

West Virginia State University Office of International Affairs Newsletter

Volume 10, Number 2 Fall 2008

West Virginia Delegation Travels to Prague to Compete in Geriolympics

"They say in life that you have one chance to achieve your dreams," stated Bert Smith, Activities Director and Coach at Cedar Ridge Nursing Home in Sissonville. "Well, this is that moment. And that is exactly what these athletes are living out here in Prague."

October 9, 2008 marks the historic date for West Virginia residents and other participants at Cedar Ridge and Heartland Nursing Homes who competed against Czech senor athletes from Domov Sue Ryder in Prague, Czech Republic. "To use a European analogy, this is like Don Quixote's 'To Dream the Impossible Dream," said Cedar Ridge Administrator, Jim Triana.

The Geriolympic competition was organized and coordinated by WVSU Professor of Health and Human Performance, Ted Muilenburg. Muilenburg has engaged in a number of projects with the University's Czech partner, Charles University, over the years that have included student exchanges, guest faculty lectures, and a grant project. Muilenburg also introduced Geriolympics to the Czech Republic three years ago in collaboration with Vit Kolar, a Ph.D. graduate of Charles University who currently practices physical therapy in the Czech Republic. "Vit traveled to Charleston twice to observe our Geriolympic games that have been ongoing for over twenty years. He launched the program at Domov Sue Ryder two years ago. The program was such a success that I figured we would challenge them with our best athletes and go for the gold," Muilenburg explained.

Cedar Ridge sent the following five athletes to Prague: Carol Tolliver, Peggy Cooper, Tracy Hodge, Dorothy Palmer, and Tony McClanahan. Heartland sent Dorothy Payter. Cedar Ridge Adminstrator, Jim Triana, and Heartland Recreational Therapist, Owen Walker, led a group of support staff and medical professionals as part of the delegation. WVSU was represented by Muilenburg, Director of International Affairs, James Natsis, Associate Director, Gus R. Douglass Institute, Bill Woodrum, Director of Communication, Gus R. Douglass Institute, Bob Loughry, and Communication Marketing Specialist, Gus R. Douglass Institute, Todd Beane. "I have traveled around the world in many capacities over the years, and have also been to Prague on three other occasions," stated Natsis, "but this trip had an incredible impact on me. I have a great deal of respect for the participants who looked after the athletes. Two of them were amputees, one being a double amputee, and I observed the genuine love and patience the crew displayed for their residents. The athletes were inspiring and resilient during the long journey and overcame the physical demands it required. I can truly state that no other short-term trip has enabled me to gain such insight into the human condition."



Heartland Resident, Dorothy Payter during an interview with the television network Cheska Televize

Inside this issue

ROTC and Peru Collaboration p. 3	Charleston Sister City Exploration p. 14
GRDI International Initiatives p. 4	Taste of Ethiopia p. 15
Partnership in Colombia p. 5	Voice of the Students p. 16
WV Advocates on Capitol Hill p. 8	Modern Foreign Language Notes p. 17

Experience of a Lifetime in an Ancient City

During spring break WVSU students joined communications professors Danny Boyd and Dr. Robin Boyd on their annual trip to Prague, Czech Republic. One of Eastern Europe's oldest cities, Prague plays host to a plethora of museums, nightlife, eateries, coffee shops, cathedrals, and magnificent architecture waiting to be explored. As copy editor for the *Yellow Jacket*, I was offered a scholarship to travel with the group and to have the experience of a lifetime.

Professor Boyd has been at the forefront of leading student groups abroad for many years. The trips which are scheduled during academic breaks offer an opportunity for students to learn about the world, its culture, and regional pastimes. Also, the trips are a great, inexpensive way

to experience a distinct vacation. The trip to Prague this year, which included airfare, lodging in the middle of the city, and a few meals during the week cost just over \$1500, which is the normal fare for an eight hour international flight from Detroit to Amsterdam.

The highlight of the trip for me was a visit to the nearby city of Pisek, where we solidified a relationship with the renowned film school FAMO. We were greeted by bilingual film students eager to display their short film productions and animation projects from past film festivals. Professor Boyd confided to me that he hopes that cooperating with the school will provide future international opportunities for students at "State."

The trip to Pisek also included a stop at The Vojna Memorial Mining Museum, a former prison camp established in 1947 for German war prisoners. It later became a labor camp for those in opposition to Communism. I will never forget this memorial. The eerie feeling that washed over me as I explored the compound where years of communist punishment and brutality occurred will exist in my memory forever. (This history is now a taboo subject among the Czech people.)

On a brisk, but pleasant evening, the group and I walked the cobblestone streets to Narodini Divaldo, one of Prague's beautiful opera theaters. Like much of the city, the building was erected several hundred years ago, yet it still represents milestones in architecture which are noted by its size, well preserved condition, and a perfect acoustical auditorium.

I also took advantage of the free time we were given to explore the city on my own terms. Our hostel was located in the middle of the city, which allowed me to walk the entire city with ease. I found myself, on most of the nights, walking around until early morning. It is hard to resist getting lost in the city's narrow, winding roads. As you walk, you are surrounded by the colorful and closely packed tall buildings which still stand, making the city a large maze. Each one of them is a historic work of art, kept contemporary by its ultra modern stores, shops, and restaurants. The only problem I experienced were after a few days, the uneven and unforgiving cobblestone streets began to take a toll on my ankles.



