



REAC Regional Review

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REAC Update

Dear Advisers,

I've been busier than usual with plenty of travel for site visits, conference attendance and ECA meetings. Since December, I've visited Joy, Radhika, Joseph and Steve in Trinidad, Lana in Tobago, our new adviser Rhanisha in Grenada, Lucila and Alfonso in Morelia, Carmen in Anguilla, our new adviser Lornette in Nevis, Latoya in Montserrat, Hilary in St. Lucia, and Curtis in Dominica. It was great to visit these sites for the first time and get to know better all of you and your centers. I was so impressed with what you're doing out there with advising. It's hard to believe that even after three years as the REAC for MCAC, I'm still conducting preliminary site visits. We have a lot of centers in this region.

I've also attended several conferences including the Mexican Association of International Education (AMPEI) in Chihuahua, the Association of International Education Administrators in San Diego, and the Consular Leadership Development Conference in Ft. Lauderdale. The main reason for my attending these conferences is to promote EducationUSA as a valuable resource for both US colleges and universities and Embassies and Consulates to reach prospective international students.

In February, all the REACs met in Washington DC for our annual meeting with all the ECA/A/S/A staff. Throughout the course of the three days in DC, we discussed several issues key to the im-

provement of EducationUSA advising, including marketing, center certification, outreach programming, adviser professional development... I want to let you know that we have a great team supporting us at ECA/A/S/A, especially with the recent addition to the team, our new Branch Chief, Mary Thompson-Jones. Prior to transitioning to ECA/A/S/A Branch Chief, Mary was the PAO in Guatemala and with a superb adviser like we have in Maritza; she is very familiar with the strengths of EducationUSA.

It's been a long time in the making but this edition of the MCAC Regional Digest has some great information that I hope you find useful to your advising center. Included in this newsletter is a regional update with introductions to the new advisers, along with some highlights that were submitted from several advisers. In the section "Spotlight On..." there are four articles in particular that I'd like to point out which are written by your colleagues who want to share with you their best practices. These are outstanding new models of networking and outreach and I'd like to congratulate the four centers who contributed.

1. *Working with MOE:* Joy and Radhika share with us their terrific model of extensive and innovative outreach programming and collaboration with the local Ministry of Education in Trinidad & Tobago.

2. *Reaching Out to Bilingual Schools:* Maritza recently worked very closely with her CAO to design and organize a program at the US Embassy in Guatemala inviting college

counselors from local private and public high schools to promote EducationUSA and provide them with tools useful to advising their students.

3. *The Parents Network*: Rosa, in the Dominican Republic, has been working on this innovative new programming to reach out to the parents who are helping their children make decisions about higher education and need support along the way.

4. *Mexico City Undergraduate Membership Program*: In an effort to streamline and simplify the individual advising process, IIE's interns helped us create an outline and several handouts and tools to use in advising students for undergraduate studies.

You'll notice in the section "Improving Communications," I'm providing you with tools to respond to the US higher education community with credential evaluation questions. Also, in an effort to improve your relationship with your PAO or CAO, I will now be asking all of you to provide a brief summary of advising related events you'll be hosting each month for the MCAC Month-in-Preview, which I will then distribute in a compiled list to your Public Affairs Section. The guidelines for these submissions are included in this section.

Also in this edition, we covered some tough and/or frequently-asked questions that some of you had sent me either through the listserv or directly. Since they were such great questions, I thought it important to share the answers with everyone.

Thanks to Radhika Gobin, Joy Sandza, Maritza Rodas, Rosa Rodriguez, Michael Harris, Silvia Perez, Rhanisha Alexander, Lucila Escandón, Mark Leyes, Celia Chaves, Marta Carranza, Wycliffe McAllister, and Judith Dijks for your contributions to this edition of the MCAC Regional Digest. Above all, I'd like to thank our IIE intern, Curtis Wilson, for helping me in pulling together all the articles for this newsletter and working on this project without a lot of support given my recent travel schedule.

I hope that the information included in this edition of the MCAC Regional Digest appeals to all of you. I encourage all of you to contribute to the next edition of this newsletter by sharing some of your best practices at your advising centers with your colleagues.

Thanks team!

~Nichole

State Department Address

Dear Advisers,

I'd like to thank all of you for your patience and understanding this past year, while I continue to learn the region. I really appreciate your professionalism and dedication to your work in the region. Hats off to our wonderful REAC Nichole Johnson!

Book ordering has begin for 2006, and although you may still be receiving books from the 2005 order, ECA/A/S/A will attempt to place the 2006 orders on a schedule that fits better with the publishers' printing calendar of

2006 book editions. After we have received all book orders for 2006, we will work on placing your book orders June - August.

Please continue to talk with Nichole about training possibilities that would enhance your professional development. For the advisers that will be attending the NAFSA Conference in Montreal, I look forward to meeting you.

Although ECA/A/S/A was not able to fund all the advisers who applied to attend the conference this year, we encourage you to try again next year and please continue to talk with Nichole about training opportunities in the U.S.

Don't forget to give Nichole your center's monthly statistics.

Sincerely,

Ella

What's New in the Region? Advising Centers

Michael Harris - Tegucigalpa, Honduras

On October 27th 2005, EducationUSA in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, sponsored its first College Fair. The fair brought in about 1000 prospective students nation-wide. The success of this fair will lead to an annual event. The key elements of organizing such an event are planning, communication, and cooperation.

Planning

Before setting a date we checked the calendar of tours and fairs in the region. October was a good month for recruiters and students; in 2006 we will most likely have our 2nd fair in October. We had difficulty coordinating with the other Central American countries. Recruiters will be more willing to travel if they can visit two or three fairs in a week. A further problem was the hurricane season. Five universities were unable to attend because of this.

