Mahabir Pun Visits Campus

Mahabir Pun, UNK alumnus from Nepal, visited campus on Tuesday, September 4. He spoke to two classes, including Healthcare Management and Database Systems, and gave a brown-bag luncheon presentation open to the public.

Pun, who graduated from UNK in 1992 and 2001, is a social entrepreneur for community development. After earning his first degree, he returned to the village he left 24 years earlier to start Himanchal Higher Secondary School, which he still directs along with the Himanchal Educational Foundation. In 2002, he created the Nepal Wireless Networking Project, a social enterprise providing internet access, electronic commerce, education, and telemedicine to more than 200 remote villages in Nepal.

Pun is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Innovation on Access Provision Award from the Australian Information Society Innovation Fund, the 2012 “Ujjwal Kirtimaya Rashtreep” Medal from the President of Nepal, and the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership, described as the Asian equivalent of a Nobel Peace Prize. He is a 2007 recipient of the Doctor of Humane Letters from the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

Pun, who was on a fifty-day tour of the U.S. and Canada, shared information on various community development projects he has spearheaded in Nepal in the last 25 years and the lessons learned from those experiences. Additionally, he unveiled his newest endeavor, the National Innovation Center of Nepal, created with the goal of introducing a research and development culture in Nepal and nurturing and promoting innovation-based ecosystems for socio-economic development.

A sampling of projects the National Innovation Center is currently supporting includes:

- improving the efficiency of existing solar thermal collector technology for water heating applications;
- developing and testing a compact system of water filtration and treatment for rural areas;
- developing and testing drones suitable for delivery of medicine in mountainous remote locations; and
- building and testing a small rice harvester using a water-pump engine.
Imagine a place where a graduate student could meet her Ambassador, a community member could have a conversation about the devastating impact of the Holocaust with a Polish Consul General, and a professor could take a selfie with the Ambassador of Yemen. Imagine a gathering of experts in climate change, anti-trafficking, education, arctic research, and medicine; leaders of activist and advocacy organizations; and diplomats from 11 countries, presenting potential solutions to the world’s most pressing crises. Imagine a connection being made between a rural Nebraska church doing humanitarian work in Nigeria and a federal government program that aids victims of genocide and persecution. Where would it be?

These scenarios all happened at UNK during the October 22-23 James E. Smith Midwest Conference on World Affairs. The conference theme was The World in Crisis: A Call to Activism.

The audience of UNK students, faculty and staff, Kearney High School students and teachers, and Kearney community members, heard from 31 speakers from the U.S., Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Yemen, Poland, Lithuania, Ghana, Germany, Indonesia, Finland, Philippines, Mexico and Qatar. Sessions took place throughout each of the two days; in most cases two sessions running simultaneously, some of which included:

- Dr. Kerry Emanuel, Professor of Atmospheric Science at MIT, *What We Know about Climate Change*
- Ms. Kristin Wiebe, J.D., *Anti-Trafficking Activism: Lessons Learned in 20 Years of Fighting Human Trafficking Around the World*
- Ambassador Ahmed Awad Bin Mubarak, Embassy of the Republic of Yemen, *Reviving the Peace Process in Yemen*
- Ms. Courtney Gehle, 23 year-old changemaker from Pretoria, South Africa, *How Activism Changed My Life*
- Ms. Fatima Al-Zahrani, Education Above All Foundation, Doha, Qatar, *Leveraging Knowledge to Educate the Most Marginalized*
- Ambassador Rolandas Kriščiūnas, Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania, *Transatlantic Security and Cooperation: the Case of Lithuania*
- Dr. José Ballesteros, Steven Muller Distinguished Professor of Arts at St. Mary’s College of Maryland, and Mr. Samuel Miranda, Educator, Poet and Visual Artist from Washington, DC, *We Is: Poetry Voicing the Will of Individuals and Societies to Survive*
- Ms. Jane Kleeb, Founder and President of Bold Alliance, *The Unlikely Alliance that Changed Climate Activism*
- Dr. Marjorie Heier, Medical Director of a mission medical clinic in Zambia, and Dr. Benjamin LaBrot, Founder and CEO of Floating Doctors, *Where is the Need? Careers in Mission Medicine*
- Mr. Scott B. Shiller, Senior Advisor for the Middle East Bureau of the United States Agency for International Development, *Genocide Recovery and Persecution Response Program*.
James E. Smith Midwest Conference on World Affairs (continued)

A unique characteristic of the World Affairs Conference is the many opportunities for interaction between conference attendees and speakers. For example, within each session, there is time for dialogue through Q&A following the speakers’ presentations. Additionally:

- “Take a Delegate to Lunch” gives small groups of faculty, students, and community members the chance to have lunch with a conference speaker. For the first time, Kearney High School students participated in this activity.
- “Classroom Visits” allows UNK faculty to invite speakers to visit their classes to further discuss the speaker’s conference subtopic or get the speaker’s input on the class content. For example, this year professors of a “Death and Cemetery Culture” course invited the Ambassador of Ghana and the Consul of Indonesia to share with their class traditions related to death and cemeteries in their countries.
- Speakers were given the opportunity to have a table where they could share information about organizations they represent or have a location where they could dialogue with students or other conference attendees.
- A pre-conference reception was held the evening prior to the conference at Cunningham’s on the Lake. Conference speakers were welcomed by Roger Jasnoch with the Kearney Visitors Bureau. UNK faculty and staff, and Kearney community members had the opportunity to meet the speakers and converse in a casual atmosphere.

