President Wu Se-hwa (吳思華) held a group trip to Russia and Estonia from March 28 to April 8, in hopes of gaining three partner schools for National Chengchi University (NCCU). The aim of the ten-day trip was to visit our partner schools in Russia and Estonia, and in the process, renew current agreements and form new partnerships.

The new partner schools included Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Finance University under the Government of the Russian Federation, and Saint-Petersburg State University of Economics and Finance. Before the trip, NCCU already had four partners in Russia: the Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow State Linguistic University, Moscow City Pedagogical University, and St. Petersburg University. With the addition of three new partners, NCCU will have seven partner schools in total. Ms. Caroline Tsai, international coordinator at the Office of International Cooperation (OIC) said NCCU has a number of exchange students in Russia, especially from the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature (斯拉夫語文學系).

The members of group trip were President Wu Se-hwa, Dean of College of Foreign Languages Prof Yu Nai-ming (呂乃明), Dean of Office of International Cooperation Prof. Chen Shu-heng (陳樹衡) and Former Dean and Professor of Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures Prof. Sung Yun-sen (宋雲森). Wu Se-hwa also visited Tallinn University in Estonia. Tallinn University and NCCU signed the partner school agreement last year. Tallinn University has two students in NCCU now while none of NCCU students are currently studying there.

With hopes to improve the relationship between the two schools, Tallinn University President Tiit Land will come to NCCU to introduce Tallinn University to Taiwanese students in May this year. NCCU and Russkiy Mir Foundation (俄羅斯世界基金會) have decided to cooperate together and launch a Russian Center in NCCU in November. Russkiy Mir Foundation has over 82 Russian Centers around the world. In Asia, there is one in Japan, three in Korea and six in Mainland China. After over a year of consultations between Department of Slavic Languages and Literature and Russkiy Mir Foundation, it was finally confirmed during the President’s trip to Russia. The NCCU Russian Center will be the first supported by the foundation to promote Russian cultures and languages in Taiwan.
OIC recruits students from Thailand

STORY
BY Jennifer Chou
PHOTO BY OIC

While students in National Chengchi University (NCCU) enjoyed the first week of April as spring break in Taiwan, our Office of International Cooperation (OIC) was busy with work in Thailand. OIC representatives, led by OIC Deputy Dean Patricia Che (車蓓群), had more than one objective to reach. In accordance with the Ministry of Education’s policy, the OIC’s top priority was student recruitment during the first few days of the trip. From April 4 to 6, the representatives also participated in the 7th annual Asia-Pacific Association for International Education (APAIE) Conference and Exhibition.

OIC visited a total of six institutions in Bangkok and had the opportunity to give presentations in four of them to promote NCCU for student recruitment. Out of the four, students from two—National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) and Bangkok University—expressed great enthusiasm toward studying at NCCU. The OIC’s presentation at NIDA was one among the many that drew the largest audience. In Bangkok University, Prof. Che was even able to conduct the entire presentation in Chinese because many of the listeners were students Chinese majors.

Most of questions students often asked were especially concerned about scholarships. Other than studying for a degree or applying for exchange, the students were interested in learning about NCCU’s International Summer School program as well. The students of NIDA, an institute which only provides graduate-level education and above, showed goal-oriented responses and wished to understand more about the strengths of NCCU’s studies. For example, they were interested in the English courses that NCCU offers.

Shifting its primary focus of increasing the quantity of partner schools from the preceding years, OIC concentrated on enhancing the quality of our cooperation with them. On the second night of the exhibition, “Taiwan night,” a dinner party, was hosted by Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Thailand. It was a chance for all the universities of Taiwan to invite partner schools for deeper connection as well as a great opportunity to network with other university representatives. OIC invited representatives from Nihon University and University of Liège.

OIC has successfully accomplished yet another task of international cooperation. Not only have they caught up with our partners during APAIE this year, but they have also met with potential students to study in NCCU. With the tremendous effort the OIC has put forth, we can start looking forward to the enrollment of Thailand students as well as more overseas study-abroad possibilities for NCCU students in the near future!

