Program Overview
This collaborative concept between two institutions of higher learning in Liberia is intended to help address two major national development issues. First, the overarching problem of Liberia’s brain-drain; and second, the need to decentralize socioeconomic development, especially access to higher education. The 1980 coup in Liberia, which eventually led to the 14-year civil war, occurred just at a time when many young educated Liberians were rising to take over leadership roles in various sectors of the country. The complexity and scale of the “brain-drain” created by the civil war, and the current demand for decentralized social services require creative and integrated solutions built around human development strategies. It has been well established that in order to accelerate effective and efficient service delivery across Liberia, we need to develop and strengthen the capacity of county and local institutions.

According to the International Labor Organization (2013), the scarcity of qualified well-educated youth in Liberia after the civil war has created a bottleneck in the supply of labor in professional occupations operated by employers\(^1\). The report also found that hard-to-fill vacancies identified by employers in Liberia are generally in the areas of higher-skilled professions, such as primary and secondary education, business services, administrative management, and managing organizations. The nation’s inability to quickly meet these demands through local markets, including counties, districts and cities, may have resulted to employers having to import foreign labor. The ILO report uncovered that the demand for highly educated employee is clearly much greater than the current supply can bear; to the extent that 33.9 percent of employers prefer that job applicants should possess tertiary education for professional vacancies, while 23.8 percent of employers require tertiary education for production related vacancies.

Nimba, Liberia’s second largest County has had considerable population increase in the past 25 years, from a population of 310,000 before the start of the civil war in 1979, to a population of 468,088 following the civil war according to the 2008 Liberian Census. Today, Nimba is still the second most populated county, trailing Montserrado where Liberia’s capital is located. In 2013, the Ministry of Education reported 20,956 secondary school students in Nimba County, including 1,772 students in the 12\(^{th}\) grade\(^2\). Currently, there are only two higher education institutions in Nimba County: ABC University, a branch of the African Bible College which reopened as a university in 2008, now offers BS degree in biblical studies; and Nimba County Community College, the only public tertiary institution in the County.

Therefore, based on the aforementioned, and the need to increase access to higher education in Nimba County, AME University (AMEU) and Nimba County Community College (NCCC) are pursuing collaboration to establish a Dual Degree Program (DDP) to be offered on the campus of NCCC. The Program will present a unique partnership between the institutions; and provide opportunities for students enrolled at NCCC with an excellent pathway to earn quality, accessible, and affordable Associate’s and Bachelor’s degrees:

The Dual Degree Program shall be designed to commence in September 2015, with the following two baccalaureate degree programs from AME University: English and Mass Communication.

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\(^1\) Labor market transitions of young women and men in Liberia / Sajith de Mel, Sara Elder and Marc Vansteenikste; International Labor Office - Geneva: ILO, 2013

AME University
Nimba County Community College

Dual Degree Program
Concept Paper
December 10, 2014

Program Benefits
The dual degree program shall be based on a formal agreement between Nimba County Community Colleges and AME University; students will spend three to five years completing all requirements of both institutions; and shall be awarded an associate degree from the community college, and a bachelor's degree from the university.

Students in the program shall benefit from the distinctive strengths of AME University faculty, which brings together expertise from 10 academic programs at the University. The University faculty will serve on rotation based on course offerings; and available master’s level faculty at NCCC to teach in the program. In addition, qualified available talents in the local business community and government agencies shall be recruited to serve as adjunct faculty. The program will use available information communication technology (ICT) platforms to support selected lectures whenever practical. Additional program benefits shall include:

- Increased possibility for NCCC graduates to remain in Nimba County for their bachelor’s degree
- New talents for the workforce to support local businesses and county governments
- Integrated academic advisement by AMEU and NCCC
- Increased flexibility in course scheduling, and access to classes from both institutions
- Coordinated scholarship opportunities designed specifically for DDP students
- Opportunity to select preparatory courses at NCCC and lower division courses at AME University
- Seamless transition from Nimba County Community College to AME University
- Students shall pay the respective tuition and fees for each institution

Minimum Admission Requirements:
- Students shall be required to enroll full-time
- Candidates must complete minimum 30-45 credits at NCCC before being admitted into the DDP
- Students must complete associate’s degree requirements at NCCC before receiving bachelor’s degree from AMEU
- GPA of 3.0 or higher shall be required for admission into the DDP
- Enrollment in the DDP shall not limit transfer to other colleges or universities; however, DDP students shall not be enrolled at a third institution while in the program
- Candidates must choose from AMEU’s baccalaureate degree programs offered at NCCC