Dr. David Wiebe was selected as the 2018 recipient of the Ari Sosa World Affairs Conference Service award, in recognition of his years of dedication to the conference, community, and his own commitment to globalization and outreach throughout his life and career as an orthopedic surgeon. Wiebe, whose daughter Kristin was one of the conference speakers, was joined by Kristin and her husband, Sunny Lacey, and sons David and his wife Kendra, and Eric and his wife Kristin.

Total attendance for all sessions was 1,765.

International Alumni, we want to keep in contact with you!
- Please go to unk.edu/international to update your contact information and tell us what you are doing these days
- Catch up on news and happenings by reading the UNK Global Newsletters
- See the campus activity calendar or access the UNK Alumni Association website
- Join the UNK International Alumni Facebook group to read about happenings on campus and around Kearney
- If you are interested in being a person prospective students could email about life at UNK, send an email to international@unk.edu.
- Finally, many current international students heard about UNK by “word of mouth.” Please share your UNK experience with your friends and relatives so they can receive the same great education you did!
Dean Tim Burkink to Transition to International Education

By Tyler Ellyson—UNK Communications

Tim Burkink didn’t travel outside the United States until he was almost 30 years old. Then an assistant professor at Arizona State University, he and a colleague went to Europe to study food marketing systems in the post-war Balkans region. “It opened my eyes to the benefits of people from different cultures coming together to learn from one another,” he said of the experience. “I appreciated how connected the world is and how we can work across countries and across cultures to solve problems.”

He saw similar benefits when his son David was part of a study abroad program while attending the University of Nebraska at Kearney. David studied in the Czech Republic and was able to visit several other European countries during the trip. Burkink said the opportunity expanded his son’s horizons, allowing him to meet new people, experience different cultures and learn about another part of the world.

“I think international travel and experiences are good for all of us,” Burkink said. “We need to get out of our comfort zone and be pushed to try new things.” The longtime dean of UNK’s College of Business and Technology will focus on that aspect of higher education through his new role with the university. Burkink, in his 18th year at UNK and 11th as dean, is transitioning from the College of Business and Technology to a full-time position with the Office of International Education, where he has served as interim director since October 2017.

Charlie Bicak, senior vice chancellor for academic and student affairs, called Burkink an excellent choice to lead the Office of International Education, citing his global travel experience, academic credentials, sound administrative leadership and genuine passion for the position. “Dr. Burkink has a wonderful ability to integrate our emphasis on international initiatives with all academic units across campus,” Bicak said. “He is precisely the right person at the right time to continue to enhance the international agenda at UNK.”

Burkink, who will serve as director of the Office of International Education beginning in fall 2019, has a pretty straightforward mission for the office. “We want to maximize the number of UNK students studying abroad and we want to maximize the number of international students who come to UNK to study,” he said.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln alumnus was “pleasantly surprised” by the number of international students attending UNK when he arrived in 2001. “The impact international students make on our campus and our community is significant,” he said. These students, who currently represent 51 different countries and 7 percent of UNK’s total enrollment, enrich life here by introducing their cultures and customs to central Nebraska, according to Burkink. “That helps make the world a smaller place,” he said. “It makes the unknown seem less frightening and I think it makes us all more welcoming of others.”

Burkink’s goal is to grow the international student population to at least 10 percent of UNK’s total enrollment, a figure he hopes to reach by promoting the quality education, supportive environment and unique landscape offered here. “We’d like them to come to greater Nebraska and experience the United States from Kearney,” he said. “This is a very authentic place for international students to study.”

UNK offers a number of opportunities for students to study abroad, including programs in the Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Spain and, beginning next summer, Australia. Additionally, agreements with schools across the globe allow Lopers to study internationally as exchange or visiting students. “I know there’s value for our students to include this as part of their academic programs,” said Burkink, who would like to see at least 25 percent of UNK students study abroad. These experiences help develop a global mindset, he said, and should impact students in meaningful ways.

“Study abroad has to be more than simply a fun trip,” he said. “It has to really be an academic experience, an immersion in a culture.” Burkink plans to work with faculty to ensure students can take advantage of these opportunities while remaining on a four-year path to graduation. “We have to make sure students are making progress toward their degree as part of study abroad,” he said. “That’s the most important barrier we have to overcome. Students will do it, as long as it’s not going to mean they have to stay another semester.”

The Office of International Education has a “very dedicated” staff and supporters across campus, according to Burkink, much like the College of Business and Technology. He’ll continue serving the college as a part-time marketing professor while directing the Office of International Education.
Study Abroad Fair Highlights Two New Programs

The Office of Study Abroad will host a Study Abroad Fair on Thursday, January 31, 2019. The fair will take place from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the Nebraskan Student Union Ponderosa Room. The primary focus of the event will be the Summer 2019 and Fall 2019 Study Abroad Programs, including two new programs that are being offered. Attendees will have the opportunity to dialogue with past summer program participants who will be on hand for the event.

The newest summer offering is Summer in Australia—a 3 week program taking place in July of 2019 at University of Sunshine Coast in Sippy Downs, Australia near the Sunshine Coast. Participants will earn 3 credit hours in INTS 480 during the program, led by UNK Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology, Dr. Suzanne Maughan, a native of Australia.

In addition to the UNK coursework, the University of Sunshine Coast will offer lectures on topics such as the Australian Environment, Indigenous Australia, Diversity of Population, Politics and International Relations, Conservation of National Resources, and Island Sustainability Practices.

Additional activities include trips to the Eumundi Market and Ginger Factory, Australia Zoo, Fraser Island, and the Great Barrier Reef. Students can also participate in a four wheel-drive island tour, snorkeling, glass bottom boat tours, and more.

For the last 25 years, the Nebraska Semester Abroad to the Czech Republic has been offered every Spring Semester. Historically, it has been one of UNK’s most popular study abroad programs. For this reason, UNK has added a Fall Semester in the Czech Republic.

UNK Professor of History, Dr. Doug Biggs, will lead the Fall Semester 2019 program with Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic. The program will focus on the Lutheran Reformation and Counter-reformation and feature a four day experiential fieldtrip to Rome.

Students who participate in this program will earn 12 UNK credits, which opens the door for them to use most forms of financial aid available to them.

The application deadline for Summer in Australia and Fall Semester in the Czech Republic is February 15, 2019. For more information, go to www.unk.edu/studyabroad, select the Schedule an Advising Appointment button, and follow the subsequent prompts.

UNK Hosts Nebraska International Educators Meeting

The University of Nebraska at Kearney was the site for the November meeting of Nebraska International Educators (NIE). NIE is the state-level organization for persons who work in international student affairs in colleges or universities. Meetings take place twice annually, shortly after the Regional and National NAFSA (National Association of Foreign Student Affairs) conferences.

Tracy Falconer, UNK assistant director of International Education who oversees International

Student Services, Admissions, and Immigration, is the current president of NIE.

The meeting was opened with a welcome from Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Charlie Bicak, and Interim Director of International Education, Tim Burkink. Following the opening, participants representing more than 20 Nebraska schools attended breakout sessions related to their area of focus, including Admissions/Enrollment Management, Education Abroad, and International Student and Scholar Services.

After lunch, the open forum, entitled Global Mobility in Today’s Climate, was presented by Mr. Dan Rock, J.D., immigration attorney for Ellick, Jones, Buelt, Blazek and Longo, L.L.P. in Omaha, and Dr. Chuck Rowling, associate professor of Political Science at the University of Nebraska at Kearney.
International Students Share Culture in Kearney and Broken Bow

Seven UNK international students from China and South Korea traveled to Broken Bow, NE in early November to share cultural games and activities with 40 school children who are part of an after-school program. This cooperation with the Broken Bow program is in its third year.

UNK international alumnus, Rakesh Srivastava (2002, MSE 2005), is one of four recipients of the 2018 Distinguished Alumni Award. The award was presented by the UNK Alumni Association during the September 14 Homecoming festivities.

Srivastava is Founder and CEO of Innovative Prosthetics and Orthotics of Hastings, Grand Island, and Omaha, NE.

Originally from India, Srivastava received his Prosthetics & Orthotics degree at National Institute of Rehabilitation Training and Research (NIRTAR) in India. In 1997, he moved to the U.S. and enrolled at UNK for undergraduate and graduate school.

Srivastava is an adjunct professor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) with a research program called Cyborg Beast, through which they are developing an affordable and innovative prosthetic hand created by utilizing 3D printing technology. He was awarded with a State Research Grant in 2016 to develop low cost medical grade prosthetic devices.

Srivastava has worked closely with Arumina Sinha, the first woman fitted with a prosthetic limb to successfully climb Mount Everest, inspiring millions of people along the way and showcasing that anything is possible with proper care. He has also worked with Malvika Iyer, a bomb blast survivor, bilateral amputee who is well known for her social work and touching stories that have affected millions of lives.

Srivastava is also involved with prominent non-profit organizations based in India where he uses his education, talent, time and generosity to assist those who are less fortunate and may not otherwise have access to the care they need.

Srivastava 2018 Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient

Rakesh Srivastava

Arunima Sinha
Three student organizations held cultural festivals during the Fall 2018 semester, including the Korean Student Association, the Nepalese Student Association and the Japanese Association at Kearney. Photos courtesy of Kosuke Yoshii

Korean Festival

Japanese Sports Festival

Nepalese Festival