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New brown-bag series links campus international scholars and researchers

Haenicke Institute Dean Dr. Donald McCloud successfully launched an international-topics "brown bag" series over the 2008-2009 academic year that attracted 300 WMU faculty engaged in scholarly and research work in various regions around the world, staff and visiting faculty and scholars.

McCloud recently announced the fall 2009 schedule, which begins September 11 with a meeting of the South Asia group. Click here to view the fall schedule.

The goal of forming the brown-bag groups is to bring together faculty, graduate and selected undergraduate students to enrich and invigorate the academic environment at WMU by offering a place where international scholarly topics are discussed and perspectives from a wide range of academic disciplines are presented. Group members share research interests, exchange information and discuss contemporary issues in the field, discuss, organize and support information for the global studies undergraduate majors and minors, present papers, and plan joint projects/initiatives. Lunch is provided by the institute and University staff are also encouraged to attend.

"One definition of a university is "a community of scholars," and yet we find few places where the campus community can meet and interact as scholars," said McCloud, who came to WMU to serve as the institute’s dean in fall 2007. "Our contemporary universities are subdivided into academic disciplines and the disciplines are further divided by sub-specialties, which narrow thinking and areas of expertise. The brown-bag format offers an opportunity to counter this hyper-specialization by bringing us together as a community with few, if any, limitations, restrictions or borders."

Seven groups formed this academic year by faculty doing scholarly work or conducting research in Japan, Russia and Central Asia, South Asia, Latin America, China and Africa. An eighth group has coalesced under the Globalization heading. Faculty engaged in Europe and the Middle East have not yet met, but groups have formed and will begin meeting in fall. Definition and control of the brown-bag program belongs with each group; the Haenicke Institute is responsible for the logistics only.

"Brown bag" lunch programs focused on particular academic disciplines or geographic areas are common on many university campuses across the United States," McCloud said. "Faculty members who have experienced these at other universities have been especially positive and vocal in their support for the new program here. I began this series because I recognize the value of these seminars from my own
experience with a brown-bag program at the University of Wisconsin’s Center for Southeast Asian Studies during my years in Madison. It is curious that there is no tradition of luncheon seminars here, and I have found no good explanation as to why not—they simply never happened."

The initiative is one of many the dean is implementing to advance the internationalization of the curriculum at WMU, which expands the Haenicke Institute’s ability to lend its support to academic development and scholarly interchange across the campus.

"The meetings have already proven invaluable for stimulating the area studies programs across the campus and re-integrating those programs with the global studies undergraduate majors and minors, a connection which somehow had been lost (or weakened) over recent years to the detriment of both," McCloud said. "While it is true that area studies programs are no longer "in fashion" with federal funding agencies, they remain the heart of much of our academic work and are essential to the global studies programs. With the development of Web sites for each of our brown-bag groups, we will begin providing an important support service for students interested in every aspect of international studies."

Response to the brown bag seminars has been uniformly positive across the Western campus, with attendance exceeding 300 in the first full year of the series. Several luncheons offered opportunities for graduate students to present draft papers aimed for subsequent presentation at academic conferences and opportunities for visiting Fulbright scholars to present their research work. Some luncheon groups read and discussed selected articles from the field, and, in one ambitious case, the group tackled an entire book. Almost all luncheon groups have discussed some aspect of current events or issues in their areas, and all have involved comment and discussion from a number of disciplinary perspectives.

"We at the Haenicke Institute are very encouraged," McCloud said. "At the same time, we recognize that it will take several years for the groups to mature and become part of Western's academic culture."

He said the globalization group reflects Western's longstanding and significant commitment to thinking in global terms, particularly bringing together those faculty members who are thinking in terms broader than specific geographic regions. This group will also be particularly important in its support of WMU's global and international studies undergraduate curriculum.

"At the end of the day, however, we needn't take an either-or perspective on the global versus the regional," said McCloud, director of WMU's global and international studies major. "Both are parts of a puzzle that few of us fully understand, and hence each contributes to understandings for the other. One would find it very difficult to study a single region of the world without addressing areas beyond the region in question, and, conversely, one cannot comprehend the global without some understanding of what happens at the regional level."
Over the next academic year, McCloud said the main goal for the groups is to continue to mature as communities. He has pledged at least three years of institute support to sustain brown-bag programs for each group until they evolve into self-managing entities.

