Outstanding International Student

International student Nowsherwan (Nash) Sultan, junior physics major from Pakistan, was selected to participate in research at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Nebraska as one of six Georgia College students with the Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REUs) through the National Science Foundation (NSF). Nash will explore “polarization and spin phenomena in nanferroic structures.” He hopes to find “magnetic memory” applications for information processing and storage. “I am really excited and grateful to get this opportunity,” Sultan said. “The main goal of my college experience was to gain hands-on experience in my field of study. I believe this is my first step toward that.” “This will be a great learning experience;” he said, “and will give me a chance to apply knowledge I’ve gained from the classroom to solve real-world problems.” Congratulations, Nash, on this remarkable achievement!

Sixteen checked suitcases each filled with 50 pounds of medical supplies made the journey to the African nation of Tanzania. Inside them surgical gloves, IV equipment, heart monitors and more. All much needed equipment for a developing country in terms of their health care system.

“Tanzania’s main focus—they realized that they are way down in the world as far as their health care, “ said Dr. Sallie Coke, associate professor of nursing. “Their main problem is maternal death and newborn child death. They have started training every single registered nurse, who is also bachelor’s prepared just like here, as a midwife as well.”

The nurses there have the training, but lack basic medical supplies. “They don’t have a NICU (neonatal intensive care unit),” said Ritesh Patel, who graduates May 2017 with his Master of Nursing degree. “They have one bed and one oxygen tank. That’s things that we don’t even think about here.”

When Georgia College's School of Nursing decide to partner with the Maternal and Midwifery Services of the City of Arusha, they asked the nurses there to provide a wish list of items they needed. That request came not in an email, but a handwritten list of items they would like to have to provide better care. At the bottom was written “We humbly and thankfully request these medical supplies.”

COHS Expands International Service-Learning to Tanzania

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That lit a fire in the students. Knowing they had a chance to really make a difference, the students collected nearly $20,000 worth of supplies to donate to the hospitals they worked with. “I think they were in shock by the quantity of it all. They were not expecting it to be as much as it was,” said Tara Butts, who graduates May 2017 with her Master of Nursing degree. “It’s just so sincere to me that they don’t expect this from us, but they were so grateful.”

Even with the supplies they donated, students still found it challenging to provide care.

“I think we all realized that the medical personnel knew exactly what they needed to do in order to provide the best medical care possible, but they just don’t have the resources to provide that care,” said Butts. “They are so resourceful with what they do have, but you can’t help but wonder how health outcomes would change if they had the same resources we do in America.”

Compared to the five per 1,000 infant deaths in the U.S. in 2016, Tanzania faced 41 deaths per 1,000 births. That’s according to the CIA World Factbook. “I realized how fortunate we are to have all this equipment, and that we are able to use the resources we have to provide care for the people that are here,” said Patel.

Led by Coke and Dr. Debby MacMillan, associate professor of nursing, undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students worked alongside each other allowing the veteran nurses to also become teachers. “I’m really glad that we had all levels of students. When our new graduates encountered something, they at least had a pro right there behind them that could help,” said Coke.

The hands on learning gave students the opportunity to growth both professionally and personally. “It was an amazing opportunity for the students to work with the professionals at the hospital,” said Coke. “There were some difficulties especially realizing that basic things like working oxygen and blood pressure cuffs— things we take for basic requirements— are not readily available in their hospitals.”

Aside from working in the hospitals the group took a safari, hiked and experienced the Tanzanian way of life.

“This study abroad experience has helped prepare me for my future career because it has made me so much more culturally aware,” said senior nursing major Olivia Melvin. “The profession of nursing naturally exposes you to so many different people, cultures and ways of life, and I think my experience in Tanzania has helped me think in more global terms as opposed to ‘what is different from the American way of life.’”

The students set out on the trip to make a difference in the lives of the people in Tanzania. They did that, but in the end they took away more than what they were able to give—a “life changing” experience. “Professionally it has made me realize the importance of basic assessment skills and how much we take for granted as providers in the U.S. We rely so much on our diagnostic capabilities that we forget the fundamentals of medical care,” said Butts. “Personally, it makes me want to drop everything and move my family to Tanzania in hopes that I could make a small impact in some way. You can’t even imagine the need that is there. Having two daughters makes me so thankful that they grow up in a place where they can go to school and get an education. It breaks my heart that not all women of the world have that same opportunity.”

Student worked with the Maternal and Midwifery Services of the City of Arusha.
New Professional Spanish Language Program in Chile

For most of May, 10 Georgia College sophomores, juniors and seniors traveled to Chile to job shadow professionals and leaders in academia, accounting, architecture, digital marketing, finance, real estate and tourism. Many of these individuals are the owners or presidents of their companies.

