



# THIS IS Central and Southwest Asia

The Newsletter of the Central and Southwest Asia Program  
at The University of Montana

Fall 2008

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## Delegation to Visit Tajikistan

President George Dennison, Provost Royce Engstrom, Associate Provost Mehrdad Kia and Associate Director of the Central and Southwest Asia Program Dr. Ardi Kia have been invited by the government of Tajikistan to visit the Central Asia country during the 17th anniversary of its independence. The delegation will be hosted by Tajikistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hamrokhon Zarifi who visited The University of Montana and participated in the annual Central Asia conference when he served his country as ambassador to the United States. In addition to the Independence Day activities, meetings will take place with Tajikistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, and many other high level Tajik government officials, including the presidents of five universities, who are interested in expanding their academic ties with UM. During the visit, the delegation will also meet with officials at the United States Embassy in Dushanbe to explore possible research and grant opportunities at both governmental and non-governmental levels. The visit results from expanding ties between The University of Montana and the Republic of Tajikistan over the last five years. UM has four active agreements with Tajik universities and one with the Tajik Ministry of Education.

### College of Forestry and Conversation Hosts Tajik Training

**By James Burchfield, Interim Dean, College of Forestry and Conservation**

From July 18-27, 2008, the College of Forestry and Conservation led a Field-based seminar based in Missoula, MT, Yellowstone National Park and other sites in the Northern Rockies for a delegation of administrators from Tajikistan.

The workshop was a technical and professional course designed for leaders of nationally significant forests and protected areas in Tajikistan. The University of Montana has developed an innovative program in Central Asian studies over the past decade, providing educational and research opportunities for this important region of the world. Student and faculty exchanges between UM and Tajikistan have been underway for the past several years, and U.S. and Tajik students participated in the workshop. Program themes included collaborative planning, sustainable tourism development and ways to incorporate community interests with visitor management.



Interim Dean, James Burchfield receives a gift from the delegation

Participants from Tajikistan on the study tour included the Chairman of the State Committee for Environmental Protection, the Deputy Head of the Protected Areas Department, Head of the Gissar Forestry Office, Director of the Tajik Office of the Regional Environmental Center, and the Project Manager of the Gissar Biodiversity Project. The group will be hosted by the College of Forestry and Conservation, the Northern Region of the USDA Forest Service, and the UM Office of International Programs. Support for the workshop was provided by CARE International. The workshop examined a range of strategies for the sustainable management of forests and protected areas and included visits to the National Bison Range, the Lolo and Gallatin National Forests, and Yellowstone National Park.

## Fall 2008 Course Offerings

The University of Montana offers an academic Minor as well as undergraduate and graduate Options in Central and Southwest Asian Studies with a variety of new courses. Course offerings for Fall 2008 include the following.

- Dr. Mehrdad Kia will teach ANTH/HIST 387, Iran Between Two Revolutions, and co-teach ANTH/HIST/AS/MATH 395.



- Dr. Ardi Kia will teach the following courses: ANTH 106: Silk Road (also HIST/AS 106), T. 5:10 - 8:00 p.m.; ANTH 214: Central Asian Cultures & Civilizations (also HIST/AS/LS 214), TR 2:10 - 3:30 p.m.; and ANTH 395: In Search of Zoroaster & Brahma (also HIST/AS/MATH 395) W. 6:10 - 9:00 p.m.

Dr. Ardi Kia, Co-Director of the Central and Southwest Asian Studies Program, received a “Teaching Excellence and Scholarship” award during the sixth annual Central and Southwest Asian Studies Conference last April; Provost Royce Engstrom and Professor John Douglas, Chair of the Anthropology Department, presented the award in recognition of Dr. Kia’s high quality teaching of over ten thousand students since 1991.



- Dr. Khaled Huthaily will teach two courses in the Fall 2008 semester: (a) ARAB 301 [Advanced Modern Standard Arabic] and (b) ARAB 396 [Independent Study: Advanced Arabic Grammar and Translation]. In ARAB 301, students further improve their Arabic language skills; in ARAB 396, students begin by studying translation as theory and then work on English-Arabic translation tasks, applying their advanced language skills.

Dr. Huthaily is also writing a book on the sounds and letters of Arabic, sponsored and funded by a U.S. Department of Education three-year grant.



- Professor Samir Bitar will be in his tenth year as Lecturer of Arabic Language & Cultures at The University of Montana. He will teach two sections of Beginning Arabic (54 students) & one section of Intermediate Arabic (14 students).

He will also serve as Faculty Advisor/Mentor to the Model Arab League program and the Mount of Olives Arabic Language & Culture Club.



- Dr. Bharath Sriraman will co-teach a new course this semester titled

“In Search of Zoroaster (Zarathustra) and Brahma: A Journey into Indo-Iranian Cultures”.

