New Grad Assistant Links Center to Zomba, Malawi Project

Tholani with President Hogan and Malawi visitors Mussa Mwale (far left) and Charles Kalemba, Zomba CEO (far right). We are pleased to announce the appointment of Ph.D. student Tholani Hlongwa as Graduate Assistant for the Center’s public engagement program: Understanding Malawi in Urbana. The initiative is part of the Sister Cities’ project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which has linked Urbana to the Malawi District of Zomba.

Tholani has been with the Center since 2001 as a Zulu instructor. However, her new post will include outreach to local schools to try to help inject a better understanding of Africa into the curriculum. As a student in the Department of Curriculum and Development, Tholani is perfectly placed for this work. The first part of her project involves designing curriculum which conforms to Illinois State standards around the galimoto. For those not familiar with the term, a galimoto is a toy car, made from scrap wire. (see photo at right) Young boys in many African countries, including Malawi, design these and sometimes sell them at local markets. Tholani will be teaching Urbana students how to make a galimoto according to scientific principles but will also use the making of these toy cars as a way of exploring the culture and economic realities of children in Malawi. In the future Tholani will work with local teachers to develop more such curriculum modules and will become involved in other aspects of the Sister Cities effort, especially the initiatives to support development of better water and sanitation in Zomba.