

AFRICA UNIVERSITY

James H. Salley, Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement

Thank you to the members of the Desert Southwest Conference for helping to prepare young leaders to be “an aroma that brings life” to a world that is crying out for justice, compassion, healing, and wholeness (2 Corinthians 2:14-16). Through its prayers and gifts, the Desert Southwest Conference participates in disciple-making by example, alongside the students, faculty, administrators, and alumni of Africa University.

Africa University is grateful to the local congregations of the Desert Southwest Conference for investing 100 percent of the asking to the Africa University Fund in 2020. Thank you for staying the course in supporting the ministry of Africa University with faithfulness and generosity. By giving, Desert Southwest United Methodist congregations are sources of inspiration and transformation, especially in times of uncertainty.

The spread of COVID-19 and the resulting public health crisis has brought about profound and lasting adjustments to how we live, work, serve, and connect. For Africa University, these include:

- A shift to online only teaching and learning from late March through December 2020: Africa University had the infrastructure and expertise to transition smoothly and break new ground with competency-based student assessment tools.
- United Methodists provided more than \$300,000 for COVID-19 relief efforts. These second-mile gifts enabled Africa University to care for about 300 stranded international students between March and late July 2020 and extend assistance to students whose families were experiencing financial hardships.
- Excellent student retention and modest enrollment growth, with 99 percent of students embracing online learning: More than 3,000 students enrolled for the 2020-2021 academic year—16 percent more than the previous year—with 2,395 studying full-time. Fifty-seven percent of full-time students were female, and 24 percent were international.
- Innovation, outreach, and service through:
 - Masks and hand sanitizer liquid, developed by Africa University, are being produced commercially.
 - The launch, via a web application, of farm to household delivery of fresh produce, meat, poultry, and milk products by the Africa University Dream Farm Trust.
 - Two student-led initiatives—“Feed a Family” and “Ben Hill UMC Women’s Residence Girl Child Support Program”—provided medical care, food, and school fees assistance to vulnerable families in the wider community. Campus and home-based students gave up meals, raised additional resources, procured supplies, and organized safe distribution to families.
- The successful completion of two new buildings—the Highland Park UMC-funded student union facility and a dormitory for female students. A new solar farm powers the Highland Park women’s dormitory.

Africa University’s online campus is here to stay, thanks to infrastructure upgrades and the lessons learned in 2020. The university is ranked number one in Zimbabwe and 39th among the top 200 universities in Africa, having moved up 59 spots in 2020. Africa University’s top priority for 2021-2022 is to grow its impact through innovation—offering sustainable solutions to persistent community challenges. The university’s growth strategy also includes expanding continent-wide student recruitment, launching new programs and partnerships, and delivering blended learning options.

In a fragile and interconnected world and family of faith, the deep commitment, loving concern, and steadfast support of United Methodist congregations matter greatly. The Africa University continues to

rely on the Desert Southwest Conference to help bring to life the dreams of young people who would otherwise never have the chance to acquire a college education.

In journeying alongside Africa University in ministry, Desert Southwest United Methodists are the church in the world—seeding hope and sharing the love of Christ. You affirm that when we are all in it together, God's grace is indeed sufficient. To God be the glory.