

Ambassador and Wife Give Boost to Medical School

On January 11, U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone Michael Owen and his wife Annerieke donated books on infectious and other diseases to the University of Sierra Leone's College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (COMAHS), as part of the Embassy's continuing efforts to assist the education sector. In a brief statement, Ambassador Owen said that this is only the beginning of what he hopes will be a productive partnership between the Embassy and COMAHS. He said the donation was prompted by his visit to the Kossoh Town Campus a few months ago, where he learned about the work of the College and the challenges they faced from lack of resources.



Mrs. Owen noted her own background as a health care professional, and said that before leaving the U.S. for Sierra Leone she spoke with her contacts in the medical profession about sending textbooks to Freetown. She also disclosed that the donated texts were new editions and especially relevant to the sort of diseases encountered in tropical

Africa.

Receiving the books on behalf of COMAHS, Acting Provost Dr. Baimba Baryoh said that since it was established in 1988, the College has successfully trained a number of doctors, nurses, and pharmacists. He added that many of these graduates have since left Sierra Leone in search of greener pastures, creating an unfortunate shortage of health care workers. He said "our graduates are usually accepted in institutions abroad, which shows that they are fairly of high quality." One such example is the present Director of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, Dr. Desmond Williams, who is one of the first graduates from COMAHS. Dr. Baryoh also said the books came at the right time, since COMAHS will soon open a new library – and the donated texts will be among the first volumes on its shelves.