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# *Cósmicos* Spring 2007

Greetings from Valdosta! Welcome to the seventeenth edition of our Valdosta State University International Alumni newsletter. Keeping you up to date and in step with Valdosta State University events and informed about how your fellow alumni are prospering. We need your assistance in order for us to continue to successfully publish this newsletter. Please send us pictures, letters, or anything else you feel is newsworthy about yourself. If you have changed careers, gotten married, or had a new baby please let us know.

## **VSU's 31st Annual International Dinner and Show**

The Valdosta State University Society for International Students in conjunction with the Valdosta Asian Cultural Association (VACA) presented the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual International Dinner and an "Artists of the World" Show on Friday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> at the James H. Rainwater Conference Center, Valdosta, GA (Norman Drive, One Meeting Place). Doors opened at 7:00 pm for the event.

The International Dinner began 31 years ago as a way for VSU's international students to share part of their culture with the Valdosta community. It is the largest celebration of cultural diversity that can be found in Valdosta. Currently there are over 200 international students from over 60 different countries attending VSU. This year VSU's International Students and VACA worked together to bring to the Valdosta community the International Dinner and an "Artists of the World" Show. A buffet style dinner was provided by the international students and some local restaurants. The dinner featured dishes from over 30 countries including Germany, France, Belize, Bulgaria, Korea, Japan, China, Russia, Belarus, Hungary, Albania, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, the Bahamas, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, and Uganda. During the dinner guests enjoyed a dance show provided by the "Artists of the World." The first guest of honor was an Indonesian Folk Dance Group from Atlanta, GA. Their performance was sponsored by the Indonesia Consulate General of Houston, TX. The second special guest was the KALYNA School of Ukrainian Dance a Ukraine Folk Dance Group from Tampa, FL. The final guest was Ms. Li Li a Chinese acrobat from Orlando, FL. She was a member of world-renowned China Wuhan Acrobatic Troupe and served as its leading performer since 1981 till 2006 when she immigrated to the United States. She specialized in acrobatic acts of Plates-Spinning, Head-Balancing, Chinese Yo-Yo, and Group Bicycle.

There was a record breaking number of attendees at this year's event, making it the largest International Dinner since its inception in 1976. Members of the community, Valdosta State University, other universities, and even other states were in attendance. The evening concluded around 9pm with guests leaving with just a hint of "world knowledge" and a hunger for more. Next year's event is sure to be even better.

## English Language Institute Updates

The English Language Institute continues to grow here at Valdosta State University. Peter Failor, Assistant Director of the ELI, stated, "The wonderful thing about ELI is that it provides an opportunity for cross-cultural dialogue. We have students from diverse cultures who are able to commune and communicate in one common language. I think people find they have more in common with each other when they live and work around one another. Growing up in Germany, I used to play with German and Turkish children who did not speak my language. We managed to have fun, and I think I learned a lot about humanity in the process." Peter recently replaced Maral Viveros, former Assistant ELI Director. Peter is an exceptionally well-rounded individual and a current graduate student at Valdosta State University.

Throughout his tenure at VSU and ELI, Peter has been able to see the changes that are constantly being made. Peter states, "The ELI has been steadily growing for the last several years. We are constantly receiving applications from new parts of the world, and I envision an ever diversifying program that serves various student needs. Most of our students are trying to gain admission into VSU and want to pass the TOEFL. Other students simply want to learn English or improve their English. All are welcome. I hope we continue to grow, and I also hope we become a more prominent presence in the VSU community".

### International Business Night

Dr. Andrew Ostapski's International Management class held its Third Annual Business Night on Saturday, April 14<sup>th</sup> at 6pm at St. John's Catholic Church Parish Hall; all international students were invited to participate. The admission was free! Each attendee received a free t-shirt, free food, and drinks, and had the chance to meet members of the local community, make business connections, and learn about the exciting things that International Management class is doing. International students were encouraged to bring a dish, share their talents, perform a dance or a song, play a musical instrument, or wear national clothing. The event was a huge success and yielded a turnout larger than it had in previous years.



## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS HOSTS IT'S ANNUAL DIVERSITY FAIR

Valdosta State University's office of Equal Opportunity Programs and Multicultural Affairs (EOP) hosted the annual Diversity Week activities during the week of April 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>. Activities included a Diversity Fair on Thursday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. in Palms Quad.

