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# SPOTLIGHT

## Fellow Attends First U.S. Presidential Debate and Learns about Famous Civil Rights Struggle at her University

As a student at the University of Mississippi, **Ophelia Minasyan** (Muskie 2008) has learned a great deal about the history of the university, a legacy which partly led to the university serving as a host for the first of the U.S. presidential debates in 2008. Up to 1962,



Ophelia Minasyan with the statue of James Meredith at the University of Mississippi.

the University of Mississippi was, in practice, an all-white university. Ms. Minasyan describes a pivotal period in the university's history: "The first black student appeared in 1962 on the 30th of September. His name was James Meredith. A month before the day he appeared on campus, he won a lawsuit that allowed him to apply to and enter the University of Mississippi. He tried to enter the area three times, but the entrance was blocked by the order of the governor of the Mississippi, who declared that, 'No school will be integrated in Mississippi while I am your Governor.' Meredith could be enrolled in the classes only by being escorted by U.S. marshals, but on September 30th, a court announced that the government will be fined \$10,000 for each day that they blocked Meredith from entering campus. White students and other whites began rioting that evening, throwing rocks at the U.S. marshals guarding Meredith at Lyceum Hall; then they fired on the marshals. Two people, including a French journalist, were killed; 28 marshals suffered gunshot wounds; and 160 others were injured. After the Mississippi Highway Patrol withdrew from the campus, President Kennedy sent the National Guard to the campus. Meredith was able to begin classes the following day, after the troops arrived."

Ms. Minasyan was also photographed next to the James Meredith memorial because, as she puts it, "I also entered the university after a long contest, and I'm also going to achieve my goal overcoming all the difficulties."

This period in the university's history was one reason why the University of Mississippi was selected as the site of the first of the debates between U.S. Presidential candidates Senators Barack Obama and John McCain. Ms. Minasyan and other Muskie fellows at the university were able to attend the debate.



Ophelia Minasyan (Second from left), Lyubomir Kuziv (Muskie 2008), and other international students from Russia and Georgia.



Ophelia Minasyan in front of CNN's "Election Express."

## Fellow Gets Involved Early, Attending Conferences a Few Weeks After Arrival to Host University

**Elena Khodunova** (Muskie 2008) hit the ground running when she arrived for her fellowship at the University of Arkansas. On September 4, 2008, she took part in the eighth annual CRE (Center for Retailing Excellence) Conference, an event meant to incorporate academics and the retail industry. The conference was divided into three sessions about the macroeconomic view of global and U.S. markets, sustainable issues, and private labels in the retailing industry and merchandising, operations and marketing integration. Ms. Khodunova concluded, "I consider this conference extremely interesting and useful for my further development. Moreover, it has helped me to extend my professional network in the U.S., which is very important in the business sphere."

Ms. Khodunova continued her active early schedule on September 19, 2008, when she attended a conference entitled, "Leadership: Disney Style." This workshop was designed by both the Human Resources Employee Development (Disney Institute) and the Sam M. Walton College Business Center for Management and Executive Education. Ms. Khodunova states that, "The workshops' goals were to provide understanding of key aspects of leadership, such as establishing shared and meaningful vision, building people's involvement, performing leadership behavior, and encouraging change. The workshop gave a unique opportunity to understand leadership aspects through real Walt Disney Company cases. It was absorbing, and it had a very strong practical approach."

Ms. Khodunova also attended the Fall SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise) Training Conference on October 11, 2008. SIFE is a global, non-profit organization with active student teams in 44 countries. SIFE teams impact the people in their local community, and more than 350 companies and donors assist these student teams. During the first part of the Training Conference students learned more about how to choose a project, what project requirements are, and how to find opportunities for their own projects. The second part of the event was devoted to personal development and leadership training. Walgreens, Walmart, and Sam's Club HR representatives discussed interviewee first impressions, resume rules, communication and other aspects of a successful career.



Members of the University of Arkansas SIFE Team. Elena Khodunova is in the center in the light blue shirt.

## Education Fellow Continues to Publish Nationally-Accredited English Textbooks for Moldova While in the U.S.

Already a trailblazer for textbook reform in Moldova, **Galina Chira** (Muskie 2007) has used some of her experience at the University of West Alabama to further refine her award-winning textbooks. Ms. Chira explains the process:

"The development of the textbooks of English for Moldovan schools is a long-term project I undertook. About seven years ago, I decided to lead a group of authors in writing textbooks for high schools in my country, when no materials for teaching English in Moldovan schools existed at all. It took years of hard work, followed by successful participation in a contest announced by the Ministry of Education in Moldova that resulted in the implementation of the newly developed 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks of English in all Moldovan schools for the last six years."

