A Letter from the Director
Norman Nakami
McDonnell Professor of East European Studies and Burke Family Director of the Bing Overseas Studies Program

Dear Friends,

After the first year as its Director, I can report to you that the Bing Overseas Studies program is doing exceptionally well. Student applications are up for almost all of our centers abroad. Our seminars in the early fall enjoy unprecedented popularity among the Stanford student body. Even the numbers of Stanford faculty who apply to teach abroad at our centers has increased. Of course, the greatest sense of satisfaction comes from those students who stop by the office or write cards and letters stating—they always many generations of alumni—that their Overseas Studies experience was the most significant in their Stanford education. It is deeply gratifying to note that many Stanford seniors are now designating BOSP as the Stanford organization to receive their Senior Gifts.

The centrality of BOSP to Stanford undergraduate education prompted an organizational change. As of September 1, we will be reporting to the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (VPUE), John Braunman, rather than to the School of Humanities and Sciences. This is no way diminishes our relationship with H&S, which is crucial to fostering our ties to departments, scholars, and students in the Humanities and Sciences. But the new arrangement should prompt new ways to incorporate Overseas Studies into university-wide undergraduate initiatives in research and teaching. We are all excited about the potential synergies that will develop from working closely with VPUE.

Our workshop on “China in the 21st Century” in June was a rousing success. We brought students and faculty together from four centers (Berlin, Beijing, Kyoto, and Stanford in Washington), as well as experts from the home campus, to discuss issues related to the growing economic, political, and strategic challenges posed by the rapid changes in China. (See our article on this page. Ed.) Here, I would like to thank Aiko Yamazaki (member of our BOSP Council) and Jerry Yang for their generous support of the workshop. Siemens Corporation once again provided crucial help for our workshops focused on various aspects of globalization. In June 2007, we will host a workshop in Kyoto on the environment.

I am glad to report that we have made significant progress during a developmental year in Spain. We have decided to locate in Madrid and have identified a short list of potential partners. At present, we are going through an anonymous batch of applications for Director of the Spanish program. Once we choose both a new Director and a Madrid location, we will be ready to think about opening our center for the 2007-08 academic year. We know there is great interest among students and faculty in the program, and we are excited about putting together an intellectually challenging curriculum, one that includes European Studies, the Mediterranean, and linkages between Spain and Latin America.

We continue to work on a future program in South Africa of the Spain program. Once we chose both a director and location for our center there, we will be ready to think about opening our center in South Africa in 2007-08. We know there is great interest in the political and cultural developments in South Africa among the Stanford community. We hope that such interest will lead to the development of a strong and vibrant program.

The newsletter of the Bing Overseas Studies Program

Stanford in South Africa!

This last Winter Quarter Bing Overseas Studies offered a special one-time program for 15 students in Cape Town, South Africa. This full-quarter program was affiliated with the University of Cape Town (UCT) and led by Timothy Stanton, Director of Scholarly Concentration in Community Health and Public Service and Senior Lecturer for Health Research and Policy at the Stanford School of Medicine. He had taught previous three-week seminars in South Africa for BOSP.

The academic objectives of the program were to introduce students to post-apartheid South Africa—its people, history, politics and culture—with an emphasis on theories and practice of reconstruction and development focused on health in the community. Students met and worked with health professionals, activists, and residents of “previously disadvantaged communities,” engaging in hands-on research, enhancing their skills, and contributing needed data and analysis to local initiatives.

Bing students are excited about the potential synergies that will develop from working closely with VPUE.

Despite our best intentions, after a long day on the bus with a broken air conditioner, we all went to bed slightly irritable. The next day, we began our service-learning activities, touring local schools and shadowing health workers as they visited homes. That afternoon we met with a group of teenagers and young adults who use music and drama to teach their peers to resist substance abuse and unsafe sex. After our discussion, they performed one of their plays for us and then began to sing. As the singing grew louder, more and more children from the community entered the school where we were meeting. Before we knew it a crowd had gathered and was singing along, and we found ourselves dancing around the room with the children. The performance group came back with us to

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“IT is through interactions with local people that I truly realized that I was in Beijing not only to learn about the Chinese culture, but also to let other people learn about the American culture as well as to overcome a few stereotypes along the way.”

ATHENA MAK, ’06 (DOUBLE MAJOR: PSYCHOLOGY, MANAGEMENT SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING) BEIJING, AUTUMN 2004-05

Stanford students with residents of Philippiolis, a rural town in Orange Free State.