We needed a strategic plan to present to the Bi-National Center who would finance the event. The strategic plan included objectives, processes and most importantly-costs and income.

Communication

There is a two-sided promotion in organizing a fair- the universities and the students. We aimed to have a variety of programs represented at the fair. We also wanted a variety of students from high school to post-graduate.

The fair is for the recruiters; therefore, we consulted with them to assess their needs and expectations. The main concern of the recruiters was comfort. By using a conference hall of a good hotel we met their needs. We promoted through the inter-I network and the NAFSA newsletter. We also used the NAFSA Re-

gion VII because most Hondurans study in this region. Most responses came from the NAFSA newsletter.

We promoted to the students through outreach by contacting school counselors. We also gave a presentation to the directors of bi-lingual schools at their monthly meeting. Through the local media, we advertised in newspapers, radio and television. Press releases allowed us free advertising along with interviews in local radio and television. One problem we faced in communication was the media wanted to present this as a scholarship fair.

Cooperation

We were fortunate to have the support of the PAO of the Embassy. They provided posters, leaflets, media attention and funding. The bi-national center also supported us logistically and financially. The local Fulbright Alumni Association worked with us in promoting the fair. Kim Diehl, who volunteered for EducationUSA, was the key factor for the success of the fair. And of course, Nichole was very supportive and helpful.

Most ideas that I used for the fair can be found in the Advisor Resources section of the EducationUSA website. I am looking forward to the 2006 fair and hope more EducationUSA centers will join us for October. If any advisors would like more specific information please contact me.

Silvia Perez - Mexico City, Mexico

Fall and winter have been really busy months for EducationUSA Mexico City. Despite that, we have been participating in various exciting events. In early October the educational advisor was invited to participate in a program called Mini Sessions organized by the American School Foundation. The topic was: "What the Admissions Committee is looking for?" This event preceded their annual College Fair the following day where the advising team was able to give out the *Applying to College and Universities in the U.S.*, a guidebook published by Petersons. During this fair we were able to talk to about 300 potential undergraduate students and provided them with information about our services.

Other college fairs that we have been involved in over the past months include: The MBA Tour, the Expo-Estudiante Fair; and two high school college fairs. We were closely involved in the organization of two of these events in which the tour organizers

compensated our office for the services we provided, such as managing fair registration, promotion and organizing embassy meetings and high school visits for the representatives.

We were honored to host five universities as they presented academic programs at their institutions. One of the visits coincided with our weekly group orientations; so we invited the representative as a guest speaker. Another event we held in our facilities was the Personal Essay Workshop that consisted of a two-day training outlining techniques to improve participants' chances of admission to a U.S. university through an effective personal statement or statement of purpose. This was the third year we've held this successful program that has helped us develop closer ties to our advisees.

Our office has been rewarded during these fall and winter months by the presence of several interns who have been hard at work on all of the endeavors of our office and constantly bringing in fresh ideas. In addition we have the continuous help and support of our Mexico/Central America/Caribbean REAC, Nichole Johnson.

International Education Week 2006

Several EducationUSA advising centers in the MCAC region organized special events in celebration of International Education Week 2005.



Silvia Perez, Nichole Johnson, and Consular Officer presenting on U.S. visas.

Rhanisha Alexander -St. George, Grenada

The Grenada Advising Center has shown constant improvement since being affected by Hurricane Ivan in 2004. Regaining student contact after such a powerful storm was not easy, but throughout 2005 the center has kept working, putting on events and steadily expanded the number of students passing their building. Below are a couple of examples of the everyday events highlighted by Advisor Rhanisha Alexander:

1. Secondary school visits held in April and May each year where we visit each of the high schools in Grenada and as part of our college program we advocate higher education in the U.S. Using the Hobson Guides, the 4-year College guides, and SAT information as reference materials to explain the general process of applying to university.
2. In July and August, the graduation period here at TAMCC we also put out brochures and do more rigorous advising for our graduating class on opportunities in the United States.

Advisor's note: We are a part of the Office of Student Affairs so we are open every day to facilitate the public and current students with our library resources and face to face advising.

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO: On Tuesday, November 15th, the advising center hosted a public orientation, "Scholarships and Financial Aid for Graduate Study in the US", with a panel of representatives from various organizations administering scholarship programs: the US-Mexico Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange (Fulbright Commission), the Institute of International Education, the Mexican Foundation for Education, Technology and Science. This session provided prospective Mexican students with an overview of the different types of funding opportunities available through US and Mexican governments and foundations, and directly from US universities. On Thursday, November 17th, the center hosted a public orientation about the process of applying for the student visa with a Consular Officer.

MORELIA, MEXICO: On Tuesday, November 15, PAO Lynn Roche (Consulate-Guadalajara) spoke to ESL teachers about the US education system at the advising center, hosted by the International Relations and Languages Center at Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. On Thursday, November 17, the advising center organized a "knowledge marathon", which included games, quizzes, exercises and contests in an effort to involve students in topics related to the world and its different customs and traditions, familiarizing students with the global environment and exposing students to the many exchange programs between Mexico and the US.



Proud prospective students attending IEW event in Morelia, Mexico with PAO Lynn Roche and Lucila Escandón.

OAXACA, MEXICO: With a delegation from Humboldt State University (HSU) visiting the Autonomous University Benito Juarez of Oaxaca (UABJO), the EducationUSA Adviser participated in a forum of federal, state and municipal authorities, various academic institutions, and NGO's regarding the topic of 'constructive wetlands' which centered on the theme of a joint HSU/UABJO proposal for USAID-TIES grant.

