Ramp Up: T.E.A.M pre orientation

By Zaki Sabuwala ’18

Ramp-Up is a pre-orientation program for students participating in T.E.A.M, a mentoring program that helps underrepresented first year students transition through a successful year of college. They get an upperclassman mentor who is also part of the underrepresented community at Bucknell, and over the years, they meet and discuss how to achieve the mentee’s (scholar) goals and find a way to solve their issues. The relationship is a mutual learning experience. There are also other T.E.A.M events to foster a community between our African, Latino/a, Asian and Native American (ALANA) students. It’s a supportive community that is strengthened by our pre orientation program. Ramp-Up is a great way for the scholars to get to know each other, their resources and other T.E.A.M mentors.

This year we had a jam packed schedule of team building, good food, and workshops. The first thing we did was take the scholars and the mentors to a low ropes course in the middle of nowhere. It allowed them to step away from campus and connection to the outside world. After that, we spent a night in a lodge where we had s’mores under a starry sky, with a warm campfire. The next day we had a service project at Dreamcatcher Farm. The farm provides fresh agricultural products to the local community. The owners of the farm gave us a tour of their land, and we got to work on weeding around the crops. Afterwards, we returned back to campus, cleaned ourselves up and enjoyed a delicious meal at Caribbean Connection for lunch. As the night came, we provided an opportunity for scholars and mentors to do a scavenger hunt around Downtown Lewisburg as a way to have them explore the Lewisburg community.

On the third day, we learned about resources on campus. We later took a trip over to Williamsport to get some Mexican food and went on the Hiawatha boat ride. During the orientation, we also had awesome parties with ESA and International Orientation!

We also got to meet Dr. Shallary Duncan, the founder of T.E.A.M. We had always wanted to invite her to meet the new scholars and show how much her program is changing the support system of ALANA students. We ended with a day at Knoebels with ESA.
Building Classrooms in Sri Lanka

By Sharmen Hettipola ’17

“Mata na.” This would so often be the response when I asked the students I was working with where their school supplies were. “Mata na” literally translates to “I don’t have” but you wouldn’t think it to mean that when you saw their smiling faces. They were just happy to be at school and learning, even though many things in their lives were holding them back from getting a proper education.

That’s where Projects for Peace comes in. Projects for Peace is a program that awards grant-winning undergraduate students (attending U.S. colleges that are part of the Davis United World College Scholars Program) $10,000 to design and implement projects that promote peace anywhere in the world. I was chosen as a grant-winner and was given the opportunity to spend a month in Sri Lanka building two classrooms for an impoverished rural school near my grandmother’s village. A few of the classrooms at the Mailapitiya School were severely deteriorated and consequently had worsened the learning conditions of the students attending the school. These new classrooms that my uncle (an architect) designed are intended to lessen the damage of these deteriorated classrooms by providing extra space to hold two classes. Furthermore, the classrooms include environmentally friendly features to capitalize on the relationship between green designs and better student productivity. These features include the use of open windows to take advantage of prevailing breezes and natural light, a roof that replaces the need for light bulbs, eco-friendly clay bricks, lead free local materials, and recycled materials for the foundation of the building. Our green design is less costly to maintain and more durable, permitting the school to save money for other classroom and student resources, two critical problems in need of addressing.

Some of the students owned only one pencil, which could hardly be called a pencil because it had been sharpened down to about an inch. Others would be walking around barefoot because they didn’t own a pair of shoes. “Mata na” became a phrase that would ring in my head at night because I would hear it so often during the day. My parents and I took on a side project of providing the students with a few school supplies before we left, but there’s still a lot of work to be done. I would hate to see these dedicated students, so eager to learn, lose their motivation, so I’m hoping to continue work with this school in the upcoming years. But it’s comforting to know, that in the meantime, there’s a team of people all wanting to do their part to help. Teachers at the school would spend their weekends offering free tuition classes on the weekends, while others would spend their own money for classroom and student resources, and many would offer to cook or buy a meal for a student that hadn’t been fed that day. The administrators and teachers all believed that these students could succeed, and wanted to do anything in their power to help make that happen. Likewise, my uncle, the contractor, and the laborers all demonstrated their commitment to education by working through weekends to make sure the building went up as quickly as possible.

Hopefully with these new classrooms, the devoted community members, and a few more school supplies, less and less students will be saying “mata na” when asked where their supplies are. These students have big dreams, most revolving around pulling their families out of poverty, and I hope to see them all succeed. I want to thank the Projects for Peace organization for allowing me to partake in such a wonderful, eye-opening experience and I encourage anyone with a desire to make a small change somewhere to apply for the grant.

