A Message from the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Texas A&M strongly values our international efforts in teaching, research, and engagement with our many international partners. As you may know, we have recently taken the opportunity to undergo a restructuring process in order to strengthen the alignment of our international initiatives and programs with our academic and research missions. In addition to being responsible for off-campus instruction, and program review and assessment, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs is now responsible for the offices that support academic programs in their engagement activities abroad. In addition to overseeing the international centers in Italy, Mexico, and Costa Rica, I have assumed responsibility for overseeing the Study Abroad Programs Office and the former regional offices (the European Union Center, the Institute for Pacific Asia, and the Office of Latin American Programs) which are in the process of being merged in order to further our efforts to support the academic College’s efforts to engage the University’s mission in those regions, and globally.

This realignment will allow more consistent consideration of globalization in our curricular offerings as well as deepening our commitment to serve the colleges in offering international experiences for students in support of the academic master plan.

These changes signal our strong commitment to maintaining and deepening international partnerships and programming at Texas A&M University. They will ensure better integration of our international initiatives and programming with our curricular and research priorities.

This newsletter provides you with an update on the services and initiatives that are being facilitated by through these International affairs in support of the University’s international goals.

Dr. Martyn Gunn, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Study Abroad

An Increase in Study Abroad Students

Nationally, European destinations for students studying abroad continue to be the most popular and this holds true for Texas A&M University as well. The most recent University data indicates that the top six destinations for Texas A&M students abroad are: 1) Spain, 2) Italy, 3) France, 4) Germany, 5) the united kingdom, and 6) Mexico.

Study abroad programs of every type have been on the rise across the US for the past decade, but more specifically the percentage of graduating Texas A&M seniors who participated in credit bearing programs abroad has risen from 10.15% for the 2004/2005 academic year to 12.88% for the 2008/2009 academic year. The two factors that have contributed most to this rise in study abroad participation are that the percentage of degree programs requiring a study abroad component have increased, and the declining perception that study abroad programs may delay graduation.

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For the 2006/2007 academic year the percentage of students that felt that study abroad participation would delay their graduation stood at approximately 48%, but this percentage had dropped to 39% by the 2008/2009 academic year.

**Initiatives in Europe**

**U.S. Midterm Elections – A view from Europe**

October 23-31, 2010

A partnership with the RIAS Berlin Commission resulted in a program for German television journalists from the leading public and private broadcasting stations (ARD/ ZDF/ RTL and MDR). The focus of the program was to gain an understanding—from the U.S. perspective—of the impact the economic and financial crises, energy issues, homeland security, and health and educational reform have on the U.S. elections. The group spent one day receiving briefings from Texas A&M faculty in the Bush School of Government and Public Service and the Mays Business School. To continue reading click here.

**Facing the Future: Global Issues**

October 22, 2010

This one-day workshop focused on strategies for connecting the classroom to the world through global issues. Program goals included (1) developing a shared understanding of global issues and sustainability education, (2) learning how to integrate global issues and sustainability into schools and classrooms, (3) being able to engage students in taking action, and (4) creating action plans for implementing what has been learned. This program is sponsored in partnership with the Office of International Outreach. To continue reading click here.
Distinguished European Scholar in Residence

Fall 2010

Distinguished European Scholar in Residence, Vibeke Lehmann Nielsen, chose to come to Texas A&M University’s Department of Political Science to tap into the faculty engaged in Public Policy and Administration research. To continue reading click here.

Young Engineers and Scientists Symposium 2011:
Alternative Energies – A Global Perspective

January 10-12, 2011

Over 150 scientists and engineers attended this three-day symposium that was aimed at fostering industrial and research collaborations between the U.S. and Europe in the field of fossil-free energies. The focus of the symposium was to connect young researchers (PhD candidates and Post Docs) and engineers from each side of the Atlantic to develop long-term exchanges. The symposium also aimed at gathering junior and senior researchers from different domains (solar, wind, geothermal, biofuels, and nuclear) who work in academia, industry, and government agencies to discuss transversal issues linked with the development of sustainable energy sources. For more information click here.

Global Issues Conference

February 10, 2011 (Grades 6–9)
May 4, 2011 (Grades 10–12)

This conference is designed to engage students in considering solutions, challenges, conflicts, and consequenc-es to global issues by researching global issues, developing a project, and participating in the global issues conference. Students must submit a global issues project to participate in conference activities. This program is sponsored in partnership with the Office of International Outreach and the Texas A&M University colleges.

