SEAYLP wraps up: A trip to the Great Falls of the Potomac National Park across the Potomac from Washington, D.C., in Maryland capped participants’ experience in this spring’s Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program. The Indonesia group seen here is accompanied by NIU’s Darus Tharim, third from left, and Sean Dolan, sixth from left.

A river runs through SEAYLP’s spring session

The CSEAS Weekly Bulletin will resume at the beginning of fall semester in August.

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Students and adult leaders from the Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program (SEAYLP) group returned to their home countries of Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia, and the Philippines on April 29 from Washington, D.C., where they spent five days following three weeks at NIU. In workshops at the national 4-H Youth Conference Center, where the group stayed, participants learned about working with the media, raising funds, and identifying local resources. In keeping with the program’s twin themes of river ecology and Abraham Lincoln’s leadership style, the group visited the Great Falls of the Potomac National Park and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, and toured the Lincoln Memorial, Lincoln’s summer cottage, the U.S. Capitol, and the Smithsonian Institution. The group also visited the Smithsonian Art Museum, after feasting on Burmese food at the Burma Restaurant, whose owner opened the restaurant just for the group. Rounding out the program was a visit to the Asia Foundation and lunch at the U.S. State Department, which provided the grant funding for the program. Program officer Carolyn Lantz hosted the students and leaders, who eagerly offered
their feedback on their experience. The group’s last full day in Washington, D.C., was reserved for a trip to the Great Falls of the Potomac National Park in nearby Maryland and a boat ride on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal.

Down to the wire: After seeing off the SEAYLP participants at Washington Dulles Airport, center director Jim Collins, fourth from left, celebrates a successful end to the spring session with program graduate assistants, from left, Shahin Aftabizadeh, Maria “Rai” Hancock, Mary Thomas, Sean Dolan, and Shawn McCafferty.

2. Thai study programs not affected by State Department travel alert
The U.S. State Department recently issued a travel alert for Americans traveling to Thailand. However, this does not prohibit NIU students from participating in language or study abroad programs in the country, according to associate provost and director of international programs Deborah Pierce. If the State Department were to put a stronger measure, a travel warning, in place for Thailand after a program began, the Study Abroad office would “assess the situation carefully and determine whether the student would need to leave the program to return home. That outcome would be somewhat extreme, but it’s possible,” Pierce said. For now, however, all Thailand study programs approved by NIU are not in jeopardy.

3. Center alum Tammy Duckworth to receive honorary degree at NIU May 7
In 2004, Tammy Duckworth was pursuing a Ph.D. in comparative politics with an emphasis on Southeast Asia at NIU, receiving a Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowship from the center in the process, when her Illinois Army National Guard unit was called up and deployed to Iraq. The Blackhawk helicopter pilot was on a mission north of Baghdad when her helicopter was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade. Duckworth lost both of her legs and partial use of one arm and never returned to NIU to complete her degree. She entered public service, emerging as an outspoken advocate on behalf of veterans. Duckworth, who refused medical retirement and is still a major in the National Guard, was unsuccessful in her 2006 bid for a congressional seat in Illinois’ sixth district. However, she was soon appointed director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, where she implemented pioneering new programs for veterans before being nominated by President Barack Obama to the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. She currently serves as an assistant secretary for public and intergovernmental affairs.

Duckworth will be on campus this week to receive an honorary degree from NIU at the Graduate School commencement at 6:30 p.m. May 7 at the Convocation Center. “Tammy is an inspiration to millions of Americans,” said political science department chair Chris
Jones, who on behalf of his department nominated Duckworth for the degree. “We felt that she was a meritorious candidate...because of her outstanding public service, national prominence, powerful personal story, commitment to civil rights and social justice, and connection to NIU and the State of Illinois.”

4. Chicago students learn about Southeast Asia-Latin America connections

NIU’s Southeast Asia Club hosted fifty Chicago public school students and five chaperones from the Emiliano Zapata Academy April 16, who came to NIU for “Exploring Pacific Links at NIU,” a program exploring historical, cultural, and religious links between Southeast Asia and Latin America. The program was organized as a joint outreach project between CSEAS, NIU’s Center for Latino and Latin American Studies and the Latino Resource Center, and the club’s Global Ambassadors group, said anthropology graduate student Brett McCabe, whose brother Christopher is a teacher at Zapata. CSEAS director Jim Collins and Latino Resource Center director Emily Prieto introduced the program, which was held next door to the center at CLLAS. Speakers were three NIU historians: center associates Eric Jones and Trude Jacobsen, both Southeast Asia specialists, and Kristen Huffine, a Latin America specialist. Thanks to all participants, speakers, and to CLLAS director Michael Gonzales and CSEAS outreach director Julie Lamb, said McCabe.