International students as well as other students gathered with a unifying cause: to increase VSU's awareness of other cultures. "Basically, it's to get the community and other student organizations together," Sandra Berube, administrative assistant for the department of Equal Opportunity Programs and Multicultural Affairs, said, "We just want everyone to meet each other and mingle." The fair will feature cultural foods, activities, and information booths highlighting campus departments, student organizations, and community agencies.

The event was yet another success for the EOP office and was highly favored amongst the faculty, staff, and students of VSU. Several people stopped by on their lunch break and between classes.

# Virginia Tech Tragedy

On April 16, 2007, the lives of many innocent people were taken or changed drastically by the attempts of one disturbed individual out on a mission to kill. On that day the lives of millions of people nation-wide was changed forever. The Virginia Tech tragedy is the first of its kind with the multiple slayings of students, faculty, and staff at Virginia Tech. Memorial services for the fallen victims and their families have been held nation-wide in remembrance of VT. Virginia Tech is planning on releasing commemorative products & apparel within the near future, but has not done so yet and asks that people not purchase products that have the VT trademark related to this event until they do so. Donations can be made to the “Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund.” Contributions should be mailed to:

*Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund  
University Development (0336)  
Virginia Tech  
Blacksburg, VA 24061*

## VSU Campus Alert System To Enhance Emergency Preparedness

Valdosta State University recently initiated the **VSU Campus Alert System** through the **Connect-ED** communication service. The new system provides campus leaders and security professionals the ability to reach all students, faculty, and staff with time-sensitive information during unforeseen events or emergencies, within minutes, through a single phone call.

**VSU Campus Alert** enables campus leaders to schedule, send, and track personalized voice messages and can also send text messages to cell phones and email addresses. Students, faculty, and staff must opt-in to have their contact information included for emergency notifications by entering their information at [www.valdosta.edu/editalertinfo](http://www.valdosta.edu/editalertinfo).

Robert A. DeLong, VSU’s Director of Environmental and Occupational Safety, stated, “When an emergency or pressing situation, such as a hurricane or health issue like potential pandemic flu, arises, one of the primary courses of action is to alert our student community immediately.” With the new **VSU Campus Alert** the university now has a system where it will be able to reach students, faculty, and staff with accurate information without delay. VSU is currently collecting the best contact information, like cell phone number, in order to provide this service.

Supplementary methods are also being explored to meet the communication needs of the campus during an emergency. Officials at VSU have said that the contact information they are provided with by students, faculty, and staff included in **VSU Campus Alert** will only be used for campus notifications and will not be made available to any other

service.

Joe Newton, VSU's Director of Information Technology, has proposed, "to continue to respect the privacy of students, faculty, and staff and their contact information will not be shared with any other service."

## **VIRGINIA TECH MEMORIAL SERVICE**

Valdosta State University's resident assistants and the Office of Housing and Residence Life hosted a memorial for Virginia Tech at 2 p.m. Friday, April 20, 2007 on the university's front lawn.

Students, faculty, and staff attended the event to honor the lives lost as well as survivors of the Virginia Tech tragedy. Speakers included Dr. Kurt Keppler, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dr. Thomas Hardy, Director of Housing and Residence Life. A student directly connected with the situation spoke as well.

Participants had the opportunity to share stories, thoughts, and feelings on the traumatic event and flowers and candles were passed out in commemoration.

### *Baptist Collegiate Ministry Hosts International Student Dinner*

On Thursday, April 26, 2007, the Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM), formerly known as the Baptist Student Union, held a dinner to honor international students. Particular emphasis was placed upon students who have been participating in events throughout the year with the BCM. The homecooked dinner was prepared by the BCM staff and members. A slide show of the year's events was showcased, as well as a spotlight for students to share their experience with others. This was the last major event that the BCM held for international students and served as a time for students to come together and interact with one another before the school year's end.

## **Commencement**

Due to the continuous growth here at Valdosta State University, the Commencement ceremony has been expanded to accommodate graduating students and their guests. With the steady increase in enrollment at VSU the need to expand commencement is evident.

An average of 950 students apply for graduation each fall and spring semester. Spring semester 2007 was the beginning of an extended commencement that will provide six

ceremonies within two days to accommodate the growing number of graduates and visitors who want to attend.