U.S.-UK Transatlantic Symposium

April 21, 2011

This half-day symposium will focus on how the UK and the U.S. will work together to face 21st Century chal-lenges to achieving security and prosperity. The program will include an introductory session and four concurrent sessions on issues where U.S.-UK cooperation will be key to our futures. The day will conclude with a plenary wrap-up session open to Texas A&M University faculty, students and the general public. The program is sponsored in partnership with the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs, Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University, and the British Consulate-General Houston. For more information on this symposium click here.
Conducting Business with the European Union – Trends, Ideas, and Approaches

Spring 2011

This program is designed to expose small- and medium-size companies to business challenges and opportunities in the European Union. This program is sponsored in partnership with the Center for International Business Studies, Mays Business School, Texas A&M University.

Tracking European Affiliations of TAMU Faculty and Staff

The EU Center works with the Texas A&M University colleges on an on-going basis to maintain a list of Europe-affiliated faculty and staff. Our definition of “affiliated” is: faculty and staff (a) whose national origin is an European country, (b) who have a degree from an European university, (c) have professional affiliation with a European university, and/or (d) teach courses or lead study abroad programs in Europe. To view the list please click here.

Initiatives in Asia

Chinese Language and Culture Tour Visits Fourteen Area Schools

College Station, TX - The Confucius Institute at Texas A&M University hosted Hanban’s Chinese Language and Culture Tour from November 9-16 in an endeavor to promote Chinese language and culture among Texas schools. The delegation of four included Zhou Zhichang, a Hanban Program Officer, Guo Lingli, a Chinese teacher at the Second High School Attached to Beijing Normal University, Wang Shuhong, a professor at Remin University in Beijing and Lu Shaojun, a Master of Martial Arts at Beijing Sports University. The school presentations included an interactive introduction to Chinese culture, a brief language lesson and a sampling of martial arts. During their eight-day tour, the delegation visited fourteen schools in the Houston, Bryan/College Station, Navasota and New Caney areas, presenting to more than 4,000 students collectively. For more on this story click here.

Indonesia Collaborations and Exchanges

As Texas A&M’s interest in developing research and collaborative exchange in Indonesia continues to grow, so does its efforts to develop viable and productive opportunities for faculty and students. Texas A&M is one of six partner institutions in the Institute for International Education’s “U.S.-Indonesia Partnership Program for Study Abroad Capacity (USIPP)” project, funded by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, to build study abroad opportunities with Indonesian Institutions. Texas A&M is also in the process of developing a Cultural Immersion and Language Training program proposal to the National Security Education Program, designed to provide culture and language immersion programs for US Army Cadet Command.
Fifteen Texas Administrators Participate in 2010 Chinese Winter Bridge Tour

Beijing, Wuhan – On December 3-10, the Confucius Institute at Texas A&M University in collaboration with the College of Education and Resource Development organized a delegation of Texas school administrators to participate in the Office of Chinese Language Council International’s (Hanban) “2010 Chinese Bridge for American Schools: A New Start”.

Sponsored by Hanban, the Chinese Bridge Program is a weeklong educational program that takes place twice a year in China for k-12 administrators. The program serves to enhance China-US educational exchanges, deepen U.S. education officials’ understanding of Chinese language and culture, and promote Chinese language courses in American mainstream schools. To continue reading click here.

A Cold but Festive Start to the Year of the Rabbit

College Station, Texas – Students and staff at Texas A&M University and members of the communities of Bryan and College Station braved the cold to celebrate the Year of the Rabbit at the 5th Annual Lunar New Year Celebration on February 10, 2011. This year’s celebration was organized by the Confucius Institute (CI), Institute for Pacific Asia (IPA), Dining Services and supported in part by Wells Fargo Bank.

The event was kicked off shortly after 5:00 pm by the emcee for the event, Josh Posten, a third year student of Chinese at Texas A&M, and followed immediately by opening remarks delivered by Dr. Martyn Gunn, Vice Provost of Academic Affairs at Texas A&M University. Dr. Gunn’s remarks were followed by the traditional lion dance which has become a part of the tradition at the annual Texas A&M Lunar New Year celebrations. For more on this story click here.
Initiatives in Latin America

Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications Courses

In January of 2011 Drs. Kim Dooley and James Lindner facilitated two courses at Texas A&M University’s Soltis Center for Research and Education in Costa Rica, ALED 440, Principles of Technological Change; and ALEC 640, Methods of Technological Change. These were contextually-rich undergraduate and graduate courses that utilized the Costa Rican setting to illustrate themes such as technological diffusion and innovative practices for sustainable development, ecotourism, and biodiversity. Students participating in these study abroad courses experienced first-hand practices and principles of technological change in Costa Rica. The content delivery included field trips to Arenal Volcano National Park, Los Lagos Geothermal Springs, and Organic Farms for the application of innovative change strategies. Instructional materials based on the field experiences in Costa Rica were created and these materials will be hosted on a website to serve as resources for other on-campus courses. For more information on these classes or other ALEC/ALED classes please contact Dr. Kim Dooley or Dr. James Lindner.

