



# IDACA

## Cape Town International Student Support Network

### NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2018

Compiled by Shannon Dowdall of IDACA

*Greetings to all of you from IDACA in Cape Town.*



Photo: Shannon Toliver (UCSB) and Menzi Ndhlovu (Student Associate)

Our SSA students have all left for the U.S. after a successful and happy semester at UCT and in Cape Town. Concern regarding the drought and water shortages early in the year has lifted after the good winter rainfall and water restrictions have been eased in the city. The students adapted very well to their

daily water allowances and will no doubt return home with an increased awareness of just how precious a resource it is. The UCT examinations went according to schedule and there was no student protest action on campus this year. Both staff and students welcomed the new Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng in July 2018. She seems to have the respect of students from across the political spectrum and believes that she will be able to connect with the whole university population which bodes well for next year. UCT's IAPO will be sending you a newsletter with an update on the water situation as well as some of the positive new policies which have been passed at UCT during the six months under her leadership.



Photo: Matthew Dea (UCD), Sean Webster (UCLA), Troy Fredericks (Boston College), Ekshika Patel (UCSB), Kelli Hamilton (UCLA)

Our students settled quickly in Cape Town and at UCT, starting with the IDACA welcome dinner and orientation and a few days later, the UCT orientation programme which has been slightly changed in format and which definitely eased the process of registration

and understanding of academic requirements at UCT. From our personal interactions with the students, most of them really enjoyed their courses, ranging from South African and African History to Environmental Sciences. They welcomed the engagement during classes and the broadening of their perspectives in their various fields. Some of them indicated that they found an increased workload in terms of the amount of reading involved in the Humanities courses and they worked hard to meet the challenges of achieving grades they wanted, given the different grading system at UCT. We wish them well for their examination results.



Photo: Shannon Dowdall

Many of them joined UCT societies and clubs as well as the voluntary student outreach project SHAWCO through which they tutored students at a primary and secondary school level. They always find this an enriching experience in that they are tutoring in disadvantaged schools in a different part of Cape Town from where they live and socialize. The UCT Mountain and Ski Club is always a popular club and many of the students hiked around Cape Town as well as further afield like the beautiful Cedarberg Mountains in the north-western part of the Cape. We encourage them to join as it is a way to meet local students and a safe way to hike and climb with experienced student hikers. A number of the students were very happy to have completed the Three Peaks around the city, Table Mountain, Lion's Head and the more challenging Devil's Peak. David Nguyen (UCSD) joined the UCT Choir and hopefully goes home with some proficiency in the very difficult Xhosa language which he was studying. Kelli Hamilton (UCLA) played

Squash for the UCT team. Eric Smith (UCSD) headed off straight after exams to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and then on to spend a few days relaxing in Zanzibar after the ascent. Although not a SSA student, Shannon Toliver (UCSB) was in Cape Town for a few weeks in June. She volunteered at the Rape Crisis Centre and joined up with our group during the orientation. To quote her, "Although my time in Cape Town was short, it was an invaluable experience. I have made life-long friends and will definitely be returning in the near future".



Photo: Shannon Toliver (UCSB)

Tia Rashke (BC Spring 2018) who stayed on after the end of her semester in June to do an internship with the Catholic Church representatives in our Parliament, introduced Shannon to the city and met up with the June arrival students at the welcome dinner. Tia not only attend parliamentary sessions and discussions but also volunteered at the Scalabrini Centre for Refugees in the city.

As always, the students travelled widely and adventurously during their short breaks and after exams. Kelli Hamilton made it through nine Southern, Central and Eastern African countries during her time here, including Rwanda, Kenya, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.



Photo: Kelli Hamilton

Many of the other students went to Namibia, Victoria Falls, Mozambique and Zambia. Johannesburg, from where many of the international flights depart, seems to be an increasingly popular stop-over with its cultural buzz, urban renewal in the old part of the city and apartheid museums.

