2014 Multicultural Festival - Many Cultures, One Journey

On April 22, 2014 the Office of Global Programs (OGP) presented their annual Multicultural Festival, themed, “Many Cultures, One Journey.” The Festival opened with an international flag parade, accompanied by the Alcorn State University Drum Corps.

Alcorn President, Dr. Alfred Rankins Jr. presented the Festival Proclamation and Dr. Dovi Alipoe, director of Global Programs, gave welcoming remarks, following which His Excellency Jeremiah C. Sulunteh, Ambassador to the United States from Liberia addressed the audience and presented gifts from Liberia to Alcorn administrators.

The program followed with the Festival's keynote performance by Qurrat Ann Kadwani, who presented an excerpt from her award-winning show, “They Call Me Q.”

The program also included an international fashion show followed by several fun contests, plus song, poetry and dance performances by the University students, faculty and staff. The program concluded with the audience enjoying international music and videos, as well as colorful exhibits while sampling some of the very tasty selections of international foods prepared by Sodexo.

Multicultural Festival Highlight Photos

Tony Innouvong, president of the IMSO, leads the flag parade into the Campus Union Ballroom to kick off the 2014 Multicultural Festival.

His Excellency Jeremiah Sulunteh from Liberia (right) gives a presentation to Alcorn President Alfred Rankins, Jr., assisted by Malah Dahn (far left) and Victor Flomo (left), two Liberian students attending Alcorn.

Alcorn students, staff and faculty members wearing their international attire in the fashion show.

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During the spring 2014 semester, Alcorn student Lauren Gagnon traveled to Thailand to study abroad at Mahidol University in Salaya, Thailand. Lauren, a senior majoring in psychology, is originally from San Diego, California. She was recruited to play soccer at Alcorn State University when she was 17 years old.

While in Thailand, Lauren took classes that advanced her toward her bachelor’s degree, including educational psychology and history and systems of psychology, which are both core classes for a psychology major. In addition, she took pro/anti-social behavior and drugs and society, which filled her some of her elective credits. According to Lauren, the classes at Mahidol are similar to Alcorn in that they both have small class sizes. However, Mahidol does trimesters rather than semesters which makes the individual classes longer but there are fewer classes overall. The teachers are very organized with their curriculum and provide most of the course materials. Lauren found the classes to be really enjoyable, even though they were very condensed in comparison to what she has been accustomed to.

While preparing for her trip, Lauren looked at the different study abroad providers that are associated with Alcorn, and chose Knowledge Exchange Institute (KEI) because of their large selection of locations and the numerous excursions they planned for their participants.

“As I researched all of KEI’s location options, their universities and the course lists, Mahidol University in Salaya, Thailand, was a perfect choice,” said Lauren. “Mahidol’s campus is beautiful and very open, they also have wonderful teachers from all over the world and their Global Affairs office helped the study abroad students with everything from extending visas to finding classes. Salaya was really wonderful, but was not as busy in comparison to some of the larger cities in Thailand.”

Lauren also enjoyed visiting the beaches with the friends that she made through KEI. “The sand is white and the oceans are a beautiful blue, so clear that one can see to the bottom. Going to the beaches on the weekends was like having mini-vacations,” Lauren said. “The low fares and cheap bungalows made traveling easy and possible. Although the language barrier could be a little difficult sometimes, it made getting there that much more fun. Going to different islands, traveling and meeting new people was definitely the best part of my whole experience.”

Lauren has some advice for her fellow Alcorn students about studying abroad: “For any student who might want to study abroad and is trying to decide, it is easily going to be one of the best decisions you will ever make. If you are worried you cannot afford it, the Global Programs office can help you find scholarships, and the program I used, KEI, gives scholarships as well. It will be worth the effort to get there and you will enjoy the opportunity. The experiences you have abroad will open your eyes to a world you had no idea you were missing out on.”
Rwanda Permanent Representative to UN Speaks at Alcorn


The 1994 genocide was a mass slaughter of the Tutsi and moderate Hutu people in Rwanda by members of the Hutu majority. During the approximate 100-day period from April 7 to mid-July 1994, an estimated 500,000–1,000,000 Rwandans were killed, constituting as much as 20 percent of the country’s total population and 70 percent of the Tutsis then living in Rwanda.

Byaje spoke on the changes in the leadership and the politics of the country, as well as the large strides women have made in Rwanda.

