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In this issue:

U.S. Embassy Celebrates Independence Day..... 1

Visit of U.S. Assistant Secretary Boucher to Uzbekistan..... 1

Independence Day a Civic and Social Event.....3

A Teenager's View of Islam in America.....4

Survey Finds Americans Are Religious, Tolerant.....5

Exchange Program Alumni Perform Comedic One Acts...6

Second Annual Alumni Conference.....7

New Jersey.....8

Fulbright Scholar Shares Feltmaking Processes..... 12

Renewable Energy Specialist Visits Uzbekistan..... 13

English Language Specialist Offers Intensive Writing Instruction..... 14

New Report Teaches Teachers to Evaluate Online Learning.. 15

Internet Revolutionizes Campaign Fundraising..... 16

Innovative Use of Online Networks Transforming Society..... 17

What I Saw in Afghanistan....18

U.S. Helps to Resolve Global Food Crisis..... 19

Sports in America.....20-21

Elite Colleges Reporting Record Lows in Admission....22

Democracy Commission Small Grants Program.....23

U.S. Government Exchange Program Alumni.....24

U.S. Embassy Celebrates Independence Day

Ambassador Richard Norland hosted the annual official Fourth of July Reception at the U.S. Embassy on July 3. Hundreds of guests joined U.S. Embassy staff members to celebrate the 232nd anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, including Senate Chairman Ilgizar Sobirov, Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis Speaker Dilorom Tashmukhamedova, First Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov, Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov, Minister for Foreign Economic Relations Elyor Ganiev, Minister of Justice Ravshan Mukhitdinov, Health Minister Feruz Nazirov, and all five state advisors.



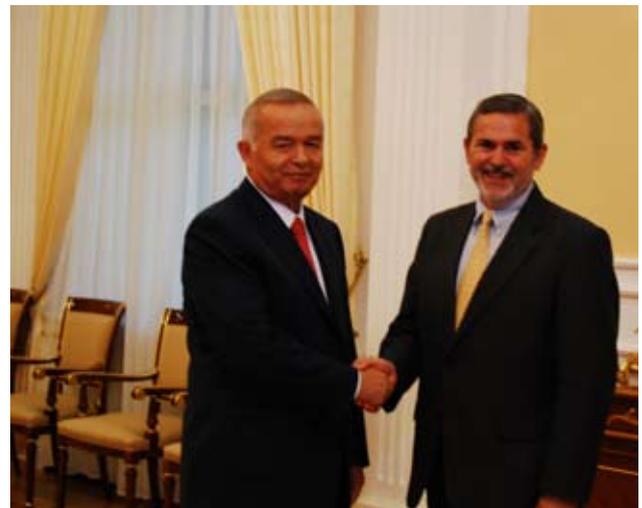
U.S. Embassy photo

Members of the diplomatic and American expatriate communities as well as Uzbek journalists, academics, non-governmental organizations, cultural figures, and business executives attended the event along with other Embassy friends and associates.

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U.S. Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher Visits Uzbekistan

The Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher visited Uzbekistan from May 30 to June 3 as part of his regular consultations in the region. His most recent visit to Uzbekistan was in August 2006.



The President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov welcomes Assistant Secretary Boucher to Uzbekistan. (U.S. Embassy photo)

While in Tashkent, Assistant Secretary Boucher met with President Islam Karimov and several senior Uzbek Government officials including Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Norov and Secretary of the National Security Council Murod Ataev. The Assistant Secretary also met human rights activists, toured Tashkent National Islamic University, visited the

Continued on page 10

U.S. Embassy Celebrates Independence Day



Continued from front page

As the sun set, the Embassy detachment of U.S. Marines presented the U.S. flag while a choir composed of U.S. and Uzbek Embassy staff members sang the U.S. and Uzbek national anthems. As the anthems came to a close Ambassador Norland gave his first Independence Day message as U.S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan. His remarks follow below. He closed his speech by greeting the audience with a hearty "Aloha!," a traditional Hawaiian greeting. In keeping with this year's Hawaiian theme, the ceremony concluded with a traditional Hawaiian welcome dance performed by a local dance troupe and band, and a performance of a traditional Uzbek dance from Khorezm. Thanks to the generous contributions of Uzbek and American businesses, guests also enjoyed traditional 4th of July dishes and beverages.



Ambassador Norland's Independence Day Speech

U.S. Embassy, Tashkent
July 3, 2008

Chairman of the Oliy Majlis Senate Sobirov, Speaker of the legislative chamber Mrs. Tashmukhamedova, First Deputy Prime Minister Azimov, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen, good evening and welcome to our celebration of the 232nd Anniversary of the Independence of the United States of America. It is an honor to have you here.

Each year we have a theme for our July Fourth celebration. As you can see, the inspiration for today's event is America's 50th state, Hawaii. Joining the union in 1959, Hawaii is com-

posed of a group of eight volcanic islands far out in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of the continental United States.

Hawaii is diverse in every sense of the word. Americans of native Hawaiian heritage live and work side-by-side with Americans of European and Japanese ancestry. In a country primarily made up of one large continent, Hawaii's island nature provides added flavor to the character of the United States.

The islands of Hawaii are in stark contrast to double-landlocked Uzbekistan. But the warmth of the people, the deep cultural heritage and the ancient traditions of hospitality are common to both places.

We Americans living in Uzbekistan – only a few hundred of us, including the children – are a small group of people, and we are far, far from home.

Yet we are honored to be here. We believe that, together with our Uzbek friends and colleagues, we are working together to promote our common interests in Central Asia, a region of pivotal importance in bridging North and South, East and West.

The pace of U.S.-Uzbek relations continues to intensify. We are working together on democratic reform and human rights. We are working together to increase student exchanges. We are working together to improve the investment climate. And the Chevrolet Nexia you saw when you came in symbolizes the fact that this is the 100th anniversary of the founding of General Motors. We are working together on Afghanistan.

We do so in a spirit of mutual respect. Where trust may have been lost in recent years, we seek to rebuild it.

Our goal is to work with and also learn from the people of Uzbekistan as they continue along the exciting but sometimes difficult path since independence was established only a short 17 years ago. Much has been accomplished. There is much to be proud of. And, of course, there is still work to be done. Work we can do together.

We look forward to deepening our partnership with Uzbekistan in the year ahead. Aloha! Welcome, and please help us celebrate our 232nd birthday!

U.S. Independence Day a Civic and Social Event



Fourth of July fireworks explode high over New York City. (© AP Images)

The United States celebrates its Independence Day on July 4, a day of patriotic celebration and family events throughout the country. In the words of Founding Father John Adams, the holiday would be “the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance. ... It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more.”

The Fourth of July holiday is a major civic occasion, with roots deep in the Anglo-American tradition of political freedom.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Each year, crowds of visitors flock to the National Mall -- the grassy expanse between the U.S. Capitol and the Washington Monument -- for the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, which always takes place on two weekends overlapping the Fourth of July holiday. The 2008 festival celebrates the culture of Bhutan, the music, food and wine of Texas and the history of NASA and the U.S. space program.

Throughout the United States, Fourth of July fireworks displays are popular, from the spectacular exhibition on the National Mall to more modest fireworks shows in city parks across the land. In New York City, Macy's department store for 31 years has sponsored what it bills as the nation's largest July 4 fireworks display. In 2008, the 30-minute show will feature 35,000 shells launched from six barges afloat in the East River and in New York Harbor. Macy's estimates that more than 3 million will watch in person. The event has been televised nationally in recent years.

“The Fourth” is a family celebration. Picnics and barbecues are common. July is summer in the United States, and millions of Americans escape the heat at beaches and other vaca-

tion spots. Independence Day is not among the legal holidays fixed on a Monday or Friday, but many employees use vacation time to create an extended weekend.

Construction of important public works sometimes begins on July 4. The Erie Canal, Washington Monument and Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (the nation's first) all broke ground on Independence Day. The date reflects a desire symbolically to stamp these projects as true civic improvements.

A CIVIC OCCASION

The Fourth of July is a time when elected officials and other public figures often give speeches extolling American traditions and values.

Independence Day has provided some of this nation's most stirring words of freedom. In 1788, Founding Father James Wilson addressed a Philadelphia gathering that was possibly the largest July 4 celebration in the young nation's history. He exhorted his fellow citizens to ratify the proposed Constitution. “A people, free and enlightened,” he said, “establishing and ratifying a system of government ... A WHOLE PEOPLE exercising its first and greatest power -- performing an act of SOVEREIGNTY, ORIGINAL and UNLIMITED.”

On July 4, 1852, the black journalist and abolitionist Frederick Douglass decried the evils of slavery, still prevalent in the American South at that time, but identified forces “drawing encouragement from the Declaration of Independence, the great principles it contains, and the genius of American Institutions in operation” that “must inevitably work The downfall of slavery.”

Ninety years later, near the darkest moments of World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt reminded the nation that for the “weary, hungry, unequipped Army of the American Revolution ... the Fourth of July was a tonic of hope and inspiration. So is it now.... The tough, grim men who fight for freedom in this dark hour take heart in its message -- the assurance of the right to liberty under God -- for all peoples and races and groups and nations, everywhere in the world.”

On July 4, 2001, President George W. Bush spoke outside Independence Hall, Philadelphia, birthplace of the Declaration of Independence. That document, he said, continues to represent “the standard to which we hold others, and the standard by which we measure ourselves. Our greatest achievements have come when we have lived up to these ideals. Our greatest tragedies have come when we have failed to uphold them.”

Across the nation, civic leaders of even the most humble station echo these words, and their audiences give thanks for the freedom and liberties that the founding generation won for all Americans.

A Teenager's View of Islam in America

Young people explain what it means to be an American Muslim



Dilara Hafiz, left, and her children Imran and Yasmine published *The American Muslim Teenager's Handbook* in 2007. (© AP Images)

Of all the faiths practiced in the United States, Islam is the fastest growing, the most questioned and the least understood.

“Will you wear Muslim clothes to school tomorrow?” “When we go to your house can we eat Muslim food?” “Do you know where Osama bin Laden is?”

These are some of the questions that young American Muslims are faced with from their non-Muslim peers in the post-9/11 era.

The Hafiz family -- Imran, 16, Yasmine, 18, and their mother, Dilara -- wrote *The American Muslim Teenager's Handbook* in 2007 to begin to shed some light on many of these questions and to provide a resource to other young Muslims trying to balance the American culture with their religion.

“There were lots of resources for Christians and Jews, but it is good to have resources for Muslims,” Yasmine said.

She saw a need to provide American Muslims teenagers like herself with a guide to help them better understand their religion and how to be a good Muslim.

Both Yasmine and Imran encountered stereotypes at their school, such as that all Muslims share the same dress, food and rituals. They wrote this book to show that Islam is a religion and not connected to a specific culture of its own.

Those who practice Islam are just as diverse as Americans who practice any other faith. Muslims come from a variety of countries, speak many different languages, and have different cultures. To the Hafiz family there is no one way to be a Muslim, and this is what they emphasize in their book.

Their book stresses the basics, or the “fundamentals” as Imran puts it, of Islam. It talks to people who are new to the faith and want to learn more, and it provides how-to instruc-

tions for young Muslims who may be unclear about all the nuances of their faith.

The book is written in approachable and accepting language. It does not try to convert anyone to the religion, nor does it admonish those who are more secular in practicing their faith and do not strictly follow every rule.

It explains why Muslims pray five times a day, what the pillars of the faith are, who Mohammed was and how to fast. It probes more controversial issues about what Muslims can eat, wearing the hijab and what every teenager wants to know about dancing, drinking and dating.

Since there is no single head of Islam, American Muslims lacked a unified authority to address the public's fear of Islam after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

“We sensed a trend in alienation,” Dilara said.

The family said they saw Muslims who were more secular begin to turn away from the faith, and they also saw Muslims become more conservative or radicalized in response to the tension regarding Islam in America.

“Why not define ourselves,” said Yasmine about being an American Muslim during this time.

The family also discussed how the attacks made Muslims abroad fearful of coming to America. The family said they want to enlighten others about Islam, but also let Muslims abroad know that America is not a bad place for Muslims.

“People abroad say, ‘Wow, you live in America as a Muslim and it's okay,’” Dilara said.

“The way terrorism is fought is through education. Promoting this is our ‘jihad,’” Imran said.



Students from the Muslim Academy in Gretna, La., stroll through an exhibit at the International Museum of Muslim Culture housed in the Mississippi Arts Center in Jackson, Miss. The museum's director sees the exhibits as another way for Americans to learn about Muslims, their lives and traditions. (© AP Images)

Survey Finds Americans Are Religious, Tolerant, Nondogmatic

Belief in God held by vast majority of Americans



Aruna Rao, an Indian American, stands near a statue of the Hindu god Ganesha, in Edison, New Jersey (© AP Images)

The typical American believes in God (92 percent), believes in absolute standards of right and wrong (78 percent), prays at least weekly (75 percent), believes in life after death (74 percent) and believes in sacred scripture as the word of God (63 percent). But that typical American is also tolerant of other peoples' beliefs and strikingly nondogmatic in the sense of not believing his or her own religion to be the only path to salvation or to have a monopoly on truth.

These findings emerge from a new study by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.

When issuing its landmark U.S. Religious Landscape Survey in February on the religious makeup of American society, the Pew Forum promised to issue a second analysis, based on the same survey, that would examine American religious beliefs and practices as well as social and political attitudes of believers and nonbelievers.

More than three-fourths of those surveyed classify themselves as Christian, and 5 percent belong to other faiths. A growing number of American adults (16 percent) do not belong to any particular religious group. More than 28 percent of American adults leave the faith of their childhoods to practice another religion -- or no religion.

Seventy percent of Americans who considered themselves affiliated with a particular religious tradition believe many religions can lead to eternal life, including solid majorities of Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Jews.

As for whether there is more than one true way to interpret the teachings of their particular religion, the overwhelming majority of Americans (68 percent) believe there is, again including solid majorities of Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Jews. Only Mormons (43 percent) and Jehovah's Witnesses (18 percent) lack a majority willing to give assent to multiple interpretations.

The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey queried more than 35,500 adults age 18 and older living in the United States, gathering data on not only the size of various religious groups, including the smallest ones, but also demographic characteristics, social and political values, religious practices and shifting religious affiliations. It was conducted by telephone in 2007 in both English and Spanish.



Father Ruben Rios walks behind altar boys at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Phoenix. (© AP Images)

The survey found that a large portion (41 percent) of Americans who are unaffiliated with any particular group nevertheless say that religion is at least somewhat important in their lives and about 70 percent of them believe in God.

The unaffiliated are likely to be secular in their outlook and to hold liberal political views, while those who regularly attend worship services and hold traditional religious views are likely to be conservative in their political views, the survey found.

Among those who are affiliated with a particular religious group, less than a majority (44 percent) believe their religion should preserve its traditional beliefs and practices, while about one third (35 percent) believe their religion should adjust to new circumstances, and one-eighth (12 percent) believe their religion should adopt modern beliefs and practices.

Majorities of mainline Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus believe their religions should adjust to new circumstances or adopt modern beliefs and practices, the survey found.

Popular culture is seen as a threat to their values by a significant minority (42 percent), especially Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and evangelical Protestants.

The complete U.S. Religious Landscape Survey and the new Pew Forum study are available on the Pew Forum Web site at <http://pewforum.org/>.

Exchange Program Alumni Perform Comedic One Acts



U.S. Embassy photo

In Tashkent on May 30 and 31, a group of young and energetic students and alumni of U.S. Government-sponsored educational exchange programs continued a tradition of staging a play in English, performing one act plays from American playwright David Ives' "All in the Timing." The short, comedic one act plays depict everything from first dates and altered states of reality to made-up languages and a man who thinks he's a typewriter. Alumni worked for three long and intense months to prepare, sacrificing their weekends to rehearse their roles. Their hard work paid off in the end as



U.S. Embassy photo

the young actors delivered Ives' lines with spot-on comedic timing and overwhelming energy. Both performances were well received by sold-out audiences of about 300 people.

Ives' one act plays explore questions of language and perception, challenging the audience to think about what they say and how they see the world. For example, one play looked at how the normal cultural patterns of meeting a person can constrain and determine the relationship between those people. Another examined how subtle differences in what is said during a conversation and how it is said can draw people together or pull them apart. Most dramatically, the final play the alumni performed challenged whether a common language

is necessary for love, as two characters fall in love while speaking an imaginary language. Tied closely to questions of language, Ives plays with the question of perception, challenging the idea of whether reality exists or whether we create our own reality. He asks these questions in comedic fashion through a monologue in which an actor describes how he thinks he is a typewriter. In reality he is not, but his belief that he is a typewriter shapes the way this character sees the world. In another play, an actor falls into a state called a "Philadelphia," in which the opposite of everything he says or does happens. To escape this condition he must first recognize it and then work to change his con-



U.S. Embassy photo

ception of reality. Finally, Ives raises the question of creating one's own reality in a short, funny one act in which two construction workers each believe they are someone different than they actually are. They both firmly believe in this alternate identify for themselves, but their third colleague does not, which creates an interesting and complicated dynamic among the three of them. While Ives' short plays are comedic, they explore important concepts, challenging the audience members and also making them laugh.

The actors and directors had a wonderful and unforgettable experience working together. The project was funded by the U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan and proceeds went to an alumni fund for future alumni and charity events. The alumni group has yet to announce any future performances, but if they do, grab a ticket, as their show will be sure to entertain. For more information about U.S. government-sponsored educational exchange programs, go to: <http://www.usembassy.uz/exchanges>. If you are an alumnus of a U.S. government educational exchange program and would like to get involved in alumni activities, go to: <http://www.usembassy.uz/alumni>.

Second Annual Alumni Conference

In Support of the "Year of Youth" in Uzbekistan



U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland, Public Affairs Officer Carol Fajardo and Global Alumni Coordinator Suzanne Weinerman discuss the alumni conference agenda, May 10, 2008. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On May 10 and 11 the U.S. Embassy sponsored the Second Annual Alumni Conference, which was even bigger and better than the previous year's. In contrast to last year's conference, which was held in the Embassy, this year's conference was offsite at a beautiful mountain resort. Almost 100 alumni from nearly all regions of Uzbekistan attended this year's conference, which was planned and run by many of the alumni themselves.

The alumni were pleased to welcome ECA's Global Alumni Coordinator Suzanne Weinerman, who delivered a keynote address to the assembled alumni. Alumni woke at the crack of dawn on Saturday morning and gathered in Tashkent for a high-spirited ride to the conference site. After arriving, Ambassador Richard Norland welcomed the alumni and underscored the U.S. government's commitment to them. He explained that the U.S. government highly values the experiences the alumni had in the U.S. and the contributions that they are now making to Uzbekistan's future. Ms. Weinerman followed with an informative presentation on alumni best practices around the globe. Public Affairs Officer Carol Fajardo and Cultural Affairs Officer Stephanie Fitzmaurice also made presentations on being an effective manager and winning job interview skills. In the afternoon, Embassy employers explained best practices in grant proposal writing and administration. A panel of alumni that have successfully completed alumni projects, most utilizing Democracy Outreach/Alumni Small Grants funds, then spoke about their projects. Not only did these alumni inspire their peers with stories of success, but they also solicited volunteers for future activities. Later that evening, alumni seized the opportunity to network, catching up with old friends and

making new ones. Evening activities included a dance party with D.J., bowling, singing folk songs accompanied by PAO Carol Fajardo on guitar, or just taking in the beautiful surroundings. Over the course of the evening, the alumni made new connections and hatched new projects.

The second day of the conference was devoted to presentations and workshops by alumni. Several English teachers presented a series of workshops on teaching, and a number of young alumni talked about their volunteer activities and encouraged others to get involved in their communities. Some of the more experienced alumni also gave presentations about their work in Uzbekistan, including tips on how to pursue employment with these organizations, multinational corporations, to start one's own business. Other presenters shared tips for success in making presentations and better time management. The day concluded with a call for contributions to the new alumni newsletter. Everyone agreed that this conference was a wonderful opportunity for the alumni to network and acquire new skills and ideas.



Alumni share their experiences in the U.S. with peers at the Second Annual Alumni Conference, May 11, 2008. (U.S. Embassy photo)

If you are interested in participating in a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program, visit <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/exchanges> to learn more about the different programs and their requirements. If you are an alumnus of a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program, and you would like to become involved in alumni activities, you can visit <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/alumni> or send an email to Tashkent-alumni@state.gov.



The State of New Jersey - The Garden State



If one word could best articulate the wonders of New Jersey, it would certainly be diversity.

While affectionately called the Garden State, it has been a center for high tech industry and invention throughout its existence. Originally settled by Native Americans, New Jersey has welcomed waves of immigrants from the Dutch and English in the 1600s to Asians and Latin Americans today.

One of the first European explorers to see the land that would become New Jersey was none other than Henry Hudson, who in 1609 sailed along the coast in his ship, the Half Moon. The first colonizers were the Dutch, who established their New Netherland colony along the Hudson River, while a short-lived Swedish colony was established on the Delaware River to the south. In 1664, the English conquered the region and named the area between the two rivers New Jersey, after the Island of Jersey in the English Channel.

New Jersey played an instrumental role in the American Revolution. Due to the fact that it was located between British-occupied New York City and the rebel capital of Philadelphia, the state was repeatedly invaded by the enemy. For this reason, Gen. George Washington spent more of the war in New Jersey than any other state.

In addition, more battles and skirmishes – including the battles of Trenton, Princeton and Monmouth – were fought here than anywhere else. Gen. Washington's victory at Trenton in 1776 has been described as the most important American military victory ever, because if he had lost it, the nation would have perished in its infancy. It's no surprise that New Jersey has rightfully been dubbed the "Crossroads of the American Revolution."

After the war, New Jersey was the third state to adopt the U.S. Constitution and the first to approve The Bill of Rights. At the 1787 constitutional convention in Philadelphia, a New Jersey delegate, William Paterson, put forward the "New Jersey Plan," which ultimately led to the establishment of the U.S. Senate in which every state, large and small, has equal representation.

One of the most important figures in New Jersey's economic development was Thomas Alva Edison. He established a pioneering research and development enterprise in which the light bulb, sound recordings, motion pictures, commercial electric service and other innovations were invented or improved. New Jersey has continued its record of inventions; in the 20th century, these have included everything from the transistor to decaffeinated coffee. Today, New Jersey is a leader in telecommunications and pharmaceuticals, while its resort communities along 127 miles of ocean shoreline continue to prove a beacon of relaxing and extraordinary recreational activities.

In 1947, New Jersey adopted a new Constitution that has been regarded as a model for other states for its design of the

legislative, judicial and executive branches. The Constitution banned segregation and other forms of discrimination – a progressive step years before the civil rights revolution.

Rutgers historian Paul Clemens aptly noted: "New Jersey has moved from being an ethnically diverse set of farming communities, to a leader in the urbanindustrial economy of the 19th century, to a state whose high-density population and mix of suburban and urban living defines the direction of much of the rest of the United States."

FAVORITE ATTRACTIONS

Six Flags Great Adventure - Probably New Jersey's most famous attraction. It is America's largest seasonal theme park featuring more than 100 rides, shows and attractions, the world's largest drive-thru safari outside of Africa, plus the world's largest new water park.



Shane Araujo, 7, left, and Vitoria Poejo, 7, of New York City, pose with super heroes Robin, The Green Lantern, and Batman at Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson, NJ. (© AP Images)

Adventure Aquarium - Adventure Aquarium has nearly 200,000 sq. ft. of sea life and wildlife. Visitors can explore the West African River Experience featuring hippopotamuses, crocodiles, porcupines and more than 20 species of African birds in a free-flight aviary, be surrounded by sharks in a suspended 40-foot walk-through tunnel, discover the wonders of the deep sea in the Jules Verne Gallery, visit the brand new 4D Theatre and have an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to 'Swim with the Sharks.'

Grounds for Sculpture - In 1984, J. Seward Johnson, sculptor and philanthropist, envisioned a public sculpture garden and museum in Hamilton, NJ. His desire was to make contemporary sculpture as an art form more accessible and to offer people from all backgrounds the opportunity to become comfortable with contemporary art. Grounds For Sculpture was conceived as a place where audiences could experience sculpture in a familiar, accessible, and informal setting.



From Alexander Cartwright to Derek Jeter, some of baseball's most important figures have ties to the Garden State. Alexander Cartwright is the father of baseball. In 1845, he developed the basic rules of the game as we now know it today.

On this photo, New York Yankees Derek Jeter, left, gets a 'hats off' from teammates Tino Martinez, center, and Mike Borzello before a game against the Florida Marlins, July 13, 2000 at Yankee Stadium in New York. Jeter was named the MVP of All-Star game two days ago (© AP Images)

ECONOMY

If the Garden State were an independent country, its Gross State Product of \$430 billion would make it the world's 17th largest economy! It is a major business center with more than 20% of the Fortune 500 companies headquartered in or near the state.

By many measures, New Jersey has a strong and resilient economy that provides a high quality of life for most of the state's residents. New Jersey's residents are among the wealthiest in the nation—the state ranks first in median household income. The state's unemployment rate is the 18th lowest in the nation.

New Jersey's economic growth has historically been driven by its talented workers, strategic location, quality of life, and innovative businesses. It ranks as the fourth-most competitive state in the nation, according to the State Knowledge Economy Index. Its talented people, supported by significant investments from the state's leading businesses and state government, have made New Jersey a leader in innovation, research, and development.

The state is located in the heart of one of the world's largest and most vibrant marketplaces. It is close to New York City, a global capital for business and finance, and Philadelphia, an important national business center. More than 60 million U.S. consumers are within a four-hour drive of the state. With its ports, airports, and other transportation resources, New Jersey is also closely linked to the growing global economy.

New Jersey's businesses, which are responsible for a large number of technological advances, have created a strong

culture of research, development, and discovery. Led by the telecommunications and life sciences industries, the state is a national leader in the number of new patents issued each year.

Many of the scientific breakthroughs that shaped the world happened right here in New Jersey. And that tradition of innovation continues today. As Life Science and Technology companies race to meet the demands of the marketplace, many companies are finding great success in New Jersey like Genta Inc., Elusys Therapeutics, Inc., LifeCell Corporation, Amicus Therapeutics, myLEADERBOARD, Inc., TheraGen Pharmaceuticals, and ECI Technology, Inc.

Sources: <http://www.state.nj.us>,
<http://nj.gov>,
<http://www.census.gov>



U.S. Map, courtesy of U.S. Census Bureau.

QUICK FACTS

Abbreviation: NJ

Capital City: Trenton

Governor: Jon S. Corzine

Date of Statehood: December 18, 1787 (3rd)

Population: 8,724,560 (est. 2006, U.S. Census Bureau)

Land area: 7,419 sq. mi., 46th largest

Origin of State's Name: Named for the Channel Island of Jersey in honor of Sir George Carteret, one of the two men to whom the land was given

Largest Cities: Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Elizabeth, Trenton

Major industries: Chemical products, food processing, electric equipment, telecommunications, printing and publishing, tourism.

Continued from front page

Hazrati Imam Complex and the Usmon Koran, walked around Chorsu Bazaar, and held a brief press conference.

While in Samarkand, Assistant Secretary Boucher met with the Hokim of Samarkand Province Uktam Barnoev, toured Samarkand's major historic sites, and paid a visit to the Mausoleum of Imam al-Bukhari.

Throughout his visit, Assistant Secretary Boucher discussed a broad range of issues including border security cooperation, counter-narcotics, human rights, education, regional economic cooperation, and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Below is the transcript of Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher's press conference, held in Tashkent on June 2, 2008.

REMARKS TO THE PRESS

*by Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs
Richard A. Boucher*

Tashkent, Uzbekistan
June 2, 2008

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Good afternoon, everyone. It is a real pleasure for me to be back in Uzbekistan. I'm always reminded when I come here of the rich culture, the rich history, the rich traditions of Uzbekistan. And I'm also reminded of the rich tradition of hospitality of the people of Uzbekistan. I want to thank the officials and the people I've met here.

I've had a lot of interesting discussions during the course of my couple of days here. I met with the Hokim of Samarkand to understand the situation outside of the capital. I've had official discussions with the Foreign Minister, Mr. Norov, with the Secretary of National Security, Mr. Ataev, and, of course, with President Karimov. We also had the chance today to go to the Islamic University, meet with some of the teachers, the Rector, and some of the students there. I think we all agree that education, and the education of young people of Uzbekistan, is the greatest promise for the future.

I came to try to understand better the direction that Uzbekistan is taking, to try to understand better the interests of this country -- of the people of this country -- and to try to identify areas where we can work together.

I remain firmly convinced that we have a common interest in stabilizing Afghanistan. And I welcome some of the ideas and proposals that President Karimov put out in that regard.

I think we have very strong interest in seeing Uzbekistan develop as a nation -- especially in such areas as protecting its border from drugs and terrorism, developing its economy, and moving forward in areas of human rights. And we would like to work with Uzbekistan in all of these things.

Our goal is to work with the people here, and with the gov-

ernment, so that the people can participate fully in the active political and economic life of the nation. We take a very practical approach. We want to move forward in all these areas. We want to achieve results -- results that make the people of Uzbekistan more free, more safe, more prosperous, and would help this country achieve the role it should play in the region.

It is no secret that we lost a lot of trust in the relationship between the United States and Uzbekistan in the last few years. But I think both sides would like to rebuild [it]. I think we'll do that by working together, by achieving things together that are in our interest, and in the interest of Uzbekistan, and in the interest of the region. So that's what we tried to identify today; how we can do that. But, I think for both sides, it's going to take time. It is going to take a real effort. For our part, we are committed to doing it. We'll keep at it because we are fundamentally ready. The United States and Uzbekistan share some common interests -- they are worth working on for both our peoples.

So with that statement, I will take your questions.

QUESTION: Thank you for the introduction. I have two questions. I represent the Turkish broadcasting agency Cihan. My first question [is] with regard to Afghanistan. The threat that exists in Afghanistan represents [a] threat to the entire region, the Central Asian region. Do you still believe that the Taliban represents a serious threat to the Central Asian region today? And my second question is: as you mentioned, that there was a certain loss of trust between U.S. and Uzbekistan over the last several years. Do you think that as a result of your visit, the cooperation between Uzbekistan and the U.S. will improve and reach a new level of cooperation?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: What about the threat of the Taliban? I think the Taliban -- in association with Al-Qaeda, in association with some of the radical groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan -- do represent a threat to people of the region. We have seen it. We have seen it in real terms. Unfortunately, we have seen it in bombs; we have seen it in attacks. I think we've all seen that instability in Afghanistan has opened up opportunities for this, these kinds of extremists. But I think that we also know the vast majority of people in Central Asia, in Pakistan, in Afghanistan, they want a different kind of life. They want a chance to educate their children. They want a chance to find jobs. They want a chance to live in a participatory government. They want a chance to live with a good government, to participate in a government. And they want more open horizons -- they want to be able to trade, to travel, to study. I think that is fundamentally why the United States is strategically interested in this region, because we think that we can help people to deal with the insurgency, to deal with the extremists, but also to develop the kind of options and opportunities that they want.

Did my visit contribute to rebuilding trust? I hope so. I've come a long way. I've come a long way to understand the situation here, to look at what is going on, and to see how we can contribute to the continuation of progress. What I heard: both sides want to do that. Though, perhaps, it will be a long while before we can render any kinds of judgments.

QUESTION: What is the result of your discussion with the Uzbek authorities on human rights, on the situation with NGOs, the freedom of press? What do you think about possible results? Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Let me say, human rights was a major issue in our discussions. It's one of the areas where we really would like to move forward. We want to move forward in all the areas – security, economics, Afghanistan, regional issues. But human rights is one of the areas where we had a lot of talking to do. And we recognize that progress is being made. We recognize the passage of laws on habeas corpus. We recognize the new discussions with the Red Cross, and the visits to prisons. We recognize the commitment to religious tolerance and moderation. But we also want to be involved with Uzbekistan when it comes to the full implementation of these commitments, and these beginnings.



Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher Assistant Secretary Boucher fields questions from the local media.. (U.S. Embassy photo)

So, that's a lot of what we discussed today. We hope that will lead to continued progress. We hope we continue to...we can help Uzbekistan move in directions that the leaders here themselves have identified. And it includes making progress on human rights, expanding the roles of non-governmental organizations -- I met with some of the representatives of organizations that work here -- and also expanding the role of the press. So, again, we have tried to look at the direction of the commitments that Uzbekistan has made and see if we can help Uzbekistan achieve results in these areas.

QUESTION: What are your impressions about the meeting with President Karimov? How would you assess this meeting?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: I've met President Karimov before, with Secretaries of State and also by myself. As before, we had a pretty long discussion that was both theoretical and practical: theoretical about identifying our common interests; practical looking for things we could do together. I think it was a useful discussion. I have to say, I think, for both sides, we find it easier to identify common interests than to identify ways we can work together. But I think he is committed, as I am, to working in pragmatic ways, and also to working on all these different aspects of our relationship, of our regional interest in Afghanistan.

Well, I thought it was a productive meeting. What exactly it will produce, I don't know.

QUESTION: Is there any interaction between the countries in the region to stabilize Afghanistan?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: You mean the interaction between the U.S. and Uzbekistan?

QUESTION: Yes.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Yeah, indeed. I think after human rights and bilateral relations, Afghanistan was really a major topic. We talked about everything -- from the big issues of how to achieve stability to particular issues of how to get electricity so children can do their homework and people can start businesses. I think there are a lot of areas for good cooperation with Uzbekistan on Afghanistan. President Karimov made some important proposals in Bucharest. I was here, in part, to follow up on that -- how to ensure that supplies come through this route and get to coalition forces and NATO forces in Afghanistan. We are looking for ways to involve the neighbors much more closely in the stabilization and reconstruction in Afghanistan. And I think in that regard we all have the desire to work closely with the United Nations [Special Representative of the Secretary-General]. So we had good discussions about Afghanistan. I think we have some practical cooperation already. And we have a good base for further cooperation.

QUESTION: In regard to stabilization of Afghanistan, can we expect any changes in terms of military-technical cooperation between the U.S. and Uzbekistan? Was an issue of reestablishment of U.S. bases in Uzbekistan discussed at all?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: That really was not an issue. It is not a question of bases. I think there is a question of cooperation to support the overall effort in Afghanistan. We have seen the flow of non-lethal supplies to coalition and NATO forces. We've seen...we appreciate having an increased transit of NATO officers through Termez base. We're not really out here looking for bases. We are looking for partners who will work with us to help save lives in Afghanistan. And that is what we are doing.

Thank you very much. Great to see you.

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Fulbright Scholar Christine Martens Shares Feltmaking Processes



Ms. Martens gives a presentation on American Art and Design. (U.S. Embassy photo)

During the month of June, American Fulbright Scholar Christine Martens met with artisans across Uzbekistan to talk about felt making and share information about various felt making processes. During her visits to Tashkent, Kokand, and villages outside of Margilan, Ms. Martens discussed various felt making techniques with Uzbek felt makers. Of particular interest to Uzbek artisans was the work of American artist Jorie Johnson. Johnson, who is based in Japan, is known for her unique designs and technically-difficult to produce garments. Ms. Martens walked artisans through the felt making process while displaying photos of Johnson's work. Ms. Martens, who has researched felt making around the world, also covered the work of popular African artist El Anatsui and American artist Nick Cava. Ms. Martens is currently conducting research on felt and traditional art in Cen-



Ms. Martens takes a photo of traditional felt made in a village near Margilan. (U.S. Embassy photo)

tral Asia and shared her knowledge of felt making in Kyrgyzstan and Turkey with participants.

Ms. Martens' visits across Uzbekistan were diverse and gave her a chance to learn more about textiles in Uzbekistan while sharing her expertise. In Kokand she met with the Businesswomen's Association to discuss various felt production techniques. In villages around Margilan she had the opportunity to meet with a number of groups who produce ikat and felt. During these visits she worked with a well-known master of ikat weaving, learning about traditional Uzbek ikat patterns. Ms. Martens also had a chance to observe all stages in the production of traditional ikat, including removing the silk from cocoons, designing patterns, dyeing threads, and weaving on a loom. As part of her observations Ms. Martens met with the



Ms. Martens with an ikat weaver. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Director of the Silk Production Research Institute where she learned about the types of mulberry plants that the institute grows to increase the productivity of silkworms. In return, Ms. Martens shared her knowledge of modern textile designs with Uzbek weavers, providing them with many ideas for new patterns. Finally, in Tashkent, Ms. Martens worked with a small group of artisans and discussed various felt making techniques and designs.

Ms. Martens' visits with felt makers and artisans across Uzbekistan demonstrates how American researchers and Uzbek artisans can have mutually beneficial meetings as they discuss a common process and its various forms around the world. Ms. Martens left Uzbekistan with a greater understanding of art and felt making in the country while the participants in her meetings gained a greater understanding of their craft and its forms around Central Asia and the world.

You can read more about recent cultural events that the U.S. Embassy has sponsored at the Embassy's homepage <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/>.

American Renewable Energy Specialist Visits Tashkent, Samarkand



Renewable energy expert Brent Nelson examines solar electric equipment at Tashkent State Technical University. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Renewable energy specialist Brent Nelson of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, Colorado traveled to Uzbekistan as a visiting speaker to participate in a week of events from June 23 to 27. He met with audiences in Tashkent and Samarkand that ranged from photovoltaic specialists to university students studying in technical and scientific programs. During the week Mr. Nelson emphasized the importance of renewable energy and provided a valuable opportunity for students and professionals to hear first-hand about U.S. efforts to promote renewable energy initiatives, particularly solar power.

Mr. Nelson spent a large portion of his visit explaining energy use in the world today to audiences in Tashkent and Samarkand. When comparing various forms of energy Mr. Nelson, who specializes in solar power, emphasized the overwhelming power of the sun, stating that the amount of sun that hits the earth in one hour each day could meet all human energy needs for an entire year. He also pointed out an advantage of harnessing the sun and wind for energy is that land can be devoted to two uses at once. For instance, engineers can build solar panels above commuter train tracks and operate the trains with the power generated from the sun. After Mr. Nelson's explanations it became clear to audiences that in the future fossil fuels will not be a viable source of energy and that countries will have to turn to the sun and other renewable sources of energy.

As a specialist in solar energy, Mr. Nelson had a number of meetings with technical experts in Tashkent. Researchers at the Technology Transfer Agency, the FOTON Solar Plant, Tashkent State Technical University, and the Solar Physics Institute of Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences had a number of questions for Mr. Nelson as they displayed their projects and equipment. Mr. Nelson worked with Uzbek renewable energy experts to discuss future projects as well as the next generation of solar electric panels. In Mr. Nelson's discussions with Uzbek experts, participants came to a consensus that it could

be helpful for Uzbekistan to implement additional renewable energy programs, particularly in places where villages are not connected to the existing energy grid, such as in parts of Karakalpakstan. After these dialogues Mr. Nelson and Uzbek researchers were reinvigorated to continue their research and implement renewable energy projects.

Mr. Nelson's message about global energy use and renewable energy was also popular with students in Tashkent and Samarkand. Students at Tashkent State Technical University, Samarkand State University, and the U.S. Embassy's weekly Chay Chat were intrigued by Mr. Nelson's presentation and



Brent Nelson discusses the growth of nuclear power with students and professors from Samarkand State University. (U.S. Embassy photo)

asked a number of questions, including about the difficulties of using solar power and the potential for other energy sources like hydrogen and biofuels. Renewable energy is an important concern for both the United States and Uzbekistan. Mr. Nelson's presentations and discussions helped to increase awareness and hopefully inspire the next generation of leaders to increase efforts to use renewable energy.

To learn more about renewable energy research in the United States, visit the National Renewable Energy Laboratory's website at <http://www.nrel.gov>.

The Chay Chat Club gathers every Friday at the U.S. Embassy at 4:00 PM for a discussion led by a native English speaker. If you would like to attend, call the Embassy at 120-5450 at least two days in advance to sign up.

English Language Specialist Offers Intensive Writing Instruction

In April the U.S. Embassy invited English Language Specialist Anne Marie Burk to offer workshops for teachers on professional and academic writing in English. She visited Uzbekistan from March 31 to April 12, and during her stay, she traveled to Tashkent, Bukhara and Samarkand, conducting workshops for teachers and students at every stop.



Anne Marie engages English teachers in a classroom activity at a workshop in Bukhara. (U.S. Embassy photo).

All of Ms. Burk's workshops were interactive and practical, as she took current and future teachers through many sample activities to help them see how they could teach similar lessons on writing to their students. Ms. Burk offered a series of intensive workshops to 25 university teachers in Tashkent, including training on the following subjects: Teaching Basic Writing: A Process Approach; Fundamentals of Academic Writing Part I: Paragraph Writing; Fundamentals of Academic Writing Part II: Writing the Academic Essay; Writing the Resume; Writing the Job Application Letter; Writing the Professional Article; and Writing a Successful Conference Proposal. In the regions, she also worked with university teachers in Bukhara and Samarkand on similar topics, including her presentation on "Writing a Successful Conference Proposal/Ideas that Work." In addition Ms. Burk worked with members of the local teachers' association in all three cities to help them increase their writing skills, as well. Additionally alumni of USG exchange programs had a chance to benefit from the expertise of this writing expert, as she offered a special evening seminar in Tashkent for approximately 30 alumni on Writing Resumes and Job Application Letters. At each workshop, Public Affairs Staff distributed publications, including several different issues of Forum magazine, which the teachers received with excitement.

Ms. Burk, who lives in Washington, has a Master of Arts Degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages from Oklahoma State University. She also has a wealth of experience in teaching English, having served as an English Language Fellow in Kyrgyzstan from 2003-2005 and taught many courses on English as a Second Language in the United States.

Ms. Burk's visit came about because teachers in Tashkent told the Embassy that there was a critical unmet need for training in English writing. They reported that courses which focus on training students and teachers to write in English are still just developing in Uzbekistan. As the teachers now must publish at least one professional article a year in English, they have a motivation to find new ways to improve their English writing. To help these teachers improve, Ms. Burk's visit and training sessions included a series of in-depth writing skills workshops so the teachers could not only write better articles in English, but also pass along this new knowledge and skills to the students they teach.

Altogether Ms. Burk presented 18 workshops to approximately 225 teachers and alumni. According to feedback that she gathered from participants, Ms. Burk's workshops increased their confidence in writing a professional article, contributed to an expanded writing curriculum, and introduced Peer Editing Sheets to teachers. Several teachers said that, whereas they enjoyed all of the workshops, they felt that the one on "Writing the Professional Article" was the most



Anne Marie distributes certificates to workshop participants in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo).

personally useful. Drawing on what they learned in some of the other workshops, they will also be able to provide students with relevant and interesting writing topics, and teach students how to self-correct and how to edit one another's writing.

If you would like to receive emails from the Embassy about educational opportunities, please send an email to Tashkent-advising@state.gov.

New Report Teaches Teachers to Evaluate Online Learning

Rapid growth in online education requires culture of evaluation



Fourth-grader Julissa Hinojos, left, mentors kindergartner Camia Bradshaw at a school in Garden City, Kansas. (© AP Images)

About 1 million U.S. elementary and high school students were taking online courses in 2007 -- 22 times the number enrolled in such courses in 2000. But if two researchers writing in the summer issue of *Education Next* are correct, the growth in online education to date is nothing compared to what is about to happen: by the year 2014, some 10 percent of all U.S. kindergarten to grade 12 courses will be computer-based, say Harvard Business School's Clayton M. Christensen and his co-author Michael B. Horn, and by 2019 a full 50 percent of all K-12 courses will be online.

These changes in American education will be driven by the low cost of delivering online courses and the advantages that accrue from individualized instruction, say Christensen and Horn. Online courses also can be geared toward the special needs many school systems currently cannot fill, such as foreign language courses and Advanced Placement courses, or the needs of growing numbers of children schooled at home.

But if online education is to fulfill its potential, accountability will be key. To that end, the U.S. Department of Education July 2 released a new report, "Evaluating Online Learning: Challenges and Strategies for Success."

"Evaluating Online Learning" is essentially a guide for educators, some of whom are seeking to design distance learning courses, virtual schools and educational Web sites, and all of whom need to be able to use such resources since every U.S. public school is connected to the Internet.

Part I of the report focuses on seven exemplary online programs that represent a range of options, from online courses to Web sites that feature education resources. Each of the seven programs surmounted challenges to evaluating online learning and offer potentially useful case studies for other programs.

The seven featured programs and resources are: Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, & Students -- Statewide Distance Learning, operated by the Alabama Department of Education; Algebra I Online, operated by the Louisiana

Department of Education; Appleton eSchool, operated by Wisconsin's Appleton Area School District; Arizona Virtual Academy, a public charter school; Chicago Public Schools' Virtual High School; Digital Learning Commons in Washington state; and Thinkport, a Web site operated by Maryland Public Television and the Johns Hopkins Center for Technology in Education.

The analyses of these programs illustrate some of the traps and opportunities of which evaluators must be aware.

The online field trips offered by Maryland's Thinkport Web site, for example, turned out in the final randomized controlled trial to have taught students more successfully than they would have learned by traditional instruction. But the initial trial indicated the online trips did not have a significant effect on student learning. Only after teachers had gained experience with the online field trips and were using them a second time did the learning tool achieve its potential.

Students participating in Louisiana's Algebra I Online program outperformed students taught by traditional methods, but the online students were more likely to report not having a good experience and were less likely to report feeling confident about their algebra skills. The evaluators speculated that online students need to get more immediate reassurance from a teacher or mentor that they in fact are learning and understanding the material.

In other words, online learning is not simply a matter of plunking kids down in front of computers and telling them to get to it. The report raises a number of important questions for researchers. These questions range from the factors that may increase online course success rates and the characteristics of successful online learners to the training, mentoring and support systems necessary for teachers to be effective.

Part II of "Evaluating Online Learning" offers recommendations to educators -- recommendations for everything from evaluating the multifaceted online resources to translating evaluation findings into action.

One of the key recommendations is to "develop a program culture that supports evaluation." In most of the case studies, early data were used to improve the program in specific ways.

Already 42 states have significant online learning programs and some 57 percent of public high schools in the U.S. provide online learning, according to the North American Council for Online Learning, an international nonprofit organization. There are also 26 statewide or state-led virtual schools in the United States and 173 virtual charter schools in 18 states.

"Evaluating Online Learning: Challenges and Strategies for Success" is available on the Web site of the U.S. Department of Education at (<http://www.ed.gov>)

Internet Revolutionizes Campaign Fundraising

Successful fundraising efforts appeal to average people online



The Internet helped presidential candidate Barack Obama, shown addressing supporters in Portland, Oregon, build support and funding. (© AP Images)

Electioneering changed in the 2004 presidential campaign when Democratic contender Howard Dean used the Internet as his staging ground and the public responded by donating time and money. Four years later, Internet fundraising has leapt ahead, with prospective Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama enjoying particular success thanks to Web 2.0 interactive and social networking tools that enhance online community participation.

Phil Tajitsu Nash, lawyer, writer, activist and longtime advocate of the Internet as a campaign tool, runs Campaign Advantage, which helps organizations develop and implement online fundraising strategies.

“Good online fundraising requires not just the technology, and not just the candidate, but also a message that resonates with online audiences. And what that means is that the insurgent candidates, generally speaking, have a better chance of raising money,” Nash told America.gov.

Things have changed since 2000, when “it was very difficult to get people to get a Web site and to get them to understand the benefits,” he said. Incumbents, particularly, clung to old fundraising methods: speeches at a dinner after which they pocket a check. But in 2000, some candidates -- among them 2008 presumed Republican presidential nominee John McCain -- raised a few million dollars on the Internet. “That was considered so phenomenal that all of a sudden the big, traditional fundraising operations started taking the Internet seriously,” Nash said.

THE DEAN EFFECT

In 2004, physician, and former Vermont Governor Howard Dean raised “a phenomenal amount of money and he showed that an insurgent could raise money effectively,” Nash said.

Even though Dean did not win the nomination, he made political fundraising history. Since his campaign, political machines have adopted his techniques: appealing to aver-

age Americans on the Internet and bringing them together in Internet-generated “meet ups.”

“Obama is really Howard Dean 2.0 when it comes to online fundraising,” Nash said, adding that Obama’s grasp of the Internet’s value was evident in his 2004 U.S. Senate campaign, “but his operation really benefited from the people who were in the Howard Dean and [2004 Democratic presidential candidate] John Kerry operations.”

The Illinois senator’s Internet success comes from harnessing Internet community energy through social networking sites such as Facebook. In 2007, Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes left the company to join Obama’s campaign. He helped develop Obama’s campaign Web site, where people connect with neighborhood groups, volunteer, donate money and read the latest news from the Obama campaign. Obama now has more than a million supporters on Facebook alone. He has a presence on other social Web sites, too, including MySpace, Twitter, MyBatanga, MiGente and AsianAve. Obama’s expected opponent McCain, has fewer than 200,000 supporters on Facebook.

Obama is not the only candidate cashing in on the Internet. Former Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul drew extraordinary support with an online campaign that thrived even though the mainstream news media mostly ignored him. In one day in November 2007, Paul raised \$6 million, more than \$4 million of it online.

McCain recently pumped more energy into his Internet campaign, using e-mail and blogs and his own social network, McCainSpace, to draw support. His daughter Megan maintains a blog to attract young potential voters.

Politicians’ ears now prick up at the mention of the Internet. “Everybody takes an interest in that they think it’s this genie in a bottle. So they’ll come to you and say, ‘OK, can you raise me \$50,[000] to \$100,000 online?’” Nash said, but “no matter how much you want the money to fall into your account, you have to be savvy about it, you have to know how the technology works, you have to keep up with the latest technology.”

The Internet can empower grassroots candidates and stimulate dialogue in communities, Nash said. “Civil discourse has broken down so much in this society. I think we need to reinvigorate that. The Internet can bring everyone to the table.”

It can also bring dollars.

See also Obama’s campaign Web site (<http://www.myrackobama.com/>) and Megan McCain’s blog (<http://www.mccainblogette.com/>).

Innovative Use of Online Networks Transforming Society

If you're going to keep up with Ben MacKrell, you'll need two things: a cell phone and an account at Facebook or a similar Web site that falls under the loose term "social networking."

MacKrell, 23 and a recent graduate of Goucher College in Baltimore, is typical of a new generation that is redefining important aspects of modern society and culture through the unprecedented ways its members gather information, communicate and stay connected to one another.

One marker of this culture shift, in the United States and around the world, is the proliferation of what experts now categorize as social networking sites (SNSs) on the Internet. The difference between an SNS and a conventional Web page is a visible personal profile along with a list of closely attached friends, according to Danah Boyd of the University of California.

"Profiles are unique pages where one can 'type oneself into being,'" says Boyd, a widely recognized authority on SNSs.

SHARING LIVES ON FACEBOOK

At 24 million members, Facebook may not be the largest SNS in the United States -- that would be its rival MySpace -- but it is the fastest growing, adding more than 150,000 new members a day who exchange messages, share music and photos or just hang out online.

MacKrell, who works at a museum of popular culture in Baltimore, is a member of two such SNSs: Facebook and Live Journal. He maintains a personal blog on Live Journal, where he also receives automatic updates of the newspaper and Web comics, along with blog entries from favorite authors like George R.R. Martin and Neil Gaiman.

"I have a different set of friends on Facebook," MacKrell says, adding that he can write quick messages on a friend's "wall," download photos and easily catch up with the whereabouts and activities of friends.

But Facebook's phenomenal growth no longer is based on the college crowd, and the Web site is now attracting organizations as well as individuals.

"What we're trying to do is just make it really efficient for people to communicate, get information and share information," says Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg in a Time magazine interview.

Facebook is part of a global phenomenon of social networking sites that are distinguished by shared interests or region and language. Among the better known: Cyworld (Korea), Mixi (Japan), Orkut (Brazil and India), hi5 (teenagers in Latin America and Asia), LunarStorm (Sweden), StudiVZ (German-speaking university students), LinkedIn (business), Flickr (photo sharing), and Gaia Online (anime and games).

STAYING CONNECTED THROUGH CELL PHONES

As wireless technology has evolved, mobile, or cell, phones have become so ubiquitous that one researcher calls them a "second skin" for many owners. The United States is one of several countries with more cell phones than people. According to one survey, the number of mobile phone users exceeded 3 billion globally in 2007. .

Equally striking are the ways in which cell phones are redefining how members of younger generations stay in constant contact with one another. "Having a cell phone means never being alone," says a communications professor in a National Public Radio broadcast.

Moreover, cell phones no longer are just about talk, but have become devices for sending text messages, taking and sharing photos, even watching videos. Americans send more than a billion text messages a day, according to one estimate.

Many observers worry about the cryptic, nongrammatical language of online instant messages and cell phone texting (LOL for "laughing out loud" and 2L8 for "too late"). On the other hand, observes columnist and speechwriter Michael Gerson, "a command of texting seems to indicate a broader facility for language. And these students seem to switch easily between text messaging and standard English."

For more information see the Web sites for Facebook (www.facebook.com), Live Journal (www.livejournal.com/), MySpace (www.myspace.com), LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com), Orkut (www.orkut.com), and hi5 (www.hi5.com).

The Information Resource Center of the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent also has its own page on Facebook, where visitors can learn about Embassy events, IRC news, rules and services. To access the page, go to <http://www.new.facebook.com/pages/Tashkent-Uzbekistan/IRC-Tashkent/9631659185>.



Facebook.com's mastermind, Mark Zuckerberg smiles at his office in Palo Alto, California. (© AP Images)

What I Saw in Afghanistan

Wall Street Journal op-ed by Laura Bush on her trip to Afghanistan.

Paris -- This week has been a study in contrasts. On Sunday, I was in one of the most remote areas of Afghanistan -- where unpaved roads are lined by tin-roofed shanties, and most people live without running water or electricity.

Today, I am in the City of Light. Yet while the circumstances of these visits could not be more different, their purpose is the same: to reaffirm the world's commitment to the people of Afghanistan.

This morning, a delegation representing 80 countries and multilateral organizations will gather here for the International Conference in Support of Afghanistan. This event is a chance for developed nations to learn more about the challenges facing Afghanistan -- and to offer the political and economic assistance it needs to recover from decades of war and oppression.

When the Taliban were driven from power in 2001, they left Afghans to build a society from nothing. But working in partnership with the United States and other nations, the Afghan people have made amazing progress. Since the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan's infant-mortality rate has been reduced by almost 25%. Its per capita GDP has increased by 70%. In 2001, only 8% of Afghans had access to basic health care. Today, that number is 85%. In 2001, fewer than a million Afghan children were in school -- all of them boys. Today, more than six million Afghan children are in school -- about a third of them are girls.

On my trip, I saw how these developments are offering Afghans new hope. Yet many hurdles still lie ahead -- and my trip was a reminder of those, too. The new schools and roads I visited stood in the shadow of Bamiyan's sandstone cliffs -- where two hollow caves are all that remains of Afghanistan's ancient Buddhas, blown up by the Taliban in 2001. Those scars in the cliffsides are a reminder of the danger lurking in the Afghan hills. It's a danger we read about on the front pages, as the Taliban and al Qaeda step up their campaign of suicide bombings and violence. And it is a danger that threatens to erase the progress that Afghans have made.

This morning, President Hamid Karzai will present his government's five-year plan for securing that progress. The Afghan National Development Strategy defines how the government will work to improve education and health care, and to address the nation's overwhelming poverty and lack of basic infrastructure. The plan also addresses energy and agriculture needs. Right now, only 12% of Afghans have access to electricity. And an agricultural crisis threatens starvation. Mr. Karzai has urged farmers to grow wheat instead of poppy, so that they and their neighbors will not go hungry.

The national strategy is a solid plan to address Afghanistan's many challenges, and it is clear that Afghanistan will also need solid support from its international partners. At today's conference, the United States will pledge \$10.2 billion toward the nation's development efforts. This comes on top of the \$5.9 billion we committed in 2006 at the donor conference in London. And it means that our commitment of humanitarian, development, and security assistance since 2001 now totals more than \$26 billion.

Other nations are doing their part. In Kandahar, Canada has provided literacy training for more than 5,000 Afghans, and vaccinated more

than 360,000 against polio. In Helmand, the United Kingdom has brought clean drinking water to more than 175,000 people, and provided microcredit to more than 336,000 small businesses. Training programs run by Germany and other nations have helped put more than 58,000 soldiers and 80,000 police on the streets. And in Bamiyan, I met the New Zealand troops who are providing security and promoting development.

Private citizens are eager to help. I'm proud to be a member of the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council, which President Bush and President Karzai launched in 2002. Through the council, individual American citizens have secured more than \$70 million in private-sector funding for a total of 30 programs. Council initiatives have trained women judges, lawyers, entrepreneurs, midwives and parliamentarians. In fact, many of the projects I observed on my trip were council initiatives. I have met children orphaned by Taliban massacres who now have classrooms to study in and safe homes to live in. And I watched women once forbidden to leave home without a male escort now run businesses that provide for their families.

Today's conference is an opportunity for governments and the private sector to do more. It is important -- and smart -- for the world to invest in Afghanistan. Americans learned on a clear September morning that misery and oppression half a world away can manifest themselves on the next block. That lesson has been retaught in the years since, in cities from Jakarta to London to Madrid.

Our security depends on preventing al Qaeda from re-establishing a foothold in Afghanistan. The best way to do that is to counter al Qaeda's campaign of terror with an international campaign of support for Afghan democracy.

It is also important for the world to invest in Afghanistan because the Afghan people have invested so much themselves. On my trip, one of the people who impressed me most is Afghanistan's only female provincial governor, Habiba Sarabi.

Gov. Sarabi's province, Bamiyan, is one of Afghanistan's poorest. Every day, she risks her life to serve her people, and under her leadership the region shows immense promise. The number of children attending school, and the percentage of students who are girls, are both higher than the national average. I was also inspired by the courage of the women I met in Bamiyan's police-training program. In a place where the law once prohibited women from learning how to read, I saw a class of female recruits studying Afghanistan's constitution and preparing to defend the rule of law in their new democracy.

Bamiyan shows us how determined the Afghan people are to see their country succeed, and now the international community must do its part to help make that success possible. As one Afghan woman told me when she visited the White House in January: "This is our only chance."

Today, as leaders from across the globe gather in Paris, we need to show with our commitments that the world will not let this chance pass Afghanistan by.

(Mrs. Bush is the first lady of the United States.)

U.S. Supports Ambitious U.N. Plan to Combat Global Food Crisis

Plan also calls for measures to address future food security needs



U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has warned that the escalating food crisis has reached emergency proportions (© AP Images)

The United States has joined 180 other countries in agreeing to an ambitious plan to combat the global food crisis and to ensure future food security through investments in science and technology.

The United States welcomed the plan's recognition of the important "challenges and opportunities" related to biofuels, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer said June 5 at the conclusion of a three-day United Nations world food summit in Rome.

He said the United States is committed to the "sustainable" production and use of biofuels. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines sustainability as applying appropriate technology in ways that meet economic, environmental and social needs without compromising resources. Schafer led the U.S. delegation at the meeting.

The U.N. plan calls for more international private-public discussion of biofuels, taking into account the need to achieve and maintain global food security, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said June 6. The FAO hosted the meeting.

Several representatives at the meeting expressed interest in finding ways to support biofuel production so their countries can become energy independent, Schaffer said in a conference call with reporters.

In addition to working with the international community to provide aid to those most vulnerable to hunger, the United States will target aid to helping countries boost food production so they can meet their own future needs, Schafer said.

That will involve teaching countries how to increase yields by using such farming methods as site-specific applications of agricultural chemicals and irrigation in ways that are cost-effective and that minimize environmental damage.

During discussions at the meeting, representatives of some countries said they are re-evaluating their "resistance" to the use of biotechnology to help boost production dramatically, Schafer said.

Also at the meeting, representatives discussed the need for more investment in infrastructure development, and some pledged to put more money into that area, according to Schafer.

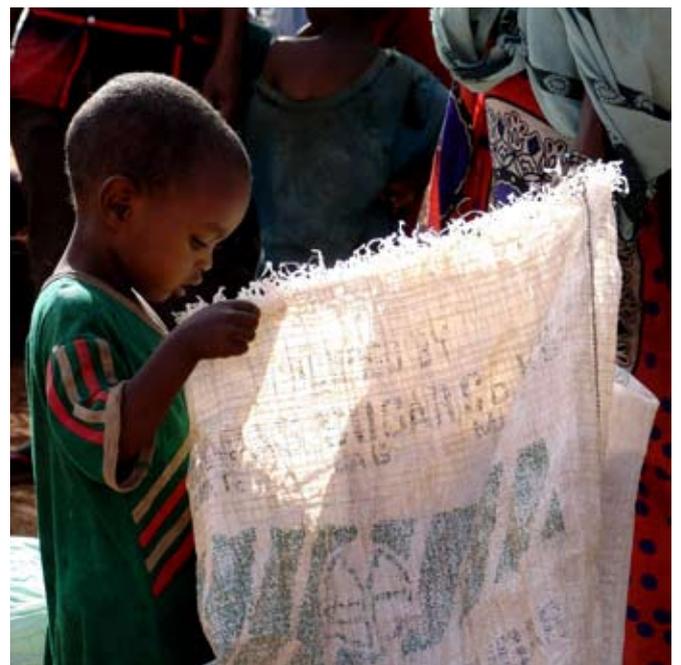
The United States plans to spend approximately \$150 million in 2008 to help countries improve their infrastructure, including roads needed to carry farm products to market and refrigeration needed to prevent harvest spoilage, he said.

The United States also agreed with the plan's call to continue efforts to liberalize agricultural trade by reducing or eliminating trade barriers, Schafer said.

ZIMBABWE URGED TO LIFT SUSPENSION OF AID GROUPS

While also representing the United States at the meeting, Henrietta Fore, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), used the opportunity to call on Zimbabwe to lift its suspension of international nongovernmental groups from doing humanitarian work in the country.

Fore said "the suspension can only add to the significant hardship and suffering of Zimbabwe's most vulnerable people," according to a USAID statement, which can be accessed through its web site (<http://www.usaid.gov>).



Chronic hunger and emergency-related hunger, such as in a drought in northern Kenya, are different problems requiring different solutions (© AP Images)

Americans Passionate, Patriotic About Olympic Games

International sporting event promotes sense of common purpose

Americans, whether athletes or observers, are passionate about the Olympic Games.

Gordon Hylton, a law professor at Marquette University in Wisconsin, told America.gov that Americans follow the Olympics "so passionately because it is our habit to do so." Hylton, who teaches classes on sports law, says American children learn that the Olympics are important, an idea which carries over into adulthood.

"Once Americans latch on to a sport or sporting event, they never seem to let go," Hylton said.

Superstar U.S. athletes such as pro basketball's Kobe Bryant and LeBron James are playing in the 2008 Olympics in China to help restore the U.S. image as preeminent in that sport, Hylton said. The U.S. men's basketball team finished third at the 2004 Olympics in Athens.

Hylton said two other professional basketball players on the U.S. Olympic team -- Dwyane Wade and Michael Redd -- were quoted as saying they were participating to prove American basketball is still the best basketball played worldwide.

"The allure of playing on a world stage combined with some real patriotism explains why Bryant and James and others are ... willing to play in the Olympics," Hylton said.

Hylton said it is appropriate for President Bush and other countries' heads of state to attend the 2008 Olympics in Beijing because the Games are a "symbol of international cooperation and a form of non-militaristic competition."

Bush, the first American president to travel outside the United States to attend the Olympic Games and a lifelong sports fan, says he is attending the Games "for the sports and not for any political statement."

OLYMPICS DRAW LARGE TELEVISION AUDIENCE

Andrew Billings, a professor of communication studies at Clemson University in South Carolina, agrees that Americans follow the Olympics "quite passionately."

The most prominent reason why people watch the Games, he said, is for "the unity they represent -- nationalism inherently provides a 'team' in which all people can root."



U.S. basketball superstar Kobe Bryant practices for the 2008 Olympic Games (© AP Images)

Billings said a large majority of Americans see the Olympics as a "bonding experience ... that transcends sport." One example of that, he said, occurred when the U.S. Olympic hockey team accomplished what was called "the miracle on ice" by winning the 1980 gold medal.

The Olympics are "increasingly an economic, consumer-driven entity," Billings said, "but that has not changed the widely held perception that winning an Olympic medal is the highest athletic achievement."

KOBE BRYANT READY FOR CHALLENGE IN BEIJING

Jay Weiner, who is covering the Olympics for *Sporting News* magazine and other publications, said the event sparks "a certain level of nationalism" in the citizens of every participating country.

Weiner said the attention given to the Olympics "says something about the natural tendency to root for the 'home team,'" even

for competitors in such so-called minor sports as taekwondo, wrestling and field hockey.

As for top U.S. athletes participating in China, Weiner said players "with a sense of history" -- such as Kobe Bryant -- are aware that U.S. basketball has been challenged by the game's development in Europe and Asia.

"So there's a sort of cultural pride" for why the U.S. stars are playing in Beijing, he said.

Weiner said pros from the National Basketball Association will be on many of the other national teams at the Olympics, which means the basketball competition in Beijing will be "quite good."

He said the NBA stars are "elite competitors in search of the best games, the highest stakes. There must be an attraction to them on that simpler, but purer, level."

Watching Soccer: a Popular U.S. Pastime

Many Americans root for favorite international team



Spain's Fernando Torres scores the opening goal past German goalie Jens Lehmann during the Euro 2008 final between Germany and Spain in the Ernst-Happel stadium in Vienna, Austria, Sunday, June 29, 2008, the last day of the European Soccer Championships in Austria and Switzerland (© AP Images)

On a Sunday afternoon in July, the streets of Arlington, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, were quiet as residents sought shelter from the summer heat. But at a restaurant called Summers, people were lining up to watch a game with their friends. The game was not between American teams, and was not in a sport traditionally associated with America. The fans were there to watch the Euro 2008 final soccer match between the Spanish and German national teams.

Before the game started, the bar was filled to capacity, with 350 people. Fans wearing team jerseys, flags, even face paint cheered loudly. The patrons were mostly American, and their enthusiasm was telling of soccer's growing popularity in America.

The world's most popular sport, commonly referred to as "soccer" in America and "football" everywhere else, is gaining a mass following in the United States. It is already the fourth-most-watched sport in America.

Summers Restaurant was voted the best soccer bar in the United States in 2002 by the U.S. Soccer Federation. Manager Joe Javidara has been showing soccer matches there since 1984, when Summers was the only bar showing international football in the Washington area. "We started with five TVs and now we have 60," said Javidara.

The popularity of soccer has grown especially among women since the U.S. women's soccer team won the World Cup in 1991 and in 1999. In the United States, 35 percent of soccer players are women, one of the highest percentages of female participation in soccer in the world. Female participation in high school soccer has risen by more than 177 percent since 1990.

In 2002 the U.S. men's soccer team advanced to the World Cup quarterfinals for the first time in recent history. Major

League Soccer (MLS), the United States' professional soccer league, has expanded from 10 to 14 teams. More than 33 million fans have attended a regular-season MLS game. Soccer is gaining a committed fan base in the United States.

At Summers Restaurant, one patron, Rich Large, who wore a German team jersey, talked about playing soccer as a kid in the late 1970s in Washington state. "We played with baseball shoes and volleyballs; once we played on a field of volcanic pumice -- if you fell, it shredded your skin. But we still played!" Now soccer equipment is readily available, and soccer fields are a familiar feature in the American landscape.

Jaime Salegio said he was rooting for Spain because he is Hispanic and from El Salvador. "Soccer in America is improving in quality of play," Salegio said. "Before, Mexico won against the United States by scores as high as 6-0. Now, in the last games, America won."

Salegio has high hopes for the U.S. team: "I think in six years the U.S. may make it to the semifinals or the finals" of the World Cup. The U.S. team reached the semifinals only once before, in the first World Cup in 1930.

Sarah Davis was dressed in red and yellow, with her face painted the colors of the Spanish flag. She said she roots for the Spanish team because they have "style and flair." Like many Americans, she got into soccer through playing. "I play it recreationally. I've played organized soccer through college -- I was central midfielder," she said. Davis believes soccer will continue to rise in popularity. "Here you hear people speaking German, speaking Spanish, it's international. Soccer is on the up-rise -- we are catching up with the rest of the world. It's starting to get easier to find places to watch the game."

Broadcasting soccer from all over the world results in interesting game times in the United States. "During the Korea/Japan 2002 World Cup games, we showed every single game live, at 2:30 a.m., 4:30 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. ... We had 300 people," Javidara said.

The odd timing for most international games makes for a busy schedule for places that show international games. Starting in September, "the English games may start at 7 a.m.," Javidara said. "For, say, Liverpool and Manchester United there will be 150 people; we have a British breakfast ready for them. Then we go to an Italian game, which is at 11 a.m., then college [American] football starts at 12 noon and we stick with college football all the way to 12 or 1 a.m.; in a day we go through 2,500 people!"

Elite Colleges Reporting Record Lows in Admission



A student relaxes on the grass in front of Widener Library on the campus of Harvard University in Cambridge, Ma. (© AP Images)

By Alan Finder

The already crazed competition for admission to the nation's most prestigious universities and colleges became even more intense this year, with many logging record low acceptance rates.

Harvard College, for example, offered admission to only 7.1 percent of the 27,462 high school seniors who applied — or, put another way, it rejected 93 of every 100 applicants, many with extraordinary achievements, like a perfect score on one of the SAT exams. Yale College accepted 8.3 percent of its 22,813 applicants. Both rates were records.

Columbia College admitted 8.7 percent of its applicants, Brown University and Dartmouth College 13 percent, and Bowdoin College and Georgetown University 18 percent — also records.

“We love the people we admitted, but we also love a very large number of the people who we were not able to admit,” said William R. Fitzsimmons, dean of admissions and financial aid at Harvard College.

Some colleges said they placed more students on their waiting lists than in recent years, in part because of uncertainty over how many admitted students would decide to enroll. Harvard and Princeton stopped accepting students through early admission this academic year; that meant that more than 1,500 students who would have been admitted in December were likely to have applied to many elite schools in the regular round.

Many factors contributed to the tightening of the competition at the most selective colleges, admissions deans and high school counselors said, among them demographics. The

number of high school graduates in the nation has grown each year over the last decade and a half, though demographers project that the figure will peak this year or next, which might reduce the competition a little.

Other factors were the ease of online applications, expanded financial aid packages, aggressive recruiting of a broader range of young people, and ambitious students' applying to ever more colleges.

The eight Ivy League colleges mailed acceptance and rejection letters on Monday (March 31) to tens of thousands of applicants. Students could learn the fate of their applications online beginning at 5 p.m. on Monday (March 31), so three of the colleges said they were not ready to make public their admissions data. But the expectation was that they would also turn out to have been more competitive than ever.

“For the schools that are perceived to have the most competitive admissions processes, there has been this persistent rise in applications,” said Jeffrey Brenzel, dean of undergraduate admissions at Yale.

Ten years ago, slightly fewer than 12,000 students applied to Yale, compared with the 22,813 who applied this year, Mr. Brenzel said. Yale's admittance rate — the proportion of applicants offered admission — was nearly 18 percent in 1998, more than double the rate this year.

“We're really happy with the class,” Mr. Brenzel said of the students offered admission. “On a day like today it's also easy to be aware of the incredible number of fantastic students who you have to turn away, because you know they would be successful here.”

At Harvard, as at Yale, the applicant pool included an extraordinary number of academically gifted students. More than 2,500 of Harvard's 27,462 applicants scored a perfect 800 on the SAT critical reading test, and 3,300 had 800 scores on the SAT math exam. More than 3,300 were ranked first in their high school class.

Admissions deans and high school guidance counselors said they spent hours at this time of year reminding students who had been put on waiting lists or rejected entirely that there were other excellent colleges on their lists — and that rejection was often about the overwhelming numbers, rather than their merits as individuals.

“I know why it matters so much, and I also don't understand why it matters so much,” said William M. Shain, dean of admissions and financial aid at Bowdoin. “Where we went to college does not set us up for success or keep us away from it.”

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Democracy Commission Small Grants Program

The purpose of the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program is to award small grants for specific projects that support the development of democratic institutions in Uzbekistan. Grants will be awarded to non-governmental, non-profit organizations (NGOs) and media outlets, not individuals.

To be eligible for consideration, the applicant must be engaged in, or propose to carry out, a project relating to:

- building democratic institutions
- fostering a strong and independent media
- supporting civic education
- respecting the rule of law
- protecting human rights
- furthering women's political and social rights
- supporting market reforms, and
- protecting the environment

Proposals must be sent via e-mail to TashkentGrant@state.gov. Supporting documents and appli-

cations for organizations that do not have access to e-mail can be sent to:

Democracy Commission
Public Affairs Section
Embassy of the United States of America
3 Moyqorghon Street, 5th Block, Yunusobod District
Tashkent 100093, Uzbekistan

In case of any questions about the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program, please contact:

Democracy Commission Small Grants Coordinator
Embassy of the United States of America
3 Moyqorghon Street, 5th Block, Yunusobod District
Tashkent 100093, Uzbekistan
Phone: (+998-71) 140-2441
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E-mail: TashkentGrant@state.gov
Website: <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/demcom>

Educational Advising Center at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent

