New Organization Offers Students Unique Opportunities

By Katie Aurand

Engineers and Scientists Abroad (ESA) is a student organization at SDSM&T where students can apply their engineering and science knowledge on an international scale through humanitarian efforts. This baby organization, founded in the fall of 2006, has already seen the birth of international projects in Chile and Suriname.

“ESA’s purpose is to promote the welfare of underdeveloped organizations on a global scale,” said ESA secretary Eric Hoffnagle. “We use engineering and science application to benefit these organizations so they can get a better start in the world that we live in today.”

Last May, nine ESA members and their faculty advisor, Dr. M.R. Hansen, went to Vicuna, Chile. ESA partnered with Vocations for Orphans (VFO), a non-profit organization based in the Black Hills that is building a vocational school in the Andes Mountains for orphans to learn a trade after leaving the orphanage. ESA members helped plot the site and construct the buildings. They took samples of the water and concrete, monitored wind speeds, and surveyed most of the site. Now, ESA members are working on projects involving site design, concrete stability, water conservation and a senior design team is addressing power storage. They are planning a return trip to Chile this May.

ESA’s projects are not armature science fair material. Not only do they take on challenges that are present all around the world, they have the added complication of applying their solutions in under-developed countries.

“Building a water purification system is one thing, but designing one for an under-developed country is another,” said ESA president Andrew Muxen. “There is pressure in building that; it is expected to work for at least 20 years. And communicating with people in another language, another culture, is challenging. Our members use their skills that they acquire in the classroom to solve issues overseas, be it engineering or science, however they can help.”

ESA’s president (Muxen) and advisor (Dr. Hansen) went to Suriname over Thanksgiving break to establish connections in Paramaribo, the capital, and to gather information on what projects ESA can work on. Students have already identified many projects in the rainforest of Suriname to work on, including water treatment and solar energy system repair.

With ESA, international travel is not needed to experience other cultures, even though the opportunity to travel abroad is available. Last semester, members of ESA were able to meet, and sometimes even have one-on-one conversation time, with distinguished digni-
Welcome back!
I hope you all had a good break! Spring 2008 is going to be a very busy semester. We have so many projects going on that are very exciting! If you are interested in becoming a member of Student Association Senate (Sophomore, Junior or Senior) please contact me in our office in SALC, by email at Student.Association@sdsmt.edu or by phone at 605-394-2651.

SOAP applications are due by Friday, January 18th at 4:30pm to the SA office in SALC. SOAP presentations will be next weekend, Saturday and Sunday, January 26th & 27th. For more information please contact Patrick Satchell the Finance Committee chair at Patrick.Satchell@sdsmt.edu or refer to the SA website at http://sa.sdsmt.edu.

The South Dakota Legislative session began January 3rd and it looks to be a prosperous session for higher education across the state. Some of the bills regarding higher education to watch are Senate bills 21, 55, 56, 57, 59 and 61. The house bills to watch are 1048 and 1087. Senate bill 59 is a proposed revision to the South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship. The changes include an increase of $200 and a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester rather than 15. This bill passed in the House State Affairs committee (8-0) on 1/11/2008.

The last thing I want to touch on with this article is the Surbeck Center Renovation project. Over Christmas break we met as committees and began the schematic design process. In looking over the timeline and working with the Architect, the Engineering firm, and other parties, it looks like construction on the second floor will begin this summer/fall, and construction on the kitchen/seating area will begin summer 2009. This is later than we had hoped, but because the kitchen renovation must be done in the summer to keep costs down for students it is imperative that we work with this schedule. If you are interested in working with Senate on the design of this renovation please contact me. We will be hosting several focus groups this semester to gather student input. The dates for those are tentatively scheduled as follows:

**January**
1. Wednesday 23rd at 7:30pm in the bump lounge; the architect will be on campus with new drawings and can answer questions and gather input at this time
2. Thursday 31st at 1pm in Bump East

**February**
3. Tuesday 26th at 1pm, Location TBA

Good luck with the semester!
Melanie Satchell

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**Ski & Snowboard Club Returns From Annual Trip**

**By Katie Aurand**

The ski and snowboard club operates by offering students opportunities to stay active when the outdoors is nestled under a blanket of snow. With trips to big-time ski resorts, free night skiing at Deer Mountain and even a Norwegian ski day, this club attracts students of all skill levels who want to shred some powder. Boasting over 60 members, the club continues to grow each year, as skiing and snowboarding gain popularity among students at SDSM&T.

Over 50 club members just returned from a trip to Steamboat, Colorado. For $325, students received transportation, three days of skiing and three nights in a condo. According to the club’s Vice President, Tyler Blumenthal, this was quite a bargain.

“If you go by yourself, like I have in previous years, it’s over $80 dollars a day to ski for the lift tickets alone,” said Blumenthal.

The club takes a trip each winter break. In previous years they have gone to Aspen, CO, Breckinridge, CO, and Jackson Hole, WY.

“We chose Steamboat this year because we haven’t gone there recently,” said Blumenthal. “Also, it’s got a really good atmosphere to the town—kind of a western feel. And they always have amazing snow.”

No prior experience is needed to join the ski and snowboard club. Benefits include the opportunity to go on the annual ski trip and occasional discounted tickets and merchandise. It also serves as a means to connect with other students who enjoy skiing and snowboarding.

Later this semester, the ski and snowboard club will host a beginner’s day. It will be an opportunity for students who have little or no experience on the slopes to try it out for a reduced price. Also, the officers and a few members will be there to give advice. Look for posters advertising this event.

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Bike Path is Hazardous for Pedestrians, Bicyclists

Narrow sidewalks make it difficult for multiple people to use the path at the same time.

