This fall, Executive Education welcomed the 2014-2015 Hubert H. Humphrey Fellows as they embarked on their year of academic study, professional development and cultural exchange at the Maxwell School. The Fellowship is sponsored and funded by the U.S. Department of State and is administered by the Institute of International Education. This semester marked the first half of a ten month journey of non-degree academic and professional-related experiences. Fellows were selected based on their commitment to public service and their potential for leadership in both the public and NGO sector.

This year, Fellows hail from 10 different countries, representing Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Myanmar, Pakistan, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Slovak Republic, South Korea, and Uzbekistan.

This is the sixth year the Maxwell School is hosting the Humphrey Fellows, who are focused in public administration, NGOs, and leadership. These Fellows are mid-career professionals and leaders in their respective home countries, and their experience and expertise integrate into Executive Education and its mission of preparing leaders for a global community.

The 2014-2015 Humphrey Fellowship Program consists of 171 fellows from 98 countries hosted by sixteen U.S. universities. Since 1978, more than 4,600 Fellows from 157 countries have participated in the program.
Orientation Week

The Fellows spent three weeks in August in orientation—settling in, learning about American political systems, going on tours both on- and off-campus and participating in other activities to get to know their new home! After getting settled and meeting their host families, they learned about the Maxwell program, the university, the city of Syracuse, and visited sites in surrounding areas. Syracuse Humphrey alum Karla Dominguez (Mexico, 2013-2014) joined a conversation with the Fellows via Skype to offer her perspective and words of wisdom. She was also able to re-connect with the Fellows during the Global Leadership Forum. Orientation provides a great opportunity for the Fellows to learn about American culture, the Syracuse area, and also each other!

Fellows, Maxwell faculty and institute directors gathered for lunch, providing an opportunity for Fellows to learn more about the research interests and areas where they can become involved. Tosca Bruno of the TNGO Institute and Prof. Peg Hermann, Director of the Moynihan institute of Global Affairs discuss their research and learn about the Fellows’ professional backgrounds.

On a beautiful day—with lovely blue skies—the Fellows were given a tour of Syracuse University.

The Fellows went on a historical walking tour of downtown Syracuse provided by the Onondaga Historical Association.
A highlight of Orientation is always a boat tour of Skaneateles Lake. Qurrat-ul-Ain Rasheed and Michelle Ntukanygwe enjoyed the cruise on Skaneateles Lake, one of Central New York’s Finger Lakes.

Fellows and their host families gathered for a host family picnic. They ate Dinosaur BBQ and enjoyed a beautiful evening at Onondaga Lake Park. Our host families are the best!

SUNY Oswego Provost Dr. Lorrie Clemo welcomed the Fellows for dinner to celebrate our new associate campus partnership. Professor Ralph Ketcham, internationally recognized teacher of early American history, spoke to the Fellows about achieving effective self-government in the 21st century.
The culmination of the Syracuse Humphrey Fellowship orientation was an official welcome by Syracuse University Chancellor Kent Syverud (above, center, in orange tie) who has led the University since January 2014. He shared his vision for the University, its dedication to academic research, offered some perspectives on leadership and took a deep interest in the Fellows’ goals while in the Humphrey program. He concluded his visit with a “small world” story about Hubert H. Humphrey as a young man in South Dakota - it turns out his grandmother’s family was from the same town! It was a great opportunity for the Fellows to meet the Chancellor.

