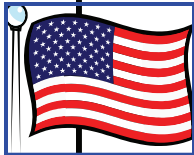




SIMMONS COLLEGE  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
STUDY ABROAD 2006  
GHANA, W. AFRICA



May 26 to June 14, 2006

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK,  
SOCIAL WELFARE &  
SOCIAL ACTION



**REPORT**



**REPORT**

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

This past spring and summer 2006 the Simmons College, School of Social Work, launched its first study abroad course, titled “International Social Work: Social Welfare Policy, Social Action and Advocacy.” This course was designed to allow students an opportunity to learn about international social work, social welfare policy, advocacy and social action practices from a global perspective, using Ghana, W. Africa as the sample country. In this course students were expected to learn about international social work, social welfare, advocacy and social action, using principles of social justice, human rights, and development as the overarching theoretical frameworks, and how these principles are applied in Third World, underdeveloped countries. The course included content on topics and themes ranging from pre-and-post colonialism, globalization and its impact on Third World countries, development and sustainable development, oppression, discrimination, human rights, racism, rights of women and girls, child labor, culture and cultural diversity, etc.

The course was offered in two parts: a series of classes held prior to travel that was held beginning late-January to mid-May, and a study abroad component from late-May to mid-June, with travel to Ghana, W. Africa. There were thirteen participants, nine of whom were students, two alumna's and two guests.

The travel abroad allowed students to gain direct exposure to a people, their culture, and worldview very different from one's own, and to learn about how social work is practiced through seminar presentations and service learning opportunities.

According to a 2002 American Council on Education poll, 79 percent of people in the U. S. agree that students should have a study abroad experience sometime during their college [education], but only 1 percent of students from the U. S. currently study abroad each year. Studying abroad “exposes students to invaluable global knowledge and cultural understanding [that] forms an integral part of their education.” On November 10, 2005 the U. S. senate passed Resolution No. 308 designating 2006 as the “Year of Study Abroad”, stating that “it is the responsibility of the U. S. educational system to ensure that citizens are globally literate, and that educating students internationally ... increase[s] understanding of cultural awareness of other cultures ...”

## **COURSE OUTCOMES:**

At the completion of this course students were expected to:

1. Gain understanding of international social work.
2. Gain understanding of social welfare policies and services within in a global context.
3. Understand the concepts of social justice, injustice, oppression, sustainable development, underdevelopment, poverty, colonialism, and colonization, pre-and-post colonialism, and globalization.
4. Understand the role of historical oppression and colonialism in creating and perpetuating poverty and inequality.
5. Learn in-depth about globalization and the role of the WTO, IMF, and World Bank on developing countries.
6. Critique the success of international social policies such as the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, and the Declaration of Human Rights to address human rights violations, poverty, and development in undeveloped countries, and the role of NGO's (Non-governmental Organizations) in sustainable development.
7. Investigate the rights and status of children, girls, and women in developing countries, and programs to improve conditions for these populations.
8. Describe what is advocacy and social action processes from an international perspective, examining models used in Ghana, W. Africa, to address unmet welfare social needs.
9. Describe social action and activism techniques used by social work professionals in developing countries, examining models used in Ghana, W. Africa, to affect social change to address unmet social welfare needs.
10. Gain knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of another culture different from
11. Explore and compare similarities and differences of a people and their culture and worldview different from one's own culture.
12. Complete a community service/learning project in a developing country.