The SDSM&T Student Senate tackled many projects last semester, including the Surbeck Center Renovation, the introduction of two new student organizations to our campus, and the installation of new outlets in the Surbeck South Lounge. Another of their projects involved contacting the City Engineer to request improvements to the School of Mines and Steele Street Bridge access points to the Rapid City Bike Path.

The concern about the street crossing and connection points was brought to the attention of the Student Senate by an anonymous student comment. After receiving the comment, members of the Senate took time to walk the bike path and take photographs of areas which could be improved.

The senators determined that the following items should be given immediate attention:

1. The crosswalk over Saint Joseph St. and Main St. is dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists and needs to be improved to allow everyone to cross safely.

2. Currently, no path exists over the train tracks which is dangerous for bicyclists to maneuver.

3. The sidewalk/bike path to Steele Street Bridge is too narrow for both pedestrians and bicyclists to use simultaneously and should run along both sides of the street.

4. The lighting along portions of the sidewalk is poor and not safe for individuals traveling during early morning or late evening hours.

5. The current condition of the concrete of the pathway is hazardous in areas and difficult to maneuver.

The Student Senate is continuing to work with the city to make these improvements and create a safer path for everyone. If you are interested in being involved in this project, please contact the Student Senate in their office in the SALC area.

Currently there is no path over the train tracks for pedestrians and bicyclists to use when crossing. Those wishing to cross must move into the roadway briefly, posing a safety concern.

Senate Meet & Greet

The SDSM&T Student Senate will be hosting a “Meet & Greet” Tuesday, January 29. The event will take place in Grubby’s Rec Room in the SALC area from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. They will be offering free pool, ping pong, and cookies during this night of fun! Senators will be around to answer any questions and listen to comments and concerns. Everyone is welcome to attend!
ESA Travels to Chile, Suriname

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taries who were visiting the region. Among them were: the U.S. Ambas-
dor to Suriname, Suriname’s Ambassador to the U.N., Iraq’s Ambassador to the U.N. and Dr. Mark Plotkin, a re-
nowned ethnobotanist who is the presi-
dent of the Amazon Conservation Team.

“Being a part of this group, I never thought I would be meeting foreign am-
bassadors,” said Hoffnagle. “And here I am doing just that. Within two weeks, I met two ambassadors, one from Iraq and one from Suriname. ESA gives students opportunities that they wouldn’t have had just by staying in the classroom or just by getting some internship. There’s much more than that.”

Wherever they go, ESA students promote SDSM&T.

“We do an excellent job of promot-
ing the school both locally and interna-
tionally,” said Muxen. “When I was down in Suriname, Dr. Hansen and I met with some of the University of Suriname’s faculty and students and tried to set up a partnership- not just for ESA work, but for studying abroad so that their students could come here, and our students could go down there. Everywhere we go around the world, we talk about the school we came from and give them that kind of exposure. We also provide students at SDSM&T with oppor-
tunities they would not have without our organization. Especially with interna-
tional travel.”

Being a young organization, ESA is still working on securing monetary funds.

“ESA is able to bring in more money [than individual fundraising] to help minimize the students’ cost in traveling,” said Hoffnagle. “As time goes on and ESA gets more recognized and established, fundraising and finances will be less of a hardship for the individual student so they can travel.”

Dr. Hansen encourages students at SDSM&T to join ESA because he believes that the experience students receive while working with ESA will help prepare them for their future.

“They know that in their professional life, the chances that they will be working overseas one way or another, either going over there or working for compa-
nies that have branches overseas, are very high,” said Dr. Hansen. “ESA helps prepare our students to work in a multi-
cultural environment. They will have a chance to go to a foreign country to work. The only way they will get on a team is to join ESA and participate and select a project and work on it, and then they will be qualified to travel.”

“ESA gives students an opportunity to use their abilities to soak in a new culture that is different and makes them a well-rounded individual, ready for their next step in life,” said Hoffnagle.

If students have new ideas for a pro-
ject that they want to take on, ESA en-
courages them to share it.

“If someone really wanted to get involved, the possibilities are really end-
less,” said Hoffnagle. “You can do your own thing with the group, or you can get involved with a committee in the group and lead from there. A lot of it is up to you: you choose your level of involve-
ment. The more involved you are, the more rewarding this organization will be.”

According to members, the future of ESA looks very promising.

“For the future of ESA, the doors are wide open for what we can accomplish,” said Muxen. “I could see ESA becoming a national or an in-
ternational organization, quite possibly, which would be amazing. Right now, we’re a very young organization, but we are growing very rapidly. But we would like more stu-
dent involvement. It is pretty difficult right now because there is a lot of work that needs to be done before this organization sees its full po-
tential. I think that this or-
ganization definitely has the potential to be a very strong organization at the School of Mines.”

ESA also hopes to eventually be a drawing point for incoming students.

“If we keep getting students who are interested in what we are doing right now and they become dedicated to ESA and what it stands for, ESA could really take off to a higher level,” said Hoffnagle. “And also through the school there is a lot more potential that the school could benefit through ESA, and ESA benefit through the school. Hopefully within the next year, the school could start advertising ESA in the literature that they print out, just like they do with CAMP.”

ESA is also hoping to develop part-
nerships with students from other coun-
tries to increase the international flavor at SDSM&T.

“When I went down to Suriname, the students I talked to down there were very interested in what we are doing with our program and they even asked about what programs they could do here in South Dakota,” said Muxen. “And I think that we could then open up to more of an international community so our students would actually be working with students from another country. That kind of an experience would be very valu-
able.”

ESA encourages any students inter-
ested to look for posters advertising their meetings and to come and see what ESA is all about.

“There isn’t another organization on campus that offers the types of opportu-
nities that we do,” said Muxen.