SUNY Sustainability Conference

The Fellows spent a busy day at SUNY Oswego, our associate campus, for the SUNY Sustainability Conference. They participated in the conference, met Oswego’s mayor and learned about the Shineman Foundation, a private foundation. SUNY Oswego faculty with an interest in international education also met with the Fellows in order to discover areas of mutual interest. The day culminated with an extended discussion with the conference’s keynote speaker, Michael Maniates, Professor of Social Sciences and Head of Environmental Studies at Yale NUS University, Singapore.
Above: The Fellows met with Thomas Gillen, Mayor of Oswego.
Left: The Fellows spoke with keynote speaker Dr. Michael Maniates, Professor of Social Sciences and Head of Environmental Studies at Yale-NUS University in Singapore.
Bottom-left: The Fellows learned about initiatives of various SUNY-Oswego faculty members and directors.
Below: Ms. Lauren Pistell, Executive Director of the Richard Shineman Foundation, spoke to the Fellows about its mission and how private foundations are structured in the U.S.
In what’s become a tradition, hosts Barry and Kathy Kogut arranged a day in the country for the Fellows. The Fellows had a chance to harvest some vegetables and pick flowers to take home. They ventured to Tinker Falls, which while not much more than a trickle, allowed them to hike up and behind the falls. After a visit to a country store for homemade doughnuts and a quick stop at an art gallery, they visited a family beef cattle farm and pumpkin stand. The lovely afternoon culminated with dinner back at the Kogut’s, with a pasta meal made from their vegetable garden. The Fellows greatly enjoyed this rural slice of the U.S!
Executive Education’s Pumpkin Party

Fellows, Executive Education students and their families had a great time at this year’s annual Pumpkin Party at the Inn Complete. It was a chance to participate in a favorite Halloween tradition, which was new to many who attended. Fellows carved their own pumpkins while enjoying Halloween snacks.

Michelle Ntukanyagwe takes a second to smile at the camera. Qurrat-ul-Ain Rasheed stays focused on her carving. Mirjahon Turdiyev and his family enjoyed carving a jack-o-lantern to decorate their apartment.

Students and Fellows display their artistic endeavors. The variety of designs never ceases to amaze.
Maxwell Turns 90!
The Fellows joined Maxwell in celebrating its 90th anniversary in October. They were joined by Maxwell Dean James Steinberg, SU Provost Eric F. Spina, alumni, faculty, staff, current students, and even Chancellor Kent Syverud and his wife, Dr. Ruth Chen. 2014 is also the 50th anniversary of Executive Education.

Learning About Inclusion and Disability Issues at the School of Education

Syracuse Humphrey Fellows had the opportunity to meet some key faculty members in the School of Education Teaching and Leadership Department to discuss global inclusion and disability issues. The seeds were planted for future connections, including the opportunity to meet School of Education students to expand the discussion.

Left and above: Humphrey Fellows discussed inclusiveness during a lunch with School of Education faculty. There was mutual interest in both inclusion and disability issues and its development internationally.
Syracuse and Cornell Humphrey Cross-Campus Trip To Lake Placid

The Syracuse and Cornell Humphrey Fellows had a great time on their cross-campus networking trip to Lake Placid! During a stop at SU’s Minnowbrook Conference Center for lunch, the Syracuse Fellows had an opportunity to go kayaking on Blue Mountain Lake. Later that day, Cornell and Syracuse Fellows broke the ice during a welcome reception, where some re-connected with old friends from their pre-academic training during the summer.

The next day, the Fellows experienced the Cloudsplitter Gondola at Whiteface Mountain, scene of the 1980 Winter Olympic Alpine events. Fellows from both campuses worked as a team to spell out a special message on the Whiteface hillside—utilizing leadership skills of teamwork, communication and collaboration!

The weather cooperated and the views were spectacular. Most importantly, it provided a retreat setting for Fellows from both campuses to come together.

Above: Everyone is all smiles on this beautiful day. Below: Cornell and Syracuse teamed together to honor the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship.

Above: The Fellows kayak in Blue Mountain Lake. Some were experienced paddlers, for others it was a new experience! Below: Qurrat-ul-Ain Rasheed, Michelle Ntukanyagwe, San Thida, Laura Dittel and Hanoof Alsughayer enjoy the fall afternoon.

Fellows Kazbek Abraliev, Cesar Perez, and Mirjahon Turdiyev on Whiteface Mountain.

Syracuse and Cornell Fellows mingled during a welcome reception.
The Global Leadership Forum brought together all 171 Fellows from 16 campuses for discussions about how they can maximize their Humphrey Fellowship experience and make transformative changes upon returning to their countries. It’s a time for networking and exploration of the impacts of climate change and how the Fellows, as global leaders from all sectors of public service, can mitigate its impact.