## THE COURSE INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

- 1). Eight (8) classes prior to travel to Ghana and one (1) post-departure class two weeks after returning; Class reading assignments; lectures; guest speakers; videos; small and large group discussions; in-class presentations; exercises; and, a show and tell opportunity that consisted of people bringing in meals from their own culture the last day of class.
- 2). A class field trip to the Museum of Fine Arts to view the Asantehene Gold Exhibit from Kumasi (the Ashante Region), Ghana;
- 3). A Luncheon, titled “A Taste of Ghana”, where students from the two schools came together to get to know one another and to have lunch serving the kind of food they would be eating in Ghana.
- 4). Tours of historical and key sites such as the University of Ghana, the slave castles, Kakum National Park and Rain Forest, the Centre for National Culture, Prempeh II Jubilee Museum, and the Manhyia Palace and Museum, the Cultural Arts Centre, Aburi Gardens and wood carving factory, etc;
- 5). A Reception in our honor hosted by the U. S. Ambassador to Ghana, Honorable Pamela E. Bridgewater;
- 6). Rolling Workshops that included visits and tours of schools and agency’s (Pinnemang Preparatory and Junior Secondary School, Cape Coast School for the Deaf and Blind, the University of Ghana, and the Buduburam Refugee Settlement);
- 7). A tour of the GA District and village, and presentation by the Deputy Mayor of the GA District.
- 8). Seminars at the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana, on such topics as “Child Labor”, “The Family and the Role of Women in Ghana”, “Domestic Violence”, “Spirituality and Education”, etc.

Students from Simmons SSW & Michigan State University School of Social Work, Faculty, and Heads of social services agency’s.



## BACKGROUND OF GHANA, W. AFRICA

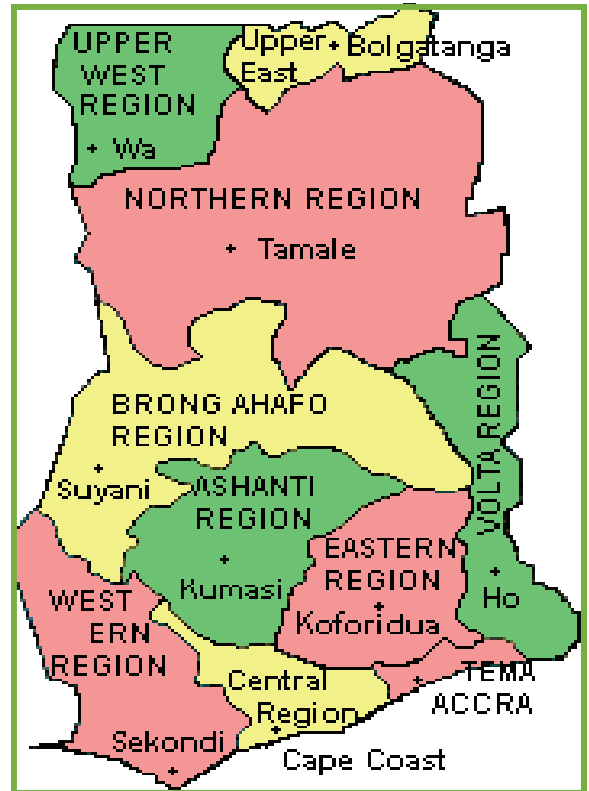
The republic of Ghana got its name from the ancient Ghana Empire in the Western Sudan, which fell in the 11th Century. Ghana, formerly known as the “Gold Coast”, is the first Black African colony in Sub-Sahara Africa to gain its independence from British colonial rule, on March 6, 1957.

On July 1, 1960 Ghana became a republic with Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah elected as its first president.

Ghana is located in West Africa with the Atlantic Ocean to the south, Togo to the East, Cote d'Ivoire to the West and Burkina Faso to the North. Ghana lies within the tropics and on the Greenwich Meridian. Ghana has a tropical climate, characterized most of the year by moderate temperatures that range between 70 – 90 degrees F, with constant breezes and lots of sunshine.

Ghana was the first place in Sub-Sahara Africa where Europeans arrived to trade, first in gold and later in slaves. Today, Ghana is a very stable, vibrant country, with the main exports being gold, diamonds, cocoa, timber, and tuna, rice, bauxite, aluminum, and manganese ore. The GNI per capita is US \$380 (World Bank, 205).

Accra, the capital of Ghana, is a very vibrant, busy, cosmopolitan city.



Independence Square, downtown Accra, Ghana.



An aerial view overlooking downtown, Accra, Ghana.

Ghana is considered a stable, harmonious, peaceful, and beautiful country. About the size of Oregon, Ghana has a rich, natural heritage, tradition, and history. The population size of Ghana is approximately 21.8 million (UN, 2005). Life expectancy is approximately 56 years for men and 57 years for women (UN, 2005).

