Dear NCCU Alumni,

Thank you so much for your long-standing support for your alma mater, National Chengchi University (NCCU). One of the most remarkable changes at NCCU is her becoming internationalized. Nowadays you will see 1,500 international students on campus, including degree seeking students and exchange students, from over 60 countries. Because of this international expanding spectrum, this office initiated Silkroad English Newsletter six years ago to serve our students, in particular, the community of international students.

In appreciation of your constant attention on the development of your alma mater, we feel obliged to share this Newsletter with you from now on. This is not the first issue, but the distribution of the international edition of this issue serves as a milestone, as an effort to invite international students or alumni into this big family; and by doing so, we are truly “the world.” The news shared here may be ordinary and not fascinating, but we hope that it will make you feel reminiscent of the good times when you were studying at the foot of the Chi-Nan Mountain with the companion of the Drunken Dream River. It makes you feel young and enthusiastic about life.

Sincerely Yours,
Dr. Shu-Heng Chen
Dean, Office of International Cooperation
NCCU
In his first lecture titled “Risk, Uncertainty and Ignorance”, Harvard Kennedy School’s (HKS) distinguished Professor Richard J. Zeckhauser explains the concept of behavioral decision and its importance for all scholars, especially to those who are currently doing research on topics related to economics and/or other social sciences.

Professor Zeckhauser stated that human ignorance is probably the biggest obstacle for efficient decision making, since individuals often fail to recognize that they are in situation of ignorance. In his enlightening speech he also explained how most individuals are not ready for the unexpected using “The Invisible Gorilla Experiment” by American psychologists Daniel Simons and Christopher F. Chabris as reference.

The second lecture, “The Wisdom of Crowds and the Stupidity of Herds,” discussed the difficulties individuals face when making group decisions; especially if determining factors, such as suppressing of information and status quo, are playing an important role in the overall decision making process. Before concluding his lecture, Professor Zeckhauser also gave participants practical and useful advices for improving both individual and group decisions.

During a conference with NCCU scholars, Professor Zeckhauser said, “The goal of my two talks is to introduce a variety of central concepts in decision theory, and to reveal the behavioral difficulties individuals and groups have in making effective decisions. Participants will be asked to make a number of actual decisions during the talks. The goal is to improve their decision making capabilities in real time.”

Harvard Kennedy School’s (one of Harvard’s graduate and professional schools) distinguished Professor Richard J. Zeckhauser was invited by AI-ECON Research Center, Department of Social Sciences at National Chengchi University (NCCU) to participate as a guest speaker in the “Herbert Simon Lectures Series No. 24: Group and Individual Decision Making” (集體決策與個體決策) on January 20 and 21, 2014.

The “Herbert Simon Lectures Series No. 24” is an interdisciplinary study and research initiative sponsored by the AI-ECON Research Center, National Chengchi University Department of Economics (國立政治大學社會科學學院人工智慧經濟學研究中心), and the National Science Council (國家科學委員會) whose main purpose is to benefit college students and scholars by teaching them important concepts and theories regarding economics and decision making.

The twenty-fourth lectures series consisted of two separate informative speeches. The first, titled “Risk, Uncertainty and Ignorance,” focused on how these three elements influence individuals’ decision making process. Using real time experiments and social theories examples,
Held by Office of International Cooperation (OIC), 2013 English Short Film Competition enriched the definition of school life. Two international students at National Chengchi University (NCCU) who won the competition, Ms. Veronika Tomanova and Ms. Isaline Maramontel, presented the beauty of NCCU, and its neighborhood, as how they saw it with their own eyes.

For the past three years, OIC has been holding such contest aiming to encourage international students to share their experiences at NCCU and connect the students more closely to the university and its community. The theme has been expanded to include community element, from 《Life at NCCU》 (2011), to 《10 must dos at NCCU》 (2012), and to 《from NCCU to NCCU +》 (2013). The title this year is "From NCCU to NCCU+: enrich your life with the surroundings of NCCU." The idea of the title is to let the students expand the life outside the campus, connect with the community and understand the history of the surroundings," said the representative of this event, Ms. Kerri Wu (吳寬), during the awarding ceremony. During the three years, the competition collected several outstanding films from Taiwanese and international students. Even though the movies were different in style of descriptions, filming methods and design of plots, they all revealed the abundant life at NCCU.

Among several participating works, 《The Story of Muzha》, directed by Ms. Veronika Tomanova, received the first prize. Condensing the varieties of Muzha (木柵) community, Ms. Tomanova emphasized the “movements” of the community, the changing of their history, the flow of traditional culture and the interaction between people. She and her team managed to capture the scenes, the sounds, and the unseen connection between the land and the people. The film discovered the colorfulness and the vigor of NCCU and Muzha and showed the deep understanding and concern of the land. “The experience of studying in Taiwan is … a combination of excitement, beauty and magnificence,” Ms. Tomanova concluded in the film.

