Spring 2011

WMU International News Spring 2011

Haenicke Institute for Global Education

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Advancing the knowledge of rural Bangladeshi women about gardening and nutrition and increasing access to basic health care services and information for Cambodian school children was the foci of Dr. Susan Weinger's research and volunteerism on a three-month overseas trip in summer 2010.

Dr. Weinger said the children were always eager to play games

The journey for Weinger, a Western Michigan University social work professor, began as a research volunteer for Helen Keller International—Bangladesh, in early May in the districts of Dinajpur and Jessore.

"I carried out a qualitative evaluation research project concerning an NGO's gardening and nutrition surveillance project,"

Weinger said. "The project provided training in gardening, farming and nutrition to local agencies, which then taught rural women how to make their gardens more productive and ensure adequate nutrition for their families."

Weinger traveled to rural areas and interviewed more than 30 women on the porches of their mud and hatched roof houses, communicating with them through the help of an interpreter. She conducted
two weeks of work in the field, traveling by van or train to rural villages where the gardening project had been completed a few years previously.

"We were there to see the lasting impacts," she said. "We walked through the rice paddies where the people haven't had a lot of contact with outsiders. The children were very cute, following me around and wanting to play games. People were very curious—as asking me questions about all sorts of things not related to the research."

She said historically the women farm in small plots of land around their houses without any formal training in agricultural techniques, such as how to plant seeds, when and how much to water the plants, and how to select the best vegetables to grow. Spinach, okra, and pumpkin, are examples of some of the vegetables grown in Bangladesh. Some highly nutritious non-native bean plants were also introduced through the program.

"Primarily, the rural women who were beneficiaries of the program did not know the food value (vitamins) of these vegetables," she said. "The program reintroduced these vegetables and explained their nutritional value so that they would not be overlooked. For example, the program suggested a stew-like recipe made from local vegetables called 'Khichuri' that is rich in vitamins to help meet the growth needs of young children."

Weinger determined that by introducing a new recipe featuring locally grown vegetables the project succeeded in raising the women’s interest in growing them. The project also helped dispel the myth that non-native vegetables like cabbage, cauliflower, and carrots are more nutritious than native vegetables such as spinach and redleaf. Additionally, by recognizing the nutritional value of local vegetables and gaining the ability to increase harvests from their limited garden plots, the women were able to serve their families more nutritious vegetables year round.

"Social work is about trying to help people and
correcting some injustices that comes from a sense that the world needs to be more just,” she said. “We just can't have people living in this kind of economic cruelty. When people have to live in situations where survival needs are the focus of their day from morning till night, it’s not right. That limits people’s potential development and ability to have happier lives."

Cambodia

In early June, Weinger headed to Cambodia, where she volunteered for the American Assistance for Cambodia. The agency administers and facilitates several programs to help people living in poverty in remote rural areas, including building schools, providing computer and English lessons, and providing financial support to make it possible for more children to attend school. Some medical assistance is also delivered to rural residents through the program.

As part of her research work in that country, Weinger proposed three possible program expansion ideas to become the focus of a grant. The AAC administrators selected Weinger’s proposal to offer through the school system basic health care and educational programs about nutrition, sanitation and hygiene to rural children.

"The idea was that by getting acquainted with the needs and goals of the agency I might be able to write a grant that would help them advance their work," she said. "I will write a grant to get nurses into public schools. For all the country’s public schools there are only 7 nurses—it's not enough. A lot of illnesses are caused by poor hygiene and poor sanitation. Educating the children that the water needs to be boiled, on how to handle water to keep it clean, and how to wash hands, are all pieces of knowledge they can tell their families about. The children really appreciated our lessons and took them very seriously."
With school nurses on board, Weinger said children would not have to suffer headaches and other minor ailments that distract them from learning because they’d easily be able to receive treatment at school. “I met a child at school one day who had a bad headache, something cured simply in the U.S., but the child usually wouldn’t have mentioned it to anyone—without a nurse in the building she’d just have to suffer,” Weinger said.

Weinger returned to Michigan in late summer and got to work identifying foundations and governmental entities to which she can submit grant proposals to begin the school nurse program in Cambodia. In addition to her research and work overseas, Weinger said she greatly enjoyed learning more about each country’s history and culture.

"Social work has an emphasis in that everyone has to be included," she said. “Diversity is a strength and a value, so there’s a lot of emphasis in WMU’s curriculum on race and culture and on how to eliminate discrimination. My interest in culture is one of the reasons I entered into social work. In both Asian countries the unfairness in the distribution of wealth—internally and across nations—was glaring. The amazing drive, endurance, kindness and resilience of the people of both nations will be a lasting memory and I had a very enriching experience that I brought back to share with my students.”