"*The Curriculum for Teaching Foreign Languages in Moldova* was revised in 2006. That same year, I won the contest announced by the World Bank for authorship of a Curriculum Implementation Guide for Foreign Language Teaching at the high school level in Moldova. The guide that was developed served as a support for teachers, but schools also needed textbooks that would include new curriculum changes. The Ministry of Education of Moldova announced another contest for the development of high school textbooks of foreign languages. The contest included developing textbooks over the next three years for 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. We started revising the existing textbooks so that they could be presented for the Ministry of Education contest."

"The revised 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook of English, entitled *Working Together*, won the Ministry of Education of Moldova contest in 2007 and has already been successfully tested in all schools in Moldova in 2007–2008. The exciting news I received this fall was that the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, *This Is Our World*, that was revised by us during the last academic year, has also won the contest and will be used in schools starting this academic year. The next step to be taken is the revision of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, *At the Crossroads*, so that it could be presented for the Ministry of Education contest in spring of 2009."

"It is not easy to coordinate the project and assure that all the details of working with the authors, with the publishing house, and with the Ministry of Education officials in Moldova are taken into consideration when I am so far from my country. It is also difficult to combine the busy schedule I have at the University of West Alabama as a Muskie scholar with working on this project. On the other hand, being in the United States offers me possibilities that I would not otherwise get; I have the opportunity to use what I've learned here for improving the content of the textbooks. When we started writing the first version of the textbooks a number of years ago, the major question I asked myself was, "What did the students in Moldova really need?" It was obvious that, in a newly-developing nation that has only recently opened the borders for travel and exchange of information, students needed to get a good mastery of the English language in order to be able to interact with people from other countries, have access to literature and internet materials in English, and study abroad. But there was also a great need for the change of mentality, values, and lifestyles of young

Moldovans. As the foreign language curriculum is a topic-based one, it gave us a valuable opportunity to include topics that would contribute to the general development of the teenagers and provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills so that they could succeed in life. Among the topics included were: setting goals for life, organizational and planning skills and time management, problem solving and making the right choices, communication skills to include active listening skills and giving and receiving feedback skills, presentation skills, building healthy relationships, team work, career exploration, and others. The school counseling courses I took at the University of West Alabama added to my knowledge of the above topics, so that I could change the existing in the textbooks content during the revision process to better suit the needs of Moldovan adolescents.”

“On my return to Moldova I plan to develop a series of materials that will supplement the existing textbooks, will help the teachers in their everyday work, and will make the teaching process more efficient. The plans include the development of a teacher’s book, student exercise books, sets of audio and video materials, and suggested activities for use in class or independently by students. I also plan to organize and facilitate a series of practical workshops for teachers of English in Moldova to help them in the process of implementation of the revised textbooks and supplementary materials.”

## Fellow Helps Other Interns Experience the UN

**Farid Gardashbayov**, a 2007 fellow from Azerbaijan, is studying Public Administration at Indiana University. Every year 4,500 graduate students apply for internships at the United Nations and only 270 are selected. Some of those selected for internships are not able to accept the position because the cost of traveling to and living in New York is prohibitive; for others, the cost discourages them from even applying. Mr. Gardashbayov and others thought that amongst these people are individuals with great leadership potential who through this internship would be able to contribute back to their societies. Currently the Fund is growing in membership and activities. Mr. Gardashbayov hopes that the Fund will help those individuals who cannot afford the opportunity to be able to come to the UN and take part in this very competitive internship.

## Internship at The New York Times Great Opportunity for Fellow

During the summer of 2008, **Karen Shainyan** (Muskie 2007) had the rare opportunity to spend his internship with The New York Times Syndicate and News Service. Mr. Shainyan performed research on ethnic media markets in New York City and the region, research on Russian-language media in the U.S., and the Russian business media market. He also participated in a few other special

projects for the company. For Mr. Shainyan, “It was a great opportunity for me to obtain work experience in a big international media corporation. I believe that the skills and knowledge I’ve gotten during my summer internship will help me in my future career. I’ll be able to apply it in my work back home this winter.”

## Facilitating Conflict Resolution Forums a Fulfilling Experience for Fellow



Shams Mustafayeva at one of the CNY Speaks Forums.

