Maxwell Welcomes Twelve 2011-2012 Humphrey Fellows

On August 1st, twelve 2011-2012 Humphrey Fellows arrived at the Maxwell School to begin their 10-month program of academic study, professional development and cultural exchange. This year, the fellows hail from 11 different countries including: China, Ecuador, India, Iraq, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, Oman, and Pakistan.

The Fellows will focus their research in the area of public administration and policy, for which the Maxwell School has been rated #1 for the past 19 years. Several Fellows are also engaged in studies at the School of Information Studies (iSchool) in the area of ICT policy issues.

During an eventful two-week orientation, the Fellows were welcomed by Chancellor Nancy Cantor, who reflected upon the interconnectedness of local and global issues and the University’s role in solutions. Associate Dean Michael Wasylenko also hosted a lunch discussion about the current national and global economic conditions. Downtown Ambassadors provided tours of Syracuse, which gave the fellows a glimpse of Syracuse history as well as current day development. They marveled at the fact that busy streets were once the Erie Canal. They met host families over a Dinosaur BBQ picnic held at Green Lakes State Park, took a tram ride at Onondaga Lake Park and met the County’s Parks Commissioner and spent an afternoon in Skaneateles, touring the lake by boat and learning of Central New York’s Finger Lakes.

It was not all fun and games, however, as they began their year-long Leadership seminar led by Catherine Gerard and Steve Lux and gained perspective on American political thought from Grant Reeder. It was a busy and productive three weeks, allowing Fellows to get to know the University, the city of Syracuse and surrounding areas, Humphrey Program and staff and most importantly, each other!
Enjoying Local Culture - Highlights of the Syracuse Area

As fall progressed, the Fellows spent a day in the country with hosts Barry and Kathy Kogut. They helped with the harvest of vegetables, tasted their new seedless grape crop and enjoyed a homemade spaghetti dinner. Barry also took them to visit the owners of a small cattle operation as well as an alpaca farm! They also drove to Highland Forest County Park to enjoy the incredible view from the lodge. It was a time of fellowship, cultural exchange and much laughter.

Right: Sania, Elena, Brahmanand, and Kenyatta pose in front of sunflowers at Kogut’s Farm.

The Fellows also had the fortune of watching the Orange win a crucial victory against Toledo at the very last second in overtime. Debate was had as to which is more complicated for spectators to understand: cricket or American football! Kenyatta’s hosts, Michael and Grace Flusche, offered pre-game tailgate hospitality in their home to set the stage for the game in the Carrier Dome.

Apart from scheduled events, students have also been celebrating their own cultures. Rezwana hosted an Eid celebration to mark the end of Ramadan, with delicious food and Huanyun’s home has been the location of a few gatherings of Fellows celebrating events, cultures and friendship. They’ve also gotten “out and about” immersing themselves in Central New York’s culture, parks and social events.
The Journey Begins - Humayun Tarar

By Humayun Tarar Pakistan Humphrey Fellow, 2011-2012

A whirlwind!!!! That’s what it has been; unbelievable, against all odds I am here at the top school of US, having one too many opportunities, not to mention my chance at the graduate school, which I don’t know how I missed when I was of age. It all started on a casual afternoon, few years ago, when I was sitting awestruck in my mentor’s office, listening to incredible stories of his Humphrey year. That is when I planned to have a go at the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship, but then typical of me, forgot about it... the desire, however, had taken root and stayed with me and it was during one of my busiest and most challenging assignments back home, when I decided to finally realize my dream. It was again a lazy, laid back afternoon in a desert town of Pakistan. My wife decided to apply for Fulbright and we had a good laugh at the minuscule prospect of being in the same university. Bingo! If only we had wished for the jackpot of mega millions! Truly, it has been mega millions so far. We had a long year of planning and prayers and with many angels working for us, we ended up in Syracuse and what an experience it has been since then. Breakfast at Ernie Davis, the guardian angels in the disguise of three amazing women, who shepherd the Humphreys, the awe-inspiring hallways of Maxwell with the presence of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, to remind us of values of purpose and higher ideals, is like the cool evening breeze in desert, reminiscent of those afternoons and late evenings when we were filling up never ending forms for the scholarships. Actually getting to America, however, was brutal! Canceled flights, a long night at the NY airport with my colleague, Sania, when we took vigil guarding each other, and then finally Syracuse, or should I say Maxwell. It would be unfair if I don’t mention Faegans, the cafe on the corner, for all the right reasons.

So far, Syracuse has treated us too well. The amazing weather has really made us appreciate what ‘autumn in New York’ means. From the very beginning, my professors made me reflect in a big way. They opened my blind space to me, a window to the inside. I have had so many opportunities to reflect and see myself professionally in a very different light. It has been a great learning experience in Prof. Larry Schroeder’s class, not to mention Catherine Gerard, and of course Tina Nabatchi - what a mix. I cannot think of a better learning environment, and the roller coaster ride is still going on!
New York Politics - A Day with Dave Valesky

After learning about American political systems from Prof. Grant Reeher, the Fellows had an opportunity to see it from a politician’s view in October. Senator David Valesky welcomed the Fellows at his regional office for a morning of political immersion and discourse, cultural comparisons and discussion of New York State politics. A founding member of the Independent Democratic Conference, Senator Valesky has been representing NY’s 49th district since 2004, and has welcomed the Fellows as part of their Humphrey experience both in Syracuse and Albany. Sen. Valesky discussed not only the politics, issues and process of NYS government, but answered the Fellows’ questions concerning federal and global issues as well.