Story by Nate Coe
International students at Western Michigan University are preparing to leave the snow and cold of Michigan for sunny skies in Florida on a spring break trip planned by the International Student Activities and Outreach office of the Haenicke Institute for Global Education.

Lygia Mueller, coordinator of international student activities, said about 40 students have registered to participate in the seven-day bus trip to the “Sunshine State” that begins February 26. The group will stay at the Disney Music All Star Resort adjacent to Walt Disney World and will have the opportunity to visit two Disney theme parks, NASA’s Kennedy Space Center and other attractions in the Orlando area.

Mueller, a native of Eckernfoerde, Germany, has been working for the activities office since fall 2008. She initially enrolled at WMU as a German exchange student in 2005 to complete one year of her undergraduate degree requirements. She returned to WMU in fall 2008 to earn a master’s degree in educational leadership, with an emphasis on higher education and student affairs.

This is the third year WMU has planned an optional spring break trip for international students. In recent years students have enjoyed trips to New York City and Washington D.C. (WMU group at right in 2010) Mueller said the worldwide
The popularity of Disney movies and music made Florida a natural choice as the destination for the 2011 trip.

“All over the world you can meet people who know Disney songs made famous from their movies,” said Mueller, who once worked for Disneyland Paris. “These songs are translated in many languages, and we’ve even hosted a karaoke night on campus where Disney songs have been a popular choice among the international students. Most international students don’t get the chance to go to Disney World as children, so we are making this trip to show them what Disney World and NASA are all about.”

A departure from WMU’s campus in the wee hours of the morning on February 26 and an all-day ride will get the group to Nashville, Tennessee for dinner in a downtown restaurant and an overnight stay near the city. Mueller said the group will arrive in Orlando on Sunday evening, and participants will have two days to explore their choice of two Disney theme parks.

Also planned is a day trip to the Kennedy Space Center, where the WMU group will tour the facility, have lunch with an astronaut, and then take a bus tour to the shuttle launch pad. An airboat ride along Florida’s coast near the space center later that day will give students a taste of what it is like to travel through the Everglades.

“Space shuttle launch pad--Cape Canaveral"

“The last day in Florida is a free day,” Mueller said. “Students will be able to choose from a variety of activities in and near Orlando. We’ll start the drive back to Kalamazoo on Friday morning. The bus rides are fun too—Craig VanGalder, who works in my office, is the master of ceremonies for our bus trips—he’ll have us singing karaoke, playing ice breakers, or watching movies.”
Mueller said WMU's commitment to providing activities and events for international students was one of the key reasons she selected the University as the place to complete her graduate degree.

“All the work done by the Haenicke Institute and the International Programs Council to host activities for international students makes us feel as if we have a home while we are here,” she said. “It helps us make connections with other international and domestic students, who are very helpful and share a lot of information about campus and all the cool places to go and things to do within a couple hours of campus. WMU’s comprehensive orientation for international students provides a first exposure to IPC and the many student organizations and other offices on campus that help newcomers hit the ground running.”

*Photos by Linjia Jiang, Haenicke Institute web assistant*
International Student Activities bulletin spring 2011

Cultural Ambassador “Step up” (January 19 + 20, 2011)
2:45 – 3:30 p.m.
Students interested in volunteering and visiting an American school should come with us to Milwood Elementary school. The children there would like to learn about foreign food, weather, holidays, language, and other fun and interesting facts about cultures! Students who can attend either day should please prepare a short presentation on their country. Artifacts or games from a home country are always welcome. Further, transportation will be provided. For more information, please contact Amanda Greig at intl-outreach@wmich.edu.

Cultural Ambassador “Friendship Village” (January 26, 2011)
6 p.m. in front of Rood Hall bus stop
Friendship Village is a retirement home for the elderly in Kalamazoo. The residents are interested in learning about foreign culture and are more than happy to share how American culture has evolved over the decades! Students are welcome to prepare a short presentation of their culture and bring some artifacts from back home. For more information, please contact Amanda Greig at Intl-outreach@wmich.edu

Graduate Student Meet and Greet (February 3, 2011)
4 – 6 p.m.
International graduate students, please join the International Activities and Outreach Office for a meet- and-greet event, where refreshments will be provided and you have the opportunity to make suggestions for future programming. For more information, please contact intl-specialprojects@wmich.edu

Cultural Ambassador “Chinese New Year” (February 3, 2011)
10 a.m. -12 p.m.