5. Program set for June genocide workshop at NIU for teachers

Anthropology professors and center associates Judy Ledgerwood and Susan Russell will be among the featured speakers at the Roger W. Smith Genocide and Human Rights Summer Institute for K-16 educators set for June 14–17 at NIU. The institute, which is co-sponsored by the center and by NIU’s Genocide and Human Rights Institute, will focus on Southeast Asia and Africa. Ledgerwood will discuss Cambodia and Russell will cover the Philippines and Thailand. Other featured speakers from NIU include assistant history professor Ismael Montana, who will talk about Darfur and the Sudan, and associate history professor and institute director J. D. Bowers, who recently received NIU’s award of excellence for undergraduate teaching and who is co-authoring a textbook on genocide. Anthropologist Nancy Lutz (Southern Illinois University—
Edwardsville) will discuss Indonesia and East Timor. The institute will open with an overall look at genocide in the 21st century by Bowers. The keynote address will given by political scientist Scott Straus (University of Wisconsin–Madison), who will discuss the Rwandan genocide. Bartlett High School social studies teacher (and NIU alumnus) Brett Weiss and 2010 NIU graduate Shay Galto, who will give a presentation about the Cambodian genocide with Bowers, will round out the speakers. The institute was named for Roger W. Smith, a founder of the International Association of Genocide Scholars and an expert on the early 20th-century Armenian genocide. Modest stipends are available to the first 20 registered participants. Attending teachers will receive continuing education credits. For program information and registration details, see the institute website. Registration deadline: June 4.

6. McCord, Pierce, and Collins to visit Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia

Due to the uncertain political situation in Thailand, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean Christopher McCord, associate provost Deborah Pierce, and center director Jim Collins reluctantly had to change their plans to visit NIU alumni and partner universities in Thailand during a planned trip to Southeast Asia in May. They now plan to meet with academics in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (May 11–12), as part of CLAS’s new initiative to develop Vietnamese studies at NIU. From there the group will travel to three cities in Indonesia: Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Makassar. In Jakarta, they plan to consult with U.S. embassy staff about U.S. government-funded projects entrusted to NIU. They will also meet with NIU alumni to discuss student recruitment. In Yogyakarta they will visit Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, an institution that signed a memorandum of understanding with NIU in March 2010. Moving on to Makassar, they will hold joint discussions with another partner university, Universitas Hasanuddin, where an intersession program in the Indonesian language has been organized for NIU students (June 1–12). The NIU team will stop in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) to meet with embassy staff and officials at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, where an NIU Malay dictionary workshop is being held in cooperation with CSEAS on May 10. On May 18 McCord and Pierce will on to Korea to visit NIU partner universities. Collins will leave the same day for another NIU Malay dictionary workshop in Brunei, where he will be joined by NIU language professor and center associate Patricia Henry.

7. Wilson bequest arrives at Founders Library

More than 70 boxes of microfilms, documents, books, and cultural artifacts from Thailand and bequeathed to the center by late history professor emeritus Constance Wilson have arrived at Founders Library. Just before her death on Feb. 17, the center received word that Wilson, a Thai specialist, wanted to donate her research materials to NIU. Wilson’s relatives later arranged to have the collection sent to DeKalb. University Libraries associate
dean and center associate Chalermsee Olson will begin cataloging the collection this summer. A panel in honor of Wilson is being organized for the 2011 Association of Asian Studies meeting in Hawaii. Contact language professor and center associate John Hartmann for details.

8. Wiegele to participate in Boston University working group
Assistant anthropology professor and center associate Katharine Wiegele been invited by Robert Hefner and Peter Berger of the Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs (CURA) at Boston University to participate in a working group on “Markets, Democracy, and Miracles: Evangelicalism and Charismatic Christians in the Second and Third Generation.” This internationalized project will examine the implications of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christian growth for politics, economics, and culture in Russia, and seven countries from the global south. Wiegele will travel to Boston in June for the first group meeting and to the Philippines later this summer to conduct field research among Pentecostals and Catholic Charismatics there. Pentecostal and Charismatic varieties of Christianity are the fastest-growing religious phenomenon in the world, more far-reaching than resurgent Islam, Wiegele said.

