

wider world

FROM KENYA TO DEFIANCE

With a strong passion for teaching, Professor Edward Kamau brings a unique world view to the classroom



by Kathy Punches, Director of Public Relations and Marketing

Edward Kamau, assistant professor of marketing, loves those illuminating moments in the classroom when students grasp a new concept or idea. It's what fuels his passion for teaching. "I like the transferring of knowledge, helping students learn new things," he says. "That really gets me, when the light goes on, and they get something in a different way. That's what you do it for, to see horizons broadening and opening up."

Kamau teaches marketing, global issues, international business, and personal finance. Some innovative areas that spark his interest include an e-marketing course he is developing to teach students how to start an online business. How do you get revenue and profitability with a business online, and how do you relate it to a regular bricks-and-mortar business?

Another topic of interest for Kamau is subsistence marketing. "Not a very glamorous name," he says, but it fits with the mission of Defiance College by studying what marketing can do to benefit low-resource communities. "Some of the ways you can do that are helping people get started in a small business, learn how to market, and how to send messages to the market in low-resource areas," Kamau notes. Tourism is another area of study, particularly the tourism industry in Kenya, where he grew up. "At one point, tourism was our biggest foreign exchange area. Now, the biggest item in foreign exchange is Kenyans outside of the country sending money back."

Growing up in East Africa, Kamau acquired a very diverse set of interests from political science to history, literature, economics and business. "One thing that growing up in Kenya impressed upon me is

the need for social justice and a fair economic system,” he says. “The wide gap between the poor and the wealthy there is obvious. It is from that perspective that I developed an interest in economics and business. My parents were also business people, so I was naturally attuned to the business field.”

His interest in teaching developed at the undergraduate level, where he had two teachers, one a professor from the United States who taught him history and the other a political economy instructor. “Both these teachers deeply impressed me, and when I came to the U.S. it was quite easy for me to decide to go to graduate school, and in a sense, follow in their footsteps,” Kamau explains. He also had relatives who were teachers, and especially important, an uncle who was educated here in the U.S. who encouraged him to come and pursue graduate education.

During and after his undergraduate education, he worked in sales, marketing and procurement for a Kenyan company that imported and sold machinery, auto parts and equipment in the East African region. During this time he became familiar with U.S. companies his company did business with such as TRW, Federal Mogul, Ford, and GM. As a result of this experience he decided to come to the U.S. to study business at the graduate level so he applied to Vanderbilt University in Nashville and they offered him a scholarship.

After completing his MBA from Vanderbilt, Kamau decided to go into the doctoral program at the University of Memphis and eventually started teaching part-time, and then full-time at LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis. He came to Defiance College in 2006.

Kamau believes a liberal arts-based education provides students with the most valuable tools to be successful. He brings a broad range of discussion topics to the classroom, from the latest technology to marketing in developing countries. “I try as much as possible to talk about other things, not just the subject of the day. What’s going on politically, for marketing that’s important - how candidates market themselves, the messages they send, the polling. It gets students to think about those issues from a marketing standpoint. It gets them to keep on top of trends. What are they interested in? What is the theme? To me, that’s getting them to see the world in a new light.”

The professor is impressed by DC’s ability to instill a world view in its students. “It rubs off on them. I think for a small

school Defiance is able to do that amazingly well, and I like teaching here for that reason. We are a small school that sees itself as part of humanity more broadly. We get our students from the region, but those students come here and see a window on a much wider world.”

In May 2008, Kamau traveled to Ghana with fellow faculty member Dr. Sandra Golden and McMaster School dean Dr. Laurie Worrall to explore opportunities for program development. Kamau examined micro-lending, business cooperatives, and exports and imports with the U.S.

It was the mission of the college that attracted Kamau to Defiance College.

“There’s a real effort to live it and put it into practice,” he says. He encourages those students who have traveled internationally through the McMaster School to talk about their projects in his classroom. He appreciates the ability to bring a global perspective into a class, not from the professor, but from a student. “For others to see ‘Hey it’s possible to come here and go to Jamaica or Cambodia.’ The fact that you have the seeds, some who have done this, it really broadens horizons and is something that’s very welcome in the classroom. I tell them, ‘You just keep talking about it.’” ♦



eBUSINESS TIPS

It is no secret that it takes hard work to be successful in business. Being successful in eBusiness is no different.

Your website is a part of your corporate brand and should fit seamlessly with the other elements that make up your corporate identity.

Constant review and testing is crucial when determining the success or failure of the objectives of the website.

A surprising number of companies spend thousands of dollars on a website their customers don’t know they have. Don’t hide your domain name.

The fastest way to loose customers is to ignore their emails.

Use server logs (Google Analytics) to update pages that perform poorly.

You don’t have to pay an arm and a leg for good SEO, just write your content well and submit it to search engines.

Your users want current information and so do the search engines. If your content is out of date, your potential clients will move on to the competition.

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