



IDACA

Cape Town International Student Support Network

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2019

Compiled by Shannon Dowdall of IDACA



UCT on the slopes of Table Mountain

Here we are, already at the close of a peaceful and successful semester with all but three of our IDACA students safely home in the U.S. Sam Abkin (UCSB), who enjoyed Cape Town so much, will be leaving Cape Town in mid-December after spending two semesters at UCT, Joey Corti (UCD), is still travelling with his father along the Garden Route and Nayeli Basulto (UCM) is currently playing soccer for UCT in Johannesburg.

Good news is that our Cape Town dams are 83% full after record rains this winter, so water restrictions will be considerably eased. Also, the semester was peaceful on campus with no disruptions to classes. Examinations were concluded successfully and the results should be available shortly. Security has been upgraded on and around the UCT campus in an effort to address general student concerns about gender-based violence in South Africa so all is well for the start of 2020.

Most of our students thought that the transition to Cape Town and to UCT was smooth despite arriving in the middle of a long and cold winter. They have been a happy, responsible and hard-working group and seemed very comfortable in their various houses and apartments close to campus. The group, with a few exceptions, travelled far less in Southern Africa than previous groups and spent a lot more of their free time exploring Cape Town and its immediate surrounds. They camped, hiked, went bouldering in the beautiful Cedarberg Mountain area, practised rock-climbing at an indoor facility, surfed and explored the diversity of food in the city, with an Ethiopian restaurant being one of their favourites.



Students at the IDACA welcome function: (L-R) Tonie Chase (Boston College), Nayeli Basulto (UCM), Sitabile Kuuya (Student Associate) and Joey Corti (UCD)

Nayeli Basulto (UCM), commented that what she loved about Cape Town was that she got to see animals around the city:

“Walking to school, I would see peacocks in the grounds of my apartment, Chacma Baboons when I went to beaches and African Penguins on the seashore. To destress from school work, I hiked on the three peaks round the city, the best for me being Lion’s Head at sunrise”. Many of the parents and even some grandparents visited the city and went on short safaris, mostly to the Kruger National Park.



Nayeli Basulto (UCM) with her coaches after the UCT women’s soccer team won the prestigious Coke Cup tournament on 10 October 2019.

We have always encouraged the incoming students to join societies and clubs at UCT as a means of making good local friends and the following three students provided ample evidence of this:

Nayeli Basulto (UCM) was selected to play for UCT’s First Team Women’s Soccer. Her team won the prestigious Coke Cup tournament involving 60 teams and is currently participating nationally in Johannesburg.

Through this involvement, Nayeli formed close friendships, was invited to stay at the home of one of her team members after exams and has been able to travel to Johannesburg with the team as part of the prize was monetary.

Nayeli commented that, “Playing soccer was a great way to travel and see different parts of the city of Cape Town as well as other parts of South Africa”.



Athlone Stadium (part of Soccer World Cup 2010) was the venue of the Coke Cup tournament finals

Jaqueline Gonzalez (UCD), said the following: *“The awesome time I spent in South Africa and what I learned about the country was largely defined by the friendships I made through my church which has a chapter at UCT”*. Ryan Parks (UCLA), commented that he didn’t know anyone in Cape Town so he had to step out of his comfort zone. *“I made friends in each of my classes and befriended someone who helped me tremendously with admin like signing up for tutorials, banking issues, buying text books etc. I rode trains to get to the beaches. The trains bought people from all over Cape Town together and I had some incredible conversations with people I’d never have met had I not tried the sometimes intimidating nature of the Cape Town train system”*. His train rides to beaches to surf were despite our cautioning students not to use trains!



As always, some of the students volunteered through SHAWCO, UCT's student outreach programme tutoring school-going students in disadvantaged schools. Tonie Chase (BC), was fortunate to get a placement volunteering at the Hope Exchange which offers services to the increasing number of homeless people in the city centre. Working there, as well as volunteering through SHAWCO, offers different perspectives and exposure to the disadvantaged people of Cape Town, away from the tourist hot spots of a city which once again this year was named by a British newspaper as "the most beautiful tourist destination in the world".



Ryan Parks (UCLA) with domestic worker Felicia Qutyelo

Ryan Parks (UCLA), Kris Olander (BC) and Brendan Delany (BC) who lived together in an apartment were incredibly responsive in their support of their domestic worker Felicia Qutyelo and her extended family in Khayelitsha (an informal settlement twenty five minutes from the UCT campus) after their shack was burned to the ground. They immediately took groceries to the family and helped out on the site. Ryan then set up a crowd funding appeal. On the day he left for the U.S., he was able to go to the bank with Felicia to deposit a substantial amount of money which will enable the family to refurbish the new shack with necessities. The family lost everything but the clothes they were wearing.