COSTA RICA: The advising center hosted a series of presentations throughout the week at the Centro Cultural Costarricense-Norteamericano: CAO Michelle Riebling and a Consular Officer gave a presentation on student visas; a representative from the Fulbright Association talked about his experience of studying in the US, and a representative from Pace University presented the undergraduate and graduate admissions procedures. On Wednesday, November 16th, the U.S. Embassy had a reception in honor of International Education Week. On Thursday, November 17th, a representative of Thunderbird University conducted a presentation about admissions procedures. The center invited representatives from several local high schools and universities, and placed a spot on a local radio station announcing International Education Week and activities at the center.

EL SALVADOR: Monday, November 21st the advising center hosted a Scholarship Fair at the Centro Cultural Salvadoreño. The fair consisted of several scholarship programs including Fulbright, Ford, The Boll Foundation, FANTEL, CASS, the El Salvador Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as a Consular Officer providing information about student visas.

HONDURAS: U.S. Embassy Tegucigalpa coordinated speakers at the Instituto Hondureño de Cultura Interamericana to discuss International Education Week topics. American Officers from the Embassy spoke with students about university campus life in the U.S. and how to apply for student visas.

GUYANA: On Monday, November 14 and Tuesday, November 15, 2005 the U.S. Educational Advisor together with consular officers made presentations to fifth and lower & upper sixth forms (equivalent to tenth, eleventh & twelfth grades) students of three of the top high schools in Guyana, namely: Queens College, The Bishops High School and Saint Stanislaus College. The presentations were focused on: higher education system in the U.S. and its advantages; a road map to follow if you want to study in the U.S.; and the student visa procedures. A total of 365 students benefited from this exercise that was embarked upon for IEW.

SURINAME: Wednesday, November 16th, the Business Education Resource Center of the US Embassy in Paramaribo organized an information session for undergraduate students at the Landmark Baptist College. The vice consul and the educational advisor spoke about student



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Departures:

Sonita O. Daniel, Charlestown, NEVIS

·Currently working as Head Librarian at the Medical School for the Americas.

Jacquelyn Mussington, St. John's, ANTIGUA

·Now working at the NEVIS library in Antigua State College.

Angie Tovar, San Pedro Sula, HONDURAS

Adviser Updates: New!!! Sub-Regional Coordinators

Sub-Regional Coordinators will act as the principal liaison for each sub-region to the REAC and will be helping with specific administrative duties, which could include direct follow up regarding any REAC or ECA requests that have yet to be responded to, forwarding credential questions to the appropriate adviser, and providing advice or guidance on a more local level. These colleagues have been selected based on their strong leadership skills, participation in adviser professional development activities, and level of communication with me and the region, and are volunteering their time to help strengthen the MCAC advising team!

Please join in congratulating our new sub-regional coordinators!

Silvia Perez, Mexico

Celia Chaves, Central America

Alvin Curtis Harris, Caribbean

Adviser's Corner: Useful tools and Techniques

Spotlight On... Advising in Trinidad & Tobago

Working with MOE in Trinidad & Tobago

Radhika Gobin & Joy L. Sandza

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

The Information Resource Center (IRC) of the United States Embassy in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago and the Ministry of Education (MOE) enjoy a very special and professional relationship, which has been nurtured over the years.

The staff of the MOE has always enthusiastically supported our many programs to promote U.S. higher education to the students of this country. In fact, our first college fair, held in 1996, was co-hosted by the Ministry of Education, and subsequent fairs have received unsolicited patronage. We have already had several enquiries about College Fair 2006.

The Examinations Division of the Ministry has been operating a test center for the

SAT, GRE and GMAT for over thirty (30) years, and the administration of these standardized tests is very professionally handled. We work very closely with the staff to resolve any problems, which the test takers may encounter, and avail ourselves of their experience by inviting the main administrator to make presentations at some of our workshops.

However, our closest ally is the Student Support Services Division (SSS) within the MOE. For many years its main office has been a Core Center for receipt of the EducationUSA's Educational Advising Reference Collection. It is also a depository for the numerous university bulletins, which the IRC receives but can no longer accommodate due to a lack of space.

These materials are well used by the students who visit the SSS and the guidance officers, who are based there, attend regular workshops conducted or organized by the IRC. The guidance officers based at high schools throughout the country are also regular attendees at these events and are always keen to share the updated information with their students.

In fact, in early 2005 we received a request from the SSS for our REAC, Nichole Johnson, to conduct a two-day workshop during

the month of September for approximately 100 guidance officers. The topic was the latest developments in U.S. higher education and an address by a Consular Office on student visa issues was also included in the program, as is the norm.

Nichole's airline passages were funded by ECA/S/A/A with the cost of renting the ballroom of a hotel, including lunch, born by the SSS. The length of the workshop was cut back to one day so that Nichole could devote adequate time during her short visit to private meetings. She held discussions with the Director and other officers of the SSS, as well as with officers of other related government offices, including the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (MSTTE), and the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT).

We enjoy excellent relations with these two entities, and many collaborative efforts to promote U.S. higher education are exercised here as well. They too are invited to send relevant staff members to our programs, and they appreciate meeting with visiting university and college representatives, so we make every effort to facilitate this initiative.

As COSTAATT is modeled on the U.S. community college system, it is feverishly seeking to establish a strong articulation program with universities and four-year colleges in the United States and elsewhere. This is to facilitate the transfer of those students who may wish to continue their studies abroad rather than at the local campus of The University of the West Indies (UWI). We look forward to COSTAATT being our co-hosts for College Fair 2006.

