Welcome

We hope you enjoy reading this inaugural issue of the International Education Newsletter. By keeping you informed of global programs, events and initiatives at UNK, we hope to encourage your comments and suggestions in order to strengthen our service to the university and collaboration with our many partners in international education. Special kudos to our new International Friendship Program Coordinator, Bonnie Payne, who designed and edited this issue.

Dallas Kenny, PhD, Director of International Education

First Meeting of Japan Alumni

On Sunday, September 27, forty Japanese graduates of UNK travelled from all over Japan to gather at the historic Okura Hotel in Tokyo to celebrate their first alumni gathering. It was a time for emotional reunions, joyous greetings, and the sharing of fond memories. ELI Instructor and Japanese Student Association advisor, Jayne Heimer, emceed the event and introduced the keynote speakers – Dr. Dallas Kenny, Director of International Education at UNK, and Mr. Koji Nagasaka, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development representative in Tokyo. Each alum then offered a testimonial or shared a story about their unforgettable student days at UNK. Many lingered to talk of the future and share memories long after the reception was over. Finally, these warm and hopeful exchanges gave way to tearful farewells as former classmates vowed to meet again ... next year!

Alumni enjoy visiting at the reception in the historic Okura Hotel in Tokyo.

Mr. Nagasaka, center, shares stories about living near Kearney as a young man with Shinta Takehana (left) and Taizo Date.
English Language Institute

The English Language Institute gives international students the opportunity to learn the four language skills of reading, writing, listening to and speaking the English language. International students who are proficient in English will provide a TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exam score when they register for admission to UNK. Students with a TOEFL score of 500 or above are admitted as full-time undergraduate students. All others enroll in ELI.

ELI students take the TOEFL exam on their first day of classes. Based on the results, they are placed in one of the five levels of instruction, ranging from Beginning to Advanced. The students are then enrolled in a variety of language immersion classes. ELI students also participate in two outside-the-classroom programs: Conversation Partners and Conversation Table.

The students are evaluated periodically throughout the semester, using the TOEFL exam to monitor their progress and improvement. Once they achieve a score of 500 or above, they are eligible to pursue an undergraduate degree at UNK.

The current enrollment in ELI is 104 students, representing twelve countries. The program has twelve ELI teachers and forty-two ELI classes this semester.

Grand Bahama College Fair

The University of Nebraska at Kearney was among the 30 plus colleges and universities that took part in the 26th annual College Fair, held Sunday, November 15, 2009 in Freeport. The fair is sponsored by the Principals/Vice Principals’ Association.

Eve Mooberry, Coordinator of International Admissions and Recruitment, who represented UNK at this event said, “The fair gives us an opportunity to speak to parents of prospective students and also to get together with our alums who show up to support us in our recruitment efforts.”

Chinese Students and Scholars Association

The Chinese Students and Scholars Association hosted numerous activities for Chinese students and the campus community during the Fall Semester. In September, CSSA held a Mid-Autumn festival in the Ockinga Seminar Center. The festival featured delicious Chinese cuisine prepared by the students. In addition, many Chinese games and activities were enjoyed by all.

Movie nights are very popular events that many student organizations host throughout the year. It is an opportunity, especially for the multicultural and international organizations, to share a bit of their culture with all UNK students. In November, CSSA held a movie night. The movie was about the establishment of the Chinese government. The students found the movie to be enjoyable and educational.

Finally, CSSA held a social event in November. It was a dance party for the 130 Chinese students enrolled at UNK. The students had a great time dancing and meeting new friends.
International Friendship Program

The International Friendship Program is off to a great start in 2009! This program connects international students with families for the purpose of friendship, communication and cultural sharing. This is a visitation program rather than a home-stay program.

Students and host families alike have found the International Friendship Program to be wonderfully rewarding. The students' overall educational experience is enhanced by getting them off campus and into the community. They enjoy experiencing American culture and customs in a family setting and being able to share their culture and customs with their new friends. Families enjoy the opportunity to meet amazing individuals and experience an international culture without leaving home! When a family shares a bit of themselves with the students, it is often one of the students' most cherished experiences while attending UNK.

There have been 29 new students placed with 21 families during the Fall semester, in addition to students and families participating from previous years. If you have an interest in participating in this program, please contact Bonnie Payne at 308-865-8939 or payneb@unk.edu.

International Education Week at UNK

Nine years ago, Secretary of State Colin Powell endorsed International Education Week, citing the importance of international education in promoting tolerance and building friendship between the U.S. and other countries. He maintained that in an era of increasing conflicts and intolerance, the need to understand one another was increasingly more crucial in its ability to break down prejudicial attitudes and support democratic development.

International Education Week was celebrated at UNK November 16-19, 2009. It featured UNK students who had benefitted from experiences studying overseas during their undergraduate education, either as a short-term program or one in which a degree was granted. Half of the speakers were international students who are either currently studying abroad at UNK or who are graduates of UNK. The other half were U.S. students who shared their experiences studying or interning abroad in countries around the world. Countries discussed were Colombia, Honduras, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Venezuela, China, Australia, Thailand, Turkey, Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Ireland and the Sudan.

The weeks' activities culminated in a closing celebration featuring international music and dance that was held in the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

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Student David Jal speaks about his experience studying in the United States.

Students enjoy the dance party following the International Education Week activities.
December Grad Studies Vocation and Avocation While in U.S.

Born in Yatsuhiro, Kumamoto Japan, Shoko Honda grew up in a very traditional Japanese family. She lived with her parents, grandparents and two younger brothers. A self-proclaimed “tomboy”, Shoko used to love to run and play with her brothers and friends in the fields of her father’s farm. She also had a love for dancing.

At 13, Shoko began taking dance lessons at a studio in Fukuoka, a city two hours away from Yatsuhiro. She would travel there once or twice a week for her hip-hop lessons.

When she was a Junior in high school, Shoko chose to study abroad in the United States. Much to her surprise, her host mother in Marshall, Minnesota ran a dance studio. It was there that she began to study ballet and modern dance. She was in a competitive dance group and travelled to many locations in the United States to participate in dance competitions.

Following her graduation from Yatsushiro High School, Shoko enrolled at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. Initially, she was a Theatre major with a Dance minor. She changed her major to Speech Communication her sophomore year but continued to be active in dance. In addition to performing three years in the UNK Evening of Concert Dance, she and her friends began to hip-hop dance together for fun. They entered and won the UNK Fame Talent Show twice and had the opportunity to perform their dance routines in the community on several occasions.

With graduation just around the corner, Shoko has spent time reflecting on her experience at UNK. “At first when I came to Kearney, I thought I would just learn about the classes in my major and develop my English language skills. But, I learned so many more things, such as friendship and communicating with people from different cultures. This really helped develop a maturity in me. I would like to thank my parents who gave me the opportunity to study at UNK, my professors who worked with me and my friends who were always by my side.”

Following graduation, Shoko is returning to Tokyo, where she has accepted a position in real estate and insurance sales.

Calendar of Events

Monday, January 4  Campus opens following Holiday Shutdown
Monday, January 11  Spring Semester begins
Monday, January 18  Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, campus closed
Saturday, February 6  Chinese New Year Party, Nebraskan Ponderosa Room, 5:30 p.m.
Friday, February 19  Nepalese Fundraiser in support of Mahabir Pun’s work bringing wireless technology to remote areas of Nepal, Nebraskan Ponderosa Room, 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 7  International Food Festival, Health and Sports Arena, 4:00 p.m.