The Office of Global Programs (OGP) hosted international students from Pakistan, Tunisia, Russia and China for the 2016-2017 academic year. The Tunisian and Pakistani students came to Alcorn State through the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), which is an international nonprofit organization providing leadership and innovative programs to improve the quality of education, strengthen independent media, and foster pluralistic civil society development. The students from Pakistan were Rameesha Khan, freshman biochemistry major; Mariam Khurshid, senior psychology major; Joti Ghani, junior political science major; Muhammad Khan, freshman computer science major (Fall 2016); Wajiha Shah, junior finance major; Shama Kanwal, junior nutrition major, and Syeda Urooj Haider, junior mass communications major (Spring 2017). The Tunisian exchange students who attended Alcorn for the 2016-2017 academic year were Hamza Zouari, freshman biology major, and Mohammed Jaballah, senior business administration major.

The Russian students came through the Year of Exchange in America for Russians Program (YEAR), which is funded by the United States Department of State and administered by the American Councils for International Education. YEAR provides a unique opportunity to study for one year in institutions of higher education in the United States, to engage with local communities in sustained and meaningful dialogue, to educate Americans about Russia's history and culture, and to gain a new, nuanced understanding of American society. The Russian students were Alisa Matlakhova, literature major, and Anna Klimenteva, education major, both freshmen.

Jin Cheng, from China, was the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant for Chinese for the 2016-2017 academic year. Jin was a graduate student and took courses at Alcorn and taught Chinese language classes in OGP.
United Nations Lecture Series on World Refugee Situation

On November 16, 2016, the Office of Global Programs hosted another presentation in the United Nations (UN) Lecture Series. These lectures are brought to Alcorn through the Higher Education Alliance of the Humpty Dumpty Institute. The lecture was titled, “The United Nations and the World Refugee Situation,” and was given by Wes Rogerson, senior associate for the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA).

The world is witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. An unprecedented 59.5 million people around the world have been forced from their homes. Among them are nearly 20 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18. There are, also, 10 million stateless people, who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement.

People fleeing persecution and conflict have been granted asylum in foreign lands for thousands of years. The agency that helps refugees is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (also known as the UN Refugee Agency), which emerged in the wake of World War II to help Europeans displaced by that conflict.

In addition to persecution and conflict, in the 21st century, natural disasters (sometimes due to climate change) can also force people to seek refuge in other countries. Such disasters – floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, mudslides – are increasing in frequency and intensity. While most of the displacement caused by these events is internal, they can also cause people to cross borders. None of the existing international and regional refugee law instruments, however, specifically addresses the plight of such people.

There was quite a bit of discussion regarding the U.S. stance of assisting refugees. There is some unease in the U.S. about taking in refugees for fear that there may be terrorists with the refugees.
International Coffee Hour Makes Multicultural Learning Fun!

The Office of Global Programs has been hosting International Coffee Hour (ICH) for a few years now and it just seems to grow more every year. International Coffee Hour ICH happens every Friday during the fall and spring semesters and is a time for Alcorn students, staff, and faculty to gather for refreshments while listening to presentations by international students, staff or faculty on their native country. The topics range from general information, specific cultural elements to traditions of their country. It is, also, a time for domestic to exchange information with the international students about how American culture/traditions are different or similar to theirs.

This year we had presentations on several countries. Jin Cheng, the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA), gave a presentation on her native country of China, all seven of the IREX students from Pakistan gave presentations on different aspects of their country, Hamza Zouari and Mohammad Jaballah displayed information about Tunisia, and Alisa Matlakhova and Anna Klimenteva did two very interesting presentations about Russia.

Yuliya Reed–Waddell, ESL educator in Global Programs, presented a slide show on Kazakhstan and gave a lecture about American Dialects later in the semester, Torria Powell, junior political science major, showed a slideshow on the time she spent in Vietnam during the summer. Shannon Giscombe, Collett Charlson and Jerome Geddes gave two very interesting presentations on their home island of Jamaica. Also, Ariel Jordan showed pictures and talked about her study abroad term in Kenya, and Dr. Frank Mrema, forestry and mycology specialist in the Department of Agriculture and Applied Sciences, gave an interesting and very educational talk on Tanzania, his native country, and on his research on fungi, specifically mushrooms and their importance to health.

There were presentations on special occasions or holidays, such as Halloween, where the attendees carved pumpkins, and Chinese New Year, and on “Pancake Day” from Russia, where we actually are pancakes, which are more similar to what we know as crepes rather than to what we know as pancakes.

