



(L-R): JUNG HWA KIM '07 AND LINDSAY N. WEYAND (DEC.) '05

A Global Perspective

Fifty international students from 23 different countries around the world attend Canisius. As these foreign friends become accustomed to life in America, they also help enrich the campus experience for all.

Lindsay N. Weyand has traveled to two continents in the past year. Most recently, the December 2005 graduate spent Christmas break in South America as a guest of **Jung Hwa Kim '07** (or 'Kim,' as her friends call her), an international student from Arica, Chile. The pair also toured Europe together in spring 2005. They met when Weyand transferred to Canisius in her junior year.

"I decided I wanted to live on campus and there was room in Campion Hall," she says. "At the time, I had no idea it was the international house."

But that wasn't Weyand's only surprise. She never expected to form a close friendship with Kim, travel with her to London, Rome, Dortmund and Amsterdam, and spend a month in Chile with Kim and her family.

"I would not have had the curiosity to go to Europe or South America if I hadn't met Kim," says Weyand, a communication studies major.

"Kim expanded my outlook. She is one of the most interesting people I have ever met."

Eager to see as much of the world as possible, Kim came to the United States as a high school exchange student. She returned to the U.S. to attend Canisius and studied for one semester in London through the college's Study Abroad Program. Kim says her parents always encouraged their children to see the world and learn about different cultures.

"Even after we moved to Chile, they sent us back to Korea so we would know the culture and speak the language," says Kim. The international business major now speaks three languages and has been to four continents in her short lifetime. Kim is also one of 50 international students from 23 countries currently studying at Canisius.

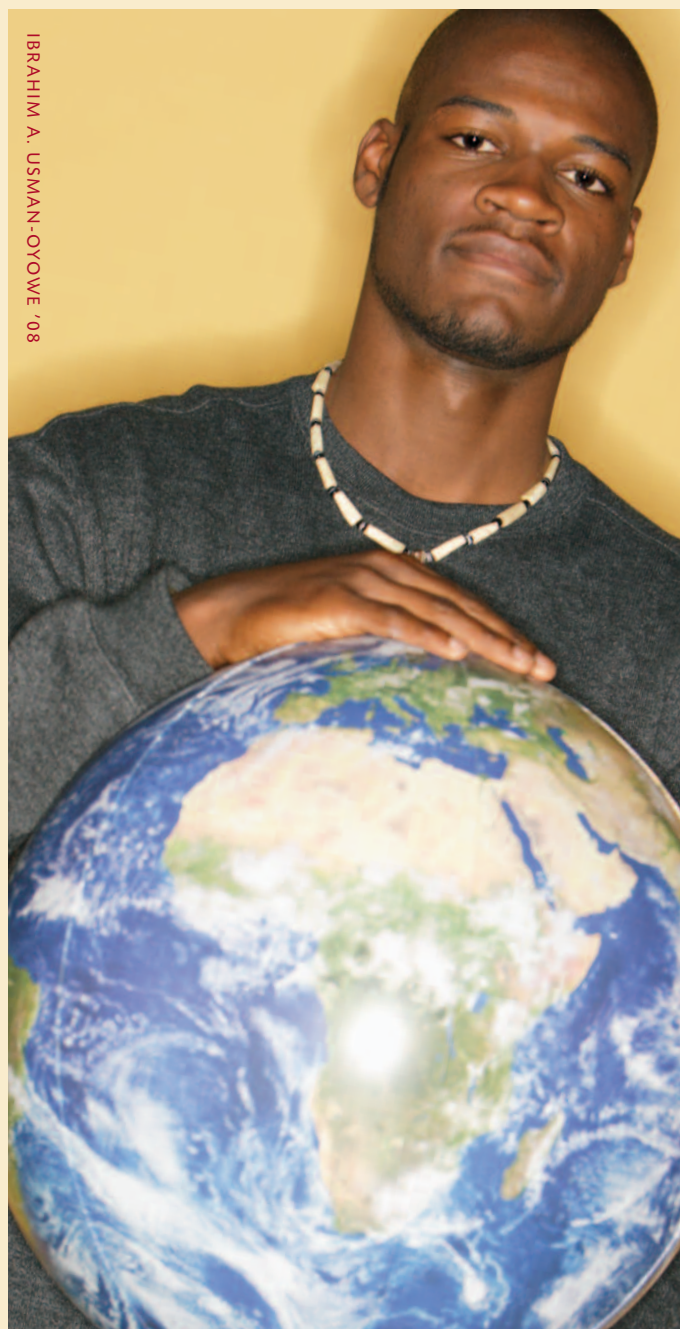
"We have international students from as far away as Nigeria, Australia and Bangladesh," says Esther Northman, director of international student programs at Canisius.