ISORP Interviews (February 4 -5, 2011)
American and international students can apply at www.internationa.wmich.edu/ISORP to become a fall 2011 ISORP leaders. Rewards include becoming a cultural-bridge person and earning $500. For more information, please contact Lygia Mueller at intl-activities@wmich.edu

IPC Valentine’s Day (February 11, 2011)
4:15 p.m. Bernhard Center, Room 205
International students, are you interested in learning about Valentine’s Day and maybe creating a personal card for someone? Then join IPC during the group’s Valentine’s Day celebration.

IPC Ice Capades (February 12, 2011)
7 – 9 p.m. at Lawson Ice Arena.
IPC will host its annual ice skating event with fun activities on the ice and music adding to the atmosphere. Students need to bring $1 for skate rentals. This year’s theme is “superheroes”--wear a costume! For more information, please contact Craig VanGalder at intl-rso@wmich.edu.

Cultural Ambassador “Habitat for Humanity” (February 19, 2011)
All day event.
Help families in need by building low-income housing. Students will assist in building houses or creating gardens. For more information, please contact Amanda Greig at intl-outreach@wmich.edu.
IPC Battle of Bands (February 24, 2011)
7 – 10 p.m. at Dalton Auditorium.
Music is a universal language, which is why IPC is organizing their first Battle of the Bands event, where university bands can compete against each other for the title as best band on campus. For more information or to register your band, please contact Hussain Dashti at ipc_rso@wmich.edu.

Spring Break Trip to Orlando, FL (February 26 – March 5, 2011)
The programming office is taking 40 international students to Orlando Florida to visit Disney World, the Kennedy Space Center and various other fun and exciting activities. The cost per student starts at $500. For more information, please contact Lygia Mueller at intl-activities@wmich.edu.

International Festival (March 20, 2011)
4–8 p.m. in the Bernhard Center, East Ballroom.
Explore cuisines and costumes from around the world during the 21st anniversary of the International Festival. 15 international student organizations have been working together for five months to present their cultural diversity.

IPC International Sports Night (March 25, 2011)
6 – 10 p.m. in the Student Recreation Center.
This event is a joint activity between IPC and the Student Recreation Center to offer students a fun and engaging study break before the final exams. In addition to team sports, such as soccer, volleyball and basketball, students can also take on a challenge at the climbing wall or play badminton.

International Ball (April 16, 2011)
7 p.m. – Midnight, Bernhard Center, West Suite.
IPC invites international students to a formal dinner and dance to celebrate the achievements of the year and say goodbye to graduating students.
Haenicke Institute deans visit Sunway University

A visit to Sunway University (formerly Sunway College), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in early January was made by Haenicke Institute Dean Dr. Donald McCloud and Associate Dean Bill Woods to participate in Sunway’s Distinguished Lecture Series, a Dean’s List presentation to student scholars, and a reunion for alumni of the Sunway/WMU twinning program. In addition, a number of programmatic initiatives were also discussed.

The Tan Sri Jeffrey Cheah Distinguished Speakers Series at Sunway University welcomed McCloud (at lectern in photo at left) as the first speaker of 2011. The series is hosted by the university to give the community and the public an opportunity to hear from a wide range of experts speaking about various topics related to higher education.

McCloud’s talk, “Studying In Today’s America: How To Choose The Right College Or University,” addressed the rapid changes taking place in American higher education and some of the major factors international students need to consider to select the best American institution to meet their academic goals.

More than 150 people turned out to hear McCloud’s presentation and participate in a question and answer session that followed his talk.

Sunway’s Vice Chancellor Robert Bignall (photo above) invited Associate Dean Woods to participate in an annual ceremony honoring the students on the Dean’s List for academic achievement. Woods made a brief speech and helped the vice chancellor present individual awards.
The two deans were also invited to participate in a small reunion dinner for alumni of WMU’s twinning program at Sunway University, which has existed for more than 25 years and has resulted in more than 500 alumni.

Dessert at the reunion dinner honored the long-standing relationship between Sunway and WMU.
Traveling around Europe as a child on tour buses guided by her travel-agent parents laid the foundation for a career in international service and education for Christina Tilbury, assistant director of Western Michigan University’s Center for English Language and Culture for International Students.

In addition to being a global traveler, Tilbury grew up in a dual-language home—learning her father’s native French—as well as a first-generation American because her mother was a citizen of England. “As a young person you want to be like everyone else, but I recognized that culturally my family was different than those of most of the kids I went to school with,” she said.