Corps of Cadets/ROTC language and Culture Program

A cooperative effort between the Institute for Pacific Asia (IPA), the Corps of Cadets, the Study Abroad Programs Office and Arabic and Asian Language in the College of Liberal Arts, Texas A&M University’s Corps of Cadets/ROTC Language and Culture (Corps L&C) program is designed to develop future Military leaders capable of meeting the global challenges of the 21st Century.

Focused on promoting the study of critical languages such as Chinese, Russian, and Arabic among future military officers, Texas A&M’s Corps Language and Culture program has provided over $230,000 in study abroad and language study scholarships in the first two years of the program. In these two years the program has seen a steady increase in participants from eight scholarship recipients in 2009 to 21 students in the 2010, funding opportunities for study in places such as China, Russia, Tunisia, and Jordan. The projected scholarship funding for the third year of the grant will be $189,000, insuring strong funding to meet the increasing number of cadets at Texas A&M pursuing critical language study abroad.

Mini-mesters at the Soltis Center

Environmental Design

In January 2011, students from multiple disciplines, spent two weeks in a creativity and innovation class known as Environmental Design (ENDS) 101. Led by Dr. Vanegas, Dean of the College of Architecture, ENDS 101 is a course intended to teach students how the design and creativity process can play an important role in their future careers. The Soltis Center provides an immersive learning environment that allows students to build close-knit teams that work in a collaborative nature that only living in close quarters can provide. For more on this story click here.
Planning a Water Conference in Mexico

Water is increasingly scarce around the world and the northern two-thirds of Mexico is one of the places most affected. To address issues related to water scarcity and establish a research agenda, Drs. Wendy Jepson and Douglas Sherman of the College of Geosciences, with the support of Dr. Roger Norton Liaison for the Americas (International Affairs), and Dr. Jennifer Brown of Texas A&M’s Mexico Center, are organizing an international workshop for May 11-13 in Mexico. It will be co-sponsored by the University of Guanajuato and other leading Mexican universities will participate, along with faculty from Texas A&M and other U. S. universities. The first day of the workshop will be held in Guanajuato City, Guanajuato, and then the venue will shift to the new Santa Clara facility near San Miguel de Allende for the second and third days. On October 21-22 Drs. Jepson, Sherman, Norton and Brown met with about 15 administrators from the University of Guanajuato, and they will be meeting with colleagues at the national university (UNAM) about the workshop plans at the end of January.

Visit from Brazilian academics and research administrators to plan collaboration

On November 4 to 7 Texas A&M received a visit from leading administrators of two Brazilian research funding agencies and from the agricultural research agency Embrapa, as well as the Director of International Relations for the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco. They were also representing the president of the Federal University of Pernambuco. The group met with a wide range of administrators, faculty and students during their stay, including with President Loftin, representatives of the Office of the Vice-President for Research and the Office of the Provost and the Colleges of Agriculture, Engineering, Architecture and Geosciences, and several new and concrete possibilities for collaboration between Texas A&M and Brazil were explored. In the coming weeks and months these possibilities will be reviewed and discussed with a view to putting some of them into effect. This was a sequel to the visit to Brazil by members of Texas A&M Deans’ offices in April of this year. The Office for Latin American Programs organized and hosted this visit and the April trip. For this and other news click here.

Collaboration with Monterrey Tec, Toluca Campus, in Engineering and Geosciences

An initial contact with Dr. Marcos Serrato, the Director of Research and Graduate Studies at the Toluca Campus of the Technological Institute of Monterrey (Monterrey Tec) during this year’s faculty abroad seminar in Mexico blossomed into an invitation from that campus for Texas A&M Professor Wei Zhan (Mechanical Engineering) to visit them in August, followed by a return visit to Texas A&M by Dr. Serrato and Dr. José Ignacio Huertas, Director of an automotive research institute at that Toluca campus. While here they held conversations about research interests with faculty in Chemical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, the Materials Science and Engineering Program, Atmospheric Sciences, and Engineering Technology and Industrial Distribution, as well as with staff of the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI). The outcomes of these visits include work on a program to exchange faculty and doctoral students with the Department of Atmospheric Sciences and work on a potential partnership with TTI in emissions testing, among other ideas. The Mexico Center facilitated the initial contacts with Dr. Serrato and International Affairs organized and hosted the visit to Texas A&M.