“The change from two to six ceremonies was made after lengthy discussions with students, faculty, and staff,” said Ronald M. Zaccari, VSU President. “As the number of graduates and guests continues to grow it is becoming difficult to provide adequate accommodations and more importantly a ceremony that exemplifies the dignity and honor this achievement deserves.”

Three ceremonies were held on Friday, May 4, 2007, beginning with College of Nursing at 2 pm, in Whitehead Auditorium; Masters of Library Science at 4 pm, in Odum Library Auditorium; and Division of Social Work at 7 pm, in the Whitehead Auditorium.

On Saturday, May 5, 2007 all three ceremonies were held in the P.E. Complex, beginning with the Dewar College of Education and U.S. Air Force ROTC at 10 am; College of the Arts and Harley Langdale Jr. College of Business Administration at 1 pm; and College of Arts and Sciences at 4 pm.

## **"Farewell" Cookout**



On Friday, May 4, 2007 the Center for International Programs held its annual "Farewell" cookout for graduating and leaving international students. Once again it was a huge success. Students began arriving at 12pm (noon) and didn't leave until 3pm. Everyone was able to reminisce on this past year's events and say their last goodbyes to one another. Food, conversation, and an ELI final presentation were amongst the festivities. There was also an awards ceremony for leaving ELI students.

### **Student Updates**

Antonio Cano, a citizen of Belize, transferred to Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia. Antonio began as a freshman at VSU in 2005 as a Pre-Engineering major. Since his acceptance at Georgia Tech in the Civil Engineering program, Antonio has decided to continue with his aspirations to become a civil engineer. Upon completion of his degree Antonio would like to pursue a career in land development.

International Students who graduated this year were: Israel Saucedo Sungmi Choi, Darlene Higgs, Elske Ten Hoop, John Martinez, Raimond Palk, Tatiana Stasenko, Maxim Lyashok, Meghann Williams, and Roger Thiele. Amongst the leaving/transferring students were: Dipsy Ghandi, Antonio Cano, Dominik Hansen, and Nikolas Overkemping.

## Staff Updates



### **Assistant Director at the English Language Institute (ELI)**

Peter Failor was born and spent most of his time in Germany. He graduated from Valdosta High School (VHS) in 1993, starting nose-guard for the 1992 national champions from VHS. Peter attended Georgia Southern University, then Valdosta State University where he received a degree in B.A. English in 1999. He has worked for the Valdosta Daily Times covering crime, education, county and government, and writing feature stories. In 2003, he returned to VSU for a teaching certificate and taught English at Valdosta High School until January 2007. Peter has continuously focused on expanding his knowledge where he attended Blackwater Writing Project and acted as a substitute teacher at the ELI. He began as the Assistant Director at the ELI on January 15, 2007, and he is currently a graduate student in the English department here at VSU where he is pursuing an M.A. in English.

### **Center for International Programs (CIP) Office Staff Contact Information**

<b>Name and Title</b>	<b>Email address @ valdosta.edu</b>
<b>Dr. Ivan Nikolov, Director of International Programs</b>	<b>inikolov</b>
<b>David Starling, Assistant Director and Study Abroad Coordinator; Director of the ELI</b>	<b>dstarlin</b>
<b>Irina McClellan, International Student Advisor</b>	<b>ibmcclel</b>
<b>Lee Yarbrough, Administrative Assistant</b>	<b>layarbrough</b>
<b>Megan Powell, Coordinator of the European Council, ISEP Coordinator</b>	<b>mapowell</b>
<b>Sonya Dodson, Graduate Assistant</b>	<b>stdodson</b>
<b>Peter Failor, Assistant Director of the ELI</b>	<b>pcfaiolor</b>
<b>Susan Starling, Graduate Assistant</b>	<b>smstarli</b>

**You can also contact the Center for International Programs at (229) 333-7410 and the English Language Institute at (229) 219-1246.**

### **WE NEED YOUR HELP**

In order for us to continue to successfully publish this newsletter, we need your assistance. Please send us pictures, letters, or anything else you feel is newsworthy about yourself. If you have changed careers, gotten married, or have a new baby please let us know. Also, if you have information about any other alumni you can also inform us and encourage them to contact us as well.