**Shams Mustafayeva** (Muskie 2008), a fellow from Azerbaijan studying at Syracuse University, decided to take a leadership role during her community service project. After receiving training from the Conflict Management Center, a student-led, educational project of the Program on the Analysis and Resolution of Conflict at Syracuse University, Ms. Mustafayeva volunteered to facilitate two “CNY Speaks” forums. Ms. Mustafayeva “found the experience very educational and fulfilling. As someone from a former Soviet Union country that is in the process of building a democratic society, it was a great opportunity for me to see a good example of citizen participation in the decision-making process. Also, as a future public administrator, I was curious to learn how to create opportunities for citizens to voice their ideas, needs and concerns.” For more on the CNY Speaks forums, please see: <http://blog.syracuse.com/cny-speaks/>



One of the CNY Speaks Forums.

## Internship at D.C. Think-Tank Opens up New Possibilities for Fellow

**Tatevik Movsisyan** (Muskie 2007) did her summer internship at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington D.C. Ms. Movsisyan was involved in two programs: the Energy and National Security Program, and New European Democracies Project of the Europe Program. Ms. Movsisyan describes her duties and experience: "Within the Energy and National Security Program I worked with Senior Associate Ambassador Keith C. Smith, assisting him in his research on energy relations in Eastern Europe, Russia, and the High North. I helped to organize energy-related events throughout the program. I also assisted the New European Democracies Project by writing weekly select-briefings on Poland and Slovakia, highlighting the main events of the week."

"I truly enjoyed my internship at CSIS: being exposed to numerous events and discussions on the most pressing international policy issues on a regular basis, having the opportunity to listen to some of the most acclaimed analysts and policy-makers in person, and just working in the very inspiring environment of CSIS every day. Young professionals interning at CSIS gain additional learning opportunities through a regular lecture series on leadership and international policy, provided by the Abshire-Inamori Leadership Academy (AILA)."



Tatevik Movsisyan in Washington D.C.

## First Impressions from a 2008 Muskie Fellow

**Ifoda Abdurazakova** is a 2008 fellow from Uzbekistan studying International Affairs at Ohio University. In her own words, here are Ifoda's first impressions of the U.S. and her host university. "When I received a letter from the U.S. embassy in Uzbekistan about my university placement through the very prestigious and competitive Edmund Muskie Scholarship, I started immediately to search the lo-

cation through Google search. What I found out amazed me very much – that it was located in a very small town called Athens. For me, it was difficult to understand how small the town could be, since the small town where I was born has more than 500,000 people, and the city where I live now is home for more than 4 million people. The information on the website revealed that around 25,000 lived in Athens; the website also showed marvelous pictures of forests and lakes. This was one of the first things that I encountered about Athens and Ohio University."

"Continuing the tradition of the Muskie program and fellows, we had an orientation in Washington, D.C. before arriving in Athens, Ohio. Finally, we arrived at Ohio University in a taxi cab from Parkersburg, and found out that university campus was completely empty. We arrived in early August and since the university has a quarter system, the classes were supposed to start on September 8. At this stage, we four Muskies (representatives of Uzbekistan, Russia and Ukraine) started to look around and explore the realities and mysteries of Athens. Even though the town was very small, we discovered that it conveyed old histories of settlements and new modern sites of student life. While talking with a few people on campus, we heard that the university is famous for its extraordinary parties and that people are attracted to being somehow different from others. This was the second discovery for me!"

"The new rushing life started in Athens on September 8. I started to realize it is a small New York city with its own crowded lines in college bookstores, busy people in Perks coffee shop, who might just come to drink coffee and be ready for the new course assignments. This was the third tricky thing in Athens; it was empty and full at the same time."

"Now, being at Ohio University for more than a month, I have a full understanding of what realities it possesses. I met a lot of people that are full of passion towards their education and really keen to be a part of community. For me, it is a really incredible chance to meet people from various backgrounds, who want to become practitioners and facilitators in development studies. From the first days in Yamada International House, I became a member of a big family, where you can keep ties with the whole world. I am also convinced that the Center for International Studies and International Development Program is a really competitive program that goes beyond the U.S., making you feel that you will capture knowledge from the whole world. I am committed to bringing changes through volunteer and community service to keep the highly memorable traditions of my Muskie predecessors. What I also found out is that you should never believe what you heard, saw, and felt initially, try to explore everything, go deeper to search for changes and you will find them."



Ifoda Abdurazakova (2nd from right) and other students at Ohio University.

## Fellow Fits in One More Volunteer Project before Heading Home to Ukraine

In June, 2008, **Iryna Tandura** (Muskie 2006) and other AIG Global Real Estate employees volunteered to join the Habitat for Humanity Organization to assist with the construction of a four-story apartment building for families in one of the economically-distressed neighborhoods in Brooklyn, New York. "To me, volunteering is a great way to support local communities while meeting new people, learning new skills, and having fun along the way! As a summer intern, I especially enjoyed this opportunity to meet employees from other departments as well as to tap into the excitement and pride of the future homeowners."