The course examines the parallels and intricate connections between Indo-Iranian civilizations from ancient to contemporary times. The course begins with pre-historic civilizations such as the Indus Valley Civilization, followed by the Rig Veda of the vedic Indians and the Gathas of Zoroaster and then explores similarities in Avestan (Old Persian) and Sanskrit, traces the rise and fall of numerous empires that overlapped on the Iranian plateau and the Indian sub-continent, and culminates in an examination of the conflicted modern identity of Iranians and Indians based on the post-colonial legacy of artificially created nationalism and boundaries.



- Tamila Meladze will teach Anthropology 195 “Georgians/Armenians/Azaries”. The objective of this course is to provide students with broad introductory historical perspective on the inhabitants, cultures, and the economies found in South Caucasus. It will also elucidate Russia’s interests and impact on the region and will invite students to reflect on the historical roots of the modern conflicts in the region.



- The Central and Southwest Asia Program welcomes Selin Bitti as a Professor of Turkish Language and Culture at The University of Montana.

Selin Bitti was born in Edirne, Turkey in 1984. After graduating from Edirne Anatolian Teacher Training High School, where she studied the basics of teaching and educational sciences, she studied English Language Teaching at the foreign languages education department of Bogazici University, Istanbul. During her studies, she had the chance to work at various language courses and observe public and private schools as an intern teacher of English. After completing her undergraduate study with High Honors, she got a scholarship from Turkish National Agency to work as an English language assistant in Germany as well as the Fulbright Foreign Language Assistant Scholarship to teach Turkish language and culture in the United States of America. In addition to her instructional responsibilities, she will study educational psychology and women studies during 2008-2009 academic year.

# Site visit to the Island of Aphrodite (University of Cyprus)

By Bharath Sriraman, Associate Professor, Department of Mathematical Sciences

On behalf of International Programs at The University of Montana, I conducted a site visit to the University of Cyprus, May 16-22, 2008. The objectives of this visit were:

(1) to give a presentation on The University of Montana to administrators, faculty and students at University of Cyprus; (2) to set up a basis for signing a memorandum of understanding and (3) to explore areas of collaboration and mutual benefit for the two universities.

During the course of this visit, I met with the Vice-Rectors as well as Deans and heads of numerous departments, in formal and informal settings. Having visited Cyprus on four previous occasions, my collaboration and consequent friendship with several colleagues at the University of Cyprus enabled the possibility of meeting the Vice Rectors.

Among the main points of discussion of the meetings were ways to generate interest among Cypriot students to choose Montana for a study abroad year as a way of broadening their intellectual and geographic horizons, given that the ER-ASMUS Program in the European Union allows their students flexibility of spending semesters at numerous other universities in the EU, and allows for transfer credit to take place.

Traditionally Cypriot students who do "cross the pond" prefer to attend universities in the East coast because of proximity to Cypriot communities and other students abroad. There was also a need expressed to determine the alignment of courses between universities and transfer credit protocols. One of the outcomes of the visit was an advertisement campaign started at the University of Cyprus in form of "targeted memos" to various departments on campus that were potentially interested in sending students and faculty to UM. These departments included informatics (computer science), Greek, Byzantine and Turkic Studies, International Studies and Education.

The idea of spending time in Montana seemed more appealing to faculty at the University of Cyprus. There exists a strong possibility

of attracting faculty to UM who are able to teach various levels of ancient and modern Greek, Byzantine and Turkic Studies, post-Colonial History. This is particularly beneficial to the Central and Southwest Asian Studies Program, as well as Foreign Languages.

The benefits to students at The University of Montana intending to spend time at the University of Cyprus are numerous. The University of Cyprus has a special Greek language school (analogous to our English Language Institute), which offers language programs at different levels to non-Greek students. The Institute includes an immersion program. All departments at the University of Cyprus offer 5 courses in English. Thus, exchange students can take courses offered exclusively in English. A new and highly recognized masters program in Economic Policy is available and may be of interest to advanced undergraduates and beginning graduate students.

Short visitor programs (1 month) are available to our faculty willing to offer courses of interest at the graduate level.

UM students can benefit from being in a safe and prosperous geo-political location that facilitates awareness of the living legacy of post colonialism, in addition to easy access to neighboring countries (Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and the Greek islands). It is hoped that one of the Vice Rectors of the University of Cyprus will visit Missoula in the coming academic year at which point an MOU will be signed between the two universities. Advertising the possibilities at the University of Cyprus and vice-versa is essential to generate a flow of students and faculty. Additionally, the Ful-

bright Office in Cyprus has agreed to mention The University of Montana to Cypriot students, as a good choice particularly when an MOU is signed and curricular alignment is completed.

During my trip, I visited the port city of Kyrenia (Girne) in North Cyprus, in the part claimed by the Republic of Turkey. North Cyprus is not recognized by the United Nations, nor any country other than Turkey as an independent nation (see April 2008 IP Newsletter). I will report on this trip in a separate article for an upcoming Central and Southwest Asian Studies Program Newsletter.



With administrators at the University of Cyprus [left of me, Prof. Costas Christofides, Vice rector of Academic Affairs, right of me Antonis C. Kakas, Vice-Rector of International Affairs, Admin and Finance]

# Kyrgyz Teacher Training Program

By Brian Lofink, Coordinator Central and Southwest Asia Program



During the month of May, faculty and staff of The University of Montana's International Programs and School of Education's Department of Educational Leadership and Division of Education Research and Service partnered to provide a training program for 24 Kyrgyz educators. The core group of 24 participants was comprised of two sub-groups of subject specialists. The first group was focused on curriculum development and learning assessment methods and the second group worked on textbook and learning materials development.

Over the course of the month, the visiting educators participated in an intensive program designed to support the efforts of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education as they modernize their primary and secondary education through student-centered curriculum, improved learning assessment, and the development of new textbooks and other learning materials. In addition to the lectures and seminars held on campus, they participated in sixteen separate field observations across the state involving five separate school districts as well as state government. The participants met with school principals, teachers, students, school superintendents as well as the Montana's State Superintendent, Linda McCullough. These experiences provided the participants a view of pre-school/early childhood education as well as elementary, middle and

high schools educational systems. The month-long study tour was only the first step in the process of integrating and implementing the information learned during their visit. Upon their return, the visiting educators will conduct their own workshops and trainings for other educators in their home country.

In addition to the professional development programming, cultural activities were held to provide understanding between the United States and Kyrgyzstan. Cultural activities included but were not limited to community pot-lucks, musical events and visits to local museums.

The Study Tour was the first of two separate but related projects funded by the Asian Development Bank in Kyrgyzstan. The focus of each project is on educational reform in the Kyrgyz Republic. The second project is to provide graduate education to two graduate students who will receive their Master's Degree in the field of Curriculum and Instruction. The first student, Elina Supataeva, arrived in mid-May and enrolled in an intensive summer session. The second student arrived at the end of August.

## Central Project Implementation Unit under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic

By Elina Supataeva, Kyrgyz Graduate Student, at The University of Montana

My name is Elina Supataeva; I am one of the members of the educational project sponsored by Asian Development Bank in Kyrgyzstan. The main purpose of our project is to implement a new certification program in learning assessment in Kyrgyzstan.

As we know, the role of assessment in education has been always crucial since the earliest approaches to formal education. However, much more attention has been paid to this role in the last few decades, largely due to wider developments in society. The most fundamental change in our views of assessment is represented by the notion as a tool for learning (Dochy & Mc Dowell, 1997).

According to the history, we know that the assessment reform which began in the 1980s in North America has had significant impact. Moreover, it has changed the way teachers think about students' capabilities, the nature of learning, the nature of quality in learning. The same is happening now with our educational system. Kyrgyzstan had been one of the republics within the Soviet Union until 1991 and it gained its independence as a democratic country. Even after being independent there remained a "spirit" of Post Soviet era in Kyrgyzstan. Post-Soviet curriculum reform has aroused much controversy in educational system. And now, the educators and Ministry of Education in our country are trying to change the content of educational system from kindergartens up to the Universities. We understand that it will be a long way, but we need to change the way teachers think about all fundamentals in education.



Having searched and analyzed lots of Universities over the world, the Ministry of Education and Science of Kyrgyz Republic selected The University of Montana, since UM is one of the best universities in the USA. As we know UM is famous for its high-qualified faculty and education.

I will complete my MA in Education with emphasis on Curriculum & Instruction. In each aspect of my education here, we focus on the assessment. Upon return to Kyrgyzstan we will have to perform analysis, prepare report and presentation on the following aspects such as International practice on development of the learning assessment systems. Moreover, we will need to conduct training for academic staff and organize structural divisions contributing to the ability of developing learning assessment training programs. And one of the responsible task will be — development and implementation of new certification program in learning assessment.

I am sure that Kyrgyzstan will benefit from studies and knowledge that I will acquire in The University of Montana.

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The University of  
**Montana**

## Central & Southwest Asia Brown Bag Lecture Series

All presentations are held from 12:00 noon to 1PM in the Central and Southwest Asia Program seminar room (Old Journalism 303) and are free and open to the public.

Wednesday, September 17:

**Who are the Turks:**

**From Central Asia to Anatolia**

Presenter: Selin Bitti, Instructor of Turkish Language and Culture,  
Central and Southwest Asia Program

Thursday, October 16:

**Cultural Diversity in Uzbekistan**

Presenter: Yelena Ablava, Uzbek Student,  
at The University of Montana

Thursday, October 30:

**Post-colonial legacy: Contrasting North  
Cyprus and Indian Kashmir**

Presenter: Bharath Sriraman, Associate Professor,  
Department of Mathematical Sciences

Wednesday, November 5:

**Crisis in Georgia**

Presenter: Tamila Meladze, Visiting Scholar from  
the Republic of Georgia,  
Central and Southwest Asia Program

Thursday, November 20:

**Education Reform in Kyrgyzstan**

Presenter: Elena Supataeva, Kyrgyz Graduate  
Student,  
at The University of Montana

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