L - R: WVSU Director of Photographic Services, Todd Griffith, Cortney Wallace, Steve Wandling, and Lynn Ingram (front)

(continued on page 7)

ROTC Hosts Cadets from Peru

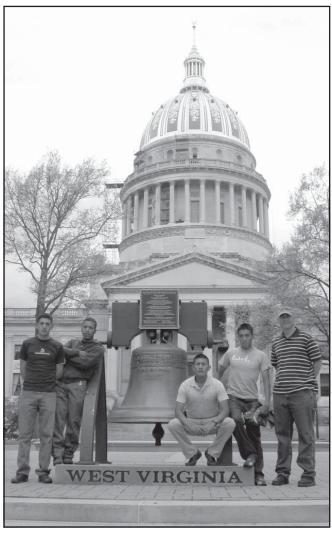
During the month of April, Cadets from the Escuela Militario de Chorrillos in Peru spent a week working and studying with members of the WVSU ROTC. The Chorillos military academy, which is viewed by many as the Peruvian West Point, sent four of their finest cadets who are listed among the top ten in their class. They included VINF Rocardo Bartolini Aguirre, VART Alberto Castro Barrantes, VINF Felix Ruiz Casanova, and VART Joan Quespe Libarbe.

The West Virginia National Guard responsible for placing the cadets at WVSU through an agreement with the Peruvian academy. The Guard seeks to place students in academic programs comparable to their learning environment at home. The focus is on military culture of the country visited and its application to home Upon their return, the Peruvian experiences. students are required to submit a detailed written report of their understanding of military practices at their host academy. Cadet Aguirre remarked on the dissimilarity in the two cultures but viewed his hosts as "very sociable." Some of the differences he noted were that ROTC students return to their home when they complete their day's training, whereas in Peru, they are interns who remain at the academy. "I also learned that the relationships between cadets and officers are different here than in Peru," he added. Cadet Barrantes was impressed by the amount of materials and equipment available to WVSU students. "Overall," he stated, "this has been very interesting, and I have a better understanding of how US military schooling is carried out."

The four visiting cadets were in the US for the first time and thus spoke limited English. It did not hinder their interactions, however. WVSU Cadet Edgar Velesquez served as translator for the group. He noted that although his family is from El Salvador, that there is a difference between the Spanish he learned here in the US, and the different colloquialisms used in Peru. ROTC Cadet Stephen Simmons also stated that "between my limited Spanish and Cadet Aguirre's limited English, we

manage to communicate on a basic level. Plus, we have access to the Rosetta Stone on-line language lessons, so I've been trying to improve."

During the interview for *Le Journal*, it was noted by the Peruvian and American cadets that language should be an important part of military training. It would be useful for deployment overseas or for future assignment exchanges such as the one experienced by the Escuela Militario de Chorrillos students at WVSU. They concluded that the acquisition of a strategic second language would almost certainly be useful at some juncture of their military career.



Peruvian cadets visit state capitol

Associate Dean of Gus R. Douglass Land-Grant Institute has Global Vision

The Gus R. Douglass Land-Grant Institute (GRDI) at West Virginia State University is a global educational operation with collaborative programs established in Mexico, England,

the Caribbean, the US, and Puerto Rico. Leading these outreach activities for the University is Associate Dean & Director of Business & Finance, Dr. Jose Ulises Toledo. whose future vision for the GRDI will include Canada. Colombia, Africa, and other European countries. Toledo is also attempting to establish a

'working group' of international programs among the 1890 Land-Grant institutions and has his sights set on strengthening the University's eco-tourism program with institutions in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Costa Rica.

Among the current international academic and research collaborations Dr. Toledo oversees are the College of the Bahamas, the Universidad Autonoma de Coahuila, the Universidad Autonoma de Chapingo, the Instituto Politecnico Nacional, and Exeter University. National affiliates include the

University of Puerto Rico, the University of Illinois, and the University of Georgia. While the main areas of academic activities include Environmental Remediation, Biofuels, and



Ulises Toledo (center) observes agricultural fields with Universidad Chapingo researchers

Environmental Biotechnology, the academic program established with the Universidad Autonoma de Chapingo focuses on waste management and energy production. During this academic year, Chapingo Professors Guadalupe Hernandez taught at the GRDI, and Teodoro Espinosa Solares is scheduled to conduct his second sabbatical year from October 2008 to September 2009. Arriving in the summer of 2009 will be three student interns.

While the current program with Mexico includes faculty exchanges and internship opportunities for students, Dr. Toledo explains that as of now, "We have more students wanting to come here than students wanting to go there because of the languages requirements. WVSU students who do participate in this program are generally science

majors interested in research in the Bioplex field, but I hope that in the future, there will be opportunities for economic and business majors to also participate. It is my wish that this publication sparks some interests in students to want to be a part of this unique program. It offers them a chance to be open

to different cultures while also establishing careers for a better future."

The Gus R. Douglass Institute of West Virginia State University focuses primarily on the development of land-grant research and outreach activities within the university and the communities served. It was established by the University in 2000.

By Edna Frimpong, English Major and Student Editor for **Le Journal**.

Summer Offers Opportunity to Develop Partnership with a University in Colombia

During the month of July, a partnership with the Universidad Autonoma (UA) in the city of Barranquilla, Colombia was discussed with UA's Director of Inter-Institutional Relations Yeison Corredor Bonilla, and Professor of Spanish, Alejandro Espinosa. WVSU representatives included Professor of Spanish, Dr. Miguel Zapata, and OIA Director, Dr. James Natsis. Zapata is a native of Barranquilla who returns to his homeland annually. Others in attendance at the meetings were Zapata's sister, Claudia Zapata Ferreira, who directs the Center of Pedagogical Development, and the Interim Rector, Tamid Turbay Echeverria, who hosted a dinner soiree featuring traditional music by a UA student Ensemble.

