinner

