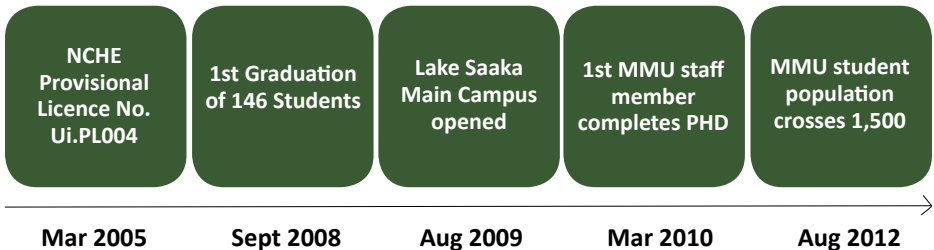


# The Journey

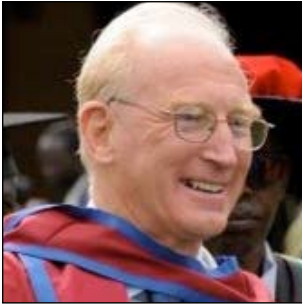
*“Nothing is as powerful as an idea whose time has come”  
(Victor Hugo, French Author)*



Mountains of the Moon University has travelled a decade into unknown lands, but with unwavering compass towards “Heights for progress” for the youth of the Rwenzori region to access affordable and impactful education.



This chapter tells the story of MMU’s journey along major achievements and milestones, through the eyes of those who conceived and “equipped” the journey between 2000 and 2005; and those who joined the travel party in 2004/2005 when MMU received its provisional license from Uganda’s National Council for Higher Education (NCHE).



“I met Fr. Albert Byaruhanga for the first time in July 2003 in Gouda in the Netherlands with a note book full of questions, all of which he answered satisfactorily. As I was leaving I asked if MMU would be paying my fare to get from Ireland to Gouda. His answer: “I will take it to the committee” told me all I needed to know: there was no money. I think it was the only time I was one step ahead of Fr. Albert whom I came to love like a brother.

This meant that I came to Uganda knowing the reality that finding money would be a crucial part of the job. Unfortunately I already knew that finding money for University education was going to be exceedingly difficult because the world focus was on primary education and University education was seen as elitist. There was not the understanding that each sector of education depends on the others, it has to be seen as an integrated whole and not as separate entities.

My wife Kathie and I arrived in Uganda in early November. We were introduced to the members of the Organising Committee in Kampala before we moved into our new home in Kagoote, Fort Portal. Fortunately, as we were leaving our house in Dublin I was paid in cash for our vehicle and our luggage was delayed so we received compensation. This meant we were able to buy furniture and other necessities for the house which was otherwise empty. But this turned out to have a great advantage: As I asked different craftsmen around Fort Portal to make different pieces, I found out who was capable to work at the quality and price which was best for MMU.

In early December I was introduced to Kalyegira Philip. Philip became indispensable to the project because he knew Fort Portal inside out and he seemed to have an ex student in any office where we needed help. He also had a deep knowledge of the education system of Uganda.

I learned from him that the problem with the primary schools was management; and also that agriculture and science on the primary syllabus could not be taught by the teachers because they had never been taught the subjects while at school themselves and had never been up-skilled since. The importance of management was confirmed when a report compiled by the Irish Embassy was published in May 2004. Hence, we focused increasingly on the poor performance of local schools in national A-levels which meant that very few school leavers were able to proceed to university. Moreover, many rural schools could only teach up to O-level. In May 2005, we received our first 16 students – teachers who were trained in MMU’s first-ever course. “

**Professor Patrick Davey,**

MU Project coordinator (Nov. 2003-March 2005)

1st Vice-Chancellor (April 2005 – Nov. 2007)

Seconded by VMM

## 2000-2005: How the idea was turned into organizational reality

In the beginning, there was an idea that blossomed in mind of then Ugandan High Commissioner to South Africa, Professor E. B. Rugumayo, as he visited South African universities and other institutions of higher learning. He eventually shared the idea with another outstanding son of the soil of the Rwenzori region, Hon. Justice S. T. Manyindo. Justice Manyindo tasked Professor Rugumayo to record the idea in the form of a concept paper.

In the early 2000s, Professor Rugumayo and Justice Manyindo happened to have their work place within the same building in Kampala. From there, they gathered the nine founders-to-be into a planning committee that met every Tuesday for the better part of four years. They also contributed over USD 2,000 to meet costs of the initial phase, e. g. operating a bank account, company registration fees etc.

On 28th June 2002, MMU was registered as a company limited by guarantee with the registration number 64222.

In parallel, they mobilised support from national and international sources. Fr. A. Byaruhanga, through his unique network spanning faith-based, political and international communities, was the most gifted fund-raiser. He initiated the partnership with Volunteer Visionary Movement (VMM) which in November 2003 seconded the project coordinator.

On 29th March 2005 the first Rwenzori-based university was provisionally licensed by Uganda's National Council of Higher Education (NCHE) under license number Ui.PL.004. The VMM-coordinator hence became MMU's first Vice-Chancellor of MMU.