The new state-of-the-art National Library and Information System (NALIS) has been instrumental to the success of our efforts to take the message of U.S. study directly to the students. We have been allotted space to set up an "American Education Corner" where students, parents, teachers and other visitors may access valuable information and receive individual counseling by an IRC advisor at scheduled times. The library also accommodates visiting university and college representatives by providing a room in which to hold presentations, free of charge.

Our "American Corner" in Trinidad's sister isle of Tobago is located in the library of a popular high school and receives the Basic Collection. In due course, this facility will be transferred to Tobago's national library, which is currently under construction. As with our Corner at NALIS, the materials available are well utilized by patrons and the staff is knowledgeable and cooperative. They are always willing to co-host programs with us and were interested in having Nicole and a Consular Officer visit and impart their knowledge with them, invited students and other interested persons. The visit was also promoted on a local radio station.

Through the efforts of the Ministry of Education, MSTTE and COSTAATT, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago demonstrates its commitment to providing the students of T&T with every possible avenue to pursue their dreams of a higher education, even at an international level. It is for this reason that every effort is made to draw upon the resources available at the various diplomatic missions represented in the country.

The role of a student adviser can be intimidating in its intensity and importance. Fortunately, however, we are in the enviable position of receiving essential support not only from the community as a whole but also from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, who realize the immeasurable benefits of studying in the United States. It certainly augurs well for the continued success of our efforts and whets our appetite for more exciting challenges ahead.

Reaching Out to Bilingual Schools

*Martiza Rodas
Guatemala City, Guatemala*

As counselors, one of our responsibilities is to program outreach visits on a yearly basis and there are different ways to plan these types of activities, but the main purpose is to establish ties to college counselors at the bi-lingual schools. We are always trying to attract more visitors to our centers and a good way to reach them is through their counselors, psychologists or coordinators who can recommend that they visit our advising offices. At the time of planning your outreach activities, these contacts will play a very important role in accessing the students who are interested in studying in the US.

The information we gain from participating in different workshops, training sessions, the feedback we receive from our REAC as well as sharing experiences, problems and solutions with our colleagues allows us to be at the top of our game and

be well informed for events such as outreach visits. It is with this information that earlier this month I was able to hold my first outreach experience which I would like to share with all of you as I feel it is a wonderful tool for anyone working with the bi-national centers, libraries, universities and even within the US Embassy.

The idea of hosting this event, which was held at the US Embassy on February 1st, came from CAO Erica Thibault, who has demonstrated a lot of interest for the Guatemalan EducationUSA Advising Center and the promotion of our services. I was very fortunate that she, along with Nichole, our REAC, helped me to plan the activity. The invitations for the college counselors were managed by the Embassy, which helped to add prestige to the event and recognition of the EducationUSA center as affiliated with the US Embassy.

In my planning stage of the event, I had suggested that it would be nice to have a Consular Officer during this presentation to give information on student visas. Also, I prepared packages in beautiful bags that I got from the Instituto Guatemalteco-Americano that were left over from another conference. In the packet, I included the Study in the USA magazine, the four books from the If You Want To Study series, information bulletins for the TOEFL and SAT, and of course, a flyer containing the information about my office.

PAO David Young welcomed everyone and stated that this meeting was important for the Embassy because they are very interested in continuing to share the study opportunities available to Guatemalan students. He also presented me to the group as the main contact for providing information on study opportunities in the US and informed them of the services offered at my office.

Most of the counselors showed interest in the information we provided, however there were a few, particularly from prestigious Guatemalan bilingual schools, who seemed bored with the some of the basic information.. These counselors, all of them

Americans and very familiar with US higher education, only refer their students to my office when coming to take their TOEFL exams. During the questions and answers, they tried to impress the rest of the group and Erica saying that there were some good scholarship opportunities that have been offered by a few specific universities and asked me if I had heard about that. It felt as though these counselors somehow felt threatened that a non-American was presenting information to them about advising students. In fact, one of the counselors asked why there is a close relationship between the EducationUSA advising office and the US Embassy, and Erica Thibault, CAO, answered that they support us because we form part of the advising centers affiliated with the US Department of State to provide information on study opportunities in the US to the general public. The fact that we, as EducationUSA Advisers, have the support of the US government in terms of training and up-to-date information on changes and policy in US higher education means that we can serve as a resource for ALL counselors.

I responded to their questioning by explaining that the main reason for having all of the counselors at this meeting is to develop a close relationship and camaraderie among colleagues in the same profession. This was a great opportunity to meet them personally and I also added that I had included a list of websites offering scholarships in their bags. We collected their updated contact information and encouraged them to maintain contact with us to further strengthen educational advising on US higher education in Guatemala and exchange information that will be helpful for their students.

To sum this day up, I think it was a great activity, very productive and informative but most importantly it helped me to demonstrate to the college counselors that the US Embassy is supporting us and that they care about the image that we may have within our local communities. Also, this event allowed us to establish a new line of communication between the schools that previously did not seem at all interested in the services offered by our office.

The Parents Network

Rosa Rodríguez
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

This project is in its initial phase. The idea of creating "The Parents Network" arose as a result of a group of parents or individuals approaching the advising office looking for clarification and information about the educational institutions in higher education in the United States.

Some parents had been through different experiences, and made mistakes in the admission and registration process precisely be-

cause they had not received an adequate orientation. They were not aware that they could be helped in how to make the right decisions academically and financially. Other parents wanted to learn and investigate more about the educational system in the United States in order to contribute their knowledge to other parents along with the advising center.

The main objectives are:

1. Broaden the parents' knowledge of the educational system of the United States.
2. Allow parents to contribute in their child's decision on what university to choose based on their individual educational needs, financial status, among other important factors.

Below is the presentation given in Washington D.C. I hope this will be useful to other advising centers in order to enlarge our outreach system in partnership with the parents.

PARENTS NETWORK:

The U.S. system of higher education differs from what an international student is accustomed to in their native country. The types of exams administered, the academic calendar, and the grading system will seem unusual and overwhelming to students at first. Difficulties such as acclimating to new surroundings, new culture, new community, different weather can also be an "issue" to some students.

The Advising Centers plays an important role in assisting students and parents in making this transition, a main reason why all parties involved need to work together as a team.

In an effort to provide better services and to help students to identify educational opportunities in the United States, we develop the following guide after surveys and consultations with parents. This tool will assist parents in getting information from the educational institutions.

Some topics that parents are concerned with or, in many occasions, lack information on include:

- the familiarity of institutions in working with students from a foreign country;
- the integration of international students in campus and wider community living in order to gain a true "American experience";
- the assistance on immigration and academic and cultural awareness issues provided by university's support services;
- if the institution is geared towards students to pursue their degree as a top priority;
- information and publications regarding a wide variety of academic clubs, culture, performing arts, science, services opportunities, intercultural and cross culture groups, sports, and reli-

gious groups, among other topics;

·what part of the application universities and colleges depend on most when making a decision, for example, how important is the language proficiency and how will the university's goals and priorities affect an admission's decision about the student;

·accurate information about opportunities for financial assistance, such as: merit and talent awards, grants, student employment, and educational loans;

·an extremely important factor: information and all the necessary documentation about health services on campus and in the community; and

·whether or not your university/college is really open to the perspectives and values that foreign students bring to campuses.

I believe that a strong collaborative network will facilitate students' success. If we work together on some of the points mentioned above we will change the life of a foreign student. Being able to function in a different cultural-social environment is a valuable tool in today's world, one of the most important aspects of international education.

ACTIVITIES

·Outreach and presentations in bilingual schools. First, I talk to students as a group and after with the parents. The school guidance counselor helped organized the parents from the school.

·Meetings at the Office: For those parents that are in the process of sending their children to study abroad, always keep a mailing list so they can exchange emails address and phone numbers.

·Motivate the group to work together, exchange information and resources, to help one another.

·During meetings discuss the most relevant issues; provide parents with accurate and reliable information.

Mexico City's New Undergraduate Membership Program

Undergraduate Membership Program

Curtis Wilson

Mexico City, Mexico

With over 60,000 prospective student inquiries per year, giving special attention to each individual is difficult. The existing membership program had set aside hour-long sessions to guide the prospective students, at both the graduate and undergraduate level, through the process of applying and getting accepted to a U.S. university. However, devising a new plan for each member was not very time-efficient, nor was the program as complete possible.

In an effort to specialize advising for dedicated students who want to pursue undergraduate studies in the U.S., we at EducationUSA Mexico City have developed a more comprehensive, organized program to better meet their advising needs. We now offer memberships to students interested in a more personalized advising experience tailored to their specific needs and supporting them throughout the entire application process, from choosing schools to a pre-departure orientation. Adhering with the mission statement of EducationUSA, the objectives of the new undergraduate membership plan are the following:

- To demystify and facilitate the college selection and application processes by offering organized advising sessions and access to EducationUSA resources.
- To provide prepared, competent guidance, support and encouragement for each student throughout the entire application process while fostering an atmosphere of trust.
- To follow a model by which to serve all students while allowing space to attend to individual interests and needs.

This restructured undergraduate membership program provides a more organized outline for advisers to follow when assisting newly joined members. The organization allows the adviser to follow a series of steps covering all aspects of the application process for each member. The membership program, which is only initi-

ated after the student attends one of EducationUSA's weekly orientation sessions on U.S. higher education, includes four personal advising sessions and a fifth session dedicated to the personal essay. The newly devised program includes a timeline and checklist of topics to be discussed in each session, combined with worksheets and homework that follow the progression of the application process.

As an example, during the member's first advising session, which is designed to familiarize the student with the center as well as the adviser, the following topics are discussed:

1. Overview of center and resources available
2. Goals of each advising sessions
3. Student reflection
4. Financial planning
5. Complete forms for member file and complete profile in database.

With the tasks to be completed as follows:

- Consult USA Today Career Quest guide and/or read chapters in advising center books
- Complete Personal Assessment
- Read about desired field of study
- Create profile of ideal college (size, public/private, religious affiliation, gender of students, presence or absence of graduate schools) and program (major, freedom vs. prescribed structure in coursework) and preferences in terms of location (geographical region, urban/suburban/rural)
- Complete financial statement worksheet with parental participation.

Some students arrive to the office already at a more advanced stage than others. Within the outlined program is ample space for personalizing the program to each student. The emphasis is not placed on conforming the student to the outline, rather finding out the specific needs and preferences of the individual and molding the membership accordingly.

The whole package has turned out to be very helpful for both the students and the adviser, and it is offered at a very reasonable price. The minimal cost affords any prospective student the opportunity to become a member with fees covering the cost of materials as well as providing the center with an income generating opportunity. Our dedicated members have benefited from the program by receiving the organized support and comprehensive information they need to better their chances of admission to a U.S. university. As a result of implementing the program our advising center has enjoyed having a system to efficiently facilitate the advising process. Due to our positive experience, we would definitely encourage all advisers to consider the benefits for you and your students in employing the program.

