International Education Welcomes New Staff Members

The Office of International Education is pleased to announce the addition of three new staff members to our team.

Ms. Barb Estes began her role as the Business Manager in June. Estes brings with her a long history with and love for the University of Nebraska at Kearney. Not only is she a UNK (KSC) alumnus, but her husband, Kent, was a professor of Counseling and School Psychology for over 30 years before passing away in 2005. All three of their sons have degrees from UNK. Additionally, son Aaron is an Academic and Career Advisor for UNK. Prior to coming to UNK, Barb spent her entire career in human services, working primarily with young children. She is eager to begin this new chapter in her professional life.

Ms. Maria Camila Parra Diaz is the new Enrollment and Latin America Recruitment Specialist. Camila, who is originally from Colombia, graduated with honors from UNK in May of 2011. Her degree is in International Studies. She was honored with the outstanding Senior Award in International Studies, Excellence in Academic Leadership Award from Multicultural Student Affairs, Outstanding Junior of the Year Award from the Economics Department, and was inducted into the International Honor Society, Phi Beta Delta. Camila will work with the OIE Outreach Coordinator to develop and implement a marketing and recruitment strategy in Latin America and Spain, and will assist the OIE Application and Records Evaluator with tracking and processing applications of new international students.

Mr. Jaekeun Cho is the new Korean-Asian Recruitment and Support Specialist for OIE. Cho graduated from UNK with a degree in Business Administration (emphasis in Marketing) in December of 2010 and had been participating in an Optional Practical Training within OIE, primarily developing new partnerships with South Korean universities and high schools. He has already been instrumental in developing a 1 + 3 degree program, as well as the short term English Language and American Culture program that took place this summer.

These timely additions to the staff of OIE are extremely valuable as we continue to work towards President Milliken’s call to double the enrollment of international students on all University of Nebraska campuses.

Welcome Barb, Camila and Jaekeun!
From the Director

Recognizing that a better understanding of other cultures and global issues is crucial for students in today’s world, the University of Nebraska has put a high priority on expanding study abroad opportunities, enhancing international research cooperation, and increasing the presence of students and visiting scholars from other countries on campus.

In this issue, we look at some examples of how UNK students, faculty, and staff have contributed to this effort.

UNK’s Semester in China program enters its second year beginning this Fall, while over 20 students have now enrolled in our new Semester program in Peru, which kicks off this January. New international student recruitment has continued to grow, but at a slower rate—Fall 2010 was up 53% over Fall 2009, while Fall 2011 is up 15% over the same year. However, attrition of existing international students may become a challenge to be addressed as the global economic crisis continues to undermine their ability to afford study in the US and ever increasing numbers of US universities begin to admit international students at resident tuition rates.

UNK’s Conversation Table and International Friendship programs continue to expand and serve ever larger numbers of international and domestic students, as well as Kearney area individuals and families looking to enrich their lives by befriending a UNK student from another culture.

Finally, I would like to direct your attention to the article on Teacher Education in Thailand on page 6 and offer a hearty ‘congratulations’ to Gui-Jie Zhang, the China Program Coordinator for the Office of International Education, who recently received the University of Nebraska Kudo Award for outstanding service. I am sure that the over 140 Chinese students at UNK would agree!

James E. Smith Conference on World Affairs

Planning is underway for the next James E Smith Conference on World Affairs. Following the March 2011 Conference, the executive planning committee met with the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, as well as the Academic Deans, to discuss ways in which the conference can be improved with the goal of increasing its value to faculty and students at UNK. It was determined that March is a challenging time for such a conference due to deadlines for tests and activities before Spring Break. Therefore, the decision was made to move the conference from March to September in 2012.

In an effort to move this direction, a single event will take place on Tuesday, November 8, 2011, at 7:30 p.m. in the UNK Fine Arts Drake Theatre. The event will feature Mr. Reza Aslan, author of *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam*. As few others can, Reza Aslan addresses the topic of Islam, the Middle East, and Muslim Americans with authority, wit and an infectious optimism. When he talks about modern Islam, the religion and politics of the Middle East, or the rise of a sophisticated Muslim middle class, audiences listen. His talks entertain, but never at the expense of complexity or nuance. Aslan speaks for a generation of Muslims who eschew the fundamentalist stereotype and want to usher in a new era of Islamic democracy. Extremism is winding down, he says, yet media coverage suggests the opposite. As a bestselling author and entrepreneur, Aslan has made extraordinary efforts to show Americans the true face of Islam today: a generation of change makers in America and abroad, who are solidifying relations with the West while making their own hopeful marks on the world.

