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SPOTLIGHT

MAXimum Benefit: Alumni and Mentors Connect

The connection forged between Muskie alumna **Natalie Okolita** (2008) and her academic advisor Dean Julie Jackson of Tulane Law School is now benefiting law students and young legal professionals in Ukraine. With the support of a Muskie Advisor Mentor Exchange (MAX) award, Jackson recently traveled to Ukraine to facilitate a workshop for alumni of U.S. Government-sponsored programs on alternative modes for dealing with disagreement and conflict, sharing U.S. methods of resolution and problem solving with participants.

A group of twenty-five upper level law students and young lawyers gathered at the Institute of International Relations of Kyiv National University for three days of training arranged by Okolita and led by her mentor from Tulane. Jackson's instruction went beyond a traditional lecture format to include simulated mediations using a variety of problem-solving formats.

"[It was an] opportunity to taste the American way of holding workshops and lectures," said Okolita. "Julie did a great job in designing her workshops, and I was responsible for organizing this workshop in the University and inviting students, lawyers and other participants. Also, I helped Julie to adapt her workshop in a way that Ukrainian participants would gain as much knowledge as possible."

During the workshop, participants discussed the importance of listening and asking open questions, separating people from a problem, and developing creative solutions that satisfy both parties. Artem Shaipov, an expert at the Centre for Political and Legal Reforms, commented on his experience as a participant, "[The workshop] ensured better understanding of the theory of mediation as well as allowed us to practice alternative dispute resolution during the course."

MUSKIE MAX

The Muskie Advisor Mentor Exchange award is an opportunity for Muskie host university faculty, internship advisors, and others who mentor Muskie fellows during their time in the U.S. to gain a deeper understanding of fellows' home countries, to share best practices and useful skills and knowledge with alumni communities in fellows' home countries, and to bring new understanding and insight back to their host universities and organizations. MAX awards provide funding for a mentor or advisor to travel to the home country of an alumnus and give seminars on their professional interests.

Jackson hopes to continue her involvement with Okolita and other Ukrainian lawyers. "There were several attorneys, as well as students, with whom I hope to stay in contact," said Jackson. "As legislation is now proposed involving mediation in Ukraine, I believe that future developments will lead to continued interest in the topics we covered."

2011 MAX Award Winners

Robert Khachatryan, Armenia and **John Nalbandian**, University of Kansas
Ahad Kazimov, Azerbaijan and **Lilya Wagner**, Indiana University
Vusala Safarova, Azerbaijan and **Jerrold Keilson**, American University
Lela Nanuashvili, Georgia and **Terry Plum**, Simmons College



Alumni Share Best Practices

Building on common experiences in U.S. study and internships, alumni in many countries gather together for networking and community projects through alumni associations. In some countries, alumni associations are highly formalized and in others the connections are looser. In an effort to create new connections between countries and to share best practices, Muskie alumni recently gathered in Tbilisi for an international Muskie alumni conference.

From July 14–16, 2011, the Muskie Alumni Association of Georgia (MAAG) hosted an international conference for Muskie alumni from around Eurasia. "Experience Sharing Among Muskie Alumni: Achievements in Diffusion of Change" was organized with financial support from the U.S. Department of State through a 2011 Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Alumni Project Competition grant. The conference brought together 17 participants from ten former Soviet countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Throughout the conference, the emphasis was on sharing experiences, techniques and results. Muskie alumni presented projects and initiatives that have been implemented in their countries, discussed best practices, and debated ways to develop alumni associations in countries that do not yet have them. They also talked about possible joint projects which could be implemented in multiple countries through cross-border cooperation of alumni associations.

The three-day conference opened with speeches by Ambassador of the United States to Georgia, John R. Bass and the Chairman of MAAG **David Onoprishvili** (1993). Alumni also met with Georgia university administrators and with students and professors to share their experiences

studying in the U.S. and to participate in a Q&A session about the Muskie program, application and selection process. During a trip to Telavi, conference participants were joined by Saul Hernandez, Cultural Attache at the U.S. Embassy in Georgia.