Through a post-degree internship at Arizona State University, Tilbury worked in a prison, where she discovered a career in social work wasn’t what she felt called to do. So, she did what many students with wanderlust do between their undergraduate and graduate degrees—she went backpacking through Europe, Asia and Australia.
“I broke out of the model of my parents’ travel in which everything is planned ahead,” Tilbury said. “I traveled on the very, very cheap, and was very satisfied for a couple years. When I came back to the States, I worked in Washington D.C. for a high-school exchange program, counseling domestic and international students who were having issues with their host families. We were located near the United Nations building, where I started taking Arabic classes.”

With some practical experience under her belt, Tilbury applied to Columbia University in New York with her sights set on studying Arabic and earning a master’s of international affairs with an emphasis on human rights and international law, which she accomplished in two years. She said she dreamed of working for the United Nations.

“I got my wish, but not in the capacity I had hoped for,” she said. “I was offered an internship to work in the Population Division looking at trends in population and migration. Before that was over, I started looking for an internship in the Middle East focused on human rights and international law.”

Tilbury struck out on two opportunities: An internship arranged in Iraq fell through when the Gulf War broke out just before she was due to arrive in country. A second position through the U.N. in Egypt didn’t work out when Tilbury learned that the official she was assigned to wanted an au pair, not an assistant.

An opening in the United States Immigration & Naturalization Service’s Department of Justice for an asylum officer caught Tilbury’s attention and she was hired in February 1991. Her first assignment involved working on a Coast Guard Cutter and at the Guantanamo Naval Base, interviewing Haitians seeking asylum in the U.S.

“At sea, we intercepted Haitians trying to get to the U.S. traveling in unseaworthy boats that could sink at any time,” she said. “Many were determined ineligible for asylum and were returned directly to Haiti. Seeing their desperation, I was especially sad for the children. That work really made me appreciate the U.S. and all we have and to what lengths one might go to enjoy the freedoms we have.”

She then shifted from working with asylees to refugees, interviewing Vietnamese under the U.S. Orderly Departure program in Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Tilbury was later asked to help open an INS office in Haiti and worked there about six months, meeting her future husband, Kent, a Green
Beret in the Army, at the ambassador’s residence in Port Au Prince. “That detail ended when the U.S. invaded Haiti in 1994,” she said. “I stayed as long as I could, then we had to drive into the Dominican Republic, where we were evacuated by helicopter.”

She returned to the states and became a supervisory asylum officer in New York for three years, before shifting gears to work for the Headquarters Inspections Division of the INS in Washington D.C. as an assistant chief inspector.

“It was a promotion and a departure from providing benefits to enforcement,” she said. “I visited the country’s borders—north and south—witnessing human smuggling firsthand. I did that for a little more than a year, until I had my first child. We lived in D.C. for a couple more years, but realized we wanted a slower-paced life. We returned to Michigan in 2002, when Kent took a job with Homeland Security in Grand Rapids.”

In recent years as her children became more self-sufficient, Tilbury began looking for local opportunities to work in the field of international education. Her work and life experiences made her a standout candidate for the assistant director position in WMU’s ESL program and she was hired in fall 2010.

“I enjoy the atmosphere of higher education—personally and professionally,” she said. “We are globally interdependent now, so to be promoting English as a catalyst in bridging educational opportunities is a contribution I believe in!”

*Tilbury with morel mushrooms found near her home*
Spanish major and global studies minor nets international job for WMU graduate

Enrolling in Western Michigan University’s global studies program and studying abroad in Spain made Kaley Marino, a 2010 graduate of Western Michigan University, an attractive candidate for an international position with a West Michigan commercial farm equipment manufacturer.

Marino, who majored in Spanish, says she has always been interested in travel and working abroad, so it made perfect sense to minor in a program that facilitated her desire to learn about other cultures and helped her achieve a goal to work for a company involved in international commerce. She reached that goal in September of 2010, when she was hired by the Big Dutchman, a German-based company located in Holland, Michigan, to serve as its international sales coordinator in the International Department.

She decided to declare a minor in global and international studies while taking the 2000-level introductory course, taught by Dr. Thomas Kostrzewa, to fulfill a general education requirement.

“I really enjoyed how “Dr. K’s” class focused on globalization, and I gained an infinitely better understanding of the true meaning of that term,” said Marino, a native of Grand Rapids, Michigan. “After completing the class, I decided to continue the pursuit of my degree with some emphasis on global studies. I met with Dr. K and found out that the curriculum was extremely flexible and that I could choose an area of focus. I was eager to get the ball rolling!”