"We will be building that culture over the coming several years," he said. "Initially in this first year there has been some hesitation to discuss topics that might be considered sensitive, however defined. Yet as time goes on, the depth and value of the discussion will become more broadly appreciated—and participants will learn that they can disagree, even disagree vigorously, but leave the room as friends looking forward to the next meeting. A very positive first step was the presentation of a graduate student paper at a recent brown-bag meeting, where the presenter was a graduate student from foreign languages, but faculty members from anthropology, political science and fine arts offered suggestions for strengthening the paper."

McCloud said the institute will declare "final victory" in the culture-building, brown-bag effort when each group has decided on its own that its meetings are so important to their work and life at Western that they should meet every month of the semester.

"At that point we will assume that the culture of brown-bag seminars has taken hold at Western," he said. "The Haenicke Institute will then be justifiably proud of having created and led an improvement in the academic life of Western Michigan University."

Faculty and graduate students interested in joining a brown-bag group may contact Rena Lynema at (269) 387-3984 or via e-mail: rena.lynema@wmich.edu.

[WMU's Global and International Studies Web site]

**WMU to host 18 faculty-led summer short-term study abroad programs**

[WMU Professors Robb Gillespie and Mustafa Mughazy with WMU students in Egypt, summer 2008]
The Haenicke Institute for Global Education is running a record number (18) of study abroad programs taught by WMU faculty in summer 2009. These programs are supported by the Dean's Scholarship for Summer Study Abroad. Eighty-three need-based grants ranging from $100-$1,500 ($500 average) have been awarded to students enrolled in these programs. Seven WMU faculty were awarded study abroad discovery grants to participate in one of these programs, with encouragement to propose their own program in the next couple of years.

**International Perspectives on Care of Older Persons**
Galway/Ulster-Jordanstown (Ireland/Northern Ireland)
Spring 2/27/09 - 3/08/09
(Chase & Mickus, spring 2009)

**Global Business in Thailand & Japan**
Bangkok & Tokyo
Summer I 4/26/09 - 5/09/09
(Leingpibul)

**Tropical Biology in Belize**
Belize
Summer I 4/27/09 - 5/15/09 (estimated dates; 2009 dates TBD)
(Vonhof)

**The Grand Tour of Europe**
Multiple European Countries
Summer I 4/30/09 - 5/24/09
(ten Harmsel)

**Civilization and Geology, Egypt (spring 2009)**
Alexandria, Cairo, Dashur, Saqqara, Giza, Aswan, Kom Ombo, Edfu, Esna, Luxor, Al-Quesir, Hurghada
Spring 5/01/09 - 5/16/09
(Gillespie & Mughazy)

**Arabic Language and Culture in Egypt**
Alexandria, Egypt
Summer I 5/01/09 - 6/03/09
(Mughazy)

**Engineering in China**
Beijing, Shanghai
Summer I 5/05/09 - 5/20/09
(Qi)

**Mexico Immersion in Health Care**
Patzcuaro, Mexico
Summer I 5/09/09 - 6/20/09
(Fuller)
International Comparative Healthcare in Slovakia
Bratislava, Martin
Summer I 5/09/09 - 5/19/09
(Sadler)

Life & Leisure in Ancient Rome
Rome, Italy
Summer I 5/13/09 - 5/26/09
(De Lisle)

Exploring Health & Healthcare Systems in South Africa
Port Elizabeth, South Africa
Summer I 6/07/09 - 6/24/09
(Bensley)

Intensive Spanish in Santander (Universidad de Cantabria)
Santander, Spain
Summer II 6/08/09 - 7/30/09
(Perez de la Cruz)

Modern and Contemporary Art in Paris
Paris, France
Summer II 6/14/09 - 7/02/09
(Thompson)

Nanotechnology Research in Brazil
Sao Carlos, Sao Paulo region
Summer II 6/25/09 - 9/01/09 (approximately 4 weeks at WMU, 5.5 weeks in Brazil)
(Ari-Gur)

Graduate Spanish in Queretaro
Queretaro, Mexico
Summer II 6/29/09 - 7/23/09 (dates of classes; travel dates: 06/28/09-07/24/09)
(Nibert)

French Language and Culture in Lyon
Lyon, France
Summer II 7/02/09 - 8/03/09
(Curtis-Smith)

Prague Summer Program
Prague, Czech Republic
July 4 to July 31, 2009
(Katrovas et al)

Chinese Language and Culture
Beijing, China
Summer II 8/15/09 - 8/31/09
(Wang)
WMU hosted 20th International Festival in March

More than 3,000 WMU students, faculty, staff and Kalamazoo community members enjoyed a global open house at the 20th anniversary of Western Michigan University's annual International Festival March 22. The festival was a showcase of the music, food and fashions of 15 countries spanning five continents.