As a result of the conference, alumni formed new relationships and reinforced existing networks. Participants shared success stories about projects and policy initiatives and promoted a joint Muskie web portal on ECA's State Alumni website and recruited more members to join. **Maya Mateshvili** (2006) summed up the event: "The MAAG Conference was a very important event because it set the precedent of bringing together alumni of the U.S. government program from a number of former Soviet countries. It provided both participants and attendees with an excellent opportunity for networking and experience sharing. Pre-sentations, panel discussions and informal cultural events allowed us to contemplate the benefits and challenges of establishing and successfully running alumni associations."



Participants on the trip to Kakheti.



Alumni with Ambassador of the United States to Georgia John R. Bass.

Appointment as Finance Minister



Dmitri Ghvindadze (2003) has been appointed Finance Minister of Georgia. Ghvindadze had worked as the Deputy Minister of Finance since July of 2005 and was directly responsible for external financing and external public debt management, for coordinating cooperation with international financial institutions and bilateral donors, and representing Georgia in the governing bodies of international financing institutions. According to a statement made by the Prime Minister, Ghvindadze has ensured the proper management of Georgia's exterior debt, the successful placement of Georgia's sovereign Eurobonds at the London Stock Exchange and the successful management of donor funds of \$4.5 billion.

As a Muskie Fellow, Ghvindadze earned his master's degree in public administration in international development from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, where he also served as a teaching assistant for a course on Macroeconomic Theory and Policy. After delivering lectures in Macroeconomics at the Caucasus School of Business and Tbilisi State University from 2005 to 2006, Ghvindadze passed the Financial Programming and Policy course at the Institute of the International Monetary Fund.

Work to Promote Diversity Recognized

Shalva Tabatadze (2006) has worked to promote intercultural tolerance in Georgia since returning home to found the Center for Civil Integration and Interethnic Relations. His work was recognized this year through his selection as the 2011 Kent State University Diversity Alumni Award recipient.

Tabatadze earned his master's degree in education with an emphasis on cultural foundations from Kent State's College of Education, Health, and Human Services in May 2007. In Georgia, Tabatadze runs the Center and is also an instructor at Tbilisi State University, where he teaches courses on intercultural education. Tabatadze notes that after earning his degree, "I was able to explore educational situations from a different perspective, conduct an in-depth analysis and design more efficient solutions to existing problems in my country."

International Collaboration Benefits Muskie Fellow and a Texas Business

As a business student at the University of Texas at Arlington, **Victoria Klimova** of Russia (2010) had the opportunity to join a team of international students working on a consulting project for CBGI, a technology start-up company.

The marketing plan proposed by Klimova's team helped CBGI to identify the best markets for an innovative water testing system and to gain a second round of funding from Texas' Emerging Technology Fund.

In developing their plan, Klimova and her classmates developed the business mission, suggested a new name, conducted a situation analysis to identify the company's competitive advantage, conducted a competitive analysis, defined objectives, conducted market research, selected strategic alternatives, predicted potential revenues, and formulated implementation timetables.

CBGI's technology was nominated for the prestigious Tech Titans Technology award and Klimova's team was invited to the Tech Titans Gala to represent the Business Development committee for the company. CEO Scott Evans commented, "We could spend tens of thousands of dollars hiring a branding firm but in my opinion the ...students did a good job following a step-by-step procedure."

"It was a unique experience since the team was very diverse — five MBA students from Germany, Russia, India, Taiwan and Saudi Arabia," said Klimova. "I believe that diversity of cultural, academic and personal backgrounds was our key to success and gave us extra competitive advantage. Thanks to this project I have learned how to interact with a diverse group of people who all have different perspectives and how to get advantage of diversity rather than treating it as an obstacle. I hope some of the friendships I have made with my team members will last a lifetime and this is what I consider the major personal outcome for me."



From left: Deepika Sanon (India), Christina Imgrund (Germany) and Klimova at Tech Titans Gala 2011 in Dallas, Texas.

