Greetings from the Editor’s Desk by Deepak Aralumallige

The academic year has ended and this is our final issue of volume 3 for 2007-2008. I hope everyone have learnt a lot during the academic year. It was a great experience for me to work for ISU.

Needless to say that our executive committee has worked a lot in not only getting ISU out of dormancy but also organizing many informative and fun activities during the past academic year.

For the next year, Cecilia Martinez Gomez will be taking over as the newsletter editor. Cecilia is an undergraduate student majoring in communications. In fact Cecilia’s finger prints are already visible on this issue. You can get acquainted with her country Paraguay in this issue. This issue is about opportunities for international students at WSU. Read about Natasha’s experience being an orientation leader. Or flip through Arvin’s ideas about sharing your own culture through the Cultural Ambassador’s Program (CAP). Vitaly, a very active Student Government Association member will also give you a perspective about his experiences as an international person in the supreme student body on campus. We also try to regularly inform our readers with international student enrollment every semester.

Recently there are many changes in the Optional Practical Training (OPT), check out page 3 for the details of OPT and international students information for Summer 2008. THANK YOU.

Deepak Aralumallige (India) is a Ph.D. student in Mathematics and can be reached at deepak@math.wichita.edu

Orientation Leader by Natasha Olinetchouk

I wanted to become an orientation leader from the moment I came to the International Orientation. I saw all those people, orientation leaders, who were in the middle of the action – helping, guiding other students, smiling and looking like they were having a really good time. I have always liked to be around people, so I thought this would be a great opportunity for me.

I was right. To me, being an orientation leader is not only about being around people, but also helping people. I remember how unusual everything was and how difficult it was to get used to the new way of life when I came to United States. It was a blessing to be able to share this experience with the new students.

The work of the orientation leader is not difficult: they are required to attend an informational meeting a few days before orientation, and then be present at the orientation greeting new students, checking them in and handing out necessary information.

The most important thing is to remember how it felt to be a new student and be friendly. Anybody can be an orientation leader. Applications are available in the Garvey International Center at the end of each semester.

People who get chosen are outgoing and friendly persons so it’s really easy to make friends within this group. The new students always appreciate the friendly faces and kindliness of the staff who works at the orientation. The orientation leaders help to make the International Orientation a successful event.

Natasha (Russia) is a Masters student of Opera Performance and can be reached at nxolinetchouk@wichita.edu
A Way to Share a Culture by Arvin John Filoteo Cruz

“N o man is an island” — Anonymous.

This has been a famous saying stating that no one lives in isolation in this world. With a population of approximately 5.5 billion, it is hard to be alone anymore.

The moment you step out of the house you tend to meet people from all walks of life and it is easy to discern that we are all different and yet live in a common place. This can be paralleled to culture – a mass of people believing in the same ideology and traditions. I myself have come from a Filipino culture of Asian descent with an influence of Hispanic and American tradition. Wow! Why can it be? That is because people have shared their culture which equates to ‘no culture is isolated’ any longer. It is this global trend that fascinated me and decided to make a difference through the Cultural Ambassador’s Program (CAP) sponsored by the Office of International Education at Wichita State University.

Through CAP, I am able to share my culture, country values, intellect and standards to the rest of the world starting with our networks in Wichita. As cultural ambassador, I am privileged to share my culture in a form of a country presentation to St. Thomas Aquinas Elementary school 6th and 7th graders. It is interesting for me to see how much they know and not know about my country. More so, it has been an opportunity for me to share Filipino standards through a Foreign Policy talk to the Model U.N. students at the Political Science Department and through a colloquium at the Anthropology Department.

The Cultural Ambassador’s Program has also offered volunteer opportunities for me to take part in events such as the Tallgrass Film Festival where I served as Theater Manager and Assistant to Print Traffic Manager.

In collaboration with United Way, we also have an opportunity to help out in communities and schools throughout Wichita — a way for me to share country values to American Society. CAP has also helped me learn cultures from other countries through my fellow Cultural Ambassadors. This includes Chinese New Year’s celebration, Malawi culture and Socio-civic roles of Women in Jordan, Russia, Hong Kong and India.