Some come to Canisius through exchange programs. Canisius currently partners with eight schools. A dozen more international students attend Canisius through its partnership with Japan's Sakae Institute. The rest find their way through other sources: a Buffalo connection, family members in the States or word of mouth from friends who studied here. Most recently, Canisius men's soccer attracted two students: one from Ireland and another from Germany. But no matter where they call home, international students are eager to study at Canisius because of the quality of its university-level education.

"Everyone in the world, especially in Africa, believes that America is the land of opportunity," says **Ibrahim A. Usman-Oyowe '08**. He attended a Jesuit high school in Nigeria and chose Canisius at the recommendation of Rev. Patrick Ryan, S.J., his high school president and a former classmate of Canisius President Rev. Vincent M. Cooke, S.J.

A biology major, Usman-Oyowe plans to attend medical school in America and then return to Africa. Like many international students, he initially found the language barrier to be his greatest challenge. But there were cultural differences, as well.

"When I meet Americans, they are very outspoken," he observes. "You can pick up a conversation and ask a lot of questions right away." Not so with Nigerians, he says. "We want to know more about a person before we actually open up. But, when we do open up, we really open up."



Another cause for adaptation: the Buffalo weather.

“A man at the embassy told me to bring a big coat,” recalls **Firis Al Karaki (December) '05 MBA** from Amman, Jordan. *“When I arrived, I found out why.”* Al Karaki says it snows only one or two days a year in Jordan. “Nothing like Buffalo,” he laughs. But, with the help of his new American friends, Al Karaki learned to embrace Buffalo’s winter. He even went skiing.

Many international students also embrace the food. “Pizza and fries are now my favorites,” adds Al Karaki.

Not surprisingly, international students also face many of the traditional college student problems, such as homesickness. However, from the moment international students arrive in Buffalo, Northman and her staff in the International Student Programs Office work to ensure that they feel welcome.

“We greet each student at the airport and treat them to a pizza dinner when they arrive on campus,” she says. The international students then participate in a week-long orientation that includes a tour of the campus, a trip to the grocery store and local mall, and sightseeing, with a visit to Niagara Falls as the highlight. “During orientation, the students not only get to know my staff and me, they get to know one another and develop a support system,” says Northman.

Part of their support system is a host family. Each international student is offered the opportunity to be paired with a host family from the Canisius community, who includes international students at dinners and holiday gatherings. But, Northman says, most families do much, much more.

David J. Snyder, PhD, associate professor of management/marketing, and his family have hosted international students since he came to the college in 1992. In addition to traditional outings, the Snyders invite their host students on family vacations.

Over the years, the Snyders have taken international students to Florida, California and regularly take students to Montreal and Toronto. “It’s great to provide them with opportunities to see more of the country and Canada while they are here,” says Snyder

Diana (Dede) M. Johnson, assistant to the Peter Canisius Distinguished Professor, says the host family experience has been of equal benefit to her family. One memorable experience was in fall 2001 when the Johnsons hosted three students: Loredana Caruso from Italy, Yoshihiro Sawayama from Japan and Waseem Mango from Jordan.

After the events of September 11, Mango and Johnson’s two sons stood by each other during that difficult time. Mango went to the Johnson’s church and talked to the Sunday school class about what it means to be a Muslim. And the Johnson boys attended Siblings’ Weekend at the college at Mango’s side.

Then in 2002, when Caruso and Mango graduated, Johnson hosted a graduation party for them. “Our home was filled with Loredana’s family speaking Italian and Waseem’s family speaking Arabic,” she says. It was just wonderful to have everyone together.”

Northman notes, “It is very important that our international students spend as much time as possible with Americans and especially American students.”

Campion Hall, home to 24 international students and 24 American students, opened in August 2003 to provide an environment where international and American students could live and learn together. The residents participate in social and educational activities, which include ethnic dinners and speakers that address cultural and world events.

Usman-Oyowe applied to be a resident assistant (RA) in Campion Hall so he could share what he learned about American culture with other international students and encourage them to spend time with American students. He also served on a committee to help plan International Fest, one of the college’s most popular events. The annual celebration includes an international buffet, dance and interactive activities.

Jung Hwa Kim is also committed to bringing international and American students together. She serves as co-president of Global Horizons. “The club organizes social outings like sporting events, movies and going out for coffee,” she explains.

“Our international students add to the diversity of our campus and allow our students and our community to be introduced to so many different cultures,” says Northman. “Learning about different cultures through our students is my favorite part of the job.”

Lindsay Weyand and Jung Hwa Kim couldn’t agree more.

“We were able to spend time in each other’s country, meet each other’s family and learn about one another’s culture first-hand,” says Weyand.

But most important, they say, is that their Canisius experience has formed a friendship that will last a lifetime.



