American University of Kyrgyzstan Administrator Visits IU

The October issue of the International Programs Newsletter announced the award to Indiana University of a new $1.9 million USIA-funded project to provide faculty development and administrative training for the new American University of Kyrgyzstan (AUK) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. This project is an ambitious one for this small and scenic mountainous country—officially known as the Kyrgyz Republic—in the heart of Central Asia. AUK, which had its origins as the Kyrgyz-American School, opened its doors as a university in 1997 in an auspicious ceremony attended by the president of the country and U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton.

AUK has a current enrollment of 700 students, 11 different programs, including American Studies, and more than 200 elective courses. About one-quarter of the courses so far are taught in English. With this new development and training project enhancing their humanities and social sciences programs and university infrastructure, AUK is expected to grow rapidly and become a model institution for that region. In addition to IU Bloomington as the lead institution, other ICIP consortium universities taking part in the project are Ball State University, DePauw University, IUPUI, IU Southeast, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, and Valparaiso University.

In October, the provost of AUK, Camilla Sharshekeeva, came for an official visit to the United States, spending two weeks in Indiana visiting with top university administrators on the Indianapolis, Bloomington, and DePauw campuses, and then traveling to Washington, D.C. to meet other high-level government and educational leaders. H. E. Baktybek Abdirisaev, ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United States, accompanied her on her trip to Indiana.

During her stay in Indiana, Sharshekeeva spent the first week attending a seminar of the Fund Raising School at the Center on Philanthropy, IUPUI, which she found to be a highly interesting and unique educational experience for her. In her second week she visited IUB and DePauw University for several days. At IUB, she and Ambassador Abdirisaev, accompanied by several faculty involved in the project, met with IU President Myles Brand and she explained her vision of higher education for her country. She said it was important to look for new approaches and opportunities for building a strong higher educational system in her country to replace the "flunked" Soviet model that was in place for decades before independence. She is particularly impressed with the interdisciplinary area studies programs so highly developed at IUB. "The opportunity to work directly in such a partnership [with IU and other institutions] is very exciting," she said. Her vision is that AUK will become "a source of light" with a strong regional impact, able to beckon on half of its students from the surrounding Central Asian states.

Ambassador Abdirisaev called the partnership with Indiana institutions "an important factor in growing the country's democratic roots and values."

In recent years, about 70 to 80 Kyrgyz students have been coming to the United States to study under

Camilla Sharshekeeva and Myles Brand exchange gifts.

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Elinor Ostrom, Arthur F. Bentley Professor of Political Science, co-director of the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, and co-director of the Center for Institutions, Population and Environmental Change at IU Bloomington, has been honored with the Johan Skytte Prize in Political Science from the Johan Skytte Foundation at Uppsala University, Sweden. She is the first woman to receive the prize of approximately $50,000, which is one of the largest awards in the social sciences.

An expert in analyzing the governance and management of natural resources, Ostrom was awarded the prize for her “profound empirical and theoretical analysis of the nature of collective action and rational choice.” The Swedish foundation cited her book, Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action (Cambridge University Press, 1990). It is considered a modern classic among her many contributions to the discipline. In the book, she argues that neither the state nor the market has been uniformly successful in solving common pool resource problems. It features an analysis of communal interests in land, irrigation communities, and fisheries, and it includes alternative solutions.

In October, Ostrom traveled to Sweden to attend the award ceremony and to present an acceptance address, to be published in Scandinavian Political Studies. The ceremony was held in conjunction with a symposium, “The Future of Democracy,” featuring Ostrom and other past winners of the prize.

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various sponsorship programs. Three exchange scholars are currently at IU: Asel Djusupbekova, researching the legal regulation of foreign investments; Ainura Orozalieva, studying the theory and practice of not-for-profit law; and Zumrat Salmorbekova, working on gender and education issues in relation to Kyrgyzstan. Sharshekeeva looks forward to having more student exchanges concentrated directly between IU and AUK.

The IU-AUK project is already well under way. This past summer, William Fierman, director of the Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center, and Charles Reafsnyder, associate dean of International Research and Development, paid a site visit to AUK to lay the groundwork. This semester, Robert Campbell (Economics, IUB) is already teaching at AUK for the academic year 1999-2000, and will be joined in January by Matt Crawford, a doctoral candidate in psychology who will teach courses in cognitive and experimental psychology. In February, former IU Kokomo chancellor Emiita Hill will spend two months working with AUK administrators. During the summer, Sherry Ricchiardi (Journalism, IUPUI) will teach an intensive course. Other instructors and disciplines are currently under consideration.

On the AUK side, two Kyrgyz undergraduate students are already attending IUB on Freedom Society Act undergraduate exchange grants and will return home at the end of this academic year. Saltanat Berdikeeva is majoring in business and Larisa Kovtunova in political science. In spring, two librarians will come for short-term training and one faculty member will spend the semester. In August, six AUK candidates for master's degrees in the social sciences will begin their studies at IUB, IUPUI, Ball State, and possibly other universities. The project will also contribute library and technical support and has already shipped 1,500 books and several computers to AUK. As Dean Patrick O'Meara says of this important initiative, “It is USIA's highest profile education project in Central Asia.”

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