

Outreach

September 2005



Advising center opens

Help is now available to Pakistani students wanting to apply to study in the US

The advising center is alive and kicking again after a somewhat sleepy period. Executive Director Dr. Grace Clark threw herself into the deep end by hiring five new advisors: three seniors with many years of experience in the field and two junior advisors who are bright and enthusiastic and rapidly gaining expertise in every aspect of advising.

A large new office has also been leased. The advising center should be moving to the large and beautiful new premises in the new year when the renovations are expected to be complete. The center will have a library of resources for students to use and a few computer stations for CD-rom and Internet browsing. Already the advising section at USEFP is a hub of intense activity. We are confident that in no time this will be the busiest advising center at least in our region.

The activities planned vary from set days for presentations on the application process and walk-in advising to a very active outreach program. Different cities will be visited during the year depending on local school timetables. Principals and advisers who are interested in having us come speak to their student bodies should contact us to be sure they are included in our outreach effort. Workshops will be held for students to help with interesting and imaginative personal statements and for teachers to write incisive and informative letters of recommendation. This quarterly newsletter is another production of the advising center.

Outreach activity for the coming academic year was kicked off with a get-acquainted gathering with principals in Islamabad over tea.



1) Principals and advisers get acquainted with USEFP over tea in Islamabad.

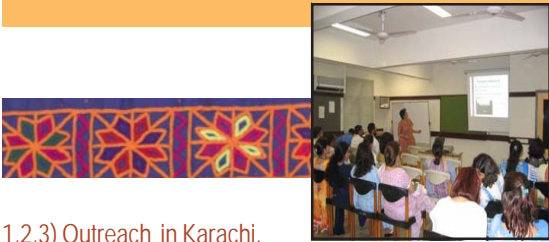
Student Services in Islamabad

In October, we will be holding workshops for students interested in undergraduate study on writing personal statements and applying for financial aid. We will also hold one for teachers on the topic of writing effective letters of recommendation. Please call or email for further information.

Group advising sessions for graduate study are held every Wednesday at 2:45 and for undergraduate study on Thursdays also at 2:45. Call or email to reserve your place.

*All this is free.
No charge, no fee.*

*Students even get a souvenir T-shirt
once they get their visa!!*



1,2,3) Outreach in Karachi.

4, 5) Standing room only at our first focus group held in Islamabad.

6) Advising group, Shafaq Gul, Zarene Malik, Rita Akhtar, Zehra Ratani and Shelale Abbasi ready to meet with principals in Rawalpindi.



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Coming Events

October Workshops: for teachers, help your students by learning to **write more effective letters of recommendation**; for students; **how to write personal statements**.

Watch for **International Education Week November 14–18**. We have lots of exciting activities planned.

Just for students...

The new advising center with its team of advisers and extensive library and online resources can help you:

- choose the right university for you,
- tackle any aspect of university applications,
- write focused personal statements, and
- prepare for the visa interview.

We also offer pre-departure orientation for students who have succeeded in the admission process.

Free TOEFL practice

TOEFL® PRACTICE ONLINE community free at www.ets.org/toeflpractice43.html . Students can take advantage of official TOEFL practice materials that can help them improve their English and prepare for the new TOEFL® Internet-based test (IBT).*

Issue # 1

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Karachi outreach

August 22 to 26 Shelale and Zarene made their first outreach visit to Karachi, where they targeted seven institutions for undergraduate study and two for graduate study. The outreach programme began with a focus group session like the one we had held the previous week at USEFP. The two concerns voiced repeatedly were lack of information and visa issues with the former far out weighing the latter.

Overall the visits were extremely well received and welcomed. It quickly became evident that the student community was starved for information regarding studying in the US. After detailed discussions with principals and advisers, it was also clear that no such vacuum exists with respect to the UK, Australia and Canada. The idea suddenly dawned that students who are now 18 were only 12–13 years old when the American Centers closed down in 1998. They are therefore totally unaware of the facility that 'once was' and many have the impression that the US is not interested in Pakistani students. Visa concerns were also evident though lack of information far outdid these concerns as a priority. Another problem students noted was the tediousness of applying to the US as compared to the UK. All undergraduate schools had advisors though the advisors also felt that there was not any information available and that they had no one to help them.

The meetings at AKU and the IED were very helpful and informative. Both institutions are very interested in graduate level study but require specialized courses and suggested that 'out of the box' thinking on academic exchange programs/topics of particular importance to Pakistan should form an integral part of the USEFP mission.

The trip helped the advising center in developing contacts, establishing goodwill, and laying the foundations of future relationships. We hope to repeat the experience soon but perhaps this time hiring a hall in the evening to enable interested students from any institution to attend.

Remember, we're just an email away!! advising@usefpakistan.org



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Student focus groups reveal what students are really thinking

Thursday, August 11, the advising center invited 23 students from University College Islamabad, Fatima Jinnah Women's University, Headstart, Froebels and Khaldunia High School to come to USEFP to share their thoughts and concerns about applying to colleges in the U.S. The discussion was kicked off with the question, "If you had the choice, where would you choose to go to college -- the U.S., U.K., Canada or Australia?" Students began by mentioning that they had heard "scary stories" about harassment and discrimination against students in the U.S. after 9/11 but conceded that these are more rumor than fact -- good news tends not to circulate as quickly or widely as bad. A more serious concern was uncertainty about getting a visa in time for the start of the Fall term or of getting one at all. Also worrying students was the difficulty of getting financial aid, especially for undergraduates.

However, there was much on the positive side. When asked for a how many would opt for U.S. higher education as their first choice, more than half of the students raised their hands. They said that the U.S. had much going in its favor, including the world's most highly ranked universities, a rich social and cultural life and a generally excellent educational system. They pointed out that unlike other English-speaking countries, the U.S. has had almost no presence here in educational fairs or other informational venues. They agreed that information is generally lacking about why and how to apply to the U.S. and were sure that outreach efforts by USEFP to local schools and colleges would be received enthusiastically. Finally, the students offered many useful suggestions for making outreach effective with their peers.

On August , the exercise was repeated in Karachi with students from who seconded the concerns expressed in Islamabad and gave us further insight.

New building for USEFP

To support the expansion of USEFP activity in Pakistan, a new building was leased in July . The new office is more than double the size of the old. It will include a purpose-built testing center. Advising also has a large amount of dedicated space. A library, conference room, computer stations for student use, as well as much more office space for one-to-one advising are all included in the renovation plan. The renovation is getting underway.

Feedback



Dear Ms. Malik,

This is Ahmed Amin (the guy who came in late for the meeting). I applied at Oklahoma State University for this fall- 2005 semester and I told you that the US embassy had denied my visa earlier in July.

Well what do you know! I went in for the interview again and they approved my application. No! I did not shave my beard :) I also want to thank you for your wonderful tips. They really did come in handy. I am waiting on my security clearance now. I am going to keep my fingers crossed and hope that it will come in time.

Please remember me in your prayers and I will do the same. Thank you again.

p.s. thank you for reprimanding me that day. I need it now and then to keep up with the clock!

Fulbright/Humphrey Program News

Record number of Fulbright/Humphrey grantees depart

In 2005, a new Fulbright/USAID student program, a two years master's degree program, was initiated. USEFP has sent off 94 students to pursue higher studies in the U.S. Grantees will be studying public health, public policy, law, development studies, management, and human rights, among other subjects, at institutions including Harvard University, Cornell University, Columbia University, George Washington University, University of Southern California, University of Pennsylvania, John Hopkins University and many others.

Four grantees have also left for the United States under the regular Fulbright student program to pursue their PhDs in fields related to computer science, English literature, and law.

The Fulbright Postdoctoral Program, a four to 10-month to research program, saw the addition of eight new scholars this year. They are due to depart in late September to early October 2005.

Four mid-career professionals from Pakistan have been awarded the prestigious Humphrey fellowship to a non-degree program of 10-months of academic study along with an opportunity to work in the United States and have already taken up their fellowships in different universities in the U.S.

Approaching deadlines for other awards for U.S. Study

Harvard Academy Scholars Program 2006-07

Deadline: October 14, 2005.

Harvard University

www.wcfia.harvard.edu/academy

Laurance S. Rockefeller Visiting Fellowships for outstanding scholars and teachers interested in devoting a year in residence at Princeton writing about ethics and human values. <http://web.princeton.edu/sites/dof/ApplicantsInfo.htm>.

Dissertation Fellowship Program for Research

Related to Education

Deadline: November 1

Spencer Foundation

www.spencer.org

Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellows Program

Deadline: November 1

www.ned.org

University of South Florida (USF) International Undergraduate Scholars Award

Deadline: January 2

web.usf.edu/iac/admissions/iusa.php

Samuel Huntington Public Service Award for College Seniors

Deadline: February 15

www.usefpakistan.org

(+92-51-2277-381, 2278344, 2823055

Email: advising@usefpakistan.org

Fax: +92-51-2271563

