The project “Philippine Youth Leadership Program: Building a New Generation of Citizens as Catalysts for Social Change” (PYLP) will bring young leaders from the southern Philippines to NIU for the 8th consecutive year. The International Training Office will host the participants, 22 Muslim and non-Muslim youth and 4 adult leaders, who come from the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and surrounding provinces in the Philippines from April 16 to May 2, 2011.

PYLP year 8 has three major phases: a five-week U.S.-based Exchange Program, implementation of community service action plans, and follow-on activities for the alumni. The exchange program’s goal is to transmit knowledge and build action strategies among participants related to the following themes: civic education, leadership development, respect for diversity, inter-ethnic cooperation, volunteerism and community engagement. By drawing on the example of civic society and diversity in the United States and by understanding the larger regional context in which contemporary conflicts in Mindanao exist, participants will acquire new perspectives to support future grassroots efforts to build closer cooperation and understanding among the different cultural, religious, and political groups in the southern Philippines.

Through a range of formal and informal interactive learning workshops and site visits, the NIU-based institute will focus on advancing four general goals: 1) facilitating a dialogue and promoting greater mutual understanding and respect between Muslim and non-Muslim youth from the ARMM and surrounding provinces; 2) creating, educating and empowering a new generation of young leaders with a strong sense of civic responsibility and commitment to community development and meaningful social change; 3) increasing their understanding of American institutions that support ethnic diversity and religious pluralism; and 4) promoting a better overall understanding of the United States—its people, culture, values, civic institutions, and varieties of leadership. PYLP year 8 will run from July 1, 2010 and ends February 28, 2012.

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