During the meeting with delegates from University of Copenhagen, Ms. Kelly Wang once again stresses the strengths of NCCU, especially its College of Social Sciences that best matches the feature of their institution. Subsequent to their visit to NCCU in March, NCCU aspires to build partnership with University of Copenhagen.

Students majoring in Chinese from Bangkok University are interested in coming to study at NCCU after Prof. Che’s detailed presentation in Chinese to them. After the meeting, students stay longer to ask questions about how to apply as an exchange student.
International and local students visit the National Palace Museum

Despite the very bad weather on Saturday, 14th of March, NCCU international and local students still visited the National Palace Museum (國立故宮博物館) as part of their English Program in Chinese Culture course syllabus. This is one of the special elective undergraduate level courses that NCCU offers to the students in order for them to better understand Chinese culture and society. Although the courses are offered in English and foreign students have priority over these kinds of courses, many Taiwanese students will also decide to take the classes. After some weeks of planning and coordinating, Professor Tsay (蔡明月) finally had the opportunity to complete this field trip to the National Palace Museum.

The National Palace Museum was originally founded in the Forbidden City of Beijing; that is why the word “Palace” is used in its name. Later, during the sociopolitical conflicts and the civil war raging between China and Japan in 1949, the Republic of China shipped approximately 600,000 of some of the most precious objects in the collection to Taiwan. Since that time, all of these treasures have been maintained here in Taiwan. The NPM not only has a complex infrastructure but it is also in a very large location. Therefore, for this trip, students were divided into several groups. Each single group had its own microphone and communication systems.

During their field trip, international and local students could appreciate two of the main elements and/or sections of the entire museum: porcelain and jade items exhibitions. They had the opportunity to see iconic pieces such as the “Jade Cabbage” (considered to be the must-see item in the museum). They also appreciated the beauty of many jade jewelry and accessories, such as jadeite bangles and belts. Later, they enjoyed the porcelain items exhibition area where you can find infinity of cups, intriguing revolving vases, and a lot of utensils and dishes in general. NCCU students also briefly passed by many interesting paintings and calligraphy exhibitions.

Sofia Cruz, a degree seeking student from Honduras, said: “I really enjoyed all the exhibitions we went to, I feel that I learnt many interesting things. My favorite part was the jade exhibition.”

The National Palace Museum is indeed one of the most important elements within the Taiwanese culture and society. It reflects many magnificent pieces of work, pieces of art, exclusive items etc. that show and tell the story of Taiwan and its people. As one of the tourist guides Ms. Shu-Ru Chen said: “A lot of people challenge the museum and Taiwan, especially Mainland China because they agree with the fact that everything inside here the museum is their heritage. Personally, I think that each single item, piece, collection, exhibition, etc. belongs to all of us, to all human beings.”

Ms. Shu-Ru Chen with her group of students after finishing their a 3-hour tour around the inside of the museum.
The International Youth (IY) held a two-day trip to Taichung on March 31 and April 1, 2012. The excursion included visiting famous attraction spots, a host of interesting activities and a wonderful BBQ dinner.

IY is a student organization affiliated to the Office of International Cooperation (OIC) at NCCU. It is made up of energetic and enthusiastic Taiwanese students who hold various activities to help international students at NCCU experience Taiwanese culture and learn more about NCCU and Taiwan.

The wonderful journey consisted of a tour to Da Jia Jenn-Lann Temple, a romantic trip to visit Taichung Shinshe Castle, exciting paintball gun games, unique grass skiing and beautiful night scenery viewing of Taichung.

The tour to Da Jia Jenn-Lann Temple is very special for international students. There was the annual Dajia Mazu Pilgrimage which is one of the grand occasions of the year. The whole precession stretches more than 300 kilometers, and takes 8 days to finish. Tens of thousands of pious folk join the parade.

It was really a unique experience for international students who joined the pilgrimage for the first time. It was also an excellent opportunity for them to discover the Mazu culture that was deeply rooted in the heart of Taiwanese, and know more about Taiwan’s religious beliefs and culture in general.

In addition to the cultural excursion, there was a trip to Shinshe Castle, an exotic tourist attraction in Taichung. IY also arranged interesting games and events, such as paintball gun games, grass skiing and mushroom picking. Everyone was very excited to participate in the game.

At night, IY held a delicious BBQ dinner, full of tasty Taiwanese cuisines. During their meal, they were able to watch the stars and the beautiful night view of Taichung from the villa in which they stayed. All the students really enjoyed the food and that night view.

There was still a special session at the end of the fantastic journey- Taichung suncakes DIY section. Suncake is a very well-known snack in Taichung. Not only could students bring back their suncakes, but they also had the chance to make the suncakes themselves.

Everyone made their own distinctively shaped suncakes. “We really enjoy making suncakes of our own, some of them even came out of interesting shapes of suncakes such as fish, star and ghost,” said Anissa Caye, an exchange student from France.

“It’s really a wonderful journey and IY organizers arranged everything very well. They divided participants into small groups and every group leader interacted well with the international students,” said Barbara Moi, an international student from Kenya.

Other than trips to Taichung, there are many other activities held by IY every semester that everyone is welcome to participate in. More information about IY can be found the on OIC website and IY’s Facebook page.
NCCU Culture Café, When West Meets East

STORY/PHOTO
BY Candy Chiu

Studying abroad has become a hot trend, particularly for students who are eager to experience a totally fresh ambience. Therefore, understanding how to interact with different cultures seems to be a necessary lesson that should be learned in advance. In order to facilitate students, the Foreign Language Centre at National Chengchi University held the culture café workshop “Living Overseas” sponsored by Taiwan’s Ministry of Education, on the 28th of March 2012.

Five foreign and four local students were invited to share their unique experiences of living abroad with the purpose of promoting inter-cultural exchange using English. Gilberto Rivera, a Mexican exchange student, noted that one of the reasons why he selected Taiwan as destination was because he used to study in a Taiwanese high school for one and a half years, and he quite enjoyed the local environment. When asked about his first impression regarding Formosa, he joked that all the products that he had ever seen were “made in Taiwan”. Gilberto further noted that in the past he often mixed up Taiwan and Thailand because “they sound similar, don’t they?”

Christina, one of the international student speakers, stressed that before her study she had no idea regarding Taiwan, “I could only google to gather the information.” However she did have travel experience to other Asian countries, for example, Singapore, Thailand, China, Malaysia, to name only a few. She encouraged local students to go explore the world and absorb knowledge regarding different countries because “in order to understand a culture, you have to go to the place.”

As culture shock seems unavoidable, the hosts continued to ask speakers to recall their most panic-stricken memory after living in Taiwan. Daniel Guzman Briman, an undergraduate student from Russia, shared his surprising experience with the rest of the listeners. He recounted that on a sunny day, he found it weird to see locals holding umbrellas and walking around campus. “European students love the sun and tanned skin, but Taiwanese students prefer snow-white color.” He thought it was a bit of a contradiction.

Yan, a French exchange student who had been on the island for seven months, said that when he arrived in Taiwan he kissed his buddy on her cheek and the girl reacted astonishingly, so “instead of kissing her cheek again, I kiss on her lips instead.” Yan explained that kissing on cheek played an important cultural norm in France, however when applied in Taiwan, it seemed a bit of a contradiction too.

Education issues were also discussed; both local and foreign students pinpointed some of the strengths and weakness of each system. Although they did not reach a consensus, through the back and forth debates both sides did learn the pros and cons of western and eastern institutions. The workshop ended with joy and laughter, whereby every student wore a smile on their face. This was the major purpose of this culture café: building a stronger relationship between locals and foreigners.