Planning for the festival began in November 2008. Members of 15 WMU international student attended weekly meetings to plan the festival and to enlist more than 70 volunteers to work at the festival. Nick DiFranco, the international festival coordinator, witnessed all the hard work by the students and volunteers that lent to the festival's great success.

"The booths created by the registered student organizations were fantastically decorated," DiFranco said. "All the food was very delicious and the performances were dazzling. Having the opportunity to present and share these cultures from all over the world with well over 3,000 people made all the hard work worthwhile."

WMU President John Dunn, second from left, with students in native garb
One of the most popular attractions of International Festival are the native foods offered by each booth. The Malaysian Student Association tried to share a piece of every culture Malaysia represents.

"Malaysia is a multicultural country," said Sue-Lynn Ng, president of the Malaysian Student Association. "We worked hard to represent each of these cultures through the food. We served what is traditional, but also what is popular within our country."

Malaysian fashions and flag

The booth featured prawn fritters, a tea snack that is sold along the roadside, Coconut poppers, a sweet desert, as well as pulled tea, which is a very popular drink in Malaysia. "Pulled tea has its name because the tea is literally pulled to create a broth," Ng said. "It is sold everywhere and everyone loves it in our country."

The Thai Student Association considers International Festival a good way to showcase Thai foods many Americans haven't tried, like green curry chicken and rice, Thai chicken salad and Thai tea.

"The food we are serving is part of the traditional Thai culture," said Kunyaluk Lertsirimongreolchai, a Thai student working on a master's degree in marketing. "We have a great time making the food and showing off Thai fashions. International Festival is always a lot of fun."
Each of the international student organizations prepared their food in campus kitchens under the supervision of WMU Dining Services staff. Preparation began on Saturday morning around 8 a.m.

"Working in the kitchen is a blast," said Gregorio Amaro, who is majoring in global and international studies and engineering graphics and is a member of the Japanese Student Association. "We work alongside all of the other international organizations and see what everyone else is making. The atmosphere in the kitchen is so much fun and it gets us excited for the day."

Each year, International Festival hosts a competition for "best booth decorations." The booths are decorated with native colors and include displays of cultural items, as well as native dishes. The Indian Student Association constructed the front of their booth to look like the Taj Mahal. The Japanese Student Association built a torii display, a gate that appears in most Japanese gardens. The Chinese Student Association hung traditional Chinese lanterns and students working the booth wore shirts with the Panda Bear, the national animal of China.

The judging of "Best Booth" resulted in a tie between the Malaysian Student Association for their representation of a traditional house in a Malaysian village setting and the Dominican Student Association's booth showcasing traditional Dominican culture.

_Dominican Student Association table_
Throughout the festival cultural dances and performances were presented on stage in the ballroom. The festival opened with a flag parade, where students proudly carried the flag of their home countries. Following the parade were several dance performances, including a Malaysian martial arts dance, a Chinese folk dance, a Japanese fan dance and a Middle Eastern belly dance.

A fashion show featuring traditional clothing from many countries attracted a large crowd as students displayed traditional clothing from their home countries. Hawaiian, Saudi Arabian, Japanese and Dominican Republic fashions and costumes were a few of the countries represented during the fashion show.

"This was my first International Festival," said Lisa Gorski, a senior majoring in human resources. "I was so impressed with all the work students put into their booths. The food and dancing were amazing. The festival has taught me a lot about culture that I never knew before in a fun and exciting way."

The funds raised during International Festival go to each of the student organizations and to help pay for the cost of the festival. "Everyone at the festival worked very hard," said Joe Kelly, vice president of the International Programs Council. "It’s great to see everyone have a good time and enjoy all of the activities."

Story by Julia Valentine
Many hands worked in the campus kitchen preparing native dishes.

