

# IDACA

## Cape Town International Student Support Network

### NEWSLETTER JUNE 2018

Compiled by Shannon Dowdall of IDACA

Greetings to you all from a very cold and fortunately, very wet Cape Town winter which bodes very well for the summer of 2019.



All round, it has been a very successful semester. No “Day Zero” materialized when taps were to run dry, there were very few crime-related issues and no accidents and UCT has elected a new Vice-Chancellor to take over from Dr. Max Price who retires at the end of the month. Both UCT staff and students seem to be in general agreement that **V.C. Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng** is a good choice and we wish her well. The academic year started on schedule after the disruptions of last year and the examinations passed without incident.

Our students arrived in early February during a very hot and dry summer. Despite the media coverage of “Day Zero” and some anxiety about water management, the students adapted very well to the daily recommended 50 litres per

person for everything. The following comment from a student from Boston College sums up the general feedback from our students.

*“Although I did have to put in effort at the beginning to change my habits, water conservation has become routine and was ultimately an easy adjustment”.*

During the past two months of winter, there has been heavy and frequent rainfall. All indications are that with the continued focus on water conservation management by the people of Cape Town, higher dam levels and supplementary water sources like desalination plants becoming active, there should be no crisis in the summer of 2019.



Student associates Mufudzi, Sithabile, Tessa & Menzi

During the two weeks of arrivals and orientation to UCT and the city, students attended the IDACA welcome function to which we invited **Robert “Eli” Whitney, the Regional Security Officer** at the U.S. Consulate in Cape Town. He addressed the students on issues of safety and security. **Gail Symington**, the UCT academic advisor for UCEAP, was also invited to meet the students and provide some useful pre-registration information.



Robert “Eli” Whitney, the Regional Security Officer at the U.S. Consulate addressing IDACA students.

Academic registration and UCT’s IAPO orientation went smoothly. Many of the students took a few days off to travel up the Garden Route, explore the city, hike and enjoy the beaches before classes began.

In March, **Jordan Zilla**, the SSA co-ordinator from Princeton arrived to spend a few days in the city meeting up with her students from Princeton, visiting the UCT campus and the IAPO office. Shortly thereafter, the Princeton students left for the Eastern Cape on their research trip with Professor Francis Wilson, always a memorable and thought-provoking experience.

As always, many of the students volunteered to tutor through UCT’s SHAWCO outreach programmes and just this week, something new and exciting has emerged from the voluntary

work last July of **Govind Srivastav (UCLA SSA July 2017)**.

He has initiated an internship with a small stipend for IDACA students interested in working at The Carpenter Shop (TCS), an organization working with homeless people in the city centre. He wanted to encourage more IDACA volunteers not only to give something to the Cape Town community but to learn and develop useful skills for their futures. TCS and Govind have been working for the past few months on developing this with the proposal being to set up a clinic for STI testing and counselling on the premises, sourcing staff for it and also doing advocacy work for the Street People Forum. Free HIV testing is available but STI testing and counselling isn’t, so this would be beneficial as a service at TCS. In Govind’s words -

*“Volunteering at The Carpenter Shop was not only the most impactful and enriching part of my Cape Town experience but it was also insane fun. After coming back to the U.S. I realized that I wanted to share this with future IDACA students”.*

So thank you to Govind for this and we look forward to extending these volunteer experiences into areas of particular interest for some of the students.



IDACA students with The Carpenter Shop residents

Many of the students joined clubs and societies, the Mountain and Ski Club being one of the favourites.