In 1960 roughly 100 linguistic and cultural groups were recorded in Ghana. The subdivisions of each group share a common cultural heritage, history, language, and origin. The major ethnic groups in Ghana include the Akan, Ewe, Mole-Dagbani, Guan, and Ga-Adangbe. There are over 60 language groups in Ghana and about 7 different languages that are used: English, Akan, Ewe, Ga, Hausa and Dagbani. About 9 different languages are used in the school system of Ghana. And, in terms of religion, the major religions in Ghana consist of Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs.

## **FACTS ABOUT GHANA**

<b>Population:</b>	21.8 million (UN, 2005)
<b>Capital:</b>	Accra
<b>Area:</b>	92,098 sq miles
<b>Major languages:</b>	English; African languages including Twi, Akan, Ga, Hausa, and Ewe
<b>Major religions:</b>	Christianity; indigenous beliefs; Islam
<b>Life expectancy:</b>	56 years (men); 57 years (women)
<b>Main exports:</b>	Gold, diamonds, cocoa, timber, tuna, bauxite, aluminum, manganese and ore .
<b>GNI per capita:</b>	US \$380 (World Bank, 2005)
<b>Monetary unit:</b>	Cedi

**For complete information on Ghana, see: <http://www.ghanaweb.com>**



## THE GHANA EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The Ghana educational system is modeled after the British system. Ghana recently instituted a new education policy making it compulsory for children to attend school at least through the junior high school years. Many children, however, do not attend school because of poverty and their parent's inability to pay the expenses to send their children to school (e.g., they cannot purchase school uniforms and school supplies). Many children are engaged in child labor practices to help support their family.



Students at the Pinamang Preparatory & Junior Secondary School in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. SSW students, Morgan Wells (left), Maria D'Addeico, Matt Sweeney, and Tsisit Moyo.



A Junior Secondary School student writing her lessons.

## POVERTY IN GHANA

Poverty in Ghana is considered to be extremely high. While Ghana is considered one of the most prosperous countries in Africa, with a stable and vibrant economy, many people are unemployed or work in the low wage sector. The countries infrastructure is typical of most un/der-developed countries (poor roads and highways, limited electricity both in and outside of the urban centers, and unsanitary water conditions etc.



Unlike most industrialized nations, Third World countries provide very little in the way of social insurance programs for its neediest citizens.

There are no public welfare programs such as income transfers, food stamps, housing subsidies, or other social welfare subsidies. So, people are encouraged to become entrepreneurs, artisans, unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled laborers, public servants, and professionals.

Families and extended relatives are responsible for helping one another in time of need. Family is very important in African culture and each member is responsible for other members, even distant relatives. Also, the African sense of community extends beyond the family to the village, which is seen almost as an extended family (Gannon).





According to Cox and Pawar (2006), “poverty is termed the most significant problem confronting the modern world today” (161), where one’s capacity to survive and provide for their family is greatly impaired (Dixon and Macarov, 1998, p. 4).

Cox and Pawar further state that:

One third of the world’s population significantly affected by poverty (p. 161) and one quarter of the world’s population remain in severe poverty (p. 163). Of the world’s 6 billion people, 2.8 billion live on less than \$2.00 per day, and 1.2 on less than \$1.00 a day (p. 164). Less than \$2.00 a day constitutes poverty, and less than \$1.00 extreme poverty.

Most of the poor live in Third World countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America and [the Caribbean], where the typical standard of living is so far below that of the industrialized countries. Many lack adequate nutrition, shelter, and clothing, and are susceptible to disease and early mortality ... and the margin separating them from catastrophe is thin.”

## **UNEMPLOYMENT:**

The unemployment rate in the country is very high, particularly for those living in the rural areas, and wages for most of the employed are considered below the minimum standard to provide for one’s family. Those who are employed in the public service sector often complain that their salary is not sufficient to live at a relatively modest level of comfort.

# **QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS**

## **WHY DID YOU REGISTER FOR THIS COURSE?**

“I decided to register for this course because I have an interest in working with refugees and wanted to gain a greater understanding of international social work and the needs of this population.”