Filmed by Ms. Isaline Maramontel, 《A Taiwanese Experience Through My Eyes》 was a runner up in the competition. As an exchange student in the Department of Diplomacy, Ms. Maramontel shared her adventure at NCCU with clean and tranquil sight. She mentioned in the film, what really catches my attention is its [NCCU’s] environment. I am not sure [if] in France, you [can] find a college [which] is surrounded by mountains and trees. It’s really a blessing to be that close to nature. With the panorama shots smoothly capturing the sight of the surroundings and the people around the NCCU community, she represented the delicate beauty of NCCU through her detailed and poetic observation.
How NCCU students start the festive period by making a difference

Story by Vittorio Adrianus

From December 16 to December 20, 2013, international and local students gathered together near the side gate of National Chengchi University (NCCU) for a fundraiser to help the typhoon victims in the Philippines.

The students’ initiative, called “NCCU students for the Philippines,” came in the wake of the devastating Typhoon Haiyan that killed thousands and wrecked millions of homes in the Philippines in November 2013. Three international students, Mr. Adolfo Zambrana, Ms. Veronika Tomanova, and Ms. Sharon Medina, started this initiative, while dozens of other international and Taiwanese students from the Student Ambassadors also lent a helping hand. For this fundraiser, the volunteers collaborated with Tzu Chi Foundation (慈濟) and opened up a fundraising booth at NCCU’s side gate that involved variety of activities, such as Free Hugs.

Thanks to the sea of passionate student volunteers from ten different countries, attractive donation boxes in the shape of little pigs, and the unconventional Free Hugs activity, the fundraising booth became a source of NCCU students’ and faculties’ attention and curiosity. Even though the initiative focused on the money donations only, many people were curious about the current situation in the Philippines, others asked if they can provide other help such as clothes and foods, while few asked for hugs only.

Despite the cold weather and pouring rain, students did not deter from pouring their hearts out for those people who suffered in the Philippines and collected incredible 63,450 NTD. Mr. Adolfo Zambrana, a student from Mexico and one of the organizers of the booth, admitted to be very pleased with the turnout: “We started this initiative because we wanted to help the victims and, at the same time, raise consciousness within our community. People showed a good response to the cause, and being keen on following our Facebook page, which hit the 70 followers after the first day of the event. We were amazed and satisfied with people’s interests in hearing about our initiative and seeing how they identify with the cause.”

Ms. Marvee Moreno, one of the volunteers, who is also a Filipino, echoed Adolfo’s sentiment in a different context: “With the intense conflict between Taiwan and the Philippines that happened just fairly recently and could still be fresh in people's memory, I was pleasantly surprised that the Taiwanese were very helpful, and were genuinely concerned about the situation in the Philippines. That was the highlight of the event for me.”

As the citizens of the Philippines are predominantly Catholic, the timing of the typhoon, which hit just before Christmas period, could not be worse. Many of the victims lost their homes and loved ones and were left with little to celebrate. This latest typhoon relief effort hopes to bring back bits and pieces of Christmas spirit and hope to the Philippines.
Merchandise Cards and a 8GB USB Flash Drive were some of the lucky prizes. The activity concluded with a very colourful “Luces de Bengala Fireworks Show” where guests played with moving Sparklers (光塗鴉) and were able to create their own interesting Christmas patterns.

“It was fulfilling to see the people who have become our family in Taiwan come together and celebrate Christmas. It warmed my heart to see everyone having fun and playing in unison, and getting to know each other more, while enjoying the best season of the year!” shared 23-year-old Ms. Sofia Elena Cruz Handy (艾俞菲), international student from Honduras, who currently has the role of Vice-President of the BA Buddy Program.

This year’s menu consisted of eight main delicious dishes: Roasted Chicken (烤鴨肉), Smashed Potatoes with Bacon (培根薯泥), Cold Pasta Salad (通心粉沙拉), Caesar Salad (凱撒沙拉), Assorted Vegetables (蔬菜總匯), Chicken Nuggets with Bread (雞塊與麵包), and Corn Soup (玉米湯), which were served with either apple cider or lemon tea. The appetizing dishes were both prepared and served by the chefs and personnel of NCCU I-House Café.

Guests also enjoyed several exquisite desserts, such as Cheesecake with Raspberry Topping (覆盆子起司蛋糕), Tiramisu (提拉米蘇), and a variety of Seasonal Fruits (時令水果).

