Thai University Launches Overseas Study Program at IUPUI

What image comes to the mind of a student from a small town in northeast Thailand when asked about the United States? Chulaporn Saenmahung of Mahasarakham University answered: "It's a very large country with many rich people... it has snow and it's a beautiful country..." Her classmate, Phattanaphong Chomphuviset said, "There are a lot of skyscrapers."

Chulaporn, whose nickname is "Aon," and Phattanaphong, who goes by the name, "Joe," did not see snow during their overseas study tour at IUPUI during the late spring semester, but they did see skyscrapers, including the view from the top of the Sears Tower during a visit to Chicago.

A formal linkage agreement was established between Mahasarakham University (MSU) and IUPUI in 1998, but Aon and Joe were the first students to participate in the overseas study component. Joint funding for their study was provided by MSU and IUPUI's Office of International Affairs, the School of Engineering and Technology (SET), and the ELS Language Center.

The two students completed a four-week program of language study at the ELS center and finished a program of technical and cultural study arranged by SET through its Office of International Services. They are both entering the final year of undergraduate study at their home institution, where Aon is in management information systems and Joe majors in computer science. Their technical study program at IUPUI was planned around topics that fit into their major fields of study at MSU, with emphasis on computer technology. During their late March through mid-May visit, Aon and Joe attended lectures about parallel computing and other selected topics, received hands-on practice with technical graphics, took virtual tours and experienced virtual reality, studied network operations, joined classes to watch student presentations, and observed research seminars. In general they learned a great deal about how technology is used and how computing is taught at IUPUI.

Aon and Joe stayed with families in Indianapolis and reported learning a lot about Americans by getting to know their host families. In turn, they found opportunities to represent their own culture. "The entire family learned much about Thailand and the cultural differences between Thai people and American people," reported Jeanine Calabria of Indianapolis, who with her husband and their children were Joe's host family.

During their stay, Aon and Joe also visited with MSU faculty member Pilanut Plusawisot, who is working on her doctorate in language education at IU Bloomington, and MSU staff member Niwat Angkawisitpan, who is studying electrical and computer engineering at IUPUI.
African Studies Program Receives Compton Funding

The African Studies Program at Indiana University has received a grant of $135,000 from the Compton Foundation, Inc., to support nine Compton Peace Fellows during the next three years. The grant is intended to build a community of Compton Peace Fellows who will focus on peace and security and link these concerns to research in sub-Saharan Africa, with special emphasis on population and environmental issues. The overall aim is to develop intellectual capacity in African nations and institutions that can be applied to address the challenges of conflict resolution, peace, and security issues in sub-Saharan Africa.

Those eligible to become Compton Peace Fellows are African Ph.D. students studying at U.S. universities who demonstrate a clear intent to return to Africa after their doctorate, show promise in contributing their skills and education to peace and conflict resolution, and, by the time the fellowship is awarded, will have completed their course work and will be prepared to embark on an approved field research project in Africa. For the purposes of this award, the Compton Foundation, Inc., defines an African student as “a person of African citizenship, who has spent significant time in the region, and whose intention is to focus his or her academic and professional pursuits on problems of peace and security in Africa.”

Compton Peace Fellows receive up to $15,000 for costs directly associated with their dissertation field research in Africa. They are expected to participate in an IU Compton Peace Fellows working group to be organized by the African Studies Program following the selection of the initial group of fellows. The working group will discuss dissertation research projects and explore connections to institutions and organizations devoted to peace and conflict resolution in Africa. Students interested in applying to become fellows in subsequent years also may attend these working group meetings.

The first round of applications was due in September. For further information on the fellowships, contact Director John Hanson, African Studies Program, Woodburn Hall 221, Indiana University Bloomington; telephone: (812) 855-6825; fax: (812) 855-6734.

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A number of units within SET contributed time and expertise to the technical program, including the Departments of Computer Graphics Technology, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Computer Technology, and Mechanical Engineering, as well as the Computer Network Center. In addition to SET’s efforts, technical briefings were provided by the Department of Computer and Information Science, the New Media Program, the Advanced Visualization Lab (IUPUI and IUB), and UITS’s Network Operations Center.

Mahasarakham University serves the north-east region of Thailand, a region rich in cultural traditions but lagging behind the rest of the country in economic performance. In the coming years, more MSU students are expected to come to IUPUI to enroll in degree programs or participate in overseas study opportunities. The partnership with IUPUI offers Thai students new options to gain international perspectives and increase their access to advanced technology.

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For more information, visit www.engr.iupui.edu/msu/may01.html