“When I heard about the opportunity to study in Ghana and to learn about another culture, I was excited ... My initial concerns was that there was not going to be the time to fully experience everything and in turn have the opportunity to develop as much as I or we were capable of based upon the time limitations. However ... I felt that ... the opportunity would be enough to spark growth that could be continued once I returned because I work with a multi-cultural population.”

“After some processing, I have begun to see how my perspective have developed and to have further insight into how poverty, multi-culturalism, and how the American perspective on the world affects our client population.”

## **WHAT DID YOU LEARN IN THIS COURSE?**

“I learned a tremendous amount in this course!

“In regards to social policy, I feel I just skimmed the surface of all there is to learn and to know. For example, when we met at the Chief’s office in Amassaman (GA District), I was really surprised to hear from them that sand-bandits were the worst problem the town faced. This answer incorporated so many levels of need — in relation to public health, child safety, community relations, etc. It is this kind of discussion that I wish we had more time to explore because I learned a little about a lot of different things.”

“I learned a lot about myself and my capacity to live in an under-developed country.

“ ... it seems that AIDS is presented as more of a family issue in Ghana than in the USA and I think it is something we can learn from in our own campaign against the disease.”

“Looking at this course from a policy and advocacy perspective, it is easier now to understand the difficulties, barriers, and complications for developing countries to develop an ability to solve problems of poverty, development, health and other world issues.”

- 9). Service Learning/Community Service Project(s) that included the following:
- a). Work with parents, teachers, and pre-school children at the First Lady's Early Learning Centers.
  - b). Service learning projects were located at three different agency sites, where three to four Simmons students were assigned together to one agency:
    - (1). The West Africa Aids Foundation (WAAF) where four (4) students were assigned to work on a research project on HIV/AIDS, organized by a Market Research firm who worked in conjunction with the Human Resources Department at a major bank. Students were assigned to interview employees at the bank (line staff, tellers, supervisors, managers), to gather baseline data that will in turn be used for public education and prevention on HIV/AIDS in Ghana;
    - (2). A domestic violence unit attached to the Headquarters of the Ghana Police Services and the Child Welfare Department; and,
    - (3). The social services department of a general hospital (Police Hospital), the pediatrics, OB/GYN, internal medicine inpatient departments and the out-patient clinic.
- 10). An Advocacy Project that consisted of a student fund raising activity.



Seminar at the School of Social Work; Dr. Michael Williams (left) Dr. Stephen Ayidiya (right), Director, School of Social Work.



## WHAT WAS THE OVERALL EXPERIENCE LIKE FOR YOU?

“There were things that I took away from the trip that I hadn’t expected to — for example, I learned to appreciate new things, such as sidewalks and closed sewers and seemingly simple things. And yet, I realize that what seems simple here in the USA and other developed countries are really a huge infrastructure piece of a society.”

“I learned to appreciate things about my life that I could not have imagined previous to the trip. Physically the heat hit me quite hard. I was expecting it to be a difficult adjustment but I don’t think anything could have prepared me for how exhausting and mood altering the heat could be.

“When I first learned that the classes would be between the hours of 6—9 PM, I thought how in the world would I sit so long in one class! However, I must say the I found the classes to be very informative, exciting, and I enjoyed them.”

“My overall experience was very good. I am a more knowledgeable person because of the information I have obtained from the course. This newly found knowledge will make me a better person and a better clinician. “

“I have seen how systems work for the good and bad of a community and I have seen poverty. “

“There is nothing I would have done differently to enhance or support my learning experience.”

“I feel that part of why this trip has given me mixed emotions towards the end is because it has taught me a lot and has been such fun.”

“There is a lot of information to sift through and process!”

“I had a fantastic time! I enjoyed all the people in our group and learned a lot by processing things with them. I enjoyed being challenged in conversations about boundaries, cultural norms, race relations, etc. I am very grateful to have had this opportunity and only hope future students will have the same chance through Simmons ...”

“I feel somewhat invested in Ghana. In some ways I feel like I am a social worker to Ghana ... I want to see the country thrive and see its people succeed.”