All campuses offered presentations on the area of climate change. The Syracuse Fellows’ presentation was entitled, “From Bananas to Rice: A Cross-cultural View of Climate Change.” The Fellows all worked together on the project, which was presented on behalf of the Syracuse cohort by Qurrat-ul-Ain Rasheed and Hanoof Alsughayer. The Fellows also had the opportunity to meet Maxwell alumni at a networking reception and visited the World Bank to meet Maxwell alums who are currently working for the organization, including 2013-2014 Syracuse Humphrey alum Karla Dominguez.
Maxwell Alumni Networking Reception

On Election night during the Global Leadership Forum, the Fellows and Maxwell alumni gathered at Maxwell’s Greenberg House in Washington DC. Former Professional Affiliation hosts, Maxwell and Leadership for Democracy Fellows alumni and friends met the Humphrey Fellows to learn about their professional goals and interests.

Center for New Americans

The Fellows met with Helen Melina and Daryl Files from the Center of New Americans, to learn about their work with the refugee community in Central New York. The Center for New Americans is part of InterFaith Works CNY, and provide resettlement and post-resettlement services to help refugee families reestablish their lives. The Fellows learned about their numerous initiatives as well as many other areas of volunteer opportunities.

Visit From NYS Senator David Valesky

In a follow-up to the Global Leadership Forum election night discussions, New York State Senator David Valesky stopped by to offer his perspective on the outcomes of the elections. He also provided background on the differences between the Federal and NYS legislatures and how the differences between citizens of Upstate and Downstate influence governing in Albany. Questions from the Fellows ranged from his thoughts on political and organizational leadership, the length of time legislation takes to pass in New York State, and political party loyalty vs constituent representation, as he has been a Democrat representing a heavily Republican region for ten years.
Meeting with IMF’s Xavier Debrun

Two fellows seized the opportunity to have an extended meeting with the IMF’s Xavier Debrun, Deputy Chief of Fiscal Policy and Surveillance Division, Fiscal Affairs Department. He visited Maxwell in November as Executive Education’s Capstone Lecture Series speaker. His lecture posed the question as to whether fiscal policy should be depoliticized or not. San Thida and Qurrat-ul-Ain Rasheed were able to ask questions to Dr. Debrun surrounding the IMF and its policies, especially as it related to their countries.

International Education Week Dinner

In honor of International Education Week, Syracuse Humphrey Fellows and their host families gathered to learn about each Fellows’ countries, culture and customs. The evening also included an Uzbek drum performance by Syracuse Fellow Mirjahon Turdiyev’s son. Both Fellows and host families alike are eagerly anticipating January’s international potluck dinner featuring

Perspectives on Public and Community Service

Pam Heintz, Associate Vice President and Director of Syracuse University’s Mary Ann Shaw Center for Public and Community Service of recently met the Syracuse Humphrey Fellows to discuss the concept of volunteerism in the U.S. (especially in higher education), some challenges and opportunities of managing volunteer programs and areas where the Fellows can roll up their sleeves to help area organizations.
Peer To Peer Speaker Series

This semester, three Fellows participated in Maxwell’s Peer to Peer Speaker series, which provides an opportunity for Executive Education students and Humphrey Fellows to present talks on a wide-ranging set of topics, taking advantage of their impressive backgrounds as leaders in government, NGOs and other organizations around the globe.

Cesar Perez started off the Peer to Peer Speaker Series this fall with his presentation, entitled “Using ICT to Enhance Governance in Indigenous Guatemalan Communities.” His talk focused on digital democracy, citizen engagement and transparency as a result of a community computer center and free Internet in an indigenous community’s town square.

Hanoof Alsughayer’s presentation was entitled, “Saudi Women and Development: Flourishing—A Personal Journey,” and told the story of her professional development in Saudi Arabia, providing a general glimpse into the lives of Saudi women.