Their effort has made a very real difference to the life of this family and we thank him as well as the other IDACA students and their parents and friends who contributed to the fund.



Joey Corti (UCD) alongside his vegetable garden

Joey Corti (UCD), began growing vegetables in the small garden of his student house, a project we hope will continue in the New Year when incoming students will hopefully find the remains of his crop of granadillas, Cape gooseberries, spinach, tomatoes and herbs.

Caleb Norton (UCSC) continued the tradition of taking over the guitar which was left to IDACA students in 2017 by Cheryl Batac (UCLA).



IDACA farewell function: (L-R) Linnea Natale (UCSC) and Zimpande Kawanu (Student Associate)



(Clockwise from front) Zimpande Kawanu (Student Associate), Jaqueline Gonzalez (UCD), Jonathan Ng (Boston College) and Joey Corti (UCD) at the Coke Cup Soccer tournament

As always, the students attended the IDACA welcome dinner and farewell, the IDACA orientation as well as the UCT orientation which was informative as well as lots of fun with the wonderful African drumming and dancing session and good food. It's been gratifying to see the group cooking together, socializing between houses and working hard to maintain their grades.



IDACA farewell function: (L-R) Nisha Momin (Boston College), Katerina Stepalavich (Boston College), Samantha Abkin (UCSB) and Tonie Chase (Boston College)

After the murder off campus of a UCT student, national awareness campaigns, a march to parliament and vigils on campuses were held in the hopes of pressurizing government and relevant agencies into action to combat the very high levels of gender-based violence in the country. IDACA organized a discussion evening facilitated by our IDACA student associates. Attendance rate was high and student feedback was positive. They welcomed the opportunity to discuss

the issue and gain insight into the anger and outrage during the protest action which spread to the World Economic Forum which was held in Cape Town. One of the positive outcomes has been a visible increase in campus protection services both on the UCT campus as well as in the surrounding areas.

We'll be welcoming two new IDACA student associates in February –

Kitso Seti is a UCT post-graduate student in Political Science and Gareth Fee will be in his final year of a science degree in Marine Biology and is currently finishing his semester abroad at Wisconsin-Madison. Having been a SSA student himself and having been good friends with a number of our SSA students last semester, (through the Underwater Club at UCT) we believe that Gareth will have a good understanding of some of the challenges of a semester abroad and that Kitso will offer in-depth cultural and political perspectives on this complex and diverse country of ours.

Zimpande Kawanu, who has been with us for 2019 is applying for a doctoral programme in creative writing so will be leaving mid-year.



Zimpande Kawanu (Student Associate) with the students on a hike

Sharon Turner from UCT's International Office has retired and we shall miss her wisdom and experience.

Last week, we attended the 90th birthday of Ida Cooper, the founding member of Ida Cooper Associates. Ida was asked by Princeton to host students interested in the political changes in South Africa back in the late 80s and early 90s.



Ida Cooper on her 90th birthday

John Smelcer (Princeton), one of Ida Cooper's first semester abroad students in 1996 who now lives in Cape Town, attended the celebration with his wife who comes from Lesotho and their twins. It was so good to hear his account of the interesting times students enjoyed with Ida Cooper Associates as far back as the mid 1990s.



John Smelcer (Princeton alumnus) with wife, Dr Mpho Tlali and twins Keneoue and Mohale

Perhaps the following remarks made by Ryan Parks sum up the value of a semester abroad and embody the spirit of what it can be:

"I was born and raised in L.A. and go to UCLA so I yearned for the opportunity to explore and learn the ins and outs of a new city. My time in Cape Town was nothing short of spectacular. My time at UCT was enriching and formative. I am a philosophy major back home and my courses at UCT allowed me an entirely new understanding of certain issues which helped me to form more fully, well-rounded positions and opinions. My exploration of Cape Town, trips to Johannesburg, the Kruger National Park, the Garden Route and Uganda, all offered me unique experiences. Uganda revealed to me that a huge population of our world lives in unthinkable poverty and it was on this trip that I solidified my purpose on this earth which is to help those who are not as fortunate as myself. Overall, my time abroad filled me with gratitude for the life I'm living with its opportunity to travel across the world and live in a city for five months, to connect with new people and places and to learn about myself in the process"

The IDACA team wishes you all a peaceful holiday season and new Year, we thank you for your continued support and advice and most of all for the wonderful group of responsive young people that come our way through you.



Best wishes
The IDACA Team



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