Marlene Torres-Magana (UCSB), Caroline Graham (UCLA) Kelli Hamilton (UCLA) and Jazmine West (UCSD) interned at The Carpenter Shop in the city centre where they were involved in a project initiated by Govind Srivastav (UCLA SSA Fall 2017). The Carpenter Shop, a well- established centre in the city offers facilities for and services to the numerous homeless people in the area. IDACA students have been most welcome at the centre since they began volunteering there in 2017. Govind's project at the centre was a direct result of his time spent there which he found an enriching and essential part of his semester in Cape Town. He wanted future SSA students to continue some involvement not only for the personal enrichment from this type of voluntary work but because he wanted to give something back to the centre in terms of services, hence the development of the STI testing facilities which the four students were researching and developing. Both Govind and the director of the centre very much hope

that four new students will sign up in January 2019 and continue the work.



Photo (L-R): Marlene Torres-Magana (UCSB), Jazmine West (UCSD) and Kelli Hamilton (UCLA) at The Carpenter Shop

This semester was almost incident free with the exception of a few stolen phones and one lap-top, so perhaps a different approach to safety and security during our orientation has been fruitful. Amongst other things, we used actual examples of what had happened when previous students had been careless and negligent to highlight the need for vigilance.



Photo (L-R): Sienna Rohrer (UCLA), Caroline Graham (UCLA), - - , Tessa Chittenden (Student Associate)

The fall students were an independent, resourceful and responsible group and a pleasure to host!

A great many parents visited including some grandparents and the students seemed to have a good time with them paragliding over the beaches, climbing Table Mountain, exploring the restaurants, wineries, game farms and the historical and cultural sights like Robben Island. Our accommodation this semester was secure and there with no issues around safety and security in the houses or immediate vicinities.

The placements of students seemed to encourage happy living arrangements and lasting friendships.



Photo: Jazmine West (UCSD), Jennifer Goodman (Emory)

We thank you as always for your care and valuable assistance in preparing the students for a semester in Cape Town, advice while they are here, safety and security up-dates and Boston College for the very helpful online workshop on mental health.

The students who end up with us in Cape Town certainly make the most of the experience. They are open to exploring and adapting to a complex and different environment and take their studies seriously.



Photo: farewell function

The spirit of the SSA experience is clearly summed up in the words of Ekshika Patel (UCSB) and Kelli Hamilton (UCLA):

*“Studying abroad in Cape Town was the best thing I’ve ever done. Moving to a country where you don’t know*

*a soul and making a life for yourself urges personal growth and a new perspective on the world. I discovered many things: how to travel, how to befriend different kinds of people, how to communicate with someone when you don’t speak the same language, the three kinds of Xhosa clicks the deliciousness of milk tart, braaied meat and chakalaka.*

*The key to having a fulfilling time abroad is simple: say yes to new experiences and welcome differences with an open mind! From the elephants in Botswana to the horsemen of Lesotho to the never ending sand dunes of Namibia, the continent is beautiful beyond words. The people are even more beautiful.*

*Seven countries, 20 flights and four (expensive) visas later, I’m leaving Africa with a heavy heart and a lighter spirit”. (Ekshika Patel)*



Photo: farewell function

*“Studying abroad in Cape Town has been one of the most incredible experiences of my life. I had so many wonderful experiences in the past few months that I cannot narrow them down. Right now, I am thinking of the UCT Squash Team Formal, horse-back riding on the beach, white-water rafting, sky-diving in Namibia on my twenty-first birthday, having my first-ever South African braai and going to Clifton Beach with the ocean next to the mountains.*

*I travelled through nine countries, sometimes alone on local buses, something I never imagined I would do.*

*Closing the door to my Grotto Rd house for the final time brought a wave of emotions but I’m not sad, I know I’ll be back”. (Kelli Hamilton)*



Photo: Kelli Hamilton

One of our IDACA SSA students, Lauri Label (UCLA Fall 2016), has very recently returned to South Africa and is teaching in a school in the village of Ingwavuma in northern Kwa-Zulu Natal near the border with Swaziland. She will have a short break in Cape Town and is keen to meet up with our January intake group to talk about her experiences not only as a SSA student in Cape Town but also about her work with the Peace Corps and living and teaching in this remote part of South Africa.



Photo: Kelli Hamilton

2018 seems to have rushed by in a flurry of change and turbulence across the globe.

We send our warmest wishes to you all for a peaceful holiday period and look forward to the arrival of our new group in late January.

It will be an interesting time for them as we hold elections in April!



Photo: IDACA Student Associates (Mufudzi, Sithabile, Tessa, Jarrod and Menzi)



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