



# IDACA

## Cape Town International Student Support Network

### NEWSLETTER JULY 2019

Compiled by Shannon Dowdall of IDACA

Belated greetings and some news about the successful first semester 2019 at UCT in Cape Town.



The students arrived during a beautiful and hot summer. The water restrictions in the city were eased and the semester under the leadership of the new Vice-Chancellor, Dr Mamokgethi Phakeng, was peaceful.

The group involved themselves fully, academically, socially, culturally, in outdoor clubs and in voluntary work. They also travelled widely.



Vice-Chancellor, Dr Mamokgethi Phakeng

Of particular note, was a small group who volunteered at The Hope Exchange, a shelter for homeless people in the city centre formally known as The Carpenter Shop. IDACA students have been volunteering there for a number of years but continued in a more structured way after Govind Srivastav (UCLA SSA '17) initiated a more formal internship there after he had left.



“The Hope Exchange, formally known as The Carpenter Shop, is a support organization offering skills training, second phase rehabilitation (for homeless people) and welfare services to the homeless and destitute in the heart of the city of Cape Town.

The organization, founded in 1841, assists trainees to reintegrate into society and reunite with families where possible. Additional services include the development of a CV, job-seeking skills, social grant applications and life-skills (including job readiness training).



L-R: Aliza Newman (UCSB) and Elizabeth Lawton (BC) at the locker unveiling

Some temporary accommodation is offered and “drop-in” ablutions and laundry facilities are offered. This year, projects that started in 2017 with IDACA SSA student volunteers from UCT continued. **Liz Lawton (Boston College), Aliza Newman (UCSB), Olivia Sorenson (Boston College) and Elena Hauser (UCB)** creatively applied themselves to interviewing, planning, fundraising for and eventually launching a medical locker facility for clients at the centre.



L-R: Olivia Sorenson (BC) and Elena Hausser (UCB) with Ian Veary of The Hope Exchange at the unveiling of the lockers.

The clients are able to store their medication, clinic cards, IDs and medical schedules safely. The locker system also provides them with a water bottle and snack to assist with taking their medication. The clients have access to a social care professional to

speak to regarding their immediate needs. This new facility launched in May this year, frees up the clients to focus on improving their situations instead of worrying about the safety of their medication on the streets.

A number of students once again volunteered to tutor junior high school students through UCT’s SHAWCO student outreach programme. Here, mention should be made of **Nina Arcot (Princeton)**, who received a certificate for her commitment to the project.



Camps Bay, Cape Town

Once again, the students seemed to engage fully in their classes, many of them with a focus on Africa politics, history, economics and culture. The students joined clubs and societies, with the Mountain and Ski Club, the Underwater Club and Surf Club being popular this semester. These clubs offer well-organized trips outside Cape Town as well as the opportunity to socialize with local students through these shared activities. A number of the students obtained their underwater diving certification while here and participated in organized dives along the coastline.



Along the Garden Route

**Kathryn Mannle (BC), Zoe Zaleski (UCSB) and Elena Hauser (UCB)** spent some post-examination time traveling to a game farm owned by the parents of a local friend at UCT. They then made a diving trip to the beautiful Sodwana coastal reserve in Northern Kwa-Zulu Natal with The Underwater Club and travelled on to Mozambique.

The group travelled widely in Southern Africa especially to Zimbabwe and Zambia spending time at Victoria Falls as well as in the Western Cape, from camping in the beautiful Cedarberg Mountains to the Garden Route on the east coast. A great many parents visited them in Cape Town, often going on to the Kruger National Park for game viewing. **Tim Summers (UCSC)** went as far as the Seychelles Islands.



Welcome function 1<sup>st</sup> semester 2019

During the welcome evening, we invited an officer from our closest police station to talk to the students about safety and security. Having worked this beat for decades, Warrant Officer Sisam is familiar with the key issues students need to know. We would like to think that their responsible behaviour this semester and that only two phones were stolen had something to do with his personal address to them on their second night in Cape Town. Perhaps, they were also a particularly mature, street-wise and responsible group who heeded the constant reminders to be vigilant!

Guests at the welcome dinner in February also included two **Princeton students, Anna Griffith and Mary Suave (first semester 2018)** who happened to be visiting the city for research purposes. It's always a pleasure to meet up with past SSA students and they always have insider advice to offer incoming students.