Canisius College partners with eight exchange schools throughout the world. They are:

- The Catholic University of Lille – France
- University of Oviedo – Spain
- London Metropolitan University – England
- University of Dortmund – Germany
- University of Antwerp – Belgium
- Universidad Michoacana of Morelia – Mexico
- Uppsala University – Sweden
- Sophia University – Tokyo, Japan



International
Fest
March 3, 2006



LAST SPRING, THE CANISIUS COLLEGE CENTER FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDED **DEBRA INSTONE NOONAN, PHD**, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY, A TEACHING/LEARNING INCENTIVE GRANT. INSTONE USED THE GRANT TO TRAVEL TO CHINA TO TEACH FOR FOUR WEEKS.

INSTONE KNEW HER EXPERIENCE IN THIS FOREIGN LAND WOULD BE MEMORABLE, BOTH PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY. WHAT SHE DID NOT KNOW WAS THAT THE EXPERIENCE WOULD FUNDAMENTALLY ALTER THE CONTENT OF THE MATERIAL SHE PRESENTS IN HER COURSEWORK, AS WELL AS HER TEACHING STYLE AND ABILITY TO MENTOR STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM.

Another Global Perspective

BY DEBRA INSTONE NOONAN, PHD

In summer 2005, I traveled to China to teach conversational English to a class of 26 teenagers. With my 15-year old daughter as my teaching assistant, I spent four weeks working in the city of Zhuji, a manufacturing town roughly the size of Buffalo. Fortunately for us, many of the vestiges of traditional culture and lifestyle were still evident despite the ubiquitous soviet block-style apartment buildings of the '70s and the gleaming new high-tech factories of the '90s.

Every morning women with wooden mallets pounded their laundry on the rivers edge. Tai Chi and Fan dances were practiced in city parks. Farmers pedaled or carted their produce, livestock and fish to market. Barbers and shoeshine girls pulled their chairs onto sidewalks to wait for business. And shopkeepers sat on wooden stumps outside their stores eating, playing cards and passing the time with their neighbors and friends.

Teaching English in China is big business these days. Native English speakers are a valued commodity and language schools that feature Australian, British and American teachers are everywhere. In school, English is a required subject but because all testing is of the paper and pencil variety, the ability to understand and speak is very limited. Although our students were able to read and write at a sixth grade level, many were unable to pronounce basic words or understand simple verbal requests. I understood their difficulties, for the sounds of Chinese were as foreign to my ear as English was to theirs. I never mastered the names of my students and am still unable to distinguish between the four tones that render the same word with different meanings.

In the classroom, foreign teachers face an interesting set of challenges beyond the sounds and mechanics of the English language. The Chinese educational system is founded on Confucian respect for authority with the teacher as knowledge-giver and the student as rote learner. Independent or creative thinking is not encouraged and questions like "What do you think" are routinely met with polite stares as students wait for you to tell them what they are to think. The typical Chinese student is uncomfortable with the open atmosphere of questions, discussions, group work, disagreement, compromise, and above all, participation, which is the hallmark of college classes at Canisius. Getting students to think "outside the box" or converse spontaneously required creativity and the creation of

a safe atmosphere in which students felt comfortable making mistakes.

Communication was often a challenge that had nothing to do with language at all. For example, I was often the last to know of schedule, location or enrollment changes. On occasion, I even showed up to find the room empty and class cancelled. Despite several polite and carefully crafted inquiries, it was nearly impossible to determine what was happening behind the scenes as every question was met with a polite but logically impossible explanation. Call this experience *Lessons in Patience and Communications 101*. Because it is difficult for a Chinese person to tell someone of higher status or greater importance something they may not want to hear – like class is cancelled – the response to a direct question is often vague and evasive. It is not intended as a lie but rather as a way of preventing potentially unpleasant information from entering the conversation. In short, transparency and open communications are a Western phenomena and learning to read between the lines is a Chinese art.

Deciphering embedded messages was particularly difficult when it came to a standard clause in my teaching contract that stipulated I refrain from discussing politics. Prior to my departure I had been told to avoid anything that might be construed as propaganda, including the Canisius business card with its prominent Christian cross. Now I was faced with deciding how to answer student questions about everything from race relations in America to Mao's place in history. It was sometimes unnerving to know my answers were probably being reported back to authorities by the delightful government relations intern assigned to help out in my class. A member of the highly selective communist party at her university, she was instrumental in helping me bridge the communication and culture gap that separated me from my students. I can only hope her translations of our politically delicate conversations were accurate.

As everyone now knows, China is a nation in transition and under construction. Old buildings, roads and traditions are rapidly being replaced with skyscrapers, highways and consumerism. I am glad I was there before the transformation was complete. I went as a teacher but I learned far more than I could ever have imagined.