Parade of Flags

MORE PHOTOS
Large, smelly tropical plant attracts WMU researcher

Specializing in a plant that can grow larger than a human torso and smells like rotten flesh, Dr. Todd Barkman, a WMU biology professor, has spent more than four years researching the plant called Rafflesia—an endangered Southeast Asian plant genus with an average size of up to three feet in diameter.

Barkman has been teaching at WMU for nine years. He grew up in Pinckney, Mich. and admits growing up in a rural area is what first inspired his interest in plants. Barkman attended Michigan State University as an undergraduate majoring in botany. At MSU, he had the opportunity to grow orchids for the botany department. "I fell in love with orchids," Barkman said. "I decided I wanted to work with and study orchids for the rest of my life."

The desire to continue research in botany became even more important to Barkman after he took a class about global ecology as an undergraduate. "The class was about how acid rains, global warming, desertification, and tropical deforestation are depleting great natural areas," said Barkman. "I realized I needed to do something to help alleviate this problem we are dealing with."

**WMU Biology Professor Dr. Todd Barkman**

Orchids were the main focus of Barkman’s research while working on his master’s degree at MSU and into his doctorate program at the University of Texas in Austin, when he conducted research in northern Borneo, where orchids grow in the wild. While in Borneo, he learned about the Rafflesia plant, which is a native of the area.

"We realized we know virtually nothing about Rafflesia," Barkman said. "It was too fascinating to ignore, so my international collaborators and I decided to use modern DNA technology to learn more about the biology of these plants."

Barkman has spent a lot of time abroad in the pursuit of advancing understanding of Rafflesia. He collected DNA samples of about 15 species of the plant in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

"Two plants had remarkably similar DNA; one small, one large, so they could be related,"
Barkman said. "We used the DNA samples to determine how long it took for these changes to occur. Some species appeared around one or two million years ago. Some reached a large size in a very small amount of time. We suspect the growth rate isn’t slowing down, so who knows how big they will become."

Barkman continues to research what causes Rafflesia to give off an offensive odor that is similar to rotting flesh. He said some people believe that Rafflesia’s odor may attract flies for pollination. "The smell isn’t a painful smell like a skunk," Barkman said. "It’s more like a week-old dead possum. It’s not that strong from a short distance, but when you put your face down in it, it smells really bad. However, it doesn’t make you want to throw up and it doesn’t dissuade people from going to see it." Rafflesia is endangered in part because local people, who need to plant gardens to survive, chop down forests for their gardens, which causes habitat loss. "The worst scenario is tropical logging," Barkman said. "Loggers clear huge areas of forest whereas local people only clear small portions. Plantation planting is also a problem for Rafflesia. Half a state can be cut down in order to grow things like coffee."

Not only does Rafflesia face habitat loss, but the plant is challenged by it complex growing habits. "Unlike other plants, Rafflesia is parasitic," Barkman said. "Rafflesia needs a habitat patch, a host plant, and to be able to land on the host in order to grow and develop inside of it. The good news is that locals have realized the tourist attraction these plants have become. Locals have started making a good living out of farming Rafflesia and bringing in tourists."

The biweekly "Current Biology" published Barkman's research, "Accelerated Rates of Floral Evolution at the Upper-Size Limit for Flowers," in its October 14 issue. Barkman authored the report with Seok-Hong Lim, a 2006 Western graduate; Domingo Madulid, Philippine National Museum botany division, whom Barkman met during his travels; Kamarudin Mat Salleh, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, School of Environmental and Natural Resources; Jamili Nais, Sabah Parks, Malaysia, both Malaysian collaborators with Barkman; and Mika Bendiksby and Trond Schumacher of the University of Oslo, Norway.
Though Barkman has a special interest in Rafflesia, he admits all plants are fair game to study. "I also study plant evolution, specifically how plant enzymes evolve new functions over time," Barkman said. "Enzymes do various things in our bodies and in plant bodies as well. In plants enzymes produce a rich array of chemicals. Many of these chemicals we enjoy because they produce flavors and scents that we are familiar with. Oil of wintergreen used in chewing gum is from plants, which is another thing I study. I look at how plants produce that chemical and how that process has evolved over time."

Another stunning example of this endangered plant

The research environment that WMU fosters was important in Barkman’s decision to teach here; he said WMU’s large international student population was another plus. "The twinning program WMU has with Sunway College in Malaysia was one feature that attracted me to this university," Barkman said. "As a result of that program, we have hosted hundreds of Malaysian students on campus at any given time. My wife is from Malaysia and because much of my research is in Malaysia, it’s nice to be in a community with people who can relate."

Barkman teaches several classes at WMU, including, general botany, systematic botany, plant physiology and introductory biology. When not teaching or researching, he enjoys spending time outdoors with his wife and three children.

Portions of this story appeared in a Western Herald story on November 13, 2008 by Josh Holderbaum.

Story by Julia Valentine
Biomed bachelor’s leads to stem cell and spinal cord research for WMU alumna

Western Michigan University graduate Jacqueline Kueh, a doctoral student in London, returned to WMU to discuss her research in spinal cord repair and in embryonic stem cells April 8 to a full house in Kirsch Auditorium of the Fetzer Center.

Now a doctoral candidate at the University College London Institute of Neurology, Kueh addressed two separate lines of her research in "Pluripotency of Embryonic Stem Cells and New Developments in Spinal Cord Repair."

After graduating from WMU in 2003, Kueh returned to her native Southeast Asia and did research at both the National University of Singapore, under the direction of Dr. Ariff Bongso, a pioneer in human embryonic stem cell research, and at the Genome Institute of Singapore. In 2006, she began her doctoral studies at University College London, where she works under Dr. Geoffrey Raisman, one of the most well respected neuroanatomists in the world.

"Jacqueline Kueh is one of our success stories at WMU," said WMU Associate Professor Dr. David Huffman. "Her experiences demonstrate that hard work and tenacity pay off in the long run. Jacqueline has used her life experiences at WMU to help her make decisions to direct her career path. More importantly, her successes are having an impact far beyond herself and may ultimately improve the quality of lives worldwide—I know that she hopes for this."

Originally from Malaysia, Kueh began her undergraduate studies at Sunway College in Kuala Lumpur. As part of WMU’s twinning agreement in place with Sunway since 1988, she transferred to WMU in 2001, and graduated summa cum laude in 2003 with a bachelor's degree in biomedical sciences. While at WMU, she was a Phi Kappa Phi Scholar and was one of the original Monroe-Brown Research Scholars in 2002. She also was active in the Malaysian Student Organization and worked in 2003 as a freshman orientation leader.

Kueh’s busy campus life while attending WMU is evident in her favorite memory from her undergraduate days.

Kueh with WMU mentor Dr. David Huffman
"I remember going into the lab to check my SDS-page gel at 4 a.m. after rehearsal for the Malaysian Night play "Red Hibiscus"—I was the director," she said. "I got around in a $500 junker car that precariously got me from point A to B. Yep; it was pretty crazy for me!"

"Attending WMU and living in the USA liberated me, as a young Malaysian Chinese daughter," said Kueh, the daughter of Christine Chew and John Kueh of Sarawak, Malaysia. "It showed me that with my assiduity and own merit, the sky is my limit. The world here is colorless, sexless, rank-less, nation-less, as long as I am willing to put in the time and effort and to be attentive to my responsibilities.

She expects to complete her Ph.D. in March 2010 and plans to do post-doctoral work at Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology or Stanford University.

"The decision will ultimately be determined by the publications that I can produce from my Ph.D. work," she said. "I'm a fallen medical doctor wannabe. I was successfully admitted into medical schools in Malaysia, but didn't have the financial support to embark on the investment-intensive training after I was turned down by all possible resources—scholarships, bank loans, rich relatives. Since then, my inclination has always been in the medical field. Stem cell research was much discussed at that time. My curiosity and research training at WMU led me to desire to explore more about the field scientifically."

The research work Kueh completed in Singapore after earning her bachelor’s degree steered her to seek a Ph.D. program in which she could "try to translate science into commercially viable products." She secured a fellowship for her Ph.D. to study the development of a neural conduit for spinal injury repair, using biomaterial and olfactory ensheathing cells.

Huffman introduced Kueh at the lecture and continues to serve as a mentor to her.

"David Huffman's continuous motivation and encouragement steers me to dream a little more than what I am - a scientist - a luxury for someone of my background," she said.
Joan Conway’s classroom: Where business and English intersect

Joan Conway, second person from the right in the front row, and former colleague Rebecca Jansen (Joan’s right), with their students at Daegu Catholic University in South Korea

Helping international business workers and students navigate the language of the business world is the focal point of Joan Conway’s work in WMU’s Career English Language Center for International Students.