He is also the author of *How to Win a Cosmic War*, a contributing editor to *The Daily Beast*, and a member of many prominent foreign relations and policy councils. He is also the editor of *Tablet and Pen*, a literary anthology that uses the arts to bridge the gap of understanding between East and West. Aslan appears regularly in the media, on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report* among other high profile outlets. In the corporate realm, Aslan is President and CEO of Aslan Media Inc., which runs BoomGen Studios, a unique media company focused entirely on entertainment about the Greater Middle East and its Diaspora communities. He has degrees in Religion from Santa Clara University, Harvard, and UC Santa Barbara, as well as a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Iowa, where he was named the Truman Capote Fellow in Fiction.
China Semester Abroad Students Depart

Seven UNK students have departed for Shijiazhuang, China to participate in UNK’s Semester in China program at Hebei Normal University. The students are:

Ruddy Jimenez—Kearney
Shaba Alavi—Kearney
Andrew Limbach—Kearney
Jennifer McMurtry—Bayard
Kirsten Flavell—Kearney
Max Chatelain—Kearney
Teruhisa Takahashi—Japan

Hebei Normal University

This program, in its second year, is designed in a way that makes it easy for students to participate. They pay UNK tuition and take UNK courses that are beneficial to them in their pursuit of a degree.

Most of the courses the students will take are taught by Chinese Professors from Hebei Normal University, with one course being taught by the UNK faculty leader of this program, Dr. Richard Meznarich. In addition to the UNK courses, the students will take a Chinese language course.

While China is not typically at the top of most Americans’ list of destinations for international travel, the students who participated in this Semester Abroad last year found the experience very rewarding. They overcame their initial apprehension, settled in and by the time the semester came to an end (all too quickly for most of them) they did not feel ready to leave the place that had become “home”. One student in the previous group, now UNK Alum Ben Cooney, chose to go back to Shijiazhuang in June and is teaching English Conversation and American Culture in a high school there.

Here are thoughts some of the students shared prior to their departure:

Andrew Limbach
What sparked your interest in this semester abroad? Studying abroad has been something that I have wanted to do for a long time and China was one of the places that has been interesting to me. I really think the history of China is interesting and is why going to China sparked my interest.

What emotions have you felt as you have prepared for this adventure? Anxious! So far I have not been nervous, just really excited.

How does your family feel about you going? They are excited for me and looking forward to hearing about my experience.

What are you nervous about? I am not really nervous about much. I was told to learn as much about current events in the U.S. to be able to tell others about it in China, which I didn’t do. So I guess I’m most nervous about sounding like an idiot because most of my U.S. current event knowledge comes from The Colbert Report!

What are you looking forward to the most? I’m looking forward to meeting all sorts of different people from different backgrounds.

What are you looking forward to? I am excited because it is new and unknown.

Jennifer McMurtry
What sparked your interest in this semester abroad? I have always wanted to travel abroad. The China semester was very appealing because the classes were in English. This would allow me to experience a culture and learn a language, but still stay on top of my studies at UNK.

What emotions have you felt as you have prepared for this adventure? Throughout the summer I have been pretty calm, but as the days count down, anxiety is beginning to set in! I think I am going to be checking my list 100 times over the next week!

How does your family feel about you going? My parents are very excited. It is not the first time I have traveled abroad, but it will be the longest stay. They are excited to see what experiences I have, but are also anxious about me going to a communist country.

What are you nervous about? I have always had a big, loud mouth. I hope I don’t say the wrong thing and get in trouble!

What are you looking forward to the most? I love making friends. I am excited to meet people who can teach me about their culture. China is an ancient civilization, so there is a lot of history. But it is a developing country, so it holds the future as well. Being there will be like being in the past and the future at the same time.
International Student Services

International Student Services is one of the divisions of the Office of International Education at UNK. ISS is staffed by caring individuals who go the extra mile to assure that each international student has everything they need to enjoy a successful educational experience. Shirley Vetter, Admission and Immigration Coordinator, oversees ISS. Her ISS staff includes Susan Garrett, International Application and Records Evaluator and Maria Camila Parra Diaz, Enrollment and Recruitment Specialist.

ISS provides information ranging from prospective students inquiring about the UNK application process, to students graduating from UNK. Here are some of the services provided:

- Provide prospects with information on application process, academic areas of interest, housing, dining, information about Kearney, and more.
- Work with each prospective student to successfully complete the application process and provide necessary documentation.
- Advise students on visa application process and provide tips on increasing likelihood of a successful visa application.
- Provide travel tips and information, as well as free shuttle service from Kearney airport. Meet students on campus when they have arrived on a shuttle from Lincoln or Omaha airports. Help students get checked in and acclimated.
- Provide new student orientation that addresses immigration regulations, culture, campus life, and campus technology. Provide campus tours, shopping trips and guidance for banking and cell phone purchases upon their arrival.
- Provide information on employment and obtaining a social security number, as well as OPT and CPT opportunities.
- Maintain contact with all international students at UNK to assure that they are aware of the necessary steps to stay in status and registered with SEVIS.

Not only do the ISS staff members do all those things, but they do it in a way that stands out. Recently, we received an email from a staff member in an office on campus that deals with lots of international students. This person asked a particular international student why she selected UNK. She said, “I went to a college fair in my home country. Out of a book I picked 10 schools in the U.S. When I called here and talked with Shirley and Susan, they sounded so warm and caring.” That is why this particular student and so many others chose UNK!

