Kazakhstan’s Bolashak Scholars Begin Their U.S. Studies

A group of 28 students from Kazakhstan arrived in Bloomington just in time to begin the spring 2006 semester. This first cohort of Bolashak Program Scholars comprises 24 undergraduate and 4 graduate students.

“Bolashak” means “the future” in Kazakh. Kazakhstan launched this ambitious scholarship program in 1993, by presidential decree. Ever since, the country has been sending its competitively selected students abroad for university study as part of a national effort to meet the rapidly increasing development needs of the country. The Kazakh government’s grand vision for its Bolashak Program is to ultimately have “3,000 scholars studying all around the world, all at the same time.”

This prestigious program is funded by the Kazakh Ministry of Education and is the culmination of months-long negotiations between the ministry, Indiana University Bloomington’s Center for International Education and Development Assistance (CIEDA) in the Office of International Programs, and the Department of Central Eurasian Studies (CEUS).

Elsewhere in the United States, the University of Texas and the American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS also serve as official placement sites for Bolashak scholars. Among other host countries receiving these scholars are Australia, England, Germany, and South Korea.

Of the 28 students at IU, 6 have been directly admitted into University Division and 22 are receiving preacademic training to improve their English language skills, preparing to sit for the TOEFL, GRE, and/or SAT exams and submitting their university graduate and undergraduate applications for placement at IUB or elsewhere. They plan to enroll this fall for full-time academic study in such fields as informatics, public administration, and biotechnology.

Special gatherings have been held in their honor, including a welcome reception hosted by Patrick O’Meara, the dean for International Programs; Charles Reafsnyder, CIEDA director; and Shawn Reynolds, associate director. They had dinner at the home of Talant Mawkanuli, who teaches both Kazakh and Uyghur and is developing curricular materials for those languages at IUB’s Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR).

IU’s Bolashak scholars have adapted very well to campus life, having already formed a Kazakh Student Association where none existed before. Many of the students are signed up with IUB’s host family program known as Bloomington Worldwide Friendship. Several of the students, in turn, volunteered to host other visiting international scholars for the Department of Central Eurasian Studies’ 13th Annual Association of Central Eurasian Studies conference held this year in early April. They were delighted to have had the opportunity to participate in the festivities of Navruz, a traditional Central Asian celebration of the beginning of spring that is observed annually at IUB, this year in late March. They prepared one of their national Navruz dishes and performed traditional folk songs and dances along with students from other Central Eurasian countries.

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Indiana University Bloomington is preparing for the 2007 campus accreditation by the North Central Association (NCA), now known as the Higher Learning Commission. IUB, through the Office of the Dean of Faculties, presented a major plan for the reaccreditation process. In contrast to previous campus accreditation efforts, and because of recent developments in the NCA process, IUB will focus much of its self-study efforts during this cycle on the special emphasis topic of “globalization and internationalization.” One of the central themes will be the capacity of all schools and units within the university to prepare themselves to meet the demands of increased globalization. This topic provides the opportunity to inform NCA and peer institutions about the rich strengths IU Bloomington brings to research, teaching, and service in the global arena; to evaluate the dimensions of its traditional international strengths; and to look for new ways to grow to meet the global challenges the institution will face in the next few decades.

Dean of the Faculties Jeanne Sept has announced that Terrence Mason, associate professor of education, director of the Center for Social Studies and International Education, and associate dean of the Faculties, will be helping to lead the campus reaccreditation process that will take place during the 2006–2007 academic year.

“I am delighted that Terry has agreed to chair the steering committee for our globalization self study,” Sept commented. “He brings valuable international and global perspectives and an impressive array of research, teaching, and service experience to this task.”

For further information about the 2007 accreditation, send an e-mail to accred07@indiana.edu.

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In the fall of 2006, CIEDA looks forward to welcoming an additional 18 students to the Bloomington campus and hosting another 28 who have been placed at IUB by other U.S. universities. The presence of the Bolashak scholars on the Bloomington campus will thus continue as CIEDA expects to receive several more cohorts over the course of the next several years. For more information about the Bolashak Program Scholars, contact the program coordinator at CIEDA, Robin Charpentier: tel: (812) 855-0353; rcharpen@indiana.edu.

Welcoming the Bolashak scholars (second from left) is Patrick O’Meara, flanked by Charles Reafsnyder and Shawn Reynolds, CIEDA director and associate director, respectively.

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