## **REACTION TO CULTURAL DIFFERENCES**

“The culture shock after returning home was a little weird. I found myself appreciative of little things, such as being able to walk on sidewalks and take the T. I had no idea how much I would miss my family until I spoke to them for the first time while I was in Ghana. After getting home, I was happy for every second I could spend with my nieces and nephew. I even found myself volunteering to change diapers (that phase has since passed). Now I find myself randomly missing people or places in Ghana. I feel that this opportunity helped me to learn more about myself as a social worker, as well as different types of social work. I was glad to be able to see how social work is handled in another country and to be able to see how their needs differ from ours. I often hear from social workers here about how big their caseload is and how hard it is to manage 60 clients, but going to Ghana and knowing that social workers there carried caseloads of thousands of clients made me definitely appreciate life here, as well as better sympathize for people in Ghana. Since being back, I have found myself able to better relate to my African co-workers, well, at least the ones from Ghana. We even bonded over the World Cup. Although the trip hurt me financially, I will never regret my time in Ghana or the people I went with.”

“ ... I wish we had more time to spend there. I was very glad to have been able to go to Ghana with the people that I did and go during the time that I went”

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY ABROAD OPPORTUNITIES AT SIMMONS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

“... [T] course could be structured in a way that would allow students to be in Ghana for a longer period of time, [for a minimum of] at least three weeks, and spend time in ... placements for longer period of time ...”

“It would be great if Simmons had a partnership with the University or with the social welfare office [in Ghana] to have this count as a field training experience for students who would want to come to Ghana for a [semester long] field experience. I know there are some students who would come to Ghana and work at the social welfare office or refugee camp for a semester if the opportunity were offered or allowed. Hopefully this is something that could happen.”

“Although I learned an awful lot in a short period of time, I feel this course should be four or six weeks long. Two and a half weeks was not enough time to learn in-depth about the topics and just skimmed the surface.

# **PHOTO GALLERY**

# “A TASTE OF GHANA” LUNCHEON

Lunch prepared by Mercy & Carlton Parkinson of Mercy's African Tours



Left to right: Sherdena Cofield, Director, Urban Leadership Program, Carol Bonner, Associate Dean and, Aidan and Angela Elias.



Left to Right: Jeff Elias, Registration Coordinator, Dr. Joyce Hope Scott, Faculty Leader, Wheelock College & Jackie Jenkins-Scott, President, Wheelock College.



# PARTICIPANTS



From Left to right: Kate Allen, Barbara Lomax, Beverly Sealey (Faculty Leader), Matthew Sweeney, Paula Thompson, and TTour Guide, Paul Apiah.



From left to right: Tsitsi Moyo, Paula Thompson, Barbara Lomax, staff, Beverly Sealey (Faculty Leader) Sofia Fotakis, staff, Liala Buoniconti.



An afternoon at the LaBardi Beach Hotel. Hotel Lobby.



Sunday afternoon lunch at the Next Door Beachfront restaurant.





Morgan Wells shopping at the gift shop at the Cultural Centre.



A game of Oware after lunch at the Cultural Centre. From left to right: Alicia Roberto, Paula Thompson performing a balancing act with the Oware wood carving on her head, that holds the game pieces.

**SSW STUDENTS ENGAGED IN A SERVICE LEARNING/  
COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT AT THE EARLY LEARN-  
ING CENTERS, FOUNDED BY THE FIRST LADY OF  
GHANA, NANA KUFOUR**



Matthew Sweeney with students at the Early Learning Center.



Parent education workshop at the Early Learning on hygiene, hand washing, and prevention of illness, lead by Claudette Golden.



SSW students who volunteered at the Early Learning Center in the GA District of Accra Ghana. This school is an early childhood education facility founded by the First Lady of Ghana, Nana Ku-four. School of Social Work students conducted lessons in the classes, read stories, and assisted the teacher(s) with activities.