9. Deadline reset to May 17 for Ramayana conference proposals
The deadline for presentation proposals has been extended to May 17 for the Third International Ramayana Conference, which is now scheduled for Sept. 18–19 at NIU’s DeKalb campus. The two-day event, co-sponsored by the center, the University of Illinois Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, and the International Ramayana Institute of North America, will include a teacher workshop. For details, see the conference website.

10. Center bids farewell to this year’s FLTAs
The end of the semester brings changes, including the end of quickly eaten celebratory cakes. The center’s hard-working and innovative Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTAs) will soon be heading back to Southeast Asia. A farewell party was hosted May 1 by center graduate assistant Mary Thomas to celebrate the role that Raden Maersaroh (Indonesian), Aileen Adam (Malay), Anito Librando (Tagalog), and Wara Chansin (Thai) have played in maintaining NIU’s high standards in teaching Southeast Asian languages. The occasion also marked an early celebration of Mamay’s birthday. The prestigious FLTA program is a Fulbright initiative funded by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. “We hope the next group of FLTAs arriving in August 2010 can live up to the high standards set by these four young
professionals,” said center director Jim Collins. “We deeply thank them for spending a long winter with us to advance the teaching of Southeast Asia languages.”

11. Globalization theme of International Burma Studies Conference in July

Burma/Myanmar in the era of globalization is the theme of the upcoming International Burma Studies Conference, which will be held July 6–9 at the Universite de Provence in Marseilles, France. NIU’s Center for Burma Studies is co-sponsoring the conference with Institut de Recherche sur le Sud-Est Asiatique (IRSEA-CNRS), Ecole francaise d’Extreme-Orient (EFEO), Centre Asie du Sud-Est (CASE-CNRS), and Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO). For details, e-mail burmastudies2010@gmail.com.

12. Scholarship available for Payap University summer program

A $1,000 scholarship is available for students applying for a three-week multi-disciplinary summer program set for July 4–23 at Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand, focusing on gender and sexuality studies. The multidisciplinary course, “Queer Thailand: Culture, Society and Sexual Identity,” is being offered at Payap by Study Australia through the Education Abroad Network. To get NIU credit and possible financial aid, interested students should contact the Study Abroad Office, 417 Williston Hall. Call 815-753-0304 or e-mail niuabroad@niu.edu. For program details, contact russ.alexander@studyaustralia.com.

13. Call for papers: Re-SEAing Southeast Asian American Studies conference

Paper, panel, and workshop proposals are due June 15 for the third annual interdisciplinary Southeast Asians in the Diaspora conference set for March 10–11, 2011, at San Francisco State University. Submit author name, affiliation, e-mail address, and 250-word abstract to Jonathan Lee, SFSI assistant professor of Asian American Studies at jlee@sfsu.edu.

14. Upcoming area Southeast Asia cultural opportunities

- The Lao Professionals of Illinois will present the first annual Lao Artist Festival in Elgin Aug. 20 at Hemmens Auditorium, 45 Symphony Way, and Aug. 21 at Elgin Community College, 1700 Spartan Drive. The festival will feature arts and handicrafts from Laos, traditional dance and music, a talent show, traditional dances, and more. Tickets are $10 in advance, $15 at the door. For details, see the festival website or call festival producer Aloun Khotisene at 847-877-8224.
- The Indonesian Consulate in Chicago offers free Balinese and Javanese dance and gamelan classes on weekends. For details, see the consulate website.
- The Cambodian Association of Illinois holds free traditional Cambodian music and dance lessons Sundays at the Cambodian American History Museum and
Killing Fields Memorial, 2831 W. Lawrence Ave., Chicago. The music program runs from 10 a.m. to noon; the dance program from 1 to 3 p.m. For details, call Anneth Houy at 773-878-7090. Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday and on weekends by appointment.

If you are a person with a disability who may need assistance at any center-sponsored event, contact office manager Nancy Schuneman at 815-753-1771 or nschunem@niu.edu. If you no longer wish to receive this bulletin, please reply to this e-mail with a request to remove your name. Thank you.