After finishing such abundant Christmas feast, everyone wrote their wishes for 2014 on the “Santa’s Wish List,” and participated in a Lucky Draw where they had the chance to win great Christmas presents. Starbucks Coffee
NCCU Student Ambassadors (SA) held their Welcome Party for new international and exchange students on February 20 at the Shi-Wei Hall Events Center. This semester’s theme party, “Travel around the Island by Train” (環島旅行), encouraged new students to travel around Taiwan in their leisure time and fully experience the richness and uniqueness of different cultural attractions.

There were a total of six colourful “train” stations introducing different areas of Taiwanese terrain: Hsinchu, Taichung, Tainan, Kaohsiung, Hualien, and Yilan respectively. Each one of them had its own personalized “SA Travel Map” showing famous tourist destinations and must-go locations such as museums, monuments, and national parks.

In each station, SA staff members provided guests with useful information regarding itinerary, transportation, accommodation, weather, people, food, and outdoor activities. They even gave a couple of “SA Quick Travel Tips,” as well as a very detailed “Must-buy Items List.” It was indeed a perfect opportunity for new international students to learn more about what Taiwan has to offer in terms of tourism and healthy recreation.

Guests also enjoyed a very interesting Chinese variety art show (雜技藝術). The show, which was organized by several NCCU student clubs and committees, included many graceful acts, such as a Chinese Yo-yo Performance (扯鈴表演) and a wide range of acrobatic and balancing acts. International students were shocked to know that all stage performers were actually NCCU local students.

“Travel around the Island by Train” concluded with a delicious traditional dinner. The buffet consisted of the three most typical Taiwanese dishes: dumplings, fried rice, and fried noodles. While enjoying the food, guests could also appreciate the art of Chinese calligraphy and participate in a photo shoot wearing traditional costumes.

“The main goal of this Welcome Party was to introduce the beauty of our island and to show our new foreign friends different sides of Taiwanese culture, which is very rich in traditions, yet, at the same time, it’s also very modern, interesting and unique,” said 20-year-old Mr. Jerry Chen (陳沛然), Taiwanese student from the department of Statistics responsible for the event planning and execution.

SA Welcome Parties aim to celebrate Taiwanese culture in its all splendor. They also provide a great opportunity for new international students to have a memorable cultural exchange experience, especially for those visiting Asia for the very first time. SA believes that these kinds of events are the key for internationalization within campus. In one hand, both foreign and local students can interact and know each other better. On the other, they are also able to appreciate the value of different cultures and traditions.

Story by Daniel Antonio Guzman Briman

SA staff members assist international students in their train quests. In each one of the six stations (Hsinchu, Taichung, Tainan, Kaohsiung, Hualien, Yilan) they are provided with a ‘SA Travel Map,’ which contains useful information regarding itinerary, transportation, accommodation, weather, people, food, and outdoor activities.

▲ International students write their very first Chinese characters using a modern writing brush pen and ink. While they try to master the beautiful art of strokes, Taiwanese students explain the importance of precise brush movements in order to achieve the right shape and proportion.

Photo by NCCU SA

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International students write their very first Chinese characters using a modern writing brush pen and ink. While they try to master the beautiful art of strokes, Taiwanese students explain the importance of precise brush movements in order to achieve the right shape and proportion.
Internationalization has been one of the endeavors of National Chengchi University (NCCU). As a result, the Center of International Education and Exchange (IEE) was established in 2004, which later became the Office of International Cooperation (OIC). Under the leadership of the first director of the Center, Dr. Yeh-Yun Lin, numerous goals were set, which included increasing the quantity and quality of English-taught courses and programs at NCCU, creating an international learning environment, and expanding international student and faculty exchange.

In 2006, Dr. Shu-Heng Chen took over the leadership of IEE. Under his guidance and management, IEE/OIC has continued to carry forward and enhance the goals and ideals of globalization. In 2012/2013 academic year, the total numbers of NCCU’s university level partners have been increased to over 260, the total numbers of incoming and outgoing exchange students have been increased to 1,000 each year, and there are over 500 degree seeking international students at NCCU.

In order to receive and manage the large number of international students, extensive efforts have been developed to create an international environment, e.g. the establishment of over 600 English taught courses, Chinese language teaching, numerous social, cultural, and academic activities to service foreign students. In addition, OIC has initiated programs to encourage Faculty Ambassador and Faculty/Researcher Exchange.

What’s driven the OIC leader and staff to initiate and continue to develop this endeavor is the strong sense of vision and mission - to benefit students and faculty to expand their global academic and cultural horizon, and to provide opportunities for them to be trained as valuable social leaders and global citizens. The numbers of exchange activities may continue to vary, but the unity of vision and mission will never waiver.

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