Women’s rights have progressed hugely. An impressive 64 percent of parliamentarians are women – the highest proportion of any parliament in the world. Gender rights are enshrined in its constitution, and a swath of laws have given women the right to inherit land, share the assets of a marriage and obtain credit. As many girls as boys receive primary and secondary education now; maternal mortality is lower and the birth rate is falling.

An interesting fact about Rwanda that Byaje shared and received quite a few comments on is that non-biodegradable polythene bags are illegal in Rwanda. In 2008, the small East African nation decided to ban them completely.

Alcorn Delegation Visits Russia

On July 19-27, 2014, six Alcorn State University’s administrators and faculty members traveled to Russia to meet with the rector, vice rector, deans and staff members of Voronezh State Agricultural University (VSAU), in Voronezh, Russian Federation, to renew a cooperative agreement between the two universities. The current agreement was scheduled to expire in October of this year.

The Alcorn delegation included Dr. Donzell Lee, interim executive vice president and provost, Dr. Barry L. Bequette, dean and director of land-grant programs, School of Agriculture, Research, Extension and Applied Sciences (AREAS), Dr. Dovi Alipoe, director of Global Programs, Dr. Wesley Whittaker, associate dean for Research, School of AREAS, Dr. Girish Panicker, director of Conservation Research, and Dr. Alena Funtikova-White, assistant professor of agricultural economics.

Another purpose of the trip to Voronezh was to strengthen the relationship with VSAU and to seek ways on expanding opportunities for international cooperation in teaching and research, which was achieved. Some highlights of those opportunities are:
- VSAU and Alcorn State will implement a joint Master of Science degree in Agriculture (Agricultural Economics major)
- Courses offered by VSAU under the joint degree program will be taught in English
- VSAU will offer selected graduate courses in agricultural economics in English beginning in the spring semester 2015. These courses will be available to Alcorn students online
- Alcorn State and VSAU will continue to hold periodic joint seminars via video-conferencing.

2014 Russian Summer Language Institute Concludes

The 2014 Russian Language Summer Institute has ended for the year. Ludmilla Dobrynina from Voronezh, Russia was the instructor and five students completed the course: Alicia Graves, Iesha Jackson, Albert Sampama, Dr. LaShawn Thompson and Geraldine Varnado.

On August 7, a completion ceremony was held in the Office of Global Programs. Each student gave a presentation showing some of the Russian language skills they acquired in the course. At the start of the ceremony, Alcorn President Alfred Rankins Jr. spoke briefly and after the presentations, Dr. Dovi Alipoe, director of Global Programs, presented each student with a certificate. A delicious lunch of Russian food, prepared by Ms. Dobrynina and her family, was enjoyed by the students and guests.
Here are a few things that are happening during the fall 2014 semester.

- Five Alcorn students are studying abroad for the fall 2014 semester. Edarien Bradley, Corderrius Stevenson and Shaydale White, are studying at Veritas University in Costa Rica; Pavel Sarygin is at Shanghai University in China; and Aakanksha Punj at Bahcesehir University in Turkey. We wish them an enjoyable, educational and eye-opening experience!

- The International and Multicultural Students Organization (IMSO) held their first meeting on Wednesday, September 10, at 11:45 a.m. The IMSO is open to all students, staff and faculty. Come join us and learn more about our international students and countries they are from. Future meeting times to be announced.

- A Study Abroad Fair and Passport Drive was held on September 30, 2014, in the lobby of the Dr. Clinton Bristow Jr. Dining Facility, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Study Abroad providers shared information about their programs. Also there was an opportunity to obtain passport applications and make arrangements to take free passport photos.

- Study Abroad Workshops will be given on Mondays and Fridays at 2:00 p.m. in the Office of Global Programs Conference Room. Information about study abroad opportunities and about the Gilman International Scholarship will be given.

- International Coffee Hour will be held this fall on Fridays at 10:00 a.m. in the Office of Global Programs Conference Room.

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**World Current Events Quiz**

What African countries are most affected by the latest outbreak of the Ebola virus?

- [ ] Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria
- [ ] Kenya, Ghana, Botswana, and Namibia
- [ ] Libya, Rwanda, Tunisia, and Chad
- [ ] South Sudan, Togo, Algeria and South Africa

Correct answer: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria

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**Upcoming Fall 2014 UN Lecture Series**