Thank you Shirley, Susan and Camila for all of your work with the current and future international students of UNK!

“I picked 10 schools in the U.S. When I called here and talked with Shirley and Susan, they sounded so warm and caring.”

Student Worker, Peijie Li assists new Chinese students as they check in with ISS on their first day at UNK.
UNK Welcomes Global UGRAD Fellow

The University of Nebraska at Kearney is pleased to welcome a new international student on campus as part of the U.S. Department of State’s Global Undergraduate Exchange Program in Eurasia and Central Asia. Joining the UNK family is Alina Vitter from Russia.

The Global UGRAD program aims to advance youth leadership and promote mutual understanding by providing one year of non-degree U.S. study to undergraduates from 12 countries of the former Soviet Union.

This program is highly competitive, averaging over 3,000 applications per year with a 5% rate of acceptance. It is administered by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX).

Alina grew up in Yekaterinburg, the 3rd largest city in Russia after Moscow and St. Petersburg. Yekaterinburg is located near the border between Europe and Asia.

She attends Ural State University, majoring in International Relations. This is her first time in the U.S. She had mixed emotions about coming to Kearney, Nebraska, not knowing anything about this area except that Kearney is much smaller than her city! However, her experience since arriving has eliminated any apprehension that she felt initially.

Alina is struck by the beauty of the campus. Her campus at home does not have a lot of green space.

She was not expecting to have a host family (Dan and Gloria LeDroit of Kearney) and was pleasantly surprised with how they have taken her under their wings and helped her with so many things upon her arrival. In the eyes of Alina, they are “from God!”

American education is thought to be the highest quality in the world. Alina is looking forward to taking what she learns here back to her city and country to foster change for future generations.

While in Kearney, Alina must complete the following requirements:

- One-semester internship,
- Community service project,
- Community speaking engagements,
- Campus speaking engagements.

She is grateful for the opportunity to be a cultural ambassador for Russia while on the campus of UNK. And we are grateful for the opportunity to welcome Alina to Kearney.

International Student Scholarship

Did you know that the University of Nebraska at Kearney has an International Student Scholarship (ISS) program with the purpose of recognizing the outstanding academic performance of international students? In addition to academic performance, consideration is given to students who contribute to extra curricular activities on campus and in the community. The scholarships are tuition waivers which pay a portion of an international student’s tuition during the one-year period of the award. Scholarships are renewable.

Students are eligible to apply after having completed 24 undergraduate, or 18 graduate credit hours at UNK. They are no longer eligible to apply after completing 125 undergraduate or 30 graduate credit hours here. The minimum GPA allowable is 2.8.

Scholarships range from $500 for students who have completed their first year of studies, to as much as $3,000 for outstanding fourth year students.

Students interested in applying can do so on the ISS web pages.
Teacher Ed Faculty Presentations in China and Thailand

Dr. Jeffrey Kritzer, Assistant Professor of Special Education at UNK, had several opportunities to travel to Asia to make presentations this year. In November of 2010, Kritzer made a presentation entitled Special Education in the United States at Hebei Normal University in Shijiazhuang, China. He then made the same presentation at Suan Dusit Rajabaht University in Bangkok, Thailand.

In May of this year, Dr. Kritzer presented a two day workshop entitled Response to Intervention at Suan Dusit Rajabaht University in Bangkok and the same workshop at Chiang Mai Rajabaht University in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Finally, he made a presentation entitled The Real World of American Special Education at Suan Dusit Rajabaht University in Bangkok on August 6.

Dr. Kritzer has enjoyed fostering academic relationships with peers in Asian institutions. He especially appreciates the chance to share practices that are used in the United States that can help teachers work more effectively with their students who are struggling in the classroom.

UNK English Language and American Culture Program

The Office of International Education and the UNK English Language Institute hosted 10 students from Hanyang University in South Korea for a short term English Language and American Culture Program. UNK and Hanyang University recently entered into a partnership agreement and this is the first of several UNK-Korean programs being developed.

The ten students, all Political Science majors at Hanyang University, arrived in Kearney on June 26 and jumped right in to their English class activities. In addition, they enjoyed several community events and field trips. One day was spent in Minden, Nebraska where they had the opportunity to see a museum called Pioneer Village. They also spent time with a Minden couple, Kelly and AJ Leopold, for an experience that was “east meets west”. AJ is Korean and prepared a delicious traditional Korean meal for them, while Kelly gave the students the opportunity to shoot targets with rifles!

Other field trips have included Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, canoeing and wildlife sighting on the Platte River, and a shopping excursion in Grand Island. In Kearney, they have attended concerts in parks and watched the Independence Day fireworks display near campus.

The students, most of whom are recent high school graduates, are very young to be traveling abroad. Though you would think they might be anxious about traveling to the U.S. and being away from family, they have done very well, thanks to the well-organized ELI program and warm welcome from the staff of the Office of International Education. Upon completion of the program, they will go back to Hanyang University, where they will continue their studies. And hopefully someday they will have the opportunity to come back to UNK to relive the experience they had here this summer!