

Emerging Ideas

The Newsletter of The International
Development Studies Program

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Message from the Director	Pg. 1
IDS trip to Washington, D.C.	Pgs.2-4
IDS Students' Accomplishments	Pg. 4-5
IDS Students' plans, careers, and congratulations	Pg. 6

EMERGING IDEAS

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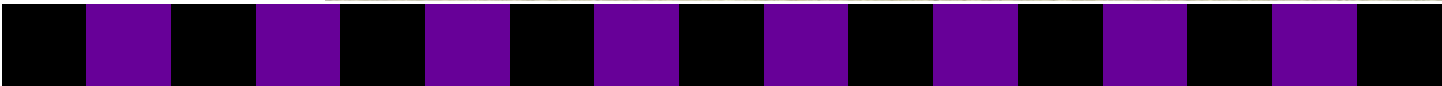
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Again it is spring time. As Ohio University prepares for graduation, our farewell party for the IDS graduating cohort is well underway. The past year, IDS moved forward at full speed as we witnessed some further improvement for the program. We are happy to continue seeing a large pool of U.S. and international applications, especially from IIE/Fulbright and other international exchange programs. We are also happy to see that our graduate students are becoming more competitive in the job market and are securing internship opportunities. To make the program better suited to our student's needs, IDS has adopted a comprehensive exam as a new capstone option to partially fulfill student's degree requirements. We also tried very hard to incorporate as many academic courses as possible into the IDS course listings to meet the diverse academic interest of our students' concentrations. We have kept our mission focused on integrating classroom learning with the practical world of development. For this purpose, we have initiated contact with development practitioners either through our field trips or through personal contacts. In the fall, we invited Stacy Stacks of Management Systems International (MSI) to speak at our International Studies Forum. At the top of the invitation list for next year is another skilled and experienced practitioner working for Development Alternatives International (DAI). We believe that our field trips plus the speakers we bring to campus help strengthen our curriculum, preparing our students for future careers in development. As the academic year draws to its end, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to all the affiliated faculty, CIS staff and administrators for their generous assistance and help. It would have been impossible for IDS to make any progress or achievement without their continued support.

-Jieli Li



IDS Hits the Road...

On April 19th a group of first and second year students from the International Development Studies (IDS) program left Athens for the second annual D.C. trip. The purpose of this trip was to give IDS students insight into the day to day activities of development practitioners. Students also went in search of summer internship opportunities with various players in the development field, how agencies get funding and the projects they are working on.

While in D.C. students visited several agencies, such as the World Bank, USAID, as well as for-profit development implementation firms such as Development Alternatives Inc. and Management Systems International.

During these meetings IDS students learned about the bidding process implementing organizations go through. According to IDS student Vongchanh Indavong, “it was really interesting to see how the implementing agencies bid for development projects and act as the middleman between funding sources like USIAD and the World Bank, and the project recipient.” Students also learned about the projects these firms are currently working on and the development issues they anticipate will receive more attention in the future.

Practitioners also offered useful advice to students on how to acquire the skills necessary to break into this highly competitive field. First year student Niken Hardiani says, “the trip was a great opportunity to network and meet contacts I can call upon in the future.”

While it was certainly an educational experience for IDS students, this year’s D.C. trip was not all work and no play. Students had their evenings free to sightsee and enjoy the city; many on the trip had never been to the US capital. Students embraced the opportunity to see our nation’s treasures and enjoy cuisine from all over the globe. For first year student Hisako Inomata, “one of the highlights of the trip was going to a authentic Japanese restaurant...I got to share part of my Japanese culture with my IDS classmates.”

Next year the IDS program plans to take a trip to New York to visit the United Nations and other organizations involved with international development.