The WVSU and UA representatives identified several areas of interest that they will pursue over the next year. Among the projected activities is a summer Spanish language program designed primarily for Spanish teachers in West Virginia who are seeking to improve their Spanish language skills. Zapata would administer a proficiency test to place the teacher-students in classes at their proficiency level and possibly issue an oral proficiency interview following the American Council on the Teaching



James Natsis signs a partnership agreement with Interim Rector,
Tamid Turbay Echeverria

of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) guidelines. UA would provide classroom space, teaching personnel, and organize home stays with local families to intensify the language experience for the teachers. "We already instructed our counterparts that even if someone in the family speaks English they would not be allowed to do so with the guest," stated Zapata. The two institutions would also share research and video conferencing opportunities. "A WVSU faculty member has expressed strong interest in conducting research in Colombia next summer with a UA colleague of the same discipline," stated Natsis. Zapata has worked previously with UA in videoconferencing and conducted a Faculty Lecture this past September that was transmitted to the UA campus from the Educational Technology Center of the WVSU Gus R. Douglass Institute.

While in Colombia, the WVSU delegates also met with administrators at the Universidad del Norte in Barranquilla. The two institutions are exploring possible projects, notably Spanish summer immersion for WVSU students. "We sent one of our students to the Universidad del Norte a few years ago for their summer Spanish program. The student enjoyed the program and improved his Spanish quite

noticeably. This offers another option for us to explore over the next year," noted Zapata.

"Colombia is an exciting country, and the people are wonderful. Barranquilla is in the Atlantic coastal region and is approximately 90 minutes from Cartagena, a coastal city for tourism with a rich history and historic sites. It is an interesting area of the country, and our concerns for safety would be similar to those in any other part of Latin America," stated Natsis. "This is a country that has a lot to offer, and we look forward to developing a strong relationship with UA and the people of Barranquilla over the coming years," he concluded.

India Research Team Join WVSU Family

Umesh Reddy and Padma Nimmakayala are both from the city of Hyderabad in the south central region of India. According to Reddy, the city is known as "Genome Valley" because of the extensive biotech and genomic research activities in the area.

Reddy and Padma met in graduate school when they were both respectively working on their Masters and Ph.D. in Genetics. They were later employed at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research that, according to Padma, "is the Indian equivalent of the US Department of Agriculture here in the United States." Reddy was specializing in rice research,

while his wife was working on oil seed research.

In the fall of 1997, Reddy accepted a two-year Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship to Texas A&M University (TAMU). Padma accepted a Post-Doc position at TAMU as well. "The fellowship is very prestigious and offered a great opportunity for us," stated Reddy. Once his fellowship was completed, he continued at TAMU as an Assistant Research Scientist. Padma stayed on as a Post-Doc.

In the fall 2001, Alcorn State University launched a new MS in Biotechnology program through collaboration with the USDA. Alcorn and the USDA contacted Reddy and Padma at Texas A&M to offer them a permanent position

to help develop the program. They both accepted and built a well-functioning laboratory over the next 2½ years through federal grants that collectively totaled nearly \$1.7 million.

Although they enjoyed their work at Alcorn, they were commuting 1 hour each way from the capitol city, Jackson, to the more rural Natchez. "We commuted because our son was in school in Jackson," said Padma. When the position of Assistant Professor of Biotechnology became available at WVSU in conjunction with the new MS in Biotechnology program, Reddy applied and was hired. Padma was also hired as a Research Scientist at the Gus R Douglass Institute. The couple was able to move about \$500,000 worth of previous grants to WVSU as well.

Reddy and Padma find the Biology Department and the Gus R Douglass Institute to be very collegial. "We have wonderful colleagues who support one another," the couple both agreed.

During spring 2008, they sponsored a workshop on microarray chip-based technology and genomic research. The workshop hosted over 30 participants from a variety of institutions. "We have the best facilities in this type of research in the state of West Virginia and among the other 1890s [Land-Grant] institutions," said Reddy.



(continued on page 7)

India Research Team

(continued from page 6)

Reddy and Padma find the people in West Virginia to be quite hospitable and friendly. They are pleased with the educational opportunities for their 15-year old son as well. "We enjoy it here in West Virginia," said Padma, "and have felt at home here." They are

very engaged in their research and work essentially seven days a week throughout the year. "I have not even had time to go back to India," stated Reddy. "Our research is advancing, and we love what we are doing. We set targets, not for anyone else, but for ourselves. But I must admit that it is difficult at times. We are a small research institution, and thus it is difficult to attract Post-Docs and funds to equip our laboratory. It is a struggle at times, but it is a profession that we truly enjoy."

Prague

(continued from page 2)

A popular spot for our group and other tourists as well was the old town square where vendors sold their goods daily. Surrounded by outdoor restaurants, art museums, crystal shops, cathedrals and, of course, a few of Prague's oldest architectural relics like the Astronomical Clock, the old town square had something for everyone at any time of day or night. I took advantage of the city's coffee shops which offered irresistible "kava."

Prior to our return home, I was out of money, and the endless walking on the uneven streets had

also taken a toll on my legs. Yet, I still hadn't had enough of this magnificent city. I went to museums, attended an opera, shopped and partied with the Europeans, and saw some of the most breathtaking structures during my week in the city. I can truly say I wasn't ready to leave. But like all good things, my time in Prague had expired. After landing back at Charleston's Yeager Airport, I savored my experiences, newly formed friendships, great pictures, and an adventure with the Boyds.