Through Interfest, I am able to taste food from different cultures and hopefully, learn to incorporate that in my diet rather than just taking food out from McDonald’s or Spangles. These are just some of the exciting opportunities that the Cultural Ambassador’s Program has to offer. But the one token that I really treasured from it is the expanded network of people that I have established and I never thought I would meet PLUS the lifelong friendships I have developed. So, got some culture to share?

Arvin (The Philippines) is a Ph.D. student in Chemistry and can be reached at agucer@wichita.edu

Republic of Paraguay by Cecilia B. Martinez Gomez

Historical Profile

P araguay, formerly called “The Giant Province of the Indies”, was born as a result of the encounter of the Spanish conquerors with the native Guaraní indigenous groups. The meeting of these two distinct cultures was a process that assumed very particular characteristics here, that differs from all its neighbors in South America. One living manifestation of this process is expressed in the use of two languages, Spanish and Guaraní, concurrently throughout the country and legally enshrined by the Constitution. Starting in the 15th century, Paraguay became the main route to the Americas. The city of Asunción has been traditionally known as “Mother of Cities”, serving as a place from where the Spaniards departed to found new Colonies. The Franciscans, arrived in Paraguay in the second half of the 16th Century and they founded several communities throughout the country. They consolidated the life style of locals and the daily use of both, the Spanish and Guaraní Languages. Some of these works of art can be seen in the churches and museums of the cities of Capiatá, Yaguarón, Itá, Altos, Caazapá, Atyrá, Ypane, Piribeyuy, and Tobatí, just a short ride from Asunción. A substantial chapter in the history of the country was the presence of the missionaries of the “Company of Jesus” (Jesuits) (1609 - 1768), as it was one of the great utopian period experiences involving the Reductions of Guaraní Tribes. Important testimonies in the country left from that time are: the Ruins of Santísima Trinidad and Jesus (declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO), San Ignacio Guazú, San Cosme and San Damián, Santiago, Santa Maria and Santa Rosa. Arts and music flourished during this period and left an artistic legacy of supreme beauty also known as the “Guaraní Baroque”.

The post Jesuit era was characterized by the decrease of population in the Reductions until they were totally abandoned. The balance based on the reciprocity and redistribution, main Jesuit–Guaraní model characteristic was broken due to the spiritual and human power separation. Paraguay becomes independent from Spain in 1811. A Provisional Government is created and ever since, the country has been through different periods including two wars, dictatorships, democratic transition and finally constitutional regimes.

Geographical Situation

Paraguay, the heart of South America, is a landlocked country located between latitudes 19º 18’ S and 27º 36’ S and longitude 59º 19’ W and 62º 38’ W. It borders on the Northern side with Bolivia and Brazil, on the Eastern side with Brazil
International Graduate Enrollment Drops to 10 Year Low for Spring 2008 Semester – Based on Fall Semester Report by Office of International Education

Starting with Spring 2002, the WTC 9/11 incident impacted several US universities in their international enrollment. At most universities, the impact lowered their international enrollment for several years. However, at WSU the trends showed mixed results. The international undergraduate enrollment has rebounded from a low Spring 2003 enrollment, it has now surpassed the pre-9/11 levels – the highest international undergraduate enrollment in ten years. On the other hand, the international graduate enrollment has dropped 274 students or 34% since the Graduate School's peak in Spring 2003. As far as new students were concerned, the undergraduate enrollment stood at 196 students (an increase of 12.6%) while the graduate enrollment stood at 54 students (a decrease of 33.3%) as compared to the Spring 2007 semester. The total number of new international students at WSU for Spring 08 compared to 07 showed a decrease of 2.00%.

However, when pooled with current international students, the figures were encouraging. There was a 19.5% increase in undergraduate international students to 759 and only a 13.9% drop in graduate students to 527 students for Spring 08. Also, when pooled together, the total number of international students at WSU during Spring 08 stood at 1,286 (an increase of 3.1% when compared to Spring 07).

Courtesy: Mr. Vincent Altum, Associate Director, Marketing, Recruitment, & Admissions, Office of Int. Education.