USBT Reports

USBT: A Good Option

Silvia Pérez

Mexico City, Mexico

Have you been an Adviser for two years or more? If the answer is yes, don't miss the opportunity to apply for the United States Based Training Program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and administered by the College Board. One year ago I applied for the program and thankfully, was selected. The program consists of a three-week intensive training program that involves travel throughout selected regions in the U.S. Due to this experience, my life, both personal and professional, has changed.

The benefits of this program are tremendous. I learned so much about American values and customs, and I met advisers from eighteen different countries and networked with them. The program allowed me hands-on training in the following areas: technology, public speaking, and U.S. higher education. I was able to visit twelve institutions including public, private, community colleges, technical schools, and liberal arts colleges. I was able to speak directly with international student advisers, deans of different departments, admissions staff, professors, and of course, international students, some of whom are from Mexico and Latin America. I was able to show my colleagues our best initiative at the Educational Advising Center in Mexico City: the creative partnership group we started among the Public Affairs Section, the U.S. Commercial Service, USAID, the Fulbright Commission and the Institute of International Education.

For the final part of the training, I attended the NAFSA Bi-Regional Conference at Colorado Springs. Besides attending different workshops and seminars like "The Development of Intercultural Sensitivity", "Share the Love of International Education Access", and "Bridging the Great Divide: Partnership with EducationUSA Centers". I participated in the EducationUSA Country Fair where I was able to speak to 80 U.S. Representatives from 12 different states and provide them with information about EducationUSA in Mexico.

I am really grateful for having been able to participate in this training program as I gained many useful tools and ideas that will help me advise better and with more confidence. Some



Silvia is all smiles in her traditional Mexican outfit.

of the new ideas I would like to implement in the Advising Center are developing a Parent's Network (see article above, page 10), implementing a new concept of cultural evenings combined with our English conversation club, continuing to offer Student Counselor Workshops, and finding different ways to work with U.S. universities.

Words are not enough to describe all the wonderful experiences I received through this training, but please feel free to contact me if you want any additional information or details about the program.

I'll be happy to assist you in any way.



Rosa Rodríguez (far left, middle row) and Silvia Pérez (seated, far right) with their new



Rosa Rodriguez is looking good!

USBT Experience– 2005

Rosa Rodriguez

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Being part of the USBT Program 2005 was a unique and rewarding experience. I had the opportunity of meeting and learning from 19 other student advisers from around the world, visit some universities and colleges from the South of the United States, from Princeton, New Jersey and from Denver, Colorado.

I really enjoyed very much the Best Practice Presentations, I learned from my colleagues and we shared valuable information about our countries and services provide. I was very excited to make my presentation on the session: "Innovative Ways of Advising". The topic I presented was "Parents Network" (see article above, page ...).

During the USBT Program I learned creative new ways to serve higher education students in our region in the best possible manner. After participating in the program I am more aware of what student advising involves and I came back with new ideas and thoughts to organize, develop and put in practice.

I visited 10 universities and colleges. I was able to meet with representatives from those institutions who provided us with campus tours, introduced us to representatives from the admission office, international students, faculty members and students from our own countries.

Attending the NAFSA Conference in Colorado Spring was a great experience and a learning opportunity. I was very impressed with the level of organization, the planning and the excellent workshops topics. I attended nine workshops, including the presentations from my colleagues.

During the program we had a space for the Advising Centers Exhibition. We were able to provide information to 65 participants who came to the table; also pictures, posters about my country as well as flyers, brochures on the Dominican Republic educational system and the services provided by the Advising Center to the Dominican community.

In conclusion, I would like to implement the following new ideas: The American Corner and continue to develop the Parents Network

I would like to finish this report by saying that I am very grateful to all the sponsors who made possible this opportunity for professional training and personal development. In particular I want to thank Carol Blythe, Janine Farhat, The College Board staff, Deborah Hefferon, Nichole Johnson REAC for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, Dorothy Mora from the State Department, Laura Abreu, Director of Academic Affairs from the Dominican Republic American Embassy and the Instituto Cultural Dominicano Americano Executive Directors.



Time to say good-bye (and we have all just graduated!)

News in Education!!

Renewing America's Welcome, Student Visas Called "Top Priority"

Washington - The United States is working to renew its welcome to foreign visitors and is giving "top priority" to getting visas into the hands of prospective students, according to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Speaking at the State Department January 17, Rice announced with Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff a joint vision for secure borders and open doors in the information age, a three-part plan to welcome visitors to the United States without compromising security.

For the complete article on the U.S. State Department's website visit this link: <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/>

Senate Passes Amendment to Attract Foreign Students to U.S Universities

On October 27, the Senate unanimously approved an amendment to require the development of a national marketing strategy to attract international students to study in the United States. The amendment contains a key provision of the "American Competitiveness Through International Openness Now" (ACTION) bill, which requires the development of a national strategic marketing campaign to encourage international students to attend American institutions of higher education, and requires better cooperation among the Departments of Commerce, Education, Energy, Homeland Security, and State in facilitating international student access.

The text of the amendment, as reported in the Congressional Record, can be found on NAFSA: Association of International Educator's website at the following link:

http://www.nafsa.org/public_policy.sec_senate_passes_amendment

Latin American presence shrinks at U.S. colleges: Andres Oppenheimer

In a troublesome sign for the long-term future of U.S.-Latin American ties, students from India, China, South Korea and other Asian countries are enrolling at record numbers in U.S. universities, while the number of Latin American and Caribbean students is declining.

The new figures from Open Doors, show that India alone (80,000) has more undergraduate and graduate students on U.S. campuses than all 32 Latin American and Caribbean countries combined (68,000).

The trend does not bode well for the long-term future of U.S.-Latin American ties, because foreign students tend to become part of their nations' business, political or academic elites, experts say. In addition, it's a bad sign for Latin American countries' own future ability to compete with other emerging economies, they say.

This article, taken from the *Miami Herald* can be read in it's entirety at:

http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/columnists/andres_oppenheimer/13214377.htm

U.C. San Diego Launches Innovative Partnership With Mexico Four Major New Initiatives Highlight UCSD International Effort

In announcing a bold agenda for partnership and cooperation with Mexico, Marye Anne Fox, chancellor of the University of California, San Diego, today unveiled initiatives to improve the quality of life for citizens of the United States and Mexico.

"This partnership with Mexico represents vital collaboration, interdisciplinary excellence, and innovations that will benefit all of our citizens," said Chancellor Fox. "These new initiatives bring together leaders from education, business, government, non-profit organizations and civil society to address issues that deeply affect our health and welfare."

The entire article can be found at UCSD's website, visit the link:

<http://irps.ucsd.edu/about/051130.php>

One-Year Visiting Fellowships in International Studies

The Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University seeks several scholars and practitioners for one-year visiting fellowships beginning July 1, 2006. The fellowship includes a \$40,000 salary along with support in health care, travel, and research funds. Preference will be given to candidates who can make contributions to and across themes such as: the financing of terrorism, the role of media in international studies, cultural awareness training in the military, institutions and development, or global climate change. The successful candidate will be expected to teach one undergraduate course in his or her area of specialty and there is a possibility of renewing this fellowship. For further information, contact Deborah Healey on the university's website: <http://www.watsoninstitute.org>.

Improving Communication

Responding to Credential Evaluation Requests from US Colleges & Universities

As you know, we often receive emails from US college admissions representatives requesting that we verify the Ministry of Education recognition of an institution, high school or university in our country. In an effort to ensure that these representatives understand exactly who we are as Educational Advisers in the EducationUSA network, I'd like to provide you with a sample response to an email request. Please use this as a template email response for any inquiries you receive from US colleges and universities.

Dear (),

I saw your message about (**) and would be happy to answer your questions.

I am the Educational Adviser at the (city/country) EducationUSA Advising Center, part of the State Department's EducationUSA network. EducationUSA centers promote U.S. higher education around the world by offering accurate, comprehensive, objective, and timely information about educational opportunities in the United States and guidance to qualified individuals on how best to access those opportunities.

(ANSWER TO QUESTION HERE)

Please don't hesitate to contact me again if you need more detailed information or have questions about the (your country's) system of education, accreditation, or specific institutions. Also, you are welcome to direct your applicants to use the advising center, which has advisers who give individual consultations, a large reference library, and computers for test preparation and Internet searches.

Sincerely,

EducationUSA Adviser

(NAME)

(ADDRESS)

(EMAIL)

NOTE: You need only respond to inquiries from US colleges or universities. If you receive a request from an institution other than a university, such as from a credential evaluating company, they are asking you to do the work that they are getting paid to do on their own. In these cases, please forward the email to me so that I may handle it inquiry directly.

Enhancing Communications with your PAO and CAO

For continued support of EducationUSA advising and your prospective professional development activities, you are being asked to send more regular updates and reports to the Regional Educational Advising Coordinator and Public Affairs Officer.

MCAC Month-in-Preview

At the end of each month, I will send an email requesting submissions for the MCAC Month-in-Preview in which I will ask you to briefly describe any advising activities, events, or professional development programs for you or your advising center for the following month. I will compile and redistribute the list to the regional listserv and all the Embassies and Consulates in the region. Please use the following samples as the format for sending submissions to the Month-in-Preview:

· Tegucigalpa, Honduras (Oct. 27th):
The Educational Advising Center at the ICHI will host the first annual College Fair, inviting US colleges and universities to participate in the event which will be held at the Hotel Clarion in Tegucigalpa.

· Mexico City, Mexico (Oct. 27th):
The Educational Advising Center at the Institute of International Education will host a visit from Adam Goodman, the International Admissions Officer at Tufts University. Mr. Goodman will participate in the weekly introductory orientation on applying to colleges and universities in the US.

· San Salvador, El Salvador (Nov. 21st):
The Educational Advising Center at the Centro Cultural Salvadoreño is hosting a Scholarship Fair from 10am to 4pm; representatives from the Fulbright Program, Ford Foundation, Boll Foundation, FANTEL, CASS, and the Scholarship Unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will present their scholarship programs. Additionally, a Consular Officer will conduct a presentation on the process of applying for a student visa.

Post-Event Reporting

For any special activities (e.g., IEW or college fairs) please send reports to me and your PAO the following week. Please use the following sample as the format for sending reports to your PAO and REAC:

·On Monday, Nov. 14 and Tuesday, Nov. 15, the Educational Adviser together with Consular Officers made presentations to fifth and lower & upper sixth form students of three of the top high schools in Guyana (Queens College, The Bishops High School and Saint Stanislaus College). The presentations focused on a) higher education system in the U.S., b) a road map to follow if you want to study in the U.S.; and c) student visa procedures. A total of 365 students benefited from activity carried out during IEW 2005.

Advanced Advising

Take your advising to the next level! Be prepared the next time a student asks a particularly hard question. Don't be caught off guard when you get asked this:

Question:

I have an adult student from an English-speaking country that has been accepted into a nursing school in the Caribbean and is being asked to take the Test Of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam on the ground that the Embassy requires TOEFL results in order to apply for the F-1 visa for the second year of the program in the U.S. How can this be true if the student comes from an English-speaking country?

