



## UPC COVID update

In the midst of the COVID 19 pandemic and other challenges facing the Université Protestante du Congo (UPC) some significant strides have been made. They include:

In response to preventative health measures taken due to the pandemic, the development of distance learning courses and online registrations have made some classes available to students.

The Faculty of Medicine of the UPC is the only private institution authorized to operate by the Ministry of Higher Education aside from the Medical Faculty of UNIKIN (a public institution).

UPC is hoping to sign a collaboration agreement with UNIKIN so that ten members from UPC's medical faculty can complete their PhD theses while continuing clinical practice at the university clinics of Kinshasa. UPC is also hoping to find scholarships in universities outside of the DRC to complete their studies.

The Kimpese Health Research Center (CRSK) is a research consortium that the UPC has created with three partners that are IME Kimpese, SANRU (Rural Health) and the Clinical Pharmacology Unit of the University of Kinshasa. This is the first *Health Demographic Surveillance System* (HDSS) in Central Africa.



## Education Congo scholarships that are making a difference

### Kasololo Mizumbi

Kasololo, age 23 and eldest of five siblings, lives in a municipality about 30 minutes' walk from the University.

He is a student in Business Administration and Economics. His father died during his last year of high school. His mother does her best to cultivate a vegetable garden on the side of the main road in her commune for lack of means to acquire better and more suitable land.

A hardworking member of his Protestant parish, Kasololo is highly intelligent and was eager to study at the UPC for the preservation of his faith

and especially for the quality of education at the University. He took on enrollment without knowing how he was going to finance his studies but on the faith that he would find a way. Highly motivated to work hard for the sake of his siblings and widowed mother, Kasololo is a very diligent and conscientious student. He is now in the last year of his university studies thanks to support from Education Congo.

### Tingi Baseya

Tingi is 24 years old and has four younger siblings. She lives in one of the most distant municipalities from the University.

Now a student in her final year of law school, Tingi grew up as an orphan having lost her

father and mother. She was taken in and raised by the family of a cousin and separated from her brothers and sisters, who were entrusted to the care of other family members.

To support her studies and other needs, including transportation, Tingi worked in nightclubs in Kinshasa as a waitress. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic with nightclubs being forced to close, Tingi no longer had the means to support herself.

Education Congo's assistance has been an unexpected lifeline for her, enabling her to pursue her dreams of studying law.

## Two UPC Medical School graduates published in the *Turkish Journal of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation*



Congolese wood carving from the collection of Mary Sanichas

Gaëlle Nkoji-Tunda and Junior Bulabula-Penge are the first and second authors of four recently published studies in the *Turkish Journal of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation*. Both young doctors began their medical studies at The Protestant University of Congo (UPC) in 2006 and were awarded their degrees as medical doctors in 2014. Both spent their intern year at Evangelical Hospital of Vanga, a very remote rural hospital in the current Kwilu region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). At UPC, both distinguished themselves as conscientious teaching assistants in the lab classrooms.

These four published papers explore questions central to strong public health in the DRC. Two of the papers evaluated the knowledge of the rural hospital's staff of two life-threatening diseases, COVID 19 and Hepatitis B. The third paper investigated the most common causes of death at Kimpese Hospital, also a UPC rural teaching hospital. The fourth paper presented data from the medical records at UPC's third rural teaching hospital in Tshikaji on the relationship between a patient's symptoms and the rural doctor's decision to prescribe antibiotics.

These two continue to use their medical knowledge to contribute to health in the DRC. Dr. Gaëlle Nkoji-Tunda is a research assistant and lab monitor of bacteremia (bloodstream infection) and antibiotic resistance at the National Institute for Biomedical Research (INRB), national public health laboratory. Currently, she is the national monitor in the THECA/TyVECO study (An open-label effectiveness study of a typhoid conjugate vaccine in Kisantu, Democratic Republic of the Congo). Dr. Junior Bulabula-Penge has been a consultant at Laboratoire Rodolphe Mérieux INRB-Goma supervising the implementation of activities of the bacteriology and hematology labs as well as being a delegate of the steering committee in the implementation of Postmortem Surveillance for Ebola Virus using OraQuick® Ebola Rapid Diagnostic Tests, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, 2019-2021. Currently, Junior is contributing to the fight against the resurgence of the Ebola virus disease at Beni town in the diagnostic and research component.



Dr. Steven Gustafson

Associate Professor of Preclinical Sciences  
College of Osteopathic Medicine at  
William Carey University  
Hattiesburg, Mississippi

## Welcome to our new Board member!

Education Congo has just elected a new Board member, Dr. Steven Gustafson. Steven first learned about Education Congo from current Board member Dr. Eva Shay, who also taught at William Carey University. Steven hails originally from Michigan and holds degrees from Michigan State University and the Des Moines (Iowa) University College of Osteopathic Medicine.

His post-doctoral training has included several fellowships, and he has authored or co-authored numerous articles for peer-reviewed publications. His international travels have involved research, teaching, and/or mission work in Cameroon, Haiti, the Philippines and Mongolia.

Steven's interest in Congo can be traced back to medical missionaries who were supported by the church he attended in his youth. He had hoped to go to Congo during his residency, but there was too much political instability and violence at the time. He is excited to finally be part of Congolese medical work and training through Education Congo's programs.

The Education Congo Board looks forward to working with Steven and having him participate on the Medical Committee.

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