Human Rights in Education — Creating the Capacity to Affect Social Change

Fargani Aliyev (2008) attended the 2011 International Human Rights Training Program (IHRT) of EQUITAS-International Center for Human Rights Education located in Montreal, Canada in June 2011. This annual three-week education event brought together over 120 participants from approximately 60 countries. The IHRT is an intermediate-level program providing a unique opportunity for human rights workers and educators to deepen their understanding of human rights and of the essential role of human rights education in affecting social change.

During the program, every participant was required to prepare an individual plan for putting their learning into practice in their home organizations. The individual plan helped the participants determine how content was transferable to their own context, resulting in a planned integration of this new knowledge in the

future activities of their organizations. Throughout the program, participants had opportunities to discuss their proposals with other participants, their facilitators and Equitas staff for feedback.

Aliyev's plan focused on the training workshops through which he hopes to develop the professional capacity of social sciences teachers who teach human rights in Azerbaijani high schools. Aliyev plans to introduce them to the content of teaching based on an action-oriented participatory approach. The teachers will be introduced to different participatory teaching techniques and instructional models, which they can easily incorporate to their subject-curriculum and that would result in students' motivation and changes of attitudes toward the social sciences, thus leading to greater understanding and knowledge of civic responsibilities.



Fargani Aliyev (center) with other IHRT participants.

Muskie Club Launches New, Improved Website

The Muskie Club of Russia, an association of the alumni of educational programs sponsored by the U.S. government and named after the Edmund S. Muskie graduate fellowship program, has rebuilt its website. The new bilingual, interactive, multifunctional site located at www.muskieclub.ru is an effective tool for communication between international program alumni. It broadcasts information about the Club, enables and facilitates communication among members of the Club, works as an on-line tool in organization and planning of Club events, and is a unique source of information for alumni of the Muskie program.

The new site is well-organized, searchable and has a growing alumni database intended to help members find peers and friends from the same city, program or year of study. The site also features an online payment capability, online registration for Club events, and other advanced technical features.

After the site's relaunch in June 2011, this communication among Muskie Club members has become easier, and more people are

attending events. The launch of the new website was made possible through the generous support of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, IREX and Mr. Pavel Karaulov, one of the Club Board members.



Award-Winning Videos Raise Awareness, Fight Corruption in Kazakhstan

Muskie program and Global UGRAD program alumni are among the winners of "Open Your Eyes," a social advertising competition sponsored by the Soros Foundation Kazakhstan. As members of the Alumni Leaders League (ALL) of Kazakhstan, the alumni submitted the first-place video "Corruption is Dirt," and "Corruption and Prices," winner of an audience award.

The "Open Your Eyes" competition challenged young citizens to create social advertisements of 60 seconds or less to draw attention to a social problem affecting Kazakhstan. **Geniyat Issin** (2003), who attended Texas A&M, and **Bates Assilbekova**, president of ALL and a UGRAD student at Lincoln Train Community College (2000), worked together with other exchange program alumni in Kazakhstan to develop and produce the winning videos.

Both of ALL's videos focused on the problem of corruption. "Corruption is Dirt" depicts the bribery of a public official and emphasizes that the dirt of corruption touches everyone in society. "Corruption and Prices" depicts prices increasing as a seller is forced to incorporate the cost of bribes in the price of food. "Corruption and Prices" closes with a simple statement, "From our taxes, a government official receives a salary. From our wallets, their bribes are paid."

Reflecting on the importance of the anti-corruption message for his country, Geniyat Issin noted, "Kazakhstan is a very young sovereign state. And it's sad that corruption has almost become a norm of life, something that people brag about. For Kazakhstan to grow and truly prosper, this disease has to be cured. If we consistently lack the just rule of law then people will lose their faith in justice, and this will wear out their enthusiasm in belonging to this country. And if people would stop believing in their own country — then the country has no future."

Congratulations to Geniyat Issin, Bates Assilbekova, and the Alumni Leaders League for their success in the Open Your Eyes competition and for their abiding enthusiasm for the future of Kazakhstan.

Videos Available Online

Corruption is Dirt: <http://youtu.be/jdzhjdqwVCw>

Corruption and Prices: <http://youtu.be/k9VJ5zCWerk>



Still from "Corruption and Prices."