Answer:

There are specific requirements for health care workers to gain certification in order to apply for the F-1 student visa to participate in US-based training for their medical studies program.

Section 343 of Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) provides that, subject to section 212(r) of the Act, an alien who seeks to enter the United States for the purpose of performing labor as a health care worker, other than a physician, is inadmissible unless the alien presents a certificate from the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS), or an equivalent independent credentialing organization approved by the Attorney General in consultation with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), verifying that:

(1) The alien's education, training, license, and experience meet all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements for admission into the United States under the classification specified in the application; are comparable with that required for an American health care worker of the same type; are authentic; and, in the case of a license, unencumbered;

(2) The alien has the level of competence in oral and written English considered by the Secretary of HHS, in consultation with the Secretary of Education, to be appropriate for

health care work of the kind in which the alien will be engaged, as shown by an appropriate score on one or more nationally recognized, commercially available, standardized assessments of the applicant's ability to speak and write English; and

(3) If a majority of States licensing the profession in which the alien intends to work recognizes a test predicting an applicant's success on the profession's licensing or certification examination, the alien has passed such a test, or has passed such an examination.

The particular institution in this case is only provisionally accredited by the government of host country, is only in the planning stages of seeking accreditation from the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC, an equivalent independent credentialing organization approved by the Attorney General), which means that the Council of Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) most likely does not recognize the institution yet. This means that graduates from this particular institution will have to go through a more stringent process of certification. In this link to the USCIS website: <http://uscis.gov/lpbin/lpext.dll/inserts/fr/fr-90383/fr-94010/fr-95155?f=templates&fn=document-frame.htm> you'll find the information below about the English-language requirements for the health care worker certification for the US.

Question:

I just got my GRE scores back and I don't know if they're good or not. How can I get a table of GRE scales to interpret what these scores mean?

Answer:

There is an ETS flyer that can help with this called "Interpreting Your GRE Scores," it can be found at the following link:

<http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/GRE/pdf/01210.pdf>.

This flyer gives information on mean scores of students in different areas of the general test along with students' means from the subject tests as well.

Question:

If I am having troubles registering for the TOEFL or GRE General Test Online, is there a better way?

Answer:

Yes, in fact many students have encountered problems on the TOEFL webpage trying to register. According to ETS's (Educational Testing Service) TOEFL 2005-06 bulletin, the website: www.ets.org/registertoday.html is another option for registering. When problems arise registering, students have been able to register using this alternate website.

Announcements & Dates to Remember

Adviser Professional Development

Conference Travel Grant Selections:

Congratulations to the following advisers who were selected to participate in higher education conferences to represent EducationUSA:

- NAFSA Annual Conference (Montreal, Canada): **Michael Harris & Guillermo Vales**
- College Board 7th Annual Summer Institute (Georgetown, WA): **Celia Chaves**
- OACAC Summer Conference (Fort Worth, TX): **Leticia Rendon**
- NAFSA Regional Conference: **Joy Sandza & Mark Leyes**
- Also attending NAFSA: **Silvia Muñoz, Celia Chaves & Curtis Harris**

USBT / PAL Selections:

Congratulations to the following advisers who were selected to participate in the U.S. Based Training (USBT) program and Professional Development Leadership (PAL) program:

USBT Fall 2006 (October 27 to November 18)

- **Cheryl Licorish**, Barbados
- **Hilary Bynoe**, St. Lucia
- Alternate: **Etilvia Arjona**, Panama

USBT Spring 2007 (TBA)

- **Michael Harris**, Honduras

PAL 2006

- **Marta Carranza**, El Salvador

ETS sets TOEFL iBT launch date!

The Education Testing Services (ETS) has set March 25th, 2006, as the date to launch the new version of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in Mexico, Central America, and Caribbean. The new TOEFL Internet-based Test (iBT), administered via internet simultaneously in test centers worldwide, will eventually phase out the computer-based test by summer 2006 and will also include a new Speaking portion of the exam in order to better measure English language competency. Some of the benefits of the new, more widely recognized test include helping universities to better measure students' comprehension and fluency in English while providing a more uniform system worldwide.

GRE announces delayed release of iBT

ETS has also announced that they will hold off another year to release an internet-based version of the Graduate Requisite Exam (GRE). Taking no chances, the majority of graduate programs prefer to wait another year for the new GRE iBT in order to ensure a well-tested, reliable system for their students and administrators. Students and educators can expect an iBT version of the GRE no earlier than October 2007.

Quick Links

www.ets.org/registertoday.html : Registration for the TOEFL test or GRE General test online. It's quick, easy and convenient for all students.

www.oacac.com : Overseas Association for College Academic Counseling is the organization to join if you are involved with assisting international students as they make their transition to higher education.

www.ets.org/ecadvisor : ETS has created a new web site specifically for EducationUSA Advisers

www.iie.org/programs/react : The REAC site provides support to nearly 50 Educational Advising Centers throughout the region counseling Advisers in center management, tools for U.S. educational advising, opportunities for professional development, regional events and updates in advising related issues.



Curtis Wilson, the new intern in Mexico City contributing to this version of the REAC newsletter.

Curtis has enjoyed his time working along the EducationUSA and IIE staff as he gets to learn a lot from them while pursuing his seemingly illusive goals of becoming an international educator. Since finishing his social science and Spanish degrees in Costa Rica, this Minnesota boy went on to travel Central America from Panama to San Pedro Sula, Honduras, serve a year with a U.S. national service organization, Americorps, and now has been lucky enough to have his internship with EducationUSA/IIE extended a few more months to help great people and with more great projects.

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