STATUE OF “MOTHER & CHILD” AT THE EARLY LEARNING CENTER

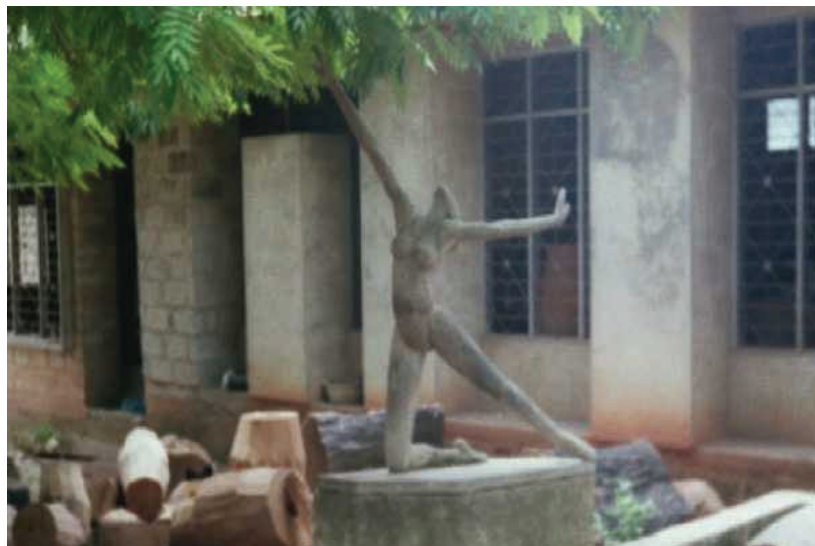


SSW STUDENTS VISIT THE CAPE COAST SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF, CAPE COAST, GHANA



A lesson in ASL is provided to SSW students by students at the Cape Coast School for the Deaf and Blind. SSW from left to right, are Maria D’Addeico (left, second row), Barbara Lomax (center, front row), Kate Allen (left, third row), Paula Thompson (rear), Tsitsi Moyo (standing), Sofia Fotakis (rear, right), Liala Buoniconti, (right, second row), and Matt Sweeney (right, front row).

## CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA





# THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



SEMINAR FOR SIMMONS SSW, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SSW & MICHIGAN STATE  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS AT THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

## ABURI BOTANICAL GARDENS



Left to right: Dr. Joyce Hope Scott, Faculty Leader, Wheelock College, Joan Qualls Harris and Morgan Wells, Simmons SSW participants, listening to a lecture.



From left to right: A Wheelock College student, Dr. Bill Thompson (faculty at Wheelock College, and wife, Simmons Student Barbara Lomax, and Wheelock student.



## A VISIT TO THE KUMASI REGION OF GHANA, AND TOUR OF THE CHIEF'S PALACE



Kate Allen, student, sitting quietly outside the Manhyia Palace, observing the peacocks, and reflecting while waiting for the group.

## BUDUBARAM LIBERIAN REFUGEE SETTLEMENT CAMP, KOSOVA

Two sisters living at the Buduram Liberian Refugee Camp (age 17 and 13). Recipients of the scholarship funds raised by SSW students.



Dorothy Kumah (Center, front) , a social worker at the Camp, leading a workshop for unwed, teenage parents.



## A VISIT TO THE KUMASI REGION OF GHANA



A typical street in Kumasi.



**Scene from the Cape Coast Slave Castle  
Coast, Ghana, W. Africa.**





# SEAPORTS



**TEMA, GHANA, W. AFRICA**

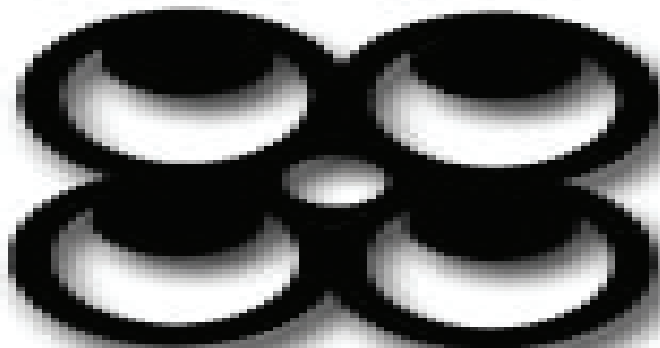


**CAPE COAST, GHANA**



## **“MATE MASIE”**

THE NETSIE ADINKRA SYMBOL OF THE AKAN PEOPLE  
OF W. AFRICA



**“WHAT I HEAR, I KEEP”**

**KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM & PRUDENCE**