Mirjahon Turdiyev’s interactive Peer to Peer presentation, entitled “Disability Rights in Developing Countries: Some Fundamental Issues” highlighted fundamental issues and several cases about the rights of disabled people in developing countries.
Alumni Updates

Rezwana Siddiqui (Pakistan, 2011-2012) reports that she recently attended a USEFP (United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan) event for Humphrey Alumni. John Sedlins, Chief of the Humphrey Fellowships and Institutional Linkages Branch in the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. State Department, met with alums to hear of their experiences upon returning from the Humphrey program. He was interested in knowing how they are using their Humphrey experience in current work assignments. Additionally, Rezwana is beginning to work on a concept paper to explore ways to take advantage of the collective expertise of Humphrey alumni. She also recently attended a Fulbright/Humphrey Alumni Conference held at Foreman Christian College in Lahore. Additionally, a project plan she developed and which was financed by JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) costing $18 million (U.S.) was approved by the government and will be formally presented before the Japanese cabinet for approval. She credits this “can do” attitude in part to lessons learned while at Maxwell and in the Humphrey program.

Brahmanand Thakur (Nepal, 2011-2012) sends this exciting update:

“Along with seven other Nepali youth I first met on Twitter, I co-founded a not-for-profit called the Nepal Policy Center (NPC). It is an independent, non-partisan, youth-led public policy think tank that promotes transparent, inclusive and participative policymaking in Nepal through dialogue, research and citizen participation.

We held our inaugural event on November 21, 2014 to mark the 8th anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (signed between the Government of Nepal and the Maoist party that brought to an end a decade-old civil war). The CPA is a policy document guiding the peace process and constitution-making in Nepal.

The General Secretaries of Nepali Congress (the party in Government in 2006) and the Maoists (the rebel party) who had played direct role in negotiating this agreement spoke at the event. They reflected on their motivation and vision for Nepal when the agreement was signed in 2006 and what has changed in the eight years since.

The guest speakers also included the president of the party representing an ethnic minority group that revolted (against the centuries-long discrimination by the state) just one year after the peace agreement with the Maoists was signed. This representative spoke about the need for an end of ethnic discrimination in order for lasting peace to return to Nepal and how the issues of federalism and social justice are reshaping the public policy debate in Nepal.

Once armed with guns that were used to kill each other these political parties in Nepal are now armed with a smile and involved in constructive dialogue on peace and constitution-making.”

(Follow the Nepal Policy Center on Twitter: @NPC_Nepal)

Sanaullah Abro (Pakistan, 2013-2014) has been busy since his return. He recently was promoted to Secretary Enforcement at Customs HQ Islamabad and is part of policy making process of Customs enforcement at the national level. He states it’s an important opportunity to utilize the knowledge and experience gained as a Humphrey fellow. He feels that learning about leadership and management during the Humphrey Leadership seminar is widely useful for his new assignment. Sanaullah also has networked with other alumni through the U.S. consulate in Karachi. Earlier in the fall, a seminar was organized to share the valuable experiences gained from during fellowship programs whose experiences contribute to the development process of Pakistan. He also volunteered at an educational fair where he provided his perspective on educational opportunities at Syracuse University.
We love when Executive Education alumni are able to connect! Brahmanand Thakur (Nepal, 2011) recently met up with Executive Education alum Kyi Par Chit Saw from Myanmar (Burma). She was in Kathmandu for a Regional Conference on Decentralization and Local Governance. Note the Maxwell mug, which was also in attendance!

Saeed Kasi (2013-14) reports that he is the Generalist Cadre in the Civil Services of Pakistan. After arriving back to his home country after his time in the United States, he was posted as the Deputy Secretary, Population Welfare Department, Government of Balochistan. He is administering the population welfare activities in the province, the largest in Pakistan. His program is active in 27 of its 30 districts. Along with his Secretary, he leads, manages and monitors all the staff of the program and its activities in these 27 districts of Balochistan province.

Medgat Olzhayev (Kazakhstan, 2013-2014) is currently working as an analyst for the Nazarbayev Center in Kazakhstan, a government analytical research center under the President’s Administration. He is also teaching Executive MBA classes part-time at two state universities, covering subjects like “Strategic Management & Business Policy” and “KAIZEN - Japanese system of continuous improvement in quality, technology, processes, productivity and leadership.” He hopes to continue to improve his presenting and teaching skills he crafted during his Humphrey leadership classes.