Contact iss@bucknell.edu for more information about how you can apply for a Project for peace grant for 2017.
International Orientation 2016

By Deepshikha Parmessur ’19, International Orientation Assistant

International Orientation is probably one of my favorite events in Bucknell. This year, I had the amazing opportunity to come back as an International Orientation Assistant (IOA). I remember last year thinking to myself how fun and amazing it would be if I could be part of the team that is responsible in welcoming the new international students and making them feel comfortable on their first few days on campus. Soon enough, I realized that being an IOA comes with great responsibilities: waking up early for training, welcoming students at the airport, and just simply being around and smiling despite the few hours of sleep the previous night. But through it all, I think that being on the staff made me realize how the Bucknell community cares about having international students; from making sure that every one had a door decoration that represented their country to including at least a song from their respective countries during our last event.

It was almost around 5pm at the JFK airport when we welcomed the first group of international students who had travelled from all over the world. Despite their tired looks, they displayed enthusiasm and energy when we greeted them. It was at that moment I knew that this was going to be an incredible experience for both the IO staff and the new students. After spending a week of training from preparing individual door decorations that represented their country, to making sure we have small snack packs for them when they get on the bus, we were now more than ready to welcome the Class of 2020 international students.

Being an IOA teaches you a lot of things you thought you already knew about Bucknell. During the scavenger hunt, I came across some new places around campus I did not know existed. I made lasting friendships with the other IOAs. The special thing about IO is that even when it ended and classes started, we get to hang out with the students and help them if they had any questions. Overall, IO was an enriching experience as it helped me in my personal development by working in a team of diverse people.

By Brishti Mandal ’20, International Orientation Student

Sitting on a day long flight, contemplating why one would sign up to leave home so early for college, was not unique to me. Although running on weight constraints, we had packed bags full of both uncontrollable excitement (overshadowed by jet-lagged eyes) and inexplicable anxiousness. The journey we impatiently waited for through the application essays and I-20 forms, was about to begin.

Fast forward to Day 1 and the excitement slowly took over the anxiousness. Team bonding, fun activities, and excited smiles of our IO staff relieved us of the paper work that drained us of energy. Soon enough we were looking forward to 8’o clock breakfasts, scavenger hunts in the sultry morning, learning how to say “hello” in more than 10 languages, Walmart getaways, screaming on wooden roller coasters, and getting used to the funny Lewisburg weather. Every day ended in exhaustion but in greater delight of having found a new home. And now the pixelated versions of our family, friends and pets over skype did not make us too homesick.

Soon enough it came down to the last two days; they left us in splits with their impeccable acting skills and with a package full of memories at the end of the closure dinner. But as rightly pointed out, “International orientation might have ended, this will never end.” I speak on behalf of all us incoming international freshmen that we are extremely thankful for every bit of support the IO team put forth for us. Not only finding each other in the crowd, but knowing that we will have this family for the rest of our 4/5 years, makes us smile from ear to ear. Thank you for all the sleep-deprived days of effort, for walking us from one corner of the campus to another multiple times and for doing all this with most contagious energy. We are very glad to have taken that early college flight before all our friends.
Cultural Organizations at Bucknell

SAAB

Students for Asian Awareness at Bucknell (SAAB), the largest cultural club on campus, strives to establish an inclusive and enthusiastic community amongst our members and on the Bucknell campus by promoting Asian culture. SAAB serves as a source of multicultural organization to promote social, racial, and cultural tolerance. It also offers an opportunity for its members to understand, appreciate, and respect the Asian cultures through social, educational, and cultural events. The club hosts several social events throughout the year such as Big/Little week, Made in Asia, and Karaoke Night but is best known for its signature event, Asian Gala, which is held every spring. With the primary goal being to increase awareness of the Asian heritage and be the voice of the Asian community at Bucknell, SAAB welcomes all current and incoming Asian students, as well as all non-Asian students, who appreciate the goals of the organization to join. You do not need to be Asian to join! The club is open to everyone who is fascinated by Asian cultures, and would love to contribute to spreading Asian awareness on campus. Our weekly meeting times are on Wednesdays between 7 and 8pm in ELC Arches Lounge.

BASA

Bucknell’s Africa Student Association seeks to enlighten Bucknell students, faculty, staff and the Lewisburg community on the diverse cultures of the African continent and hence, prepare them to act as ambassadors on and off campus beyond. Through our activities and events, we aim to promote diversity and to foster a deeper understanding of African values at Bucknell. BASA is privileged to have a strong and diverse constituency and welcomes all current and incoming African students, as well as all non-African students, who appreciate the goals of the organization. Through our annual BASA Bash and fundraising efforts, we have been able to fund Oreoluwa’s education in Nigeria. That being said, BASA aims to be a safe space for those who identify with African culture, as well as advocate for equal opportunity across the globe.