By Cortney Wallace, Comm. "08

Spanish Immersion in Barranquilla, Colombia

West Virginia State University will sponsor a 4-week Spanish immersion program beginning in late June 2009 in Barranquilla, Colombia. The host institution will be the Universidad Autónoma del Caribe. The program will include an Advising OPI Interview, which will be of particular interest to K-12 teachers of Spanish who are interested in demonstrating proficiency at the required national level.

The program package will include airfare, family home stay (lodging and half pension), course instruction, extra-curricular excursions, and airport transfer in Barranquilla.

The total cost will be approximately \$2,000.

More information will be available in the next few months. Please contact Miguel Zapata <u>mzapata@wvstateu.edu</u> or 766-3068.

WV Advocates on Capitol Hill Represents Best Practices for Internationalizing Higher Education

In March of this year administrators from three WV institutions of higher education joined other advocates from around the country to meet with Congressional Delegates on issues related to international education and exchange. The two-day event which was organized by the Association of International Educators (NAFSA), is comprised of advocacy updates and training, and concludes with visits to each participant's Congressional representative. Those who met with Capitol Hill Reps this past spring included Daniel Weiner, WVU Director of the Office of International Programs,* Clark Egnor, Executive Director for the Center of International Programs at Marshall University, and James Natsis, WVSU Director of International Affairs.

The Capitol Hill event focused on immigration reform, establishing the Simon Study Abroad Program, and international education's importance to the US economy. For example, according to NAFSA, foreign students and their dependents contributed approximately \$14.5 billion to the U.S. economy during the 2006-07 academic year. In West Virginia, NAFSA estimates that the net contribution to the state economy of foreign students and their families is over \$45 million. This includes tuition, fees, and living expenses. At WVSU, NAFSA

calculated that foreign students and their families contributed approximately \$100,000 to the local economy.

At the 10.000 attended NAFSA Conference held in Washington, DC May 26-30, West Virginia's recently established Consortium for Internationalizing Higher Education (CIHE) demonstrated "best practices." The CIHE, which is supported by the WV Higher **Education Policy Commission** (HEPC), sponsored an exhibit booth featuring literature and artifacts from eleven public institutions of higher learning. Other colleges and universities throughout the US are attempting to form similar cooperative agreements and seeking support at the state level. Bruce Flack, HEPC Director of Academic Affairs, delivered a welcome at the NAFSA opening reception for the West Virginia college/ university representatives and other state residents and associates attending the conference.

NAFSA is a member organization promoting international education and providing professional development opportunities to the field. It serves international educators and their institutions and organizations by setting standards of good practice, providing training, professional development opportunities, networking opportunities, and advocating for international education.

*Dan Weiner has since accepted a position at Ohio University.



L - R: Erin Hippolyte, Nancy Person, Bruce Flack, and Clark Egnor

The US and West Virginia Provide Opportunities For Salvadorian

Pablo Arias was born in Mogotillo, El Salvador, a small village he describes as being similar to the 'hollers' of West Virginia. At age 10, he and his brother immigrated to Washington DC to join their mother who had arrived there some years earlier. Pablo considers this move a twist of fate as he had been diagnosed earlier with severe scoliosis of the spine. In DC, he was able to receive quality care and the surgeries needed to correct the curvature in his back. "My condition was so severe that my lungs were in danger of eventually being crushed," Arias confided.

At age 11, it was recommended that Pablo visit a psychologist to analyze his capacity to adapt to life in the US, given his physical condition, as well as his transition from a rural society in El Salvador to a large metropolitan area in the US. "They concluded that I had no learning disabilities and no chemical imbalances, so when they asked me what I wanted to be, I told them that I wanted to work in computer science," he explained.

Pablo was first introduced to the Commodore and Apple Macintosh computers at Marie Reed Elementary in the DC area. When he matriculated to high school, his teacher, Barbara Shaw, provided him with a 286 DOS 5.0 computer and tutored him at home. While attending Theodore Roosevelt High School, he joined the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), where he competed nationally with 4 other students in wheelchairs. "High school was a big adjustment for me because in elementary and middle school I was the only student in a wheelchair, which garnered me special attention. Now, I had to share this attention with others," Pablo confided.

At the age of 16, Pablo was introduced to a summer youth program and landed his first job with the Internal Revenue Services while still in high school. He later transferred to the Pentagon, where he worked for four years. When he turned 20, he enrolled at the University of Maryland for three semesters, but

due to his lack of discipline, he abandoned his studies and went on a four year hiatus. On his 24th birthday, he saw a commercial on television for the Job Corps and decided to pursue this route. He was accepted by the Charleston Job Corps, where he found an environment better suited to his physical condition. He received his A+ Certification in Computer Repair and enrolled in the Information Technology Program at West Virginia State Community and Technical College (WVSCTC), where he became certified as a Microsoft Professional. He currently attends WVSU and plans to finish his Bachelors in Communication/Media Studies in May 2009 with a focus on video editing.

Pablo has received support from the West Virginia Rehabilitation Center during his tenure at WVSU and WVSCTC. As his studies wind down, he is looking forward to post-undergraduate life. "By December, I hope to have a special van and my own place off campus. I also hope to have a job lined up by the time I graduate," said Pablo. Although his family members are urging him to join them in the DC area, Pablo has not discounted the possibility of staying in West Virginia. "I like the pace of life here, and it is a safe environment. I may not make as much money in West Virginia, but at least I can feel safe going and coming home at night," he concluded.