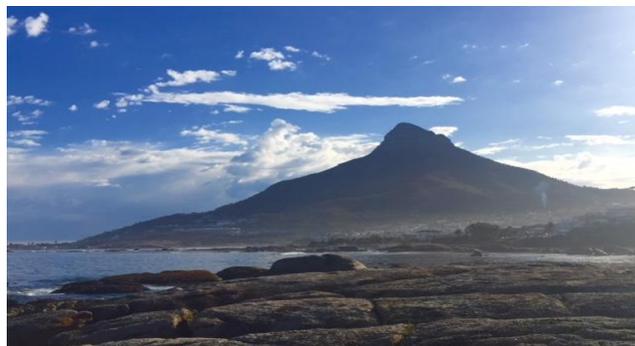
Samuel Lapkin (Princeton), Nair Meza (UCSB) and Amarra Daniels (Princeton)

**Amy Gately (Boston College)** played soccer, **Erica Munson (UCB)** and **Caffrey Lynch (UCB)** learned to sail and **Noelle Dohlin (UCSC)** was not only involved with SHAWCO work but joined the UCT Choir and sang in a wonderful performance at The Baxter Theatre last month with one of our IDACA student associates Jarrod Keuler.



During the short Easter vacation, most of the students travelled, exploring South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and further afield to Madagascar and Namibia. More than half the group had families and friends visit even during the current, cold winter. This year for the first time, students who travelled through Johannesburg commented on how much they enjoyed the vibrancy of the city, so this might well

be a direction worth following up in terms of service providers for the students who go there.

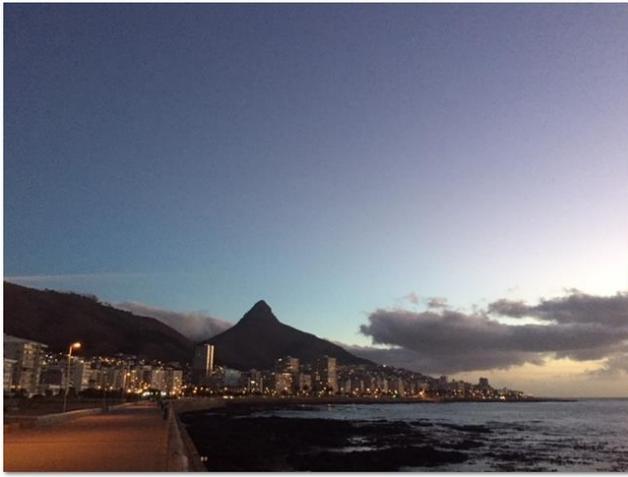


Culturally, the students went on trips to Robben Island, to “braais” in the townships, some learned to cook, they went to talks, lectures, the theatre, music festivals and **Isabel James (Princeton)** learned some Xhosa through a local organization (which is impressive as it wasn’t part of a UCT language course and was extra-curricular). Most of them visited the interesting and new Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art housed in old silos with amazing views and a spectacular concrete atrium designed by the famous U.K. architect Thomas Heatherwick.

We’d like to thank you as always for the assistance, patience and support and for sending us what was once again a wonderful group of students who embody the spirit and values of the SSA experience.



Jose Rubén Díaz Vásquez (Emory) and Sithabile Kuuya (student associate, UCT) at the IDACA farewell function



In conclusion, perhaps **Brycen Ulrich's (UCB)** comments offer a fresh and recent summing up.

*"In a word, my experience in Cape Town was mind-blowing. As an adventurer, I surfed and kite-boarded and explored a range of great locations, making friends from South Africa, Australia, the Netherlands, France and Norway to name a few.*

*My time at UCT was similarly stimulating and enjoyable.*

*As a Biology student, my courses encouraged critical and interdisciplinary thinking and my education was easily on a par with my education back home.*

*Initially I was taken off guard by the difficulty of my classes although I had been warned they were rigorous but I learned a number of important life-skills in my adjustment to a foreign place and living.*

*My advice to others is to engage heavily with the content of your classes and manage your time well. Travel, talk to new people, discuss important things and listen to different ideas. Befriend fellow South African students and international classmates.*

*Don't stay with cliques from your own country and from your home universities.*

*Keep an open mind and relish being out of your comfort zone every now and again."*

Best wishes

The IDACA Team

Isabella, Shannon, Menzi, Sitha, Mufudzi, Tessa  
and Jarrod



Shannon Dowdall & Isabella Scholtz at the US Consulate Independence Day Reception on June 20, 2018