Alumni Perspective: Eco-Friendly Art Paints Smiles on Children's Faces

By Oksana Oriekhova

*In this alumni perspective piece, **Oksana Oriekhova** (2009) shares her experience implementing a Project Smile project in her community. Project Smile, a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State and implemented by IREX, provides grants to alumni of selected ECA-sponsored programs to implement community service activities that will benefit an under-privileged group in their local community such as children at an orphanage, the disabled or the elderly.*

Aided with funding from a Project Smile grant, I implemented a creative community service project this summer in Zapadnoe, in the Lugansk region of Ukraine. I arranged a quilling master class using eco-friendly materials for children from a local orphanage and rallied a team of nine volunteers to work with 20 children ages 3 to 14. The project received attention from the local media.

Quilling involves the rolling of paper strips to form decorative designs and artistic patterns. For Oriekhova, it is a fun activity that also serves a greater purpose. The event was important for the children and for the people of Zapadnoe as an example of what can be done by regular people who are willing to devote free time to improve their community. The art was created from ecologically clean materials with almost no waste, which introduced the idea of preserving, saving and empowering the environment. It is also an engaging task that brings happiness and satisfaction to those involved in it.



Internship Leads to Gender Advocacy in Ukraine



On a Saturday morning in early October 2011, 145 youth ran through the streets of Simferopol, Ukraine on a mission to combat gender stereotypes while engaging in MATRIX: ReGENDERation, a role-playing quest based on the film *The Matrix*. Muskie alumnus **Maksym Klyuchar** (2009) observed as youth completed the day-long quest that he had helped to organize. Following exposure to gender issues through his Muskie internship at the UN Information Center (UNIC), Klyuchar is now a Local Expert/Coordinator in Crimea for the European Union-United Nations Development Program Equal Opportunities and Women's Rights Programme (UNDP EOWRP). Events like MATRIX: ReGENDERation promote gender equality in the local Ukrainian community, a goal that Klyuchar emphasizes when he speaks about his work. "Ukrainian society as a whole is still choosing between the familiar patriarchal values and the new values of equality of opportunity, which — if adopted step by step by each next generation — will become a cornerstone for a more egalitarian society," said Klyuchar.

Klyuchar connects his interest in gender issues to his Muskie internship at the UNIC in Washington, DC. "It was [at the 'Women Deliver' conference] that I heard the UNDP Director, Helen Clark, speak alongside the now leader of UN Women and former president of Chile, Michelle Bachelet. I attended multiple round tables and presentations related to maternal and child health, including presentations led by Melane Vermeer, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues. I think that my experience in the summer of 2010 in Washington has proven to be extremely helpful for my present career."

Internship Exposes Fellow to Good Corporate Governance



Good corporate governance has a big value in the business world and helps to attract capital to countries with strong

corporate governance practices. Domestic and international investors are likely to shy away from countries that do not guarantee investor rights, provide for adequate corporate disclosure, and ensure sound board practices. **Vitaliy Dubil** (2010) spent his summer internship in the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, where he learned about and helped to implement corporate governance projects throughout the world.

"During my internship, I was working in the team that has been involved in projects in almost each corner of the Globe — North Africa and Latin America, Asia and Pacific Ocean region, Eurasia and Sub-Saharan Africa. I studied corporate governance practice in many countries. This experience allowed me to look at the governance issues from different perspectives. Corporate governance is in high demand in Ukraine, as better governance practice can help Ukrainian enterprises get access to international capital and know-how. I believe that the knowledge that I gained in IFC will help me make my contribution to the development of good corporate governance in Ukrainian business," said Dubil.

Dubil worked on several research assignments, including the collection of data on corporate governance indices for a scorecard project. Dubil also created an annual reporting system for the Global Corporate Governance Forum, where he was interning, and managed the creation of the Corporate Governance e-Library.

Dubil mentioned his graduate study as a key factor that had helped him to decide to apply for the internship in IFC, "My academic program in the University of Texas at Arlington gave me not only substantial knowledge and skills in many subjects, but also understanding of my future professional priorities. Especially, I would like to mention Dr. Abdul Rasheed and his Strategic Management course that crystallized out my interest in management consulting."

INTERNSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Internships provide Muskie fellows with practical experience in businesses, nonprofit organizations and government offices. In 2011, fellows gained practical experience interning at diverse organizations in 68 U.S. cities. Internship hosts included:

- American Airlines
- Exxon Mobil
- Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas
- The Urban Institute
- American Red Cross
- City of Omaha, Nebraska
- City of Bloomington Utilities, Indiana

Internship hosts praised Muskie fellows for their meaningful contributions and dedication to learning and to excellence. Hosts also benefited from the new cultural and professional connections with the Muskie fellows' home countries. In a survey of internship supervisors, 24% of respondents reported establishing contact with someone in the fellow's home country as a result of the experience.

"Before Vadim came to our farm, people in our community had never heard of Moldova. Now they have a real relationship with someone from there and have a more tangible grasp on Moldova and its culture, issues and place. I personally learned a lot more about community development in Moldova and was able to use many of their ideas in our own community to strengthen our non profit."
John Sandri, Founder and Director of Farmer John's Plot, hosted Vadim Caramalac of Moldova

ALUMNI UPDATES



Lilit Grigoryan (2009) returned to Armenia following the completion of her graduate studies at the University of Southern California, where she earned a Master of Arts degree. She currently holds a fellowship at the Regional Studies Center (RSC), an independent think tank in Yerevan, Armenia. As a leading think tank in Armenia, the RSC conducts research and analysis and develops policy initiatives aimed at bolstering political and economic reform and conflict resolution in the broader South Caucasus region. The RSC strives to elevate political discourse and deepen civic activism while broadening engagement in the public policy process. Working closely with the Center's director, Richard Giragosian, Grigoryan serves as a senior advisor on several of the Center's ongoing projects, ranging from gender issues to foreign policy and national security. She is also a teaching assistant for a structured, certificate-based series of professional development and training courses for students, youth and young professionals, the "RSC Expert School." The program is part of a broader education project which seeks to contribute to raising educational standards in Armenia by offering affordable, modern and innovative academic training.

Elena Settles (1998) is now the Global Citizenship Director for Cirque du Soleil Rus. Cirque du Soleil is a Canadian entertainment company which embodies a dramatic mix of circus arts and street entertainment. The philosophy of the Global Citizenship division is to build a better world and to promote responsible global citizenship. Cirque du Soleil is committed to the relationships it has built with individuals, groups and companies with which it partners in business and through its social and cultural action programs. Settles' role is to bring Cirque's social programs to Russia, including the Social Circus program for children-at-risk, and to cultivate cultural programs such as links with other circuses, costume exhibits, book presentations, and photo exhibits.

ALUMNI SHORTS · ALUMNI SHORTS · ALUMNI SHORTS · ALUMNI SHORTS

Anna Asatiani (2005) is now working as TV Imedi's U.S. Bureau Chief and New York Correspondent. She will cover politics, culture, fashion, sports and more for the Georgian network.

Vitaliy Razik (2003) was elected Director of the Regional Charitable Foundation, Law and Democracy, a Ukrainian NGO engaged in human rights protection. Since his election, Razik has conducted seminars for public officials on amendments to the law on anticorruption.

Violetta Khabibulina (2002) was invited to present a paper on "Subjective Wellbeing Indicators for Effective Modeling of Medical Social Work with

People Living with HIV" at The International 'Social Work & Society' Academy on Politics of Identity The Changing Face of Social Work in August 2011 in Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic.

Behruz Himov (2005) joined Fitch Ratings in Tajikistan in June 2011 as an analyst at Public Finance Department.

Sarkis Knyazyan (2009) is volunteering his time and providing free legal consultations to local residents, authors, inventors, scientists, and innovators (including various non-profit organizations) who cannot afford to pay the high fees associated with IP law firms. Through the Armenian "Intellectual Property Rights Center" Foundation (www.ipr-center.org),

Knyazyan will continue to volunteer his time through the end of January 2012.

