James E. Smith Midwest Conference on World Affairs

Positive Engagement in the Global Community was the theme of the 2014 James E. Smith Midwest Conference on World Affairs. Taking place Monday, September 29, this event marked the 50th Anniversary for the World Affairs Conference on the UNK campus.

In commemorating the golden jubilee of the conference, the executive planning committee chose to focus not on how the global community affects us and our world but how we, as individuals and communities, can influence and improve upon the world. As Margaret Mead famously said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Thus, for this conference, the committee sought out “thoughtful and committed citizens” from Nebraska who have indeed changed the world in ways that might seem impossible.

Attendance reached 1,100 for the sessions presented by UNK alumni and faculty, Nebraska individuals and organizations, and one international organization. Session topics included:

- Give Peace (Corps) a Chance
- Small Nebraska Church Saving Lives: Callaway Nigeria Partnership
- Intercepted: Trafficking and Homeless Victims
- Nebraskans 4 Haiti
- Nebraska Activism and Human Rights: The Palestinian Struggle
- World Health: Can One Person Make a Difference?
- Music: Bridge Divides, Build Community, Heal Wounds of War
- South Sudan: One Person’s Impact in Healthcare
- Trade vs. Aid: Two Approaches to Poverty Alleviation

The keynote address, provided by Tom Clynes, contributing editor and photographer at National Geographic and Popular Science, was entitled Can One Person Really Change the World? Traveling the world to discover and tell extraordinary stories is Tom’s passion. He took the audience along “on assignment” to discover what can be accomplished by a person inspired to take action. Two examples he spoke of were virus hunter Nathan Wolfe’s work in Cameroon during the Ebola outbreaks, and “Elephant Whisperer” Lawrence Anthony, who rescued animals from the Baghdad zoo in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.
Chinese Student Presents Research at Fall Symposium

Hongyue Yao, a Finance major from China, was selected to participate in the 2014 Summer Student Research Program at UNK. The students work with a faculty mentor to design, conduct, and present original scholarship work. Yao’s faculty mentor was Dr. Beverly Frickel. A unique feature of this program is that all the participants meet weekly to challenge and support each other while learning about research in other disciplines.

Yao’s research project compared the U.S. and Chinese banking systems over the past two decades using data obtained from the World Bank from 1992 to 2011. It examined the data to perceive overall trends in the economic and banking systems in the two countries, with the analysis focusing on economic health indicators and typical banking industry indicators.

As a result of successfully completing this project, Yao was one of two students in the region selected to present their research at the 2014 Great Plains Economics and Business Conference, sponsored by the Nebraska Economics and Business Association. This honor also included a $200 award. Additionally, she and the other SSRP students participated in the UNK Fall Student Research Symposium, sponsored by the Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity. Finally, she has applied to participate in the April 2015 National Conference on Undergraduate Research, being held at Eastern Washington University, where students from across the country present their scholarly work in an academic forum. UNK sends one of the larger delegations of students each year.

Yao summarized her SSRP participation this way, “This valuable experience not only benefited my present studies by providing a ‘real economic world’ research application, but it also developed in me skills necessary for accurate data analysis that will enable me to continue to complete successful research projects in my future studies and eventual career.” She also expressed her deep gratitude to Dr. Frickel, without whose mentoring she would have been unable to complete this project.

International Students Win Music Competitions

For Music Performance majors, performances and competitions are their presentation of scholarly work. Two UNK international students have done very well this semester, having won statewide music competitions.

Lee Hajeong, a Vocal Performance major from South Korea, won first place in the Senior Women’s Division of the National Association of Teachers of Singing competition taking place at Hastings College on October 3. Additionally, she won the UNK Concerto/Aria competition, and with that receives the honor of performing a solo with the Kearney Symphony Orchestra in February. She studies voice with Dr. Sharon Campbell. “It was a great experience.” Lee said. She continued, “I never expected that I could win because I’ve never won, or even was a finalist in this type of competition in Korea.” For her competitions, she performed a French art song by Eva Dell’Acqua, as well as a piece composed by Mozart.

Ayane Nakajima, a junior Piano Performance major from Japan, competed October 24-25 at the Nebraska Music Teachers Association State Conference at Wayne State College. She won the Music Teachers National Association Young Artist Piano Competition, Nebraska State Level. Ayane is a recipient of the Lavern Clark Memorial Piano Scholarship and studies piano with Dr. Nathan Buckner. For Ayane, “Winning was ‘the fruit of my effort’, as a result of hard work, a little luck, and support from Dr. Buckner, my Japanese family, Kearney host family, and friends. However, this is not a goal, but a passing point. I have to keep motivating myself to study and still need support too. I have a division level competition in January I am working towards.”
Bicak and Fox Visit Dourados, Mato Grosso do Sul for Sister City Program

UNK Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Charlie Bicak, and retired Director of International Education, Jerald Fox, traveled to Dourados, in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil in November as representatives of Kearney’s Sister City Committee.

