



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Ricks' Principal Appointed to the Faculty of Mercer University**

**4 June 2009**, Ricks Institute, Virginia, Liberia—During the opening assembly this morning at Ricks Institute, Principal Olu Q. Menjay, PhD, received a formal letter from Mercer University President William D. Underwood appointing him as an assistant professor in the Roberts Department of Christianity in Mercer's College of Liberal Arts.

Dr. Richard F. Wilson, Chair of the Roberts Department of Christianity at Mercer, delivered the appointment letter and made the public announcement. Reading from the letter, Wilson shared the words of President Underwood with the Ricks community: "You are, Dr. Menjay, a stunning example of a *Mercerian*. Your important work in Liberia at the Ricks Institute brings hope to our world. Your commitments to Mercer through your cooperation and leadership in Mercer on Mission is a model for our faculty and students. It is, therefore, apt that you return to your *alma mater* as a member of the faculty of The Roberts Department of Christianity."

Wilson added his own praise of his former student, recalling that Menjay was a hard-working student who knew the importance and value of his education. He added that Menjay is a living testimony to what can happen when people make lasting relationships. "You have been a loyal *Mercerian*," Wilson said, "and today we honor the bridge of friendship between Mercer University and Ricks Institute. Let us hope together that the bridge stands for years to come and will make it possible for our schools to grow together as we hold the light of education in our darkened world."

In addition to the letter of appointment Wilson presented Menjay with a replica of the Jesse Mercer Plaza, a landmark on Mercer's campuses in Macon and Atlanta, Georgia. "Now there is a Jesse Mercer Plaza at Ricks, too," Wilson said. "Let this figurine remind you that big dreams live longer than the dreamers and that the power of big dreams rests upon memory of what was and hope for what can be when dreams inspire new generations."

Menjay's appointment to the Mercer faculty is a bold innovation. Menjay will continue in his position as the Principal and CAO of Ricks Institute, a position he has had since 2005. The appointment also formalizes Menjay's work over the last two years with the Mercer on Mission program initiated by President Underwood when he became Mercer's leader in 2006.

Mercer on Mission is an ambitious program that combines a rigorous study abroad experience with a thoughtful service learning component. Now in its third year, Mercer on Mission makes it possible for faculty and students to spend a minimum of three weeks during the summer in a developing country. Students complete six hours of academic work and complete a service project appropriate to the needs of the host country.

Menjay taught in the Mercer on Mission experience in 2008 and is co-teaching with Wilson in 2009 as a field trip coordinator for a course exploring the issues of peace and reconciliation in post-war Liberia. This year all of the Mercer on Mission students come from Mercer's Tift College of Education. Ten students and one faculty member from Tift College will work together with Ricks elementary school faculty for four full weeks. For the last three weeks of the Mercer on Mission: Liberia 2009 experience the students will be joined by four mentor teachers from Georgia who will observe, evaluate and encourage the students. The mentor teachers also will conduct workshops for the Ricks faculty who teach K through 12 grades.

**About Ricks:** Ricks Institute, established in 1887, is a dynamic and comprehensive learning center (K-12) that attracts students from all over Liberia and beyond. Since 2006, the institution remains the only private school in Liberia offering free primary education to its students. As a community and nationally recognized school in Liberia, Ricks has 560 students with 210 residential students. Additionally, it operates a free Accelerated Learning Program in the afternoon with 125 (over aged) students. The school is located in Virginia, Liberia on some 1200 acres of land. For more information, visit [www.ricksonline.org](http://www.ricksonline.org).