Meri Poghosyan (2008) has been working at UNICEF as an Education Officer since June 2011. In this position, she works with the Ministry of Education and Science and other relevant stakeholders to address disparities and gaps in access to quality and inclusive education for children. The organization's current programs focus on early childhood development, school management information systems, and access of the children with disabilities to education and other social services.

Olga Ivanova (2007) has been appointed the Mobile Projects Director

at Russia Beyond The Headlines, an international project by Rossiyskaya Gazeta. Ivanova is currently working on the developing a mobile application about Russia which will potentially reach over 6 million iPad owners in the U.S. and UK.

Artak Aleksanyan (2006) has been appointed CEO of ArmNews. One of Aleksanyan's challenges will be to ensure the quality of media work and raise the channel's ranking. As a CEO he plans to invite highly qualified editors and producers to the channel, implement outsourcing policies, and buy high quality content to insure high ranking, popularity and efficiency of the channel.

The Muskie Messenger Editorial Committee:

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Submission guidelines:

If you are interested in making a submission to the Muskie Messenger, please fill out the online news submission form <<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/muskieneews>> or email muskie_messenger@irex.org by January 31, 2012. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State and IREX reserve the right to edit submission content. Not every submission will be printed.



Bureau of Educational
and Cultural Affairs

www.exchanges.state.gov



ALUMNI OPPORTUNITIES

US Government sponsored exchange alumni are eligible to take part in various Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) supported conference and training activities. In addition to events that support large audiences, individual alumni may apply for small grants that fund the organization of community service activities, conferences, publications, Internet-related activities, research trips, training programs, the creation of associations and other activities.

ECA Alumni Programming for Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program Alumni

State Alumni Website: The State Alumni website is an online community by and for alumni of US Government sponsored exchange and training programs. The content of the site is updated every day and alumni are encouraged to submit information to the website for posting. Features of the website include: calendar of upcoming alumni events, job listings and career development information, searchable database of alumni and US host families who have registered at the site, grant opportunity listings, live online discussions, discussion forum, alumni news, alumni resume database, articles written by alumni, feedback form/online survey, live online guest speakers, photo gallery, and the Alumni ListServ. <<https://alumni.state.gov/>>

The ECA Alumni Small Grants Program (ASGP): Alumni may apply for a grant of up to \$3,000 to conduct a community development or professional development project. Fundable project ideas include coordinating a community service project, launching a pilot program at an NGO or organizing a training program for professional colleagues and/or other alumni. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

Project Smile: Project Smile is a community development program aimed at helping youth, the elderly and the disabled in Eurasia. Each grantee will receive up to \$250 to perform public service in their home city. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis.

Alumni Events: IREX and the US Embassy organize monthly alumni events in all 12 countries of Eurasia. These events include workshops, conferences, trainings, roundtable discussions, happy hours, movie nights, seminars and lectures. Larger scale events include job fairs that allow alumni to have their resumes reviewed, learn about the current job market in their home country, and meet with potential employers. IREX local offices and the Embassies encourage alumni to actively participate in the development and implementation of such events.

MUSKIE FELLOWSHIP

About the Muskie Program

The Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program is a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State, and implemented by IREX (the International Research and Exchanges Board). Since 1992, the Muskie program has provided opportunities for Master's level study in the United States to more than 4,000 of the most talented citizens from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

Through their academic studies, internships, and community service, fellows come in close contact with Americans and make direct connections with American universities, businesses, social-service organizations, schools, and other institutions, allowing them to develop a deeper understanding of U.S. values and ideals, such as democratic leadership.

Goals

Promote mutual understanding, build democracy, and foster the transition to market economies in Eurasia through intensive academic study and professional training. Returning Muskie fellows contribute professionally, engage in democratic processes in their home countries, and strengthen relationships between the U.S. and their home countries.

Additional Information

For more information about the fellowship application process, please see <<http://www.irex.org/programs/muskie>>.

Universities interested in hosting a Muskie fellow can visit <<http://www.irex.org/application/muskie-host-application>> for more information and to join the Muskie Host Universities listserv.

