Mandela Fellows
African leaders learn skills at Purdue

BY SAM PORTERFIELD
Summer Reporter

A major organizer of the program responsible for bringing young African professionals to study at Purdue said that the 25 business leaders are taking full advantage of the University's resources.

“I think the fellows have been pleasantly surprised with the breadth of expertise we have on campus – especially in that we have faculty and staff with significant experience working in Africa,” said Anne Dare, the academic director of the Mandela Washington Fellowship at Purdue. “The fellows really value the lessons learned from individuals who have experience in contexts closer to that in their own countries.”

The Mandela Washington Fellowship is part of President Barack Obama’s Young African Leaders Initiative. Thousands of young entrepreneurs applied for the fellowship from all across Africa, but only 1,000 were selected as finalists. Purdue is hosting 25 of those finalists who have a focus on agriculture and engineering. This year is the first year that Purdue was chosen to host the fellowship.

The fellows are in the midst of their third week at Purdue. They will be spending a total of six weeks here learning from professionals at Purdue and gaining hands-on experience around the community. The fellows hope to gain knowledge and skills from the program that will help them grow their prospects at home.

Djeneba Ouane and Simon Malugu plant at the Clegg botanical gardens on June 29th. For more comments from the scholars, see Page 8.

Jules Malonga Bibila, a fellow from the Republic of Congo, said, “I have come here to gain skills in agriculture. I know in Indiana farming is really developed. I would like to see and meet and talk to people who are experienced in farming, and gain knowledge from them. I'm a small scale farmer, but maybe within ten years I can (work on a) larger scale. This is a great opportunity for me to see how (Indiana farmers) manage it.”

Up to this point most of the activities the fellows have taken part in have been focused on agriculture, but in the coming weeks they will become more involved on the engineering side of Purdue.

At the end of their six weeks here, the fellows will fly to Washington D.C. for a presidential summit.