The City of Kearney is working to create a Sister City designation with Dourados. In an effort to achieve this goal, the pair met with the Mayor of Dourados and his staff, as well as various agencies and interested people throughout Dourados, to discover similarities between Kearney and Dourados and to see where programs could be developed that would be beneficial to both communities.

Additionally, they met with groups from the Federal and State Universities of Greater Dourados and Dom Bosquo University, to create exchange programs and develop joint research with UNK.

The Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul is located in Central-Western Brazil. Dourados is the second-largest city in the state with a population of 200,000. Like Nebraska, the economy is primarily based on agriculture and cattle-ranching. The most common crops are soybeans, corn and sugar-cane.

Sister City is a relatively new program for Kearney but is well on its way to helping develop a greater international component for the community. Committee members made a similar trip to Opava, Czech Republic in September of 2013.

UNK International Education Leadership Changes

Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Charlie Bicak, has announced the hiring of Michael Stopford as Assistant Vice Chancellor for International Affairs. Stopford replaces former Director for International Education, Dr. Dallas Kenny, who accepted a position with another university. He will begin work at UNK in February.

Stopford, originally from the UK, brings a wealth of experience to the position. Since 2011 he has served as Executive Vice President of Higher Education and Global Corporate Strategy for public relations firm Weber Shandwick. Prior to that, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Strategic Communications Services/Science for Peace and Security for NATO Public Diplomacy, and also held positions with Coca-Cola, Syngenta International and Exxon Mobil Corporation. Additionally, he served as Senior Assistant to the President for International Affairs, and Director of the Office of International Affairs, American University, Washington DC. He began his career in Diplomatic Service to the UN. We look forward to welcoming Stopford to campus and anticipate many new opportunities for the campus and community under his leadership.

The English Language Institute at UNK has also undergone a change in leadership. Diane Longo, who has been the ELI Coordinator since the program’s inception in 1997, has resigned in order to serve as the business manager for her son, Dr. Peter C. Longo, at Longo Orthodontics in Kearney. Traci Gunderson, former full-time ELI instructor who is currently Assistant Director of Academic and Career Services at UNK has assumed the role of Interim Coordinator. A search for a permanent coordinator will ensue when the Assistant Vice Chancellor for International Affairs is in place. The English Language Institute is an intensive language program designed to prepare international students to enroll in UNK as successful undergraduate degree-seeking students.
More than 30 countries were destinations for the 212 UNK students who participated in Study Abroad programs during the 2013-14 academic year. This is the largest number of students UNK has had study abroad in one year. The most popular semester based programs were: Czech Republic, Ireland, and Peru.

Most students choose to participate in Study Abroad opportunities during the summer term. One such program, the Hanyang University International Summer Program which took place in Seoul, South Korea had a record number of UNK participants. Seventy-two students joined UNK faculty members for this short term study abroad program. The students earned credit hours while taking courses taught by the UNK faculty. Additionally, they had the opportunity to interact with students from all over the world and enjoy a variety of extracurricular educational and cultural activities.

The number of Study Abroad students at UNK has increased 79% since receiving University Foundation Grant Assistance in 2011. The grant is used to hold an annual World Leaders camp for incoming freshmen. The camp is one means by which the eyes of incoming undergraduate students are opened to the opportunities awaiting them through Study Abroad.
Did You Know?

- Fall 2014 enrollment at UNK includes 518 international students from 55 countries. Of this number, 389 of those students are non-immigrants, representing 32 countries.
- The top five international student populations include:
  - Japan—115
  - South Korea—99
  - China—81
  - Colombia—20
  - Brazil—14
- Fifty percent of the UNK non-immigrant international students have Kearney area host families through the International Friendship Program.
- UNK Campus Conversation Tables brings together international and domestic students, faculty, staff and community members for the purpose of conversing in English for one hour a week during the first six weeks of each semester. The goal is to have at least 100 people. This semester there has been 100-150 people gathering weekly.
- Central Nebraska’s largest cultural event, the Scott D. Morris International Food and Cultural Festival has been hosted annually by UNK international students for more than 30 years and has attendance numbers of 2,500-3,000 each year.
- Other campus cultural opportunities include: Korean Festival, African Festival, Chinese Festival, Japanese Festival and the Young Arab Leaders Association Festival.

International Alumni, we have web pages for you: unk.edu/international

- Update your contact information with us and tell us what has been going on in your life
- Read about other UNK international alums
- Catch up on news and happenings by reading the Global Newsletters
- See the campus activity calendar or access the UNK Alumni Association website

If you are interested in being a person prospective students could email about life at UNK, contact Bonnie Payne at: payneb@unk.edu.