She caught the teaching bug as an undergraduate at Michigan State University, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in elementary education. After graduating in the early 1970s, she began working as a teacher, and then changed careers a few years later to work in sales for the Kellogg Corporation headquartered in Battle Creek, Mich. When she realized that wasn’t a long-term fit, she returned to college to earn a master’s degree in linguistics at Cornell University.

In 1987, Conway was hired by the University of California at Santa Barbara to develop a business English program for international students. She drew on her work experience in the Kellogg Corporation’s sales force and her experience teaching in the Harvard Summer School, where she prepared international students to enter graduate programs at the Harvard Business School. Her course simulated American MBA classes to help students adjust to the rigors of a competitive academic environment.
"I enjoy teaching language and critical thinking and anything that has to do with business," said Conway, a native of Battle Creek, Mich. "I love to bring in a case from the Harvard Business School and help my students use their analytical skills to dissect it. It encourages them to call on their high-level English skills, while focusing on a real-life situation."

Conway was hired by WMU in fall 2005 to teach ESL classes and welcomed the opportunity to return to Michigan, which she sorely missed. "California never felt like home—I grew up in Battle Creek—that is where I feel at home," she said.

Recently, Conway has taught business English classes for Kellogg’s, her former employer. Kellogg’s asked WMU to help them provide instruction to their international employees who had requested high-level business English instruction. Conway designed the classes to include business writing, presentation skills, corporate etiquette and cross-cultural language issues. She also continues her work with CELCIS students preparing to enter the University.

"The students in the CELCIS program come from many nations and speak many languages," she said. "There is always something new to learn from my students."

Joel Boyd, CELCIS interim director, said Conway has been especially helpful to students planning to study business at WMU in the Haworth College of Business.

"What stands out about Joan’s work is her professionalism," Boyd said. "This professionalism is supported by her kind smile and determined attitude. Her background in teaching English for business majors has been of particular benefit, and we offer short-term programs with students from Japan and France where her expertise comes in very handy."

Click here to visit CELCIS online
Masoud Al Ajmi, an international student from Najran, Saudi Arabia, has adjusted from the sand dunes of his homeland to the “dunes” of snow that pile up in Michigan winters to study at WMU’s Career English Language Center for International Students.

He chose WMU with the goal of earning a master’s and Ph.D. in electrical engineering because of Western’s high quality of teaching and research and because of the state-of-the-art facilities available in the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences.

CELCIS offers international students the opportunity to improve their English language skills before entering an academic program at WMU. Al Ajmi studied advanced level English language classes, which included reading and writing, grammar, speaking and listening to prepare to enter the engineering college in summer I semester.

Al Ajmi arrived in the United States in fall of 2008. “I decided to join WMU’s CELCIS program because it was one of the requirements for the academic program that I will take at WMU,” Al Ajmi said. “After taking a placement test, I began taking pre-advanced level language classes and then moved up to the advanced classes.”
CELCIS courses are designed to improve language skills, however Al Ajmi finds the most valuable part of the program the way his teachers combine language and culture. CELCIS instructor, Darryl Salisbury, teaches his classes in a way that Alajimi finds particularly special.

“Mr. Salisbury can be described as an encyclopedia,” Al Ajmi said. “He can answer any questions I have about the United States and the world. Having a teacher who has the ability to teach the language, and the culture as well, is such a great learning experience. I didn’t expect to have an instructor who is so knowledgeable in politics and history. It’s wonderful and I gain a lot.”

In Ulsan, South Korea’s largest industrial city

Al Ajmi has adjusted to the cold winters and snow that contrast sharply with the climate in his homeland. “This was the first time I have seen snow,” Al Ajmi said. “It’s good to see new things, but it took some time to get used to the climate.” When asked what he misses the most about Saudi Arabia, Al Ajmi didn’t say the warm weather, but rather his family. “I went home for a visit over Christmas break,” he said.

Even with a busy schedule of classes, Al Ajmi had time to recently make a trip to Washington D.C. “I saw the historical monuments,” he said. “I also hope to visit California.”

Al Ajmi began taking University classes and working toward his degree in the summer I semester that began May 4. “I’m excited to start my courses,” Al Ajmi said. He plans to earn a master’s degree in electrical engineering and eventually a Ph.D.

Story by Julia Valentine