

## BACK TO SCHOOL, OUT OF THE BOX Letter from the Director

I sat next to a businessman on a recent flight. As we endured the turbulence leaving Phoenix, talk turned to the state of the world. "It's hard not to see the world as spiraling out of control," he said. "It's so bad – I had to stop watching Fox News. I was getting too depressed. I felt like I was in a box with no way out."

At that moment, I was anything but depressed about the state of the world. I had just hosted a welcome reception for about 100 Fulbright scholars, students and alumni based in Arizona. It was a lovely event, with about 43 countries represented by eager, bright minds, future leaders in their academic fields and in their countries. People who are preparing themselves to take on those "spiraling out of control" problems my seat-mate found so depressing, problems like AIDS, water shortages and sustainable food and energy supplies.

The week before, we hosted a dinner for a delegation of higher-ed leaders who came from Syria to the US under the International Visitor Leadership Program. Several board members (IIE President Allan Goodman, DU Chancellor Robert Coombe, Colorado Community College System President Nancy McCallin and Colorado School of Mines Provost Steven Castillo) were table hosts and eagerly engaged



the Syrians in discussion of familiar higher ed issues such as ensuring access for diverse populations, research agendas, faculty credentials, budget pressures, academic preparation and curriculum reform. The evening concluded with shared hopes to implement exchanges between Syrian and Colorado higher education institutions.

Back on the flight out of Phoenix, I tried to convey to my seatmate the basis for my optimism: interacting with the people in our programs gives one the ability to break down the sides of the boxes in which we feel stuck. Actually, sharing ideas and working side-by-side in a learning environment that transcends boundaries, such as our scholars and students do, might even get that world back on its axis. I am privileged to do this on a daily basis, and hope that you will "come back to school" with us and utilize our programs to meet and interact deeply with our students, scholars and visitors. It is a box-breaking experience!

**Karen de Bartolomé**  
Executive Director  
Rocky Mountain Region

## THE FULBRIGHT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM COMES TO DENVER

Water scarcity is a critical global issue and one new Fulbright student's desire to solve water resource problems has brought him from one water-challenged climate to another. Colorado welcomes its first International Fulbright Science & Technology (S&T) grantee, a Ph.D student from Swaziland.

Mcebisi Mkhwanazi recently arrived from his home country in southern Africa and, like most Coloradans, he is concerned about water. Swaziland has endured long periods of drought as well as intermittent floods which have devastated the agricultural economy. Drought in 2006 and 2007 left more than twenty-five percent of the population in need of emergency food. As a Civil Engineering Ph.D student at Colorado State University, Mcebisi plans to become an expert on water resources and to discover ways that technology can improve irrigation needed for agriculture. He joins 47 other extraordinary S&T grantees beginning scientific study and research in top US doctoral programs.

The International Fulbright Science & Technology award was created by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)

of the US Department of State to be a prestigious international scholarship in science and technology and to demonstrate the US's commitment to welcoming and developing scientific researchers. Current S&T grantees are engaged in doctoral research in fields such as biomedical engineering, computer science, energy, environmental science, neurosciences, and oceanography. This unique program sponsored by the Department of State provides grantees with exceptional research and leadership opportunities while also promoting cultural exchange. Profiles of students like Mcebisi are posted on the International Fulbright Science & Technology website at: <http://scienceandtech.fulbrightonline.org>.

The first S&T cohort began their US studies in 2007 and, as the 2010 cohort is arriving, the student supervision of the S&T program has come to our Denver office. We are excited about adding this group of outstanding grantees to the group of Fulbright students supported by the Denver office. We hope you will be able to attend upcoming Fulbright events, talk with Mcebisi about his water resource research, and welcome him to Colorado.



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## WESTERN UNION FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP

The Institute of International Education – Rocky Mountain Regional Center is proud to be working with Western Union Foundation to administer the Western Union Family Scholarship. This scholarship, which is now completing its fifth round, is designed to help a family move up the economic development ladder by helping 2 members of a family through support of language acquisition classes, vocational training, or undergraduate course work. At least one member of the family must have been born outside of the US for the pair to be eligible.

Since the beginning of the scholarship, IIE-Rocky Mountain has processed 865 applications and has approved awards to 60 families (120 individuals) totaling more than \$300,000. Recipients are attending schools across the country, from community colleges to Ivy Leagues. The most recent round saw a huge increase in popularity, with more than 700 applicants. We want to introduce you to one of our winning families:

Mahshid Mashayekhi and Shirin Afsan are a daughter/mother pair of recipients of the Western Union Family Scholarship. They are refugees from Iran currently living in California. In addition to financial struggles, they've had hard times learning the language and culture. Both Mahshid and Shirin volunteer weekly at a senior center. Mashid explains:

"While we have been in the States for only over a year, we feel that it is amazing that we are already in the position to give something back to the community that has welcomed us and helped us when we arrived here."

Mahshid's long term goal is to become a Pharmacist and then eventually obtain her Doctorate in Pharmaceutical Sciences. She first plans to obtain her Associate's degree in Science, then her Bachelor's and then go onto Pharmaceutical school. Her mother, Shirin, was a housewife in Iran but wants to be a Teacher's Assistant in the US. She plans to pursue an AA degree in Child Development and is currently enrolled in ESL classes.

IIE-Rocky Mountain is honored to partner with the Western Union Foundation to help families like Mahshid and Shirin pursue their educational goals.



*"Shirin Afsan and Mahshid Mashayekhi- two of the winners of the Western Union Family Scholarship in 2010."*