The Bing Overseas Studies Program at Stanford University

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The Old Jail that night, and as they taught us about the grasshoppers and geckos crawling on the walls of our “jail cells”—South Africa, and Philadelphia, had begun to feel like home. Moments like those are what made BOSP’s first quarter-long program in Africa such a unique experience. More than just an academic program, Stanford in Cape Town was focused on “service-learning,” almost every day, we went beyond the classroom and out of our comfort zones to engage with the communities we studied. The centerpiece of this approach was our community-based research project. My group chose to focus on the impact of domestic violence and substance abuse on health in two townships, Langa and Bonteheuwel. Another group of students created a broader assessment of community health in the rapidly growing township of Khayelitsha. Twice a week, we explored those communities with the help of local guides, meeting with civic leaders and average residents to learn their views on our research topics. At the end of the quarter, we presented our findings to the communities and provided a written report to inform their future development projects. Each of us also arranged a personal service-learning project, from working in a children’s home or hospital to designing a website for a women’s employment project. These opportunities to interact with many levels of South African society provided us with an understanding of the country, its challenges, and triumphs in a way that could never be achieved from our campus here in Palo Alto. What we learned in Cape Town continues to inform our undergraduate education and future goals; members of our group are going on to attend public health and medical school, study international economic development and human rights law, or go into business. Finally, the close-knit, team nature of the program allowed us to support each other as we faced the many ups and downs of service-learning, and we all returned to Stanford with fourteen new close friends.

Dawn Cardon (07, Economics) writes: Before I left for Cape Town I spent a lot of time dreaming of how I might fit South Africa. I saw myself, a budding development economist, crafting policy to mitigate unemployment, inequality, poverty, and low levels of income. As time went on, I realized how incredibly much I needed to know about the regions I worked in and the people I was serving in order to understand fully their specific challenges. This cultural specificity was the most important lesson I learned. The vital role that beliefs, practices, values, and traditions play in any development project is something all future economists should know. The Cape Town experience will inform the rest of my studies, my honors thesis, and my future in economics.

Chrissie Coxon (07, Political Science and African Studies) adds On Mobility: Some of the best moments in Cape Town occurred outside formal collection of data for our research; roaming the informal settle- ments with our guides. Christina and Veronica, while we compose a photo essay; stopping by the shebeen (bar or club) for a meet-and-greet with the morning drinkers, cuddled with a morning dance; hearing our guide. The good news, her sister’s death in February of 2006, and my father fled th...
We were particularly excited about the idea, first of all because the timing seemed so perfect. In fall quarter we were fortunate to have as our visiting faculty member from the true and broadest sense of the word. In a more specific

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Karen Kramer is Director of Stanford's Program in Berlin and provides this account of a special feature for students.

Alumnus Hans George Wills ('55) support to the Berlin campus is legendary, since he has backed such ambitious projects as the purchase, in the year 2000, of Haus Crämer ("the Villa"), the registered architectural monument which has housed the Berlin Program for almost three decades. In celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of his graduating class, Wills generously established the H.G. Will Fund at Stanford; his donation in the context of the Campaign for Undergraduate Education. Emisioned to provide enrichment for Bing Overseas Studies Program (BOSP) in Berlin, proceeds from the Fund will, in the first years, provide study trips for Berlin student cohorts to visit the countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe currently in the process of joining the European Union (EU).

These programs on expansion of the EU introduce students to the problems and desires of the local populations.

The Will Trips commenced in Winter 2006-07 with a trip to Istanbul, Turkey, where our students participated in discussions and workgroups with professors and students at the University. The second trip took students to Riga, Latvia, where they discussed EU membership with Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga. This past February, students traveled to Istanbul, Turkey, where Europe and Asia meet, for three intense days of discussion and exploration with faculty and students of the Koc and Sabanci Universities; a highlight of the time in Istanbul was the keynote speech of Stanford alumnus Cem Kodu, former President of Coca-Cola's division of Central Europe, Eurasia, and the Middle East. Spring-quarter students traveled to Sofia, Bulgaria, where they had a private audience with the man who signed the charter for Bulgaria's entry to Europe, ex-Prime Minister Simeon II of Sachsen, Coburg, and Gotha. Vanuus for 2006-07 will be Rumania, Cyprus, Estonia.

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Richard Hausmann, President and CEO, Siemens Ltd. China, on the experience of running a business in China. He emphasized both the opportunities and the obstacles that businesses encounter in China and stressed the competitive nature of all lines of business as both foreign and domestic firms contend vigorously for shares in China’s burgeoning markets.

U.S. Ambassador and Mrs. Randt, who graciously hosted a reception and buffet dinner for participants at the Ambassadress’s residence, provided a highlight of the entire experience. Ambassador Randt spoke of the challenges of representing the U.S. abroad and how he and his family provided some interesting counterpoints to the comments of Assistant Minister He the previous day. A noteworthy aspect of both presentations was the argument that differences between Chinese and American approaches to the U.S. and China despite important differences are less important than similarities. It is not at all the case that the U.S. and China are poles apart. Indeed, there are many areas where cooperation is good: on several fronts. On the final day, Jason Patent, Director of Stanford’s center in Beijing, provided insights about living in China, emphasizing the extent to which cultural differences shape a people’s integral character and influence the inferences that individuals draw from seemingly similar circumstances.

Not all of the time was devoted to study—at the end of the program, a farewell banquet was held at the Quanjude Roast Duck Restaurant in the fashionable Wangfujing district. This workshop continued the tradition established previously by its predecessors in Berlin and Paris and amplified for everyone attending both the importance of studying and understanding globalization as well as the splendid opportunity Overseas Studies presents to do just that!