Georgia College senior Martin Wilson chose to study in Chile because it is a historically and culturally rich nation.

“It represents countless ethnic groups and still maintains peace and a booming economy 30 years after a dictatorship,” he said. “There is a ton of economic and cultural opportunity in Chile right now.”

Wilson jumped at this opportunity as a chance to learn new things.

“I expect to develop somewhat of a grasp on the most difficult Spanish to understand in the world,” he said. “Luckily after that, all other dialects of Spanish will come easy. I expect to get out of my comfort zone and immerse myself in a new culture and language.”

Also fascinated by the culture, Dorothy Denham, a senior, at first didn’t know if she would be able to participate.

“Originally, I didn’t think I would financially be able to go, but I knew it wasn’t an opportunity to miss,” she said. “I’ve always loved the country. I received a generous $1,000 scholarship through Georgia College, which has really helped me with the costs.”

Students will live with host families who have been instructed to not speak English unless there is an emergency. Despite this challenge, they are filled with excitement about this study abroad experience.

“Of course, there is some anxiety associated with living with a host family that does not speak English and diving into a high-level professional world, and in a foreign language to boot,” said Dr. Brantley Nicholson, assistant professor of Spanish and Latin American culture. “Most of the students studying abroad have advanced into the upper-division of Spanish classes, but a few have only taken the basic language requirement. These students proved to me that they have the linguistic ability and drive to take on the challenge.”

While in the country, students will also hear from speakers, who run companies, representatives of the Chilean Ministry of the economy and Start-Up Chile—a Chilean Government program that attracts entrepreneurs to bring together their start ups using Chile as a foundation.

Some of the sites they’ll visit include Santiago’s museums and cultural sites including the Museo Pre-columbino, Pablo Neruda’s Santiago and Valparaiso homes, the Teatro Mori, the Teatro Las Condes, the Museum of Memory and Human Rights and the architectural works of the Pritzker Prize winning Alejandro Aravena.

“I’d really love to visit the Museum of Memory and Human Rights, which gives a history of the atrocities of the Pinochet regime, but also an account of the resilience of the Chilean people,” said Denham. “I think it’s important to understand the history of a country when you visit.”

The students, who are majoring in accounting, English, management, marketing, mass communications, public health, rhetoric and Spanish, will temporarily live in the eastern half of Santiago—described as a modern area comparable to north Atlanta.
The IEC awarded Dr. Debby MacMillan (COHS) a faculty development grant to develop a health science study abroad program in England. She plans to travel to England in the fall of 2017. This funding was recommended by the International Faculty Development Grants committee.

A painting depicts Start-UP Chile - a Chilean Government program that attracts entrepreneurs to bring together their start-ups using Chile as a foundation.

After the program ends, some students will travel to Buenos Aires, Machu Picchu and the Atacama Desert. Senior Allison Leotis is one of those individuals.

“I want to visit the historic places in Chile and the surrounding islands,” she said. “Places like Easter Island, Magdalena Island, Mano del Desierto, the mountains, beaches and the Atacama Desert.”

Nicholson’s expectation is that students gain linguistically, experientially and professionally from this study abroad experience.

“They will grow personally from learning how to navigate a foreign society both socially and academically.”

The IEC has launched its 5-year strategic plan with the goals of increasing study abroad and international student enrollments. The long-term goal is to send 25% of GC graduates abroad at least once prior to graduation by 2022. The IEC currently sends close to 15% of its students abroad before graduation. An international student recruitment and market study will be completed by June 30, 2017. Recommendations for targeting five undergraduate student markets will be made to Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management.

The IEC awarded 120 study abroad scholarships in April for student experiences in the summer and fall of 2017. These scholarships came from the following endowments: Virginia Weir Fund, the Elizabeth Chandler Minter Scholarship, the Guy H. Wells Memorial Scholarship, the Wellington Study Abroad Scholarship, and the Semple-Morrarty Memorial Scholarship fund. Student applications were reviewed by the Education Abroad Committee.
Chidinma Uzoagu (Nigeria) and Jan Serpan (Czech Republic) were awarded scholarship monies from the Global Scholars Fund. This endowment supports international students with the costs of study at Georgia College after their first year on campus. Global Scholars Fund student awards are based on merit and need. The scholarship monies for the two students are allocated for next academic year. Student applications and nomination were vetted by the International Student and Scholars Committee.

Recent graduate, Chukwuemeka ‘Chuks’ Ibebuike (B.S. in Physics) was featured in the Macon Telegraph on May 4th. By the time he is 40 years old, Chuks would like to start running for political office in Nigeria. He has seen government corruption and mismanagement and the decline of Nigerian currency, and he “can’t turn a blind eye to his home country,” he said. This motivated him in his studies in Georgia.