



## Brief History

The dream to put-up a unique Institute of Infectious Diseases at the University of Nairobi that resembles those in Europe and North America went all the way back to the mid-1990s. If done as envisaged in the dream, the Institute was going to be a home to one of the only three high level laboratory (enhanced level 3) in the whole of Africa (Johannesburg, South Africa has a level 4 laboratory and Gabon in West Africa has enhanced level 3 laboratory). Dr. Francis Plummer, a Canadian researcher from University of Manitoba who came to Kenya in early 1980s as part of the collaboration between University of Manitoba and University of Nairobi was the one who envisaged the dream. In 1980, the Department of Medical Microbiology, University of Nairobi and Department of Medical Microbiology, University of Manitoba had started a collaboration to study Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Nairobi. By early 1990s the collaboration had grown to include other international Universities from Europe and America and the research work involved had become extensive and complex that it was felt that the work could no longer be handled at the Departmental level. Hence the need to create an Institute of Tropical and Infectious diseases that could handle research on diseases people in Kenya, East Africa and the region.

In the mid 1990s a team from University of Nairobi and University of Manitoba put together a proposal to look for funding to build the institute. For three years no funding came through and the idea of the institute was shelved temporarily. However, in 1999 University of Manitoba team lead by Dr. Plummer presented the proposal to the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) competition. To everyone's surprise CFI agreed to fund the building of the institute. Immediately the approval process to set-up an institute at the College of Health Sciences, University of Nairobi was initiated and towards the end of 2003, the University of Nairobi of Nairobi senate and council approved the establishment of a virtual Institute to be house at the College of Health Sciences. The institute was named as the University of Nairobi Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (UNITID). The institute was created as a virtual institute and therefore, officially able to attract diverse scientists and scholars highly accomplished in their respective areas of expertise such as basic sciences, social and behavioral sciences; epidemiology and biostatistics; from local and international research and training institutions. In the same year, Prof. George Magoha and Prof. J. O. Ndinya Achola journeyed to Ottawa, Canada to witness the signing of the funding agreement between CFI, University of Manitoba and University of Nairobi.

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