Brahma isn’t the only Humphrey displaying Maxwell mugs in action! Es Lichnachan (Philippines, 2013-2014) took hers on a lovely excursion to Ducligan, in the Philippine countryside. Where will one show up next?

Kenyatta Mwawashe (Kenya, 2011-2012), has been appointed of Head of Policy and Campaigns at ActionAid International Kenya and will begin his new responsibilities mid-January 2015. It’s one of the five senior most management positions in the organization which has 250+ staff. He writes, “this is after the organization completed restructuring and drafting of a new Country strategic Plan. I will be leaving Ceperd Kenya Consultancy where i served as the Head of Programs and Deputy Chief Executive Officer. I owe this career progress to Maxwell School and particularly the Humphrey Program.”

Here in Executive Education, we have an update of our own. Meet our newest member of the Humphrey team, Assistant Coordinator Denise Mallory Breen. She is no stranger to Maxwell, having worked here in the college since 2010, most recently in the Anthropology Department. Welcome, Denise!
Andy Svakova (Slovak Republic, 2013-2014) and Andrijana Vojnovic (Serbia, 2012-2013) Serbia met up in Bratislava, Slovakia over the summer. We’re so happy to see these two Syracuse Humphrey alums keeping the Syracuse Humphrey connections alive and well across program years. Andy also reports that she is continuing her studies in Bratislava, Slovakia at Comenius University. She is pursuing a Master’s degree in Cognitive Sciences in the department of Mathematics & Physics.

Bo Song, (China, 2013-2014) is now a Joint Venture Partner for TechBridge International, an international consulting company based in Syracuse that connects Central New York and China for collaboration and commerce. This August, using continued connections he made during his Professional Affiliation with Tech Bridge, Bo was able to host a delegation from Syracuse that included Maxwell School alums Seth Mulligan and Rob Simpson. This group from TechBridge, CenterState Corporation for Economic Opportunity (Syracuse’s regional economic development organization), and also the Tech Garden (Syracuse’s ‘business incubator’) visited several Chinese.

Loday Tsheten (Bhutan, 2010-2011) has been transferred to Head of the Central Coordinating Agency for Internal Audit Service under Ministry of Finance from the Anti-Corruption Commission. He is now responsible for the management, operations and coordination of Internal Audit function across the nation.

Hazim Hamed (Iraq, 2011-2012) writes that in November he passed his PhD viva with minor corrections from USM University, Malaysia. His PhD topic was political discourse analysis in Iraq. Congratulations! In other news, Hazim is now a team leader of a large project to assist IDPs (internally displaced people) in the north of Iraq, who fled the violence caused by the terrorist group of Islamic State in Iraq and Levant. This project is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The idea of the project is how to help around 12,500 IDPs to start their new businesses in order to cover their living expenses instead of waiting for humanitarian relief activities.
Maya Angelou once said “courage is the most important of all the virtues because without courage, you can’t practice any other virtue consistently.” The fight against the recent Ebola outbreak has highlighted courageous healthcare practitioners and advocates around the world. In Sierra Leone, 2010 Hubert H. Humphrey alumnus Joe Bangura has joined the ranks of the dedicated women and men who are working to prevent the spread of Ebola.

Joe is a dynamic entrepreneur who uses his status as a national radio personality to provide information and motivate his audience to move forward during a time of crisis. As host of a one-hour, daily radio show titled “Join Hands to Drive Ebola Out” on one of the most listened to radio stations in the country, he stands at the forefront of the mass media efforts to help Sierra Leoneans take action against the Ebola outbreak.

Through his position as Head of Corporate Affairs in Sierra Leone’s biggest mobile phone company, Africell, he has arranged for the mobile cell phone services of Africell to be donated to health organizations free of charge to disseminate Ebola messages. Additionally, Joe exchanges notes on a weekly basis with staff of the BBC Media Action Trust and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop content for his show. He met with the first CDC team upon their arrival in Sierra Leone, and he advised on the roadmap for the CDC’s operations in the country.