Welcome function 1<sup>st</sup> semester 2019. L-R: Nina Arcot (Princeton), Eliza Love (Birmingham-Southern College), Zoe D'Angelo (UCB), Mufudzi Nhamoinesu (student associate)

Another previous SSA student to visit Cape Town was **Lauri Label (UCLA second semester 2016)** who after graduation in California, volunteered for the Peace Corps and was placed in a small village on the border of Swaziland and northern Kwa-Zulu Natal.



L-R: Lauri Label (UCLA 2<sup>nd</sup> semester 2016) from the Peace Corps & friend

While on a short visit back to Cape Town, we organized a small supper and discussion evening with her for any of the current students interested in hearing more about her experiences. She is teaching English and Mathematics, communicates in Zulu with her junior high school students and lives in a small rondavel (hut) with no running water.

Her only means of transport is by local bus and electricity and the internet are very intermittent in her village. Her insight into the way of life in the village and her experiences there are not only interesting but reveal much about the resilience, maturity, independence and generosity (spirit of ubuntu) she is developing. She has kept up friendships made in 2017 with local students in the city and is considering returning to UCT for post-graduate studies after her stint with the Peace Corps.

A tradition for IDACA students was initiated in 2017 by **Cheryl Anne Batac (UCLA '17)**. While in Cape Town, she missed playing a guitar so bought one and left it here to be passed on to another guitar – playing student, leaving a letter to be handed over too.

*“This guitar was a channel for so many feelings when words couldn’t express a complexity of emotions. It also brought people so much joy and happiness especially during home jam sessions. I hope it helps you to navigate the beautiful mother city and that the joy and memories we’ve made here are passed along to the next group of students”.*

Since then, **Brycen Ulrich (UCB '18)**, **Fiona Sereboff (UCSC '18)** and **Ginger Perez (UCI '19)** have kept up the music.



Ginger Perez (UCI) with her banjo

**Ginger Perez** in particular, became very involved in acoustic music in the city this last semester performing gigs in clubs. She also bought a banjo while here to add to the music group she played with and sang for in Cape Town.



UCT at the foot of Table Mountain

Personal growth, exposure to different ways of living in the world, academic challenges, lasting friendships and exploration of the natural and urban landscape on this tip of Africa seemed to be the norm for this group and we enjoyed getting to know them.



L-R: Ben Yap & Jacob Berman (1<sup>st</sup> semester 2019), with a visit by Mary Suave and Anna Griffiths (1<sup>st</sup> semester 2018) all from Princeton

To sum up the benefits of a semester abroad, we include a short piece from **Kendall Fitzgerald (UCB)** who made the most of her experiences here.

*“My time spent in Cape Town has been the highlight of my life. I stayed in a wonderful house with other American and International students who have become family to me, bonded by our memories together from travelling up the Garden Route to camping in the Cederberg Mountains and First Thursdays in the city.*

*Thanks to this little family and the IDACA programme, I always felt I had a safe home base.*

*Cape Town offered endless exploration every weekend. UCT's campus nestled below the mountain must truly be the most beautiful campus in the world.*

*The courses offered were interesting and my classes offered a sense of camaraderie which helped me to befriend South African students. I strengthened these bonds by joining clubs like the Underwater Club, the Mountain and Ski Club and the Birding Club. These clubs and the passion of the members have inspired me to bring new ideas to my clubs back at home.*

*The friends and the memories I have made in these five months have taught me that shared experiences should be valued more than we think and just how many of these experiences exist every day".*

After her examinations, Kendall travelled to Zimbabwe where she interned at the Museum of Bulawayo, and then returned to Cape Town where she interned at the Iziko Museum in the city.



We welcomed the second semester 2019 IDACA students to Cape Town on July 8, this time during a Cape winter at its coldest and wettest. They enjoyed the orientation week at UCT which included a wonderful group African drumming session in between all the serious information sessions, they had a chance to explore a little of the city, hike on the mountain above UCT and settle into their accommodation before classes started last week.



US Consulate Cape Town, commemoration of the 243<sup>rd</sup> Independence Day of the USA & 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Apollo moon landing

We thank you as always for your assistance and ongoing support and for the preparation the students receive pre-departure.

Warmest wishes.

The IDACA team in Cape Town.



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