Acts of Kindness - Center for New Americans

Perhaps one of the most meaningful visits the Fellows have made so far has been to the Center for New Americans. In conjunction with Syracuse University’s involvement with Acts of Kindness Weekend, which sought to build community as a reaction to 9/11, the fellows met with the Center’s director, Helena Malina to discuss the refugee program in the Syracuse area. It was a wide-ranging discussion from the UNHCR to specific refugee populations in and around Syracuse and the challenges and opportunities these refugees face as they settle in Syracuse.

This was also an opportunity to work together and volunteer at the Center. After the meeting, the Fellows cleaned and arranged an apartment that was about to house a family of 5 Somali refugees later that evening. Working together in order to help provide a better life for others resonated with the Fellows and is a savored memory of the program. Some intend to continue their volunteer service with the Center for New Americans.
Combating Widespread Corruption with Michael Johnston

Michael Johnston, a Charles A. Dana Professor of Political Science at Colgate University and an expert on Corruption in Developing Societies, met with the Fellows to discuss important trends, implications, effects, and potential reactions to reforms. Johnston discussed not only the systemic problems associated with corruption, but the difficulty in developing meaningful consensus on just what it means, and to what extent it can be addressed in our globalizing society. Fellows were able to draw on Johnston’s wealth of knowledge as they discussed how corruption can influence their own societies in today’s world, and what they, as leaders, can do to do to lessen its effects on their agencies or organizations. Prof. Johnston extended an invitation for Fellows to visit Colgate undergraduates enrolled in his Democratic Transitions & Consolidation and corruption classes.

Social Media and Voter Empowerment with Judy Asuni

With a focus on recent world events such as the Arab Spring and the London riots, Judy Asuni, Executive Director of Academic Associates Peaceworks, discussed the implications of social media for voter involvement, particularly in regard to her experiences with the recent Nigerian elections. Dr. Asuni went on to present her view of both the negative and positive consequences, and how specifically, one might harness its power to encourage youth involvement in areas with feelings of disenfranchisement.

Above: Professor Asuni describes her experiences with youth-engagement through Social Media and other forms of electronic communication.
Pumpkins lined the tables as Fellows and other Executive Education students, including a delegation from Shenzhen, China, filed into the Inn Complete to celebrate Halloween and get a jack-o-lantern “lesson.” Some brought their children, many in costume, to partake in the season’s festivities and carving mayhem. Tops of pumpkins were sawed off, guts were scooped out and at the end of the night, dozens of orange faces stared back at their creators.

Right: Fellows Sonia, Elena and Brahmanand take part in the pumpkin carving

Right: Humphrey Coordinator and Asst. Director of Executive Education Margaret Lane welcomes Chancellor Nancy Cantor during orientation for the Fellows. Associate Dean Mike Wasylenko presided over a luncheon discussion. The event was held in the Founder’s Room of the Maxwell School.

Left: Fellows and coordinators enjoyed a boat tour of Skaneateles Lake during a picture perfect summer day in Central New York. They experienced Doug’s Fish Fry, a local landmark and ice cream after the cruise!
We are in the process of collecting updates from Maxwell Humphrey alums for the next newsletter! Please pass along any news you wish to share—photos are always welcome! You can post on our Facebook group page or email Martha at mhketcha@syr.edu.

Here are a few alumni updates to get you started!

**Khaled AlAjmi**, 2010-2011 Humphrey alum, is now General Manager of Hafiz, a Human Resources Development Fund in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This is a national program created as a result of a royal decree by King Abdullah whose mission is to assist the unemployed. Khaled’s responsibilities include defining the overall strategy of the program, monitoring and measuring program performance and interacting with media as well as working with local and international organizations. Congratulations, Khaled!

Khaled also recently Skyped with the Fellows to offer his perspective of the Humphrey Fellows experience.

**Ronnie Amorado**, 2009-2010 Humphrey alum, recently published “Kakistocracy,” which delves into unethical and corrupt behavior of officials and how citizen involvement can prevail in the Philippines. This endeavor is a result of his Fellowship experience and incorporates his work in anti-corruption, development management and integrity development. Forewords were authored by Steve Lux and Michael Johnston. Congratulations, Ronnie!

**Next issue:**
Discover what Humphrey alums are up to, including highlights from one Fellows’ return visit and meeting with the Fellows. Highlights from GLF, Fellows and host family international potluck dinner, more Fellow reflections and more!

**Humphrey alums on campus:**
We are pleased to still see Nicolas Hernandez and Jungwook Auh, 2010-2011 Fellows, at Maxwell! Both are pursuing EMPA degrees. Nicolas will graduate this December and Jungwook will finish her studies in May.

Stay up to date with us on Facebook. We want to hear from you! Join us on Facebook. If you have news, views, or updates, join our “Humphrey Fellows- Maxwell School, Syracuse University” group on Facebook. You can post thoughts, share photos and join the conversation—it’s a great way to keep in touch with past and current Maxwell Humphrey Fellows!