Joe is also widely known in Sierra Leone for his “Life-by-Design” motivational television show. One of his biggest achievements through this show is the mentorship and personal financial support of a young adolescent student, who had built an FM radio transmitter from materials he picked up from scrap heaps. With help from the group “Friends at MIT,” the student won an invitation to participate in the World Maker Faire 2012 in New York and became the youngest person to participate at the Visiting Practitioner Program at MIT that same year. Joe also mentored this young man as he prepared to take part in the 2013 TEDxTeen talks in New York hosted by Chelsea Clinton. He is currently supporting several other upcoming youth leaders from low-income communities in Sierra Leone in business leadership and civic participation.

Beyond his role as a humanitarian, Joe is CEO of a micro-finance business that serves small and medium-sized enterprises. He spent the 2009-2010 academic year as a Humphrey Fellow at Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Public Administration and Whitman Business School, where he honed his business and leadership skills. Through his leadership and by applying the skills gained on his exchange, his microfinance business has grown almost tenfold over the last four years. As an ambitious entrepreneur who sees opportunities in his home country, Joe has also established four other growing businesses which involve publishing, software development, management consulting, and a multi-media production house.

Source: https://alumni.state.gov/alumni-story/join-hands-drive-ebola-out

We always like to hear about Humphrey alumni updates! We post to Facebook in between newsletters. No news is too big or too small. Please pass along any news you wish to share and photos are always welcome. You can post on our Facebook group page or email Martha at mhketcha@syr.edu.
National Electoral Commissioner Member and 2010-2011 Humphrey Fellow Roxana Silva Chicaiza led a delegation of officials from the National Electoral Council of Ecuador in Seoul, South Korea in October. She was invited by the Institute for Civil Education and Democracy (KOCEI) to exchange experiences and identify trends and best practices in electoral processes.

“It is important to stand out the electoral projects made by South Korea like best practices and technology used in the electoral processes that will allow us to take a broad view of our situation and help us to improve efforts and keep working for the Ecuadorian democracy,” said the National Electoral Commissioner.

Also, it was an opportunity to reconnect with Dong Seok Lee (Syracuse Fellow, Korea, 2009-2010), Yongju Park and Sungmin Lim! They had a great time in Seoul.

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. It’s a great way to keep in touch with past and current Maxwell Humphrey Fellows! This is a closed group—only current or former Fellows and host families are accepted. Our public Facebook page is The Hubert H Humphrey Fellowship Program at Maxwell, Syracuse Univ. and can be ‘liked’ by anyone!
Enhancement Workshop Preview

For the third year running, the Maxwell School will host 40 Humphrey Fellows from the 16 Fellowship host campuses during its Enhancement Workshop, “Leadership and Governance During Times of Crisis.” The week-long event will take place February 23-27, 2015 and is spearheaded by Professor Bruce Dayton, Assistant Director of the Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs.

The overall goal is to give participants perspectives and tools to more effectively provide leadership and address a wide range of crises including humanitarian emergencies, political instability and civil unrest, terrorism, natural disasters, health pandemics, industrial accidents, financial crises, and foreign policy fiascos.

The sessions will cover numerous aspects of crisis management and leadership including risk assessment, preparation and mitigation, decision making and collaboration, response to crises and ways to communicate with the media and public in the midst of a crisis. The culminating experience for participants is a half-day simulation, where participants put to practice the knowledge they’ve gained during the week in a role-playing scenario that becomes quite real to the participants as the simulated crisis evolves.

As in past years, Syracuse Humphrey Fellows will have the opportunity to serve as campus ambassadors to visiting colleagues. It’s always a reunion of sorts, as Fellows from campuses across the U.S. meet up and spend the week together honing their leadership and crisis management skills.


Reaching Out in the Wake of Recent Global Events

As this newsletter goes to press, Pakistan and the world is reeling from the horrific bombing at a school in Peshawar and West Africa is continuing to be devastated by the Ebola outbreak. Other regions are coping with violent attacks and the resulting increase in refugees. There seems to be no shortage of conflicts, violent acts, natural disasters and health crises.

The Humphrey program brings together people from all around the world in order to develop leadership capacity in the face of the enormous challenges facing the world today. Through exchange, friendship and collaboration these challenges can be better met.