## 2005-2008: With start-up spirit from 1st enrolment to 1st graduation

MMU's first students were 16 teachers from local schools who enrolled for a short course in May 2005. In Aug. 2005, MMU "kicked-off" its first academic year. 151 students enrolled for 7 undergraduate courses (for details see the Chapter "Schools"), accredited by NCHE.

These courses were organized along four departments. Agriculture and Health Sciences respectively were headed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Business and Management Studies as well as the overall administration, which included the Library and Computer Laboratory as main units, were headed by the Vice-Chancellor. Only the Department of Education (teachers' training) had its own individual head. In 2007, the four academic departments were renamed as 'schools' (equivalent to faculties).

When MMU received its license in April 2005, its 18 staff members were being paid through KRC. By September 2005, MMU had 25 academic and administrative staff members, 17 male and 8 female. They all met monthly to discuss and drive the progress of MMU.

The team was motivated by a spirit of huge enthusiasm in the start-up of the project. By the end of academic year 2007/08, when MMU held its first graduation ceremony, the total student population had grown beyond 500, enrolled in 14 courses.

The University Council represents the districts of the Rwenzori region together with faith-based, civic and business communities, alongside MMU management, staff and students. The districts embraced the University as a driver of regional development. Local government staff provided a major portion of weekend students. Furthermore, the district of Kabarole donated 75 acres of land to MMU – today known as the Lake Saaka Main Campus.

Local MPs acting together prompted the Government of Uganda to recognise the remarkable progress of MMU. Whereas the central government does not usually support non-government universities, it added 75 acres land to MMU, and it created a budget line that provided financial support of UGX 500m in each of the financial years 2005/6, 2006/7 and 2007/8.

## 2008-2012: Diversifying services and growth of student and staff numbers

Since 2007 MMU has activated a staff development policy (revised in 2011 and 2014). By mobilising external funding, from among others the Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC), MMU has begun supporting staff members in their further studies. By 2011, 12 MMU staff had attained Ph.Ds, Masters', Bachelor degrees and diplomas.

In particular through the dedicated support of Irish philanthropist Martin Hawkes, MMU was able to complete its first purpose-designed building project and to open the Saaka Main Campus "for business" in 2009.

In the academic year 2009/10, MMU introduced for the first time postgraduate courses. In the following year, triggered by the new community bursaries for bachelor students, the total student population surpassed 1,000. The total number of courses offered (both under- and postgraduate) grew from 15 to 27.



“I joined MMU in December 2004 as university bursar. I had always believed that working at a University would be the best career for me. Being an educational environment, it creates an open and innovative community, which keeps my mind active. Also, there is great scope for collaborative, multidisciplinary and research opportunities. I also decided to join MMU because it's near home. I walk to work at MMU, meet friends and there is always something of interest going on around my work which makes it the best place I could ever work. I also like interacting with students and staff. I have learnt a lot of new things from them, and they have encouraged me to explore new opportunities. MMU offers a vibrant and exciting expansion of one's horizons.

I am grateful that MMU has supported part of the tuition costs of my professional course with the Association of Certified and Chartered Accountants (ACCA). I could not have afforded this international course otherwise. Furthermore, I was able to take study leave at time of sitting exam papers.

I am proud of MMU for its great achievements over its first decade, in particular for continuously supporting staff members for further studies and training, and having completed its own buildings at Saaka campus. Nowadays, jobs are scarce in Uganda. Hence, staff joining MMU are expected to work extra-hard and be extra committed. In return, they get a wonderful opportunity to work in a context offering a diversity of knowledge that will bring a better future to our Rwenzori communities. “

**Sr. Stella Kanyunyuzi**, University Bursar / Senior Accountant (Dec. 2004 to date)

In 2011, MMU formed a new School of Computing and Informatics. This move responded to the demand for compact computer courses from the community, as well as to provide basic computer skills to the University's students across all schools.

With support of One Brick at a Time (OBAAT), MMU completed the building for the School Of Health Sciences, including a community clinic, in 2012.

In 2010, MMU carried out research on career paths in the (micro)finance sector of Uganda. It informed the theme of the first edition of MMU's yearbook in the same year.

In 2011, MMU was invited to become a partner of the AfroMaison consortium of universities and research institutes that studies natural resource management in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the same year, MMU carried out research on cultivating *Artemia* as a fish feed input for aquaculture.



“I took over from Patrick Davey in November 2007, having been accepted into the post by the University Governing Council. My wife Patricia and I had already visited Fort Portal in July 2007. We had extensive conversations with Professor Rugumayo on his terrace about the MMU vision and mission to intertwine knowledge and professional skills. At the end he said to me ‘You’ll do!’

I reported to office in January 2008. Having met with my colleagues Dr Semana, Fr. Dr. Chris Mukidi, Phillip Kalyegira and Sister Stella Kanyunuzi, I was already off to Kampala to meet architect Davy Mugamba about plans for our first building in Saaka. We held the first site meeting on 5th Dec. 2008. In Sept. 2009, the second graduation, chiefly organised by Fr. Mukidi, took place there.

We had organised our first graduation on 26th Sept. 2008 at Mountains of the Moon Hotel, succeeding our first public lecture in the quadrangle in Kabundaire. On 31st October 2008 we held a fundraising Dinner at the Imperial Royale Hotel in Kampala where I became famous by auctioning some white pebbles that I had collected from the beach at the southernmost point of the African continent. There were a few laughs: if the VC could make money out of stones, the future looked good for MMU!

Much of my time in these two years was involved in creating a number of international partnerships. The fruits of these included agricultural projects, the establishment of microfinance and banking Degrees and the first MBA supported by our online Moodle platform.

By November 2009 I was able to achieve my final goal and pass on the keys of office to Prof John Kasenene, the first Ugandan VC. I would stay on for another 3 months for a smooth handover.”

**Dr. Douglas Nisbet**, 2nd Vice-Chancellor (2007-2009)

Seconded by VMM; Dr. Nisbet is chair of the board of VMM and a director of OBAAT, two of MMU's longest and most committed partners

## 2012-2015: Consolidating growth, building systems

Since 2012, MMU has increasingly focused on consolidating and systematizing its 'inner workings', in particular in the areas of teaching and administration.

As it surpassed 1,500 total student population, it has strengthened its office of student affairs, now led by a full-time Dean of Students and supported by a full-time counsellor.

MMU has also streamlined its finance office, now led by a Registrar Finance, as well as its Registrar Academic office, which now closely manages admission, examination and transcript processes - the heart of any university relevance, and hence reputation among future student, employers of its graduates, and graduates themselves.

Top University Management now comprises of the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the three Registrars (Academic, Administration, and Finance), the Dean of Students and the Human Resource Director.

At the same time, MMU has positioned its Directorate of Postgraduate Studies and Research as its 'sixth school'. The Directorate works alongside the four 'founding schools' and the youngest School of Computing and Informatics (SOIC) which was formerly an administrative department. MMU's own IT-infrastructure is now managed by a Directorate for Information Technology.

Through meticulous work and perseverance, MMU was selected as an institutional partner of the Flemish Inter-University Council-University cooperation for Development (VLIR-UOS). Under this project, MMU will receive capacity building and research cooperation for 12 years (2 phases of 6 years each, the 1st started in 2013).

All these compose the sound and solid foundation for MMU to grow from 46 courses now to the 60 envisioned for its second decade. In its second decade, student numbers are targeted to grow to 5,000, as MMU achieves its charter.

### Spotlight: African Economic History



Professor Ewout Frankema (Wageningen University - Netherlands) and Dr. Ellen Hillboom (Lund Institute - Sweden) visited MMU (picture with pilot BPAD-class, together with Felix Meier zu Selhausen, who taught at MMU from 2011-2013 and carried out his Ph.D-research from Kasese) to pilot a new textbook. Find it for free on the internet: [www.aehnetwork.org/textbook](http://www.aehnetwork.org/textbook)



One Brick at a Time (OBAAT) is an independent charity which works with a number of partners to transform the lives of school children in Uganda.



Butiti Centenary Secondary School - Before



After



Hoima Hospital Project - Before



After

The OBAAT initiative has proven a track record (see pictures). It works primarily through a skill exchange between UK construction colleagues and Uganda construction trainees and graduates in projects that are termed as 'Training Projects'.

OBAAT works directly with schools and health facilities undertaking construction work to provide better quality schools e. G. St. Peter & Paul Primary and health facilities e. g. The MMU School of Health Sciences, Kagoote Health Centre III, among others.

For more details, please visit our website [onebrick.org.uk](http://onebrick.org.uk)





“I joined MMU in 2006 as a student for a BSc Public Health. On 25th Sept. 2009, I graduated with recognition as the best overall student in leadership and service to the community, for which I received a Chancellor’s Award.

In 2010 I joined MMU as university nursing officer and as a teaching assistant in SHS. Since then, I have been developing the idea that MMU should train nurses. In 2011, encouraged by Dr. Fr. Christopher Mukidi [then-Registrar Academic], I shared a draft proposal with the Registrar of Nurses and Midwives in Uganda. Subsequently, I teamed up with experts from Mbarara University of Science and Technology to write the curricula for both Diploma and Bachelors of Science in Nursing.

Today, the department has grown from teaching just diploma level nursing students, to training nurses and midwives to degree level. This would not have been possible without the instrumental inputs of MMU Chancellor Professor Rugumayo.

I am grateful for having worked with a variety of outstanding professionals from my field to achieve all this.”

**Sr. Bashabire Eunice**, Teaching Assistant SHS since 2010,  
HoD Nursing and Midwifery, 2012-2015,  
MPA-candidate, since 2014



**For all your Printing, Design & Layout, and  
branded promotional items.**

0752 866380 / 0787 015637 / 0712 866125

info@swandesigns.co.ug

ruthtile@swandesigns.co.ug

www.swandesigns.co.ug





In 2013, L.T Rubongoya (RIP) received the Doctor of Letters [D.Litt] for his contributions in writing and publishing Rutooro Runyoro literature books.



MMU's 1st financial literacy day: The team of trainers with Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and visiting expert from Deutsche Bank