Marino visited Rome when she studied abroad.
One of the main reasons Marino was drawn to the GIS program was because of her ability to personalize her plan of study to satisfy her interests. The GIS major offers seven choices for a disciplinary focus, which is coupled with a regional, comparative, or foreign language emphasis of the student’s choice. “That kind of freedom to focus on what I was really interested in was very appealing,” she said.

Working for a company doing business in Mexico provides Marino the daily opportunity to speak Spanish and think globally. The Big Dutchman sells farming equipment in more than 100 countries. Marino’s responsibilities include taking orders, preparing quotes, making product recommendations and completing logistical arrangements for her accounts in Mexico. This gives her the opportunity to speak Spanish and to witness how globalization is playing out daily in an international business.

“I wanted to be as marketable as possible because of how tough the job market is,” she said. “I think the most beneficial thing I learned from my GIS classes was the political standings of countries throughout the world. In my current job, I frequently work with import and export laws, trade regulations, and Incoterms—the official rules for international trade terms. Each country has its own set of regulations and requirements. My knowledge from the GIS classes allows me to better understand those requirements and fulfill them accordingly.”

To complement her Spanish major, Marino studied abroad in Malaga, Spain, in fall 2008 and lived with a host family, which she said greatly advanced her foreign-language reading, speaking and writing skills.

“Immersing myself in Spanish culture was the ultimate experience for my language skills and my cultural studies,” she said. “By living with a host family, I learned things that I would not have been able to learn in a classroom. Studying abroad is an experience I recommend to anyone studying for any degree.”

Working for an international company has greatly expanded Marino’s perspectives on the impact of globalization in the business world.

“Working for a foreign company has a broader view of business than one that is doing business only in the United States,” she said. “Such companies are also compelled to do things more efficiently because their business is spread all over the world. Working for a global company means I have a lot more networking and expansion opportunities, as well.”

Story by Ed Clancy
Gambian native at home on Bronco court

Being an international student-athlete like WMU Bronco basketball player, Muhammed Conteh, requires a major dedication to time management.

"Not everyone can be an athlete with all the stuff you go through, but at the same time it has its own rewards," said Conteh, who arrived in the United States in 2002 and learned the game when he was 13 years old.

Conteh spends anywhere from 16 to 18 hours a week on the court practicing basketball with his team, not including game time and travel time associated with away games. Off the court he's enrolled in four classes, with an additional two lab classes and then spends around six-to-eight hours a week studying for his exercise science major and business minor.

His high school successes on the court made him an attractive candidate for many United States universities.

"When I was in high school, I received eight or nine offers, visited about half the universities and didn't like the atmosphere I encountered on those campuses," he said. "When I came to Western, met some of the players, and scrimmaged with them, I knew I belonged in Kalamazoo."

Conteh said the team is his local family, and the players help him get through the struggles of being a busy college athlete.

"When I walk into the locker room, everybody is always cracking jokes, which reminds me of being back home with old friends," he said. "If I’m having a tough time in practice, they cheer me on and help keep my spirits up. I can definitely grow here—I have already learned a lot and have made many changes in my game. I am better at finishing with my left hand and on my outside shots. My teammates and coaches are always helpful."

Despite the pressure to do well on the court and in the classroom, Conteh enjoys being a college athlete and getting recognition from people on campus and in the community for his contributions.
“Everywhere I go I’m proud to be an athlete for Western,” he said. “My court motto is—go hard every time, every possession. My coach said I bring energy to the court; when the team is down, I’m the guy who pumps the team back up!”

The team’s away schedule means Conteh spends a good deal of time on the road, which sometimes means missing classes. Assignments pile up and he has to figure things out on his own because he missed information shared in class. “The team’s study table helps me maintain a good GPA,” said Conteh, who is majoring in exercise science, with a minor in business.

One of his dreams is to play basketball in the NBA, but he said if that is not possible he will continue to play overseas. He believes his business minor will help launch a career in Gambia, where he hopes to work with people who are less fortunate, and who were not able to get an education.

Surprisingly, his favorite memory from the court this season was the team’s 68-65 loss to Xavier University in the season-opener. “We went out there to a crowd of about 10,000 people and took it right to their noses,” he said. “It felt real good to play as hard as possible.”

**Story by Nate Coe**

[Conteh’s stats]

[Story about Conteh from Kalamazoo Gazette]