Alternative Development with DAI

Frednel Isma

To be honest, I expected that my trip to Washington D.C. would be a relaxing moment to compensate a difficult winter quarter with only one week of break. Our trip to Washington D.C. took us to several respectable institutions which are leading development projects around the world. From the first visit (World Bank) to the last (Management System International), we realized quickly that this trip alone adds great depth to the IDS program at Ohio University. While all the institutions that we visited have impacted our vision in development, I must confess that the visit to Development Alternative Inc. captured my attention the most. There are three main reasons for that: the discovery of DAI, the concise presentation of its opportunities, and the alternative development it proposes.



Despite the fact that this institution was established in 1970 and is well known by most or all the students, I consider our visit a discovery. The difference between hearing about DAI and visiting it is considerable. It was interesting to realize how competitive and small the group of people working in development projects is and how DAI has established itself as the king of that field. That is, as development scholars it is crucial to learn about DAI's work, as it represents a potential partner for our future endeavors in international development. From this visit, my previous conception of non-for-profit development agencies was proven to be incorrect. Firms such as DAI can be not-for-profit without compromising their relevancy, their feasibility, or their applicability. Our visit to DAI has no better qualification than discovery.

Also, the presentation of DAI's program and opportunities captured my attention. Dr. Bowman under the title of Principal Development Specialist was responsible for the presentation of the day. The interesting part of the presentation was becoming familiar with the diverse and highly specialized projects DAI is working on. Most of DAI's projects deal with agriculture, then comes projects in conflict resolution and peace building. In our mission to achieve sustainable development, these projects represent some opportunities for students to acquire experiences. While we were very interested in finding internships and jobs opportunities at DAI, we were also identifying partners as future leaders of countries and institutions. That was exactly what we have learned from Development Alternative Inc. This visit has enlarged the present and future opportunities for development scholars willing to pursue career in international development.

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Finally the alternative development proposed by DAI greatly impacted our thinking. First, we can signal the positive aspects of DAI's slogan: "Advancing Human Prosperity." Most of the critics toward development agencies reside in "fighting the bad" instead of "creating the good." The reality is that DAI aims to present alternative development which is characterized by reinforcing capacity at the bottom level mostly in rural areas through agriculture. It is more likely to see progress and prosperity when applying participative development which considers everyone as stakeholder instead of "direct beneficiary." DAI seems to present a clear alternatives in conflict resolution and peace building as well. We have discovered all of this during of our trip in Washington D.C.

In sum, this field trip allowed us to learn, and this time the lessons came from practitioners not pure academics. Such experience does not carry credit hours, but it carries credit to our competences in awareness in dealing with development institutions, which is crucial for future practitioners. We have been reading a lot about the World Bank and the other institutions, we were fortunate enough to hear about MSI through Stacy Tacks talk at Ohio University, yet our discovery of DAI was one of the most interesting visits and greatly contributed to the success of the IDS D.C. trip.



IDS Student Granted Two Prestigious Fulbright Awards

Dan McBrayer, a third year IDS student, received word in April that he has been awarded the extremely competitive Fulbright Award to conduct research in Georgia. A few weeks later, Dan was also awarded a National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) Critical Language Enhancement Award. These awards will allow Dan to travel to and live in Georgia for 15 months. While in Georgia, Dan will study the Russian language and conduct research on youth contributions to conflict transformation.

Dan became interested in these issues during his Peace Corp service in Georgia from 2001 to 2003. After coming to Ohio University, Dan decided to apply for a Fulbright Award that would allow him to work directly on these issues in Georgia. The Fulbright application process is long and time consuming; Dan began working on his Fulbright application in April 2007, submitted it in September, and was interviewed by the Fulbright committee in October.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s there have been ethnic wars in two areas of Georgia. Dan's research will focus on one of the war-torn areas, Abkhazia, from which 250,000 people were displaced. From the late 1990s to 2006 youth camps were created in an attempt to foster conflict transformation between Georgians and Abkhaz, on a grassroots level. The camps were suspended in 2006 due to heightened conflict.