SASA

The South Asian Student Association (SASA) is an organization aimed at bringing together students from all walks of life and forming a community which focuses on campus outreach and spreading awareness about the South Asian culture in general. We are proud to be the host of the longest-standing student-run event - The Annual SASA Dinner - celebrating its 44th anniversary this fall. This event aims at bringing together students, faculty, staff, and members of the community to celebrate South Asian culture and showcase our group's talents. Our program includes dancing, singing, and general showcasing our culture. Other activities include the members getting together and discussing pertinent events; occasionally we are involved in discussions related to diversity on campus. We also encourage creating strong bonds between members through cricket games, movie nights, cooking dinner and so much more.
Meet some members of the Class of 2020!

Name: Amaryllis Kanyabwero  
Hometown: Bujumbura, Burundi  
Major(s): Cell Biology & biochemistry  
Why Bucknell: There are so many reasons why I applied to Bucknell. With its beautiful campus and the tremendous amount of activities and clubs that can accommodate my interests in dance, biology, sports and service, Bucknell has conquered my heart. I applied to Bucknell looking at the stats, pictures and articles on the internet, as I was far from the U.S. and could not visit the school. However, I was happily surprised that nothing was exaggerated. Bucknell has great academics, great facilities and great people! (oh and the food is good too!).  
Favorite Bucknell experience(s): During orientation, we had a pep rally to learn Bucknell’s fight song. That day was amazing. All first-year students colored our faces and arms with orange and blue paint and we took tons of pictures. What I liked the most about that event is that it was a great time to connect with people in my hall as well as other first-year students. We were all united by our pride to be Bucknellians and we joyfully sang the ‘Ray Bucknell song.

Name: Yasameen Mohammadi 
Hometown: Kabul, Afghanistan 
Major(s): Undecided  
Why Bucknell: Besides Bucknell’s strong academic reputation, beautiful nature and kind people, I mainly choose to apply because of what Bucknell stands for. (Helping students to become the best version of themselves)  
Favorite Bucknell experience(s): My favorite experience/memory is by far the International Orientation. Even though that I was not feeling well, it was a lot of fun and I got to meet and spend quality time with all other international students and the IOAs and IOLs. The bond we have made during that week is unforgettable and I am sure it will take us far.

Name: An Phan 
Hometown: Hanoi, Vietnam 
Major(s): Undecided Management  
Why Bucknell: Bucknell’s excellent academic reputation is a major factor that helps me decide to choose the school. Specifically, Bucknell offers Management for undergraduates, and I was especially attracted to Markets, Innovation and Design major. Faculty and staff are amazing, encouraging and always want students to succeed. Bucknell has a vast resource that readily aids students with almost everything they need. Other than that, I like the location – right at the center of Pennsylvania that I only need a few hours’ drive to get to many big cities around the area.  
Favorite Bucknell experience(s):  
International Orientation – very welcoming and informative  
Classes – enlightening  
Professors – extremely knowledgeable and ready to help  
Cafeteria – serves the best pizzas on Earth
Upcoming IEA Events

**Common Ground**
A five day student-led retreat dedicated to exploring topics relating to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender on campus
When: October 7—11.
Applications due by Wednesday Sept. 21, 5pm

**Passion for the Arts and Everyday Life**
Ala Hamdan and Sayid Ahma talk about the role of women in the arts in the Middle East
September 28th, 5pm
Location: Walls Lounge

**Community Dinner**
The Personal is Political: How Do Your Religious Beliefs Influence Your Political Stance and Your Daily Life?
Tuesday, September 27

“Life After Being Called Out” with Shane Lloyd and Maura Pavalow
September 29th at 7pm AND Sept 30th at noon.

**Solidarity March**
The event supports those who have been marginalized or silenced within their community
Tuesday, October 4th
Time: 5:30pm

**Community Dinner**
The Personal is Political: How Do Your Religious Beliefs Influence Your Political Stance and Your Daily Life?
Tuesday, September 27

Professional Staff:
Denelle Brown (Assoc. Dean of Students for Diversity and Inclusion)
Myrna Perkins (Administrative Assistant)
Jennifer Figueroa (ISS)
Bill McCoy (LGBTQ Resources)
Rosalie Rodriguez (MSS)
John Colatch (Religious life)
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