Pablo Arias and Todd Lammers

Students, Faculty, and Guests

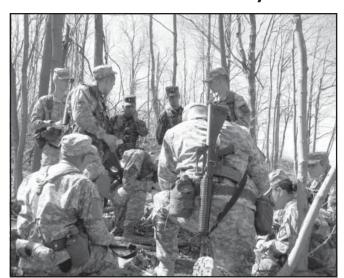


Mr. and Miss State-Natnael Alemu and Lina Abrar-Native Ethiopians (See upcoming Spring issue for profiles)



Group in Prague

Students, Faculty, and Guests



Peruvian cadets perform field exercises with ROTC



Edna Frompong, a native of Ghana, West Africa, joins the Office of International Affairs as a Work-Study student



The West Virginia Latino-based music band, Comparsa, performs at the 2008 Multicultural Festival in the student plaza

From Africa to Germany to the US is a Good Investment

Endless study choices, research opportunities, flexibility, global focus and so much more; these are some of the principal benefits that motivate international students to study in the United States. As far as I can recall. I have always been attracted by the access to international opportunities through an American degree. Yet after high school in my country Togo, I went for a more affordable education in Germany. When I graduated three years later from the University of Siegen, I felt it was time for me to experience the other side of the Atlantic. But by then, becoming an international student in the USA had become much more challenging.

To enter the US on a student visa, one had to either apply directly to a university, or go through a language institute before transferring to the university. The first option requires the completion of huge reams of paperwork and considerable amounts of waiting time. The second method is quicker, but can be a very expensive choice in the long-term if you do not have a sufficient English language background. This however, was the option I chose.

Overall, the transition from Europe to multicultural Washington, DC was very smooth. For any first-timer in the US, there is something puzzling about American's friendliness, the easy way people engage you in conversation on the street, in the metro, or in restaurants. I was placed in an American family along with other students from Venezuela, Brazil, Italy, and Korea. It was a rewarding cultural experience despite the expense. While I was taking English classes, I started filing applications for graduate school. I gave myself six weeks to transfer to a university or hurry back to Germany and resume Grad school there. I spent six weeks preparing for and passing



Christine Agbanzo

the required entry tests, and another six weeks completing my application and waiting for an admission decision. It felt like an eternity.

I was careful about choosing the right school. Following my intense theoretical curriculum in social science, media studies, and Spanish in Germany, I was looking for a more production oriented, hands-on program. I discovered WVSU on collegeboard.com. Its offerings in filmmaking, web-design and other technical classes were a perfect match. Added to that was the encouragement I received from Dean David Wohl, who was patient, friendly and answered all my questions. I really felt that I was dealing with a school small in size, but big in attention. This impression was confirmed again when I got in touch with my advisor, Dr. Tee-Ford Ahmed, who was also very helpful.

Once at "State" my main concern was to adjust to the American system as fast as possible. At some point, it felt easier than I anticipated. In Germany it took ten to twelve classes a semester to complete a Bachelors degree, with most of the paperwork done when school is not in session. If one had to juggle studies and a job, a vacation could be kissed goodbye! Therefore, I do appreciate the small course load in the American system. At the same time for the non-native speaker that I am, keeping up with multiple deadlines and projects over a single semester feels like running a marathon. One more thing, I feel a difference here in the closeness between faculty and students. In the French/German system, professors are addressed by their titles and students by their last name. In the German system they will even add an imperative Herr (Mr.) or Frau (Mrs.) to it! The one experience common among the two systems is the respective language barriers. I'm overwhelmed at times.

As I end my first year here in the US, I am extremely positive about my experience: the time in Washington, my classes in the media studies program here, and my teaching experience this past summer with Upward Bound were all rewarding. Taken together, these experiences have changed my perception of studying in the US. Where once I viewed only the benefits of having such an opportunity, I now see the difficulties such an experience entails.

I have a newfound respect for my fellow international students who endure many trials and tribulations along the way—adapting to the US academic culture, and jumping over hurdles to maintain a legal status, etc. It all creates quite a challenge. But like these students, and millions of future students who choose to study in the US, I strongly believe that I am making a short-term investment that will pay off in the end.

By Christine Agbanzo, Media Studies graduate student

Alabama Ph.D. Candidate Completes Research at WVSU

Shambhu Katel, a Ph.D. candidate in Agronomy and Biotechnology at Alabama A&M, spent the Spring 2008 semester conducting research with Dr. Umesh Reddy, Professor of Biology, and Dr. Padma Nimmakayala, a Research Scientist in the WVSU Gus R. Douglass Institute. Through a cooperative grant project between Alabama A&M and WVSU, he has been able to apply biotechnological techniques to identify better sweet potato lines. "I grew 100 lines at Auburn and brought plant samples with me to WVSU for analysis," he stated. "I wanted to do the analysis here because Drs. Reddy and Nimmakayala are both doing similar type of work. Additionally, your laboratory is well equipped for my needs."

Before coming to the US, Katel was active in his native Nepal, where he taught courses at the university, and worked for the Canadian International Development Agency in the Katmandu office. He also worked in the area of rural development with Action Aid, a non-governmental organization based in London, and a California group that had an organic farm located in Nepal. He also initiated his own organization, the Society for Cooperation and



Shambhu Katel

Development, to perform rural development work in the poor areas of Nepal, while also working on the European Union Bagmati Watershed Project.

Katel stated that he was welcomed by the WVSU family and felt at home during his stay. "The hills here remind me of Nepal," he said. He also found the winters to be mild and enjoyed the bus rides from campus to town during his free time.

International Studies Task Force Assigned by New Academic Affairs Vice President

The 2008-2009 academic year marshaled in a new VP of Academic Affairs, Dr. Charles R. Byers, whose broad agenda included among other things, the establishment of a Task Force to conduct a needs assessment on International Education and to propose a degree program in International Studies. This was in keeping with the University's 2007-2009 Strategic Plan of "...increased emphasis on international perspectives within the curriculum." The Task Force completed its work in October and will present the proposed Bachelor of Science degree to the Education Policy Committee for approval. The new BS in International Studies will be

interdisciplinary in nature, offering concentrations in International Relations, International Business, Foreign Language, and Communication/ Media Studies with a required Study Abroad component. The plan will also be submitted to the Chancellor of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission for his approval. Members of the Task Force included Gail Mosby (Sociology), Abainesh Mitiku (Business), Miguel Zapata (Modern Foreign Language), Ted Muilenburg (Health & Human Performance), Daniel Boyd and T. Ford-Ahmed (Communication/Media Studies), and James Natsis, Chair, Office of International Affairs.

Charleston Exploring Sister City Relationship with Banskà Bystrica

Banskà Bystrica means "mining mountain stream" in Slovakian. It is a fitting title for a sister city relationship with West Virginia where mining and mountain streams join hands with the local culture. The former Executive Director of the West Virginia Humanities Council, Chuck Daugherty, has been working with citizens on both sides of the Atlantic in an effort to make the sister cities partnership a reality.

Following the 1989 Velvet Revolution in the former Czechoslovakia, when the Communist system fell with the Berlin wall, the Czech Republic and Slovakia peacefully separated into two sovereign countries. In 1996, as Slovakia strived to diversify its economic base that was primarily agricultural, Chuck's wife, Christine, a community development consultant, was contacted by Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance (VOCA). The organization had received a rural community development grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Christine traveled to Slovakia where she worked for a few months planning the project. She wrote to her husband asking how he felt about moving to Slovakia. She decided she would direct the project herself. Since he had directed the Humanities Council for the past 20 years, he figured it was time to make a change. Daugherty grew up in Brazil, where his great grandfather migrated in 1865 with many other southerners who were disillusioned with their homelands after losing the Civil War. "They were upset over 'carpetbaggers' moving down south and telling them how to live," Chuck explained. He grew up in Brazil but came to the US at eight years of age, where he remained. When Christine suggested that they move to Banskà Bystrica, he saw it as an opportunity to do what his parents had done. "My parents were missionaries in Brazil, and even though we wouldn't be religious missionaries, I was going abroad to do good stuff. It felt good to connect with my family heritage," he stated

The couple stayed in Banskà Bystrica for three and a half years. During this period, Christine brought people to and from Charleston, especially those with community development skills. Joe Barker, who is currently with the Department of Health & Human Resources, was head of a rural council at the time and was among those recruited to work on the development project. James

Tibeault worked with villagers in crafts, and his wife Karen Glazier advised them on senior care. The Vice Principal at Charleston Catholic, Kate Fitzgerald, led listening projects where citizens discussed what they really wanted in their community. Charleston resident John Biros, who spoke Slovak, served as the translator when visitors from Slovakia were in Charleston. These connections led Chuck Hirt, a US citizen residing in Banskà Bystrica with his Slovakian wife, to suggest exploring a Sister City connection with Charleston. Hirt convinced Banskà Bystrica Mayor, Ivan Saktor, to invite Charleston Mayor, Danny Jones to explore the Sister City connection. Mayor Jones appointed council members Cubert Smith and Kasey Russell to work with the group chaired by Daugherty and Linda Elliot. The group is formally incorporated as the "Charleston Banskà Bystrica Sister City Alliance." Among the activities proposed for the organization is an on-going relationship between First Presbyterian Church and a group that supports at-risk Roma (Gypsy) youth and their families in Banskà Bystrica. The Charleston Area Medical Center is exploring a connection with a Medical Center in Banskà Bystrica, and the Friendship Force is in contact with individuals interested in establishing a Banskà Bystrica Friendship Force. The Charleston Rotary appointed a committee to investigate the sister city relationship as well. WVSU participants include Dr's Gerald Beller (Political Science), James Natsis (OIA), and T. Ford-Ahmed (Communication/Media Studies).



Chuck Daugherty (second from right) with staff from the Healthy City Community Foundation in Banska Bystrica, the first community foundation in Slovakia

Ethiopian Student Assocation Organizes 2nd Annual "A Taste of Ethiopia"

Students, staff, faculty, and community members were greeted with sounds, sights, and scents of Africa as they entered the Wilson University Union on the late afternoon of April 13. The 2nd Annual "Taste of Ethiopia" was enjoyed by a crowd of over 200 first time and veteran connoisseurs of Ethiopian culinary fare. "It was a nice evening, and the food as usual was excellent," stated Chuck Smith, Professor of Political Science.

"It was a lot of work, and I was absolutely exhausted when it was all over, but it was a very good evening," said Ethiopian Student Association (ESA) President, Robel Hailu. Hailu and three other students were operating on very little sleep as they had just returned early that morning from Washington, DC, where they picked up most of the food for the event. "We cut it very close, but it is essential that we do the trip to DC no more than 1-2 days before the event to assure that the food is fresh," explained Hailu.

The Ethiopian students were well prepared to feed the large amount of people on their guest list. "We were ready last year and had plenty of food. We benefited from last year's experience to assure that everyone would be well-fed. In fact, we had enough food left over for us to enjoy the following days," said Hailu. Billy Joe Peyton, Professor of History, and Ethiopian cuisine aficionado, was pleased with the event. He attended with his wife, Christine, and four of their friends. "As was the case last year,"



stated Peyton, "we really enjoyed the food. My only suggestions to improve the evening would be that they start the dinner line a little earlier, and that they open up a second line. There was plenty of food, but some people had to wait awhile before getting through the line."

In addition to excellent food, there was a program rich in Ethiopian fashion, music, and information about the country. "I especially enjoyed the Ethiopian dancing," said a community member who attended with her husband. "I also loved their traditional outfits; they were very beautiful," she added.

Thanks to the funds raised through the annual event, the Ethiopian Student Association sent a check for \$780 to the non-profit organization, Capital Foundation, to help support two orphans back home in Ethiopia. According to Hailu, the Association "is trying to work with Capital Foundation to raise enough money to send 3-5 ESA members to Ethiopia to see how the kids are doing, and to create a link with Addis Ababa University to get university students to tutor the orphan kids." Hailu is planning a trip with ESA member, Bless Nesibu, and Office of International Affairs Director, James Natsis, to Addis Ababa in January as an initial step towards establishing a formal agreement between WVSU and Addis Ababa University.



Ethiopian students

The Voice of the Students

The U.S. has tended to ignore Russia in recent years. Have we overprioritized "terrorists states" and thus overlooked other important countries and regions such as Russia?

Yes, after the break up of the Soviet Union, we have underestimated modern Russia. Some of the perceived threat of Iran and their pursuit of nuclear energy are fostered by Russia, so addressing Russia indirectly addresses Arab-Persian terrorism.

Austin C. Moore, Political Science

Yes, even though the cold war financially crippled Russia for awhile, the country is quickly regaining its status as a world power. I believe there are still some hard feelings toward the U.S. and its allies, which may cause Russia to secretly join forces with some of these countries that are already labeled "terrorist states."

Ron Dickerson, Regents

Yes, Russia was a super power and a threat until the 1990's. However, since the collapse of the U.S.S.R., they have not been considered a threat. In recent years, their economy is coming back online, and so is their military. The United States can not afford to lose focus on other threats outside of the Middle East. Russia was once a threat to our way of life, and left unsupervised it could once again become a reality. **Robert Smith, K-Adult Social Studies Education**

The U.S is going through one of the toughest times a country could go through. We are in the process of choosing a new leader and are at war; this tends to bring a lot of division and dissention of opinions. It also leaves the U.S in more ways than one too open to attacks. Although these "terrorist states" are a threat and should be supervised, it seems to me that there is too much focus on the Middle East and thus leaving a country like Russia to build up and become too powerful. In metaphorical terms, Russia is like a wounded tiger and try as it may, the wound doesn't change it at all. It is still a tiger and could attack a deer, should it get a chance.

Edna Frimpong, English Literature

Regardless of its demolished status following the Soviet breakup in 1991, Russia alone holds weapons that can destroy the United States, and it is a military industry nearly equal to America's exports of weapons. Russia possesses large quantities of poorly secured nuclear materials that are desired by terrorists we are seeking today. Plus they have claim to the largest oil and natural gas reserves on the planet. Russia also remains the largest in terms of territory; it is located in the East and the West, making it the intersection of competing civilizations. Our national security depends more on Russia than Russia's depends on us, this has to put us in a weak position.

Mark Stolle, Political Science

While I hesitate to define any nation as a "threat", if there is one country in the world that could actually present a legitimate military challenge to us, it is Russia. For years, and still today, the Russians have possessed the only Navy and Air Force in the world even close to being large enough or sophisticated enough to compete with our own. This is also true of their nuclear arsenal. Simply put, our old friends the Atlantic and Pacific oceans still protect us from all but the Russians. None of the so-called "terrorist-states," like Iran or Iraq has the conventional military strength or a sophisticated missile delivery system to really threaten us. The Russians still do have both. What makes this frightening is that Putin seems to be harkening back past the communist period all the way to the Czars in his foreign policy. There is no more empty rhetoric about the workers of the world, just Russian troops occupying desired territories in places like Georgia.

Robert Barnes, Political Science

Modern Foreign Language Notes

Spanish

Professor Rebecca Conner is organizing her annual trip to Costa Rica in 2009. Several students who attended last year's trip met during the Spring semester for a final presentation on Costa Rica to students interested in participating in the current planned trip. Presenters from last year's trip included Nicolas Cartwell, Victoria Paul, Veronica Jarvis, Coleman Richardson, and Jessica Osborne. The presentations were all delivered en español as part of the course requirement.

The Department of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) offers conversational opportunities for students and others through the Tertulias and Spanish Conversation in the cafeteria. For a schedule of these activities, contact Professor Conner at connerre@wvstateu.edu or 766-3124; or Dr. Zapata at mzapata@wvstateu.edu or 766-3068.

Dr. Zapata coordinated a partnership agreement between West Virginia State University and the Universidad Autonoma del Caribe in Barranquilla, Colombia. The MFL Department and Office of International Affairs are working on creating Spanish-language opportunities with the Colombian University in the near future.

French

The Cercle Français (French Circle) meets each month alternating between the Café de Paris in downtown Charleston, and the Campbell Conference Center on the Institute campus. Students, faculty, administrators, and community members from many different countries gather to discuss a variety of topics. The conversation is predominately in French, although students who are still in the early stages of language acquisition are encouraged to participate. During one session on the topic of the West African nation of Togo, there were participants from seven different countries comparing and contrasting various points of view. The countries represented were the US, Togo, Congo,



Students, faculty, and community members gather for dinner at the Cercle Français (French Circle)

Cameroon, Colombia, Germany, and France. For information on meeting dates and locations, contact Mary Frye at mfrye@wvstateu.edu or 766-3067.

German and Japanese

Elementary German is being offered this semester after a brief hiatus by Professor of English, Thomas Kiddie. Dr. Kiddie studied German in graduate school before moving to Europe, where he spent five years in Italy and seven years in Germany. He studied in a German language program for foreigners while in Germany and operated his own business. He still uses German frequently and welcomes the opportunity to share his skills with students. "Since the students don't have to take the class, they tend to be more enthusiastic," Kiddie said. "They could be taking Spanish, French, or another international perspective course instead of this one." Kiddie plans to offer a German 102 class next semester.

Elementary Japanese is offered this semester on Monday and Wednesday evenings by Yumiko Iimori. Professor Iimori is an Executive Assistant in Administration at NGK Sparkplugs (USA) Inc. in Sissonville. She is active in the greater Kanawha Valley community and serves on the Sissonville High School International Program Advisory Council. She has been teaching Japanese language and culture classes at WVSU for a number of years.

From The Desk Of The Editor

The WV Crystal Awarded to Student Task Force for Film Premiere of African Prince

The student-run firm Tower Communications and members of the Charles R. Byrd Chapter of Public Relations Student Society of America received their 3rd Crystal Award from the West Virginia Public Relations Society in a ceremony held at the Marriot hotel in June. The firm won the award in the "Special Events Planning" category for the Charleston film premiere of "Prince Among Slaves," which chronicled the true story of Abdul Rahman Ibrahima Sori, an African Prince enslaved in America.

Tower Communications executed the campaign for their client, the West Virginia Islamic Association, which brought together education, business, state, and faith based organizations at a time when West Virginia was receiving negative publicity nationwide due to a racial incident occurring in Logan County. Tower students saw the premiere as an opportunity to positively promote the state through these partnerships and conducted their campaign around the theme: "cultural harmony." They wanted to highlight the fact that West Virginians "do" work together and to promote the university's motto of "A Living Laboratory of Human Relations.

Tower Communications members of the Charles R. Byrd Chapter of PRSSA implement public relations-marketing-advertising programs for campus, local, state, and international clients. Members also participate in national competitions, as well as attend regional and national development conferences.





International Studies Minor "A Minor with Major Benefits"

The *Introduction to International Studies* course will be offered in the Spring 2009 semester. The General Education course is team-taught by T. Ford-Ahmed and James Natsis.

Through the use of readings, lectures, films, and group activities the course moves along a journey that encompasses the regions and continents of the world in an effort to establish a base from which other content courses in international studies may be approached with more sophisticated awareness for working across national and cultural boundaries.

To obtain more information regarding the International Studies minor, visit the Office of International Affairs, 302 Hill Hall. Telephone: 766-4249. Email: natsisja@wvstateu.edu.

The Language Corner

Test your knowledge of language by completing the following quiz (Answers are below).

- 1. Creole is the most widely spoken language in Haiti. True or False?
- 2. Guarani is widely spoken in which South American country? Guyana, Brazil, Paraguay, Uraguay
- 3. How do you say "Thank You" in Portuguese? Merci, Gracias, Obrigado, Grazie
- 4. Spanish is not an official language in which country? Equatorial Guinea, Bolivia, Chile, Belize
- 5. Tagalog is the most widely spoken language in which country? India, Philippines, Laos, Pakistan
- 6. Etcetera is from which language? Greek, Armanian, Hebrew, Latin
- 7. Which is the most widely spoken Chinese dialect: Cantonese or Mandarin?
- 8. The Beatles recorded a version of "I Want to Hold Your Hand" in German. True or False?
- 9. Two of the following languages are spoken in the Ukraine. Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Russian, Urdu
- 10. English is the official language of Surinam. True or False?
- 11. WV State University does <u>not</u> offer any courses in the following language: Italian, German, French, Japanese
- 12. Which language is most commonly spoken in Algeria? Arabic, Hausa, Hebrew, Amharic
- 13. Welsh is one of the official languages of Ireland. True or False?
- 14. Basketball star Tony Parker grew up speaking which language: Flemish, Spanish, Creole, French
- 15. Portuguese is spoken in which one of the following countries? Bolivia, Argentina, Cap Verde, Cameroon
- 16. Cambodian most resembles which language? Vietnamese, Thai, Chinese, Farsi

All contributions to the West Virginia State University International Program are tax deductible and will be used for international exchange and study abroad opportunities for our students. Please make your check payable to the WVSU R & D Corporation, 200 East Hall, P.O. Box 1000, Institute, WV 25112. Indicate that it is for International Studies.

Le Journal is now available on-line. Visit our Website through the West Virginia State University weblink www. wvstateu.edu (click on General Info and then International Affairs)

Office of International Affairs Staff:

Editors: James J. Natsis and Tee Ford-Ahmed Student Assistant Editor: Edna Frimpong

Le Journal is distributed to faculty, staff, students, and others who have international interests. Send articles, news briefs, and other inquiries to the Office of International Affairs.

West Virginia State University

Office of International Affairs 302 Hill Hall P.O. Box 1000 Institute, WV 25112-1000 Non-Profit Org. U.S. Postage

PAID

Institute, WV 25112 Permit No. 1