Important Change in Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Beginning 2008, there are some significant changes in OPT laws that will affect all International Students seeking post graduation employment in the U.S. OPT can be filed only up to 3 months before the degree program ends, or 2 months after the program end date. For STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) majors, the one-time extended OPT of a total of 29 months is allowed only with companies that have an E-verify program and applied before their current OPT expires. A student on OPT with an H-1B pending in their name (accepted within the quota for that year) gets an automatic extension of status till the pending H-1B is approved or denied.

Students employed while on OPT should report their employer's details to the institution/school from which the graduated and applied for OPT.

There is an unemployment limit. For a 12 month OPT status, the student cannot accrue more than 90 days or unemployment (before, and/or between jobs). For a 29 month OPT, the limit is 120 days.

To get more information about new rules of Optional Practical Training (OPT) visit the Office of International Education Web site:

www.wichita.edu/international

Go to the link “Current Students.” You will find the announcement of the OPT extension and the OPT validation Project.

(From PARAGUAY PAGE 2)

and Argentina, on the Southern side with Argentina, and on the Western side with Bolivia and Argentina. The average Summer temperature is between 25°C and 35°C while the average Winter temperatures is between 10°C and 20°C.

Departments
Alto Paragu, Alto Paraná, Amambay, Boquerón, Caaguazú, Caazapá, Canindeyú, Central, Concepción, Guairá, Itapúa, Cordillera, Misiones, Neembucú Paraguári, Presidente Hayes and San Pedro.

Weather
Tropical to Subtropical
Average Temperature: 25°C to 35°C during Summer and 10°C to 20°C during Winter.

Population
6,068,000 inhabitants.

Official Languages
Spanish and Guarani.

Religion

Government
Republic. Representative Democracy. The Executive Power (Presidential System), the two-chambers Legislature Power (Senators and Deputies) and the Judiciary.

Nature
Green and dense forests, sheer and aggressive hills, impressive falls, lagoons, cascades, rivers, creeks, parks, and natural reserves with rich flora and varied fauna, both with exotic species, make of Paraguay a singular tourist destination.

Other great attractions of the country include the native fauna and flora with 167 mammals, 701 birds, 100 reptiles, 46 amphibians, 230 fish, 100,000 invertebrate species, 13,000 vascular plants, 298 trees and shrubs distributed in 767 species.
Dear International Students:

I would like to encourage you to join the Wichita State University Student Government Association, one of the most powerful and prestigious student organization on campus. Involvement in the Student Government Association carries with it many benefits for the international student. As a senator, you will acquire a valuable experience in leadership and communications, and will prepare yourself for the challenges of the real world.

For instance, you will have an opportunity to meet with numerous campus administrators and to discuss with them important campus issues. Also, you will build a large social network of students, faculty, and staff. Student government is a great place to meet new people and build friendships; this is especially important for you as an international student because having a large network of friends makes your experience here in the US more enjoyable and fun.

Your experience in the association will distinguish you from many applicants for the scholarship you are applying for or the job you are dreaming of. Student involvement in extracurricular activities is highly valued by scholarship committees and employers and it is one of the factors that distinguish good applicants from bad ones.

Student Government Association offers you an opportunity to influence the international student body and the entire university in many ways. You can partake in the process of allocating the university student fees, which total over eight million dollars, to various student programs and organizations at WSU.

Also, you have the power to create programs that will benefit the international students at the university and to solve some of the problems they are facing. For example, as a senator you can advocate an increase in the amount of money allocated to the international student scholarship fund or to the Cultural Ambassador’s Program.

Another example is that you can create a program that you think might benefit the international students at our university and establish a fund for supporting it in the future.

As a former Senator at Large of the Student Government Association and member of numerous other student organizations, I found my involvement on campus and in the association a priceless experience.

I developed my leadership and communication skills, and had a chance to influence the WSU community in many ways. I expanded my social network and was blessed to acquire many good friends that are making my life here in the US fun and exciting. Also, I had the honor to be the recipient of numerous scholarships and awards as well as a great job offer!

Your decision to join the Student Government Association will be one of the best decisions you will ever make and one of your first steps towards a successful future.

Vitaly Eldani

Visit us at http://webs.wichita.edu/isu