We are proud of all our alumni who work everyday to reflect the Athenian Oath: “...we will transmit this city not only not less, but greater, better and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.”
The evening of November 20 was a dark and stormy night in Syracuse, New York as winter made an appearance. But the warmth of the folks inside Pasquale’s restaurant at Drumlins quickly dispelled the chill as I arrived for the presentation of the Humphrey Fellows on their home countries. I first caught up with several of the Fellows whom I had not seen since their visit to our farm in Fabius (was that visit really over two months earlier?) and then settled in for the PowerPoint presentations.

The quality of the presentations was impressive. The level of enthusiasm remained high throughout the evening and pride in country came through with every presentation. The most common theme was affection for family and it underscored the universality of the human experience despite cultural differences. Ah, but the cultural differences – this is what adds the spice to any gathering of folks from different places.

Quick thoughts about each presentation:

San Thida (Mynamar): The most impressive thing was the time that San takes for meditation in her very busy day. San has such a calmness about her and that must be a product of her stepping back and re-focusing during the day. I wish that I had the discipline to do that.

Lara Saade (Lebanon): The affection for the cedar tree as Lebanon’s national emblem was evident and something that I relate to as an environmental lawyer from both a natural history and political perspective.

Hanoof Zamel Alsughayer (Saudi Arabia): The presentation included a delightful view of Saudi Arabia at leisure, and in particular, a look at the recreational opportunities presented by the desert.

Michelle N. Ntukanyakwe (Rwanda): I was unaware of how young the population in Rwanda is. The discussion of the lowland gorillas was a special treat.

Woojin (Daniel) Han (South Korea): Daniel offered a unique perspective, offering 5 things that he liked and 5 things he did not like about life in the U.S. It underscored why it is important for Americans to become familiar with cultural differences prior to engaging with others outside our shores, even if their English is as good as our own. Daniel’s praise of the area around Onondaga Lake for its natural beauty may come to a surprise to many in Central New York and underscores that we often do not appreciate what is close to home.

Laura Dittel (Slovak Republic): I was not familiar with the extensive physical beauty of the country. Laura’s comments on the ever-changing political map in that part of Europe reminded me of my Polish grandparents who came to this country as citizens of Austria-Hungary.

Qurrat-ul-Ain Rasheed (Pakistan): The colors of Pakistan were amazing. As a student of politics, I also appreciated the tour of the provinces of Pakistan and the uniqueness of the various lifestyles.

Mirjahon Turdiyev (Uzbekistan): The look of pride in the face of MJ’s boy as he played (without any hesitation) the Uzbek frame drum was priceless. I also now know that Uzbekistan is one of two double landlocked countries in the world.

Kazbek Abraliev (Kyrgyzstan): While wearing his white hat, Kazbek gave me a welcome insight into a country of which I knew very little. My favorite was the photo of the impressive mountains.

Cesar L. Perez Carrera (Guatemala): I did not realize how volcanic the country was. It was also fun to listen to Cesar explain why a person’s full name in Guatemala is so long.

At the end, we had no time for questions and that was just as well as the Q&A would likely have pushed the evening into early Friday morning. But the whole experience was a reflection of how unique we are and also how much we are the same.

There is never enough time, and it seems that there are way too many logistical hurdles, to visit as many countries as one would like. I am therefore very thankful that I have had the opportunity to travel the world through the ambassadors known as the Humphrey Fellows.
Candidly Maxwell

Above, clockwise from left: Fellows Cesar Perez and Mirjahon Turdiyev act out a scene from The Titanic on Skaneateles Lake. Cesar meets his hero, Abe Lincoln. Michelle Ntukanyagwe captures the Lake Ontario sunset. Michelle and Hanoof Alsughayer are all smiles on a beautiful day in the country. The Syracuse Fellows’ first group selfie, by Maxwell’s statue of Abe Lincoln. Professor Ines Mergel engages in conversation with San Thida during a faculty meet and greet in August.

Want to see more candid photos? Like our Facebook page! Updates are posted on a regular basis.