Often, the presentations create a platform for healthy and honest discussion of different aspects of a culture or country and often clear up some misconceptions that people may have. The free and open exchange of information between the domestic students and our international students has led to a better understanding of each other’s cultures and has led to many good friendships. To experience this opportunity to learn about other countries, and to possibly make new friends, please join us during the fall and/or spring semesters on Friday mornings at 10:00 a.m.
April 11, the Office of Global Programs (OGP) presented 2017 Multicultural Day. The day started with a morning educational workshop conducted by the Kotchegna Dance Company, who was also the afternoon festivities’ featured performance. The Kotchegna Dance Company is a performance group based in New York, but perform traditional dances from the Ivory Coast of Africa. During the workshop, the attendees learned about the history of the Ivory Coast, some of the stories behind the dances they perform, and information about each of the performers in the group which was composed of people from several different countries and cultures. Following, the attendees where given an interactive dance lesson from Kotchegna. In the afternoon, the main festivities took place in the Grand Ballroom of the James L. Bolden Campus Union.

After welcome remarks by Dr. Dovi Alipoe, director of OGP, and a reading of the Proclamation by Dr. Martha Ravola, interim chair, Department of Human Sciences, the mistress of ceremonies, Felicia Harried, user interface architect, introduced the main performance of the day, Dr. David Goldblatt (left) is introduced by Ms. Felicia Harried, MC for festival.

Alcorn State students, staff and faculty model international attire in the Cultural Fashion Show. Several different countries and cultures were represented.

Logo for 2017 Multicultural Day features a tree with leaves of hands with the flags from countries represented at Alcorn State University, past and present, which exemplifies the event theme: “Diversity = Beauty and Strength.”

“The Mask Speaks” from the keynote performance by the Kotchegna Dance Company.
American HBCU attire modeled by the TREND Modeling Squad from Alcorn State.

The group V.Y.B.E. entertains the audience with a rousing rendition of “Uptown Funk.”

FLTA Jin Cheng from China performs a beautiful Chinese dance.

the Kotchegna Dance Company. The performance was lively, dynamic and exciting! The lead dance at one point performed on stilts and even did a modified walk-over on them!

Following the main performance, Dr. David Goldblatt, assistant professor of School of Arts and Sciences, played the guitar and sang two welcoming Hebrew songs. The next group to strut their stuff was the TREND Modeling Squad from Alcorn State, who modeled modern American Historically Black Colleges and Universities attire.

Next was the popular Cultural Fashion Show, beautifully organized by Rani Panicker, data analyst for Extension, School of Agriculture and Applied Sciences. Alcorn faculty, staff and students modeled native attire from several different countries and cultures, including Pakistan, China, Russia, India, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Togo, Philippines, Virgin Islands, Japan and Nigeria.

The next presentation was the V.Y.B.E. musical group from Alcorn State who really got the crowd moving with a wonderful rendition of “Uptown Funk.” After their song, Jin Cheng, the Fulbright Chinese FLTA charmed the audience with a beautiful Chinese dance. To close out the performances, members of the Pan-Hellenic Council did a lively Greek Stroll.

Attendees later toured the Multipurpose Room to view different country exhibits and were treated to a variety of international foods to sample while being entertained with international music videos. It was a lively and vibrant educational and social event.

Members of the Pan-Hellenic Council perform a lively Greek Stroll to end the presentations.

Festival goers look over the country exhibits and sampled various country cuisines.
February 19, 2017, the Office of Global Programs hosted a lecture on “The United Nations Continuing Challenges in Combatting Climate Change.” Ambassador Odo Tevi, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Vanuatu to the United Nations served as the speaker. This was another United Nations Lecture Series presented in collaboration with The Higher Education Alliance of Humpty Dumpty Institute. In the morning, prior to the lecture, Ambassador Tevi met with several students in the Office of Global Programs to share more information about his island nation of Vanuatu.

In the lecture, Ambassador Tevi described the difficulties Vanuatu and other small island nations must handle in the face of climate change and rising sea levels. Goal 13 of the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 is to “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.” Many island states in the Asia-Pacific region, including Vanuatu, are feeling the impacts of climate change particularly strongly. Large numbers of islanders earn their living from agriculture or fishing, and this makes them especially vulnerable to extreme weather events like cyclones, floods or droughts. Vanuatu is assessing how to address this situation.

Left: Ambassador Odo Tevi of Vanuatu (head of table on left) talks to students in the Office of Global Programs before the afternoon lecture. Right: Ambassador Tevi speaks to the audience at the UN Lecture on Climate Change.

World Current Events Question

March 2017, what country officially notified the European Council that it was divorcing itself from the European Union?

a. Poland
b. United Kingdom
c. Greece
d. Spain

Answer: b