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More recently, largely due to Russia's increasing involvement, the conflict in Georgia has intensified. As part of his research in Georgia, Dan will be interviewing individuals who took part in youth camps to determine if these types of camps are successful in healing the psycho cultural wounds left from the conflict. He will also be interviewing NGO workers, academics, and governmental officials who have been involved in resolving the conflict.

Dan credits much of his success in receiving this award to Ohio University's Fulbright Representative, Beth Clodfelter, who was instrumental in helping him prepare his application. Dan is also grateful for all the faculty members who valuably contributed to his project proposal.

IDS Student Earns Second Place in National Competition

Damion Croston and his business partners were awarded second place and a \$7,500 prize at the 2008 Social Innovation Competition held in Austin, Texas. This competition sponsored by the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at the University of Texas invited graduate and undergraduate students from across the country to submit proposals for a sustainable business or a nonprofit organization that would change the world. Over 1,200 individuals from almost 100 institutions entered the competition. Croston says, "for me the most valuable part of the competition was being able to network with the other teams, they were a great source of information and advice for continuing with our business."



Damion and his teammates submitted their application in February, in hopes of gaining publicity and funding for their business, Planting Empowerment, which they founded in 2007. Damion and his business partners started Planting Empowerment with the goal of reducing the practice of slash and burn agriculture they witnessed in Panama as Peace Corp Volunteers. Their business links investors with rural Panamanian landowners by creating sustainable timber plantations. Planting Empowerment signs long-term lease contracts with the landowners which enable the company to manage the plantation over a 25 year period. These plantations benefit the local environment by increasing ecological biodiversity, sequestering carbon and improving the soil quality. The local people not only profit from the lease of the land, they also share the profits from timber sales with the investors and Planting Empowerment.

The team's impressive business plan earned them a coveted spot in the finals. They were flown to Texas to present their business plan to a team of judges which included elite businessmen and women, directors of non-profit organizations and academics. Planting Empowerment walked away with the second place prize of \$7,000, which Croston says will go towards updating the business's website and setting up a non-profit arm in the United States. Croston and his partners will go to Panama this summer to plant more trees and expand operations.

To learn more about Planting Empowerment please go to www.plantingempowerment.com.



First Year Student's Summer Plans

This summer I will be...



“doing an internship at the United Palestinian Appeal (UPA). UPA is an NGO serving the Palestinian people. It is located in Washington D.C.” – Ramzi Asali



“studying abroad in Honduras then working as an intern for GYLC in D.C.”
– Mitchell Boutin



“going to South America with Ohio University's Topical Disease Institute to conduct research on Chagas disease in rural Ecuador.” – Lynn Walroth



“going to Thailand for an internship at a local NGO. I'll live with hill tribes and teach Japanese and Japanese culture.”
– Hisako Inomata



“going to Botswana for study abroad and research on HIV/AIDS policy and then I will be working as an intern for GYCL in D.C.” – Frednel Isma



“working on an overseas expansion project of Planting Empowerment in Panama (11,000 trees planted); then an internship with a non-profit ACENET in Athens.” – Damion Croston

Graduate Corner

Graduating Student's Career Plans...

Ali Hunter will be taking a position as a Corporate Programs Coordinator with Americorps in Boston, MA.

Ravshan Grezov will be working with United Nations Development Program in his home country, Tajikistan

Nathan Olah is currently working as a Project Manager at Management Systems International in Washington, D.C.

Sothy Khieng will also be joining Nathan as an intern at MSI.

Congratulations IDS Graduates...

Yuko Nagata

Ravshan Grezov

Samuel Johnson

Masayasu Higuchi

Rhodaline Baidoo

Alexandra Hunter

Julietta Barcaglioni

Joshua O'Donnell

Amanda Cozad

Lori Sargent

Satoko Tsunoda

Sothy Khieng

Nathan Olah

Ayumi Hama

Philip Adu

... Best wishes for the future!!!