Iryna Tandura (back row, second from right) and other Habitat for Humanity volunteers.

## Muskie Alumna and Academic Advisor Reunite Seven Years Later

There is a value in keeping in touch with one's alma mater. **Ms. Anush Shahverdyan** (Muskie 1999) realized this benefit recently at an International Conference on Internationalization of Quality Assurance, Accreditation, and Management of Higher Education organized by the Association of the Black Sea Higher Education Leaders in Istanbul Turkey: <[http://www.kent.edu/diversity/Programs/upload/Turkey\\_publication63008.pdf](http://www.kent.edu/diversity/Programs/upload/Turkey_publication63008.pdf)>. At the conference, Ms. Shahverdyan met with her former advisor, Dr. Steve O. Michael (Vice Provost and professor at Kent State University), one of the conveners and chairs

of the conference. The conference elaborated on the integration processes in education, which promote the formation of a new understanding of the quality of higher education. The conference also touched upon the noticeable possibility of decreasing quality in a market-led higher education environment. This makes it a priority to study the notion and essence of the quality of education and the distinction between the notions of 'quality of education' and 'quality assurance systems'. The conference involved participants from Russia, Romania, Belarus, Kyrgyz Republic, Armenia and the U.S.

Ms. Shahverdyan's presentation was on the lack of appropriate skills and knowledge of university graduates in Armenia required by industries. Graduates often do not have experiences in the workplace and do not understand the expectations and realities of their profession. She spoke about the direct dependence of the development of industry on the availability of a competent workforce and about the importance of higher education institutions' increased focus on meeting labor market requirements and responding to demands for more skilled workforce. Ms. Shahverdyan introduced the issue of the quality and relevance at the university level, of the too broad and general comprehensive education with a lack of focus on specialization, as well as the limited communication between academia and the private sector in Armenia. She offered practical examples of embedding skills into existing curricula.

Ms. Shahverdyan was grateful for her first trip to Turkey which enabled her to meet with her former academic advisor, who initiated both the association and conference. 'Dr. Michael has made my attachment to Kent State even stronger. My experience and education at Kent State continue to be instrumental in my personal and professional progress. I wouldn't have missed the excellent opportunity to represent my country and meet with my professor', Ms. Shahverdyan says.



Anush Shahverdyan and Dr. Steve O. Michael.

## ALUMNI SHORTS · ALUMNI SHORTS · ALUMNI SHORTS · ALUMNI SHORTS

Russian alumnus **Alexey Kalinin** (Muskie 2006) was recently promoted to the position of Vice-rector of international Affairs at Pomor State University in Arkhangelsk, Russia, the largest institution of higher education in the European north of Russia.

Armenia alumna **Karine Aghababian** (Muskie 2003) fondly remembers her internship experience with the Russian-American Chamber of Commerce. Her remarks on the experience can be found at <http://www.debpalmierussia.com/Testimonials.html>

In August, 2008, **Vyacheslav Bezruk** (Muskie 2002) accepted the position of Kyiv Branch Manager at CMA CGM Shipping Agencies Ukraine, a subsidiary of French CMA CGM A.S. (Marseilles), the world's third largest container shipping holding. His responsibilities

will include further promotion of CMA CGM brand via selling its shipping and logistics services, as well as overall managing of the Kyiv office.

## The Muskie Messenger Editorial Committee:

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### Submission guidelines:

If you are interested in making a submission to the Messenger, please send all text and pictures to <[muskiemessenger@irex.org](mailto:muskiemessenger@irex.org)> by January 15, 2009.

ECA and IREX reserve the right to edit submission content. Not every submission will be printed.



Bureau of Educational  
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# 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.

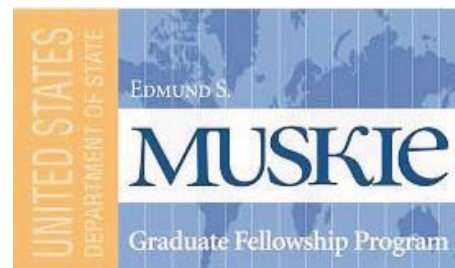
## ECA Alumni Programming for Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program Alumni

**State Alumni Website:** The State Alumni website is an online community by and for alumni of US Government sponsored exchange and training programs. As of May 2004, the website has over 8,500 registered users. 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. <<http://www.irex.org/programs/asgp/index.asp>>

**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. <<http://www.irex.org/programs/smile/index.asp>>

**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.



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