Creating Hope: Positive Responses to Global Challenges
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Many issues that shape the quality of our lives have an international dimension. Global economic interdependence, the development of appropriate environmental strategies, the resolution of regional conflicts and the enhancement of human rights all require a global perspective. An important component of the education experience is discussion and interaction with people from many cultures. Since 1964, Kearney State College, now the University of Nebraska-Kearney, has sponsored an international conference to discuss issues of global importance. In 1988 the name of the conference was changed to honor Professor James E. Smith.

As we slowly emerge from the most serious economic crisis since the Great Depression and work to extricate ourselves from two wars, many in the United States are inclined to look for hopeful signs in the world we inhabit. As citizens of the world, we try to imagine creative responses to the challenges we must all face together and seek to build sustainable development strategies that will provide a better life for all.

It is for that reason that we have chosen "Creating Hope: Positive Responses to Global Challenges" as the theme for the 2010 James E. Smith World Affairs Conference. This year, writers, poets, activists, diplomats, scholars, and entrepreneurs from Nigeria, Cuba, Oman, Russia, Vietnam, Uzbekistan, China and India among other countries will speak about initiatives currently taking place around the world that can make a difference in the lives of individuals and in the interactions of groups, nations, and states.

Through their speeches we hope to introduce UNK faculty, students and the broader Kearney community to just a few of the positive responses currently taking place and how they affect the United States and Nebraska. As every year, it is our hope that at least some members of the audience will be sufficiently
inspired by what they hear at the conference to maintain a lifelong interest in international affairs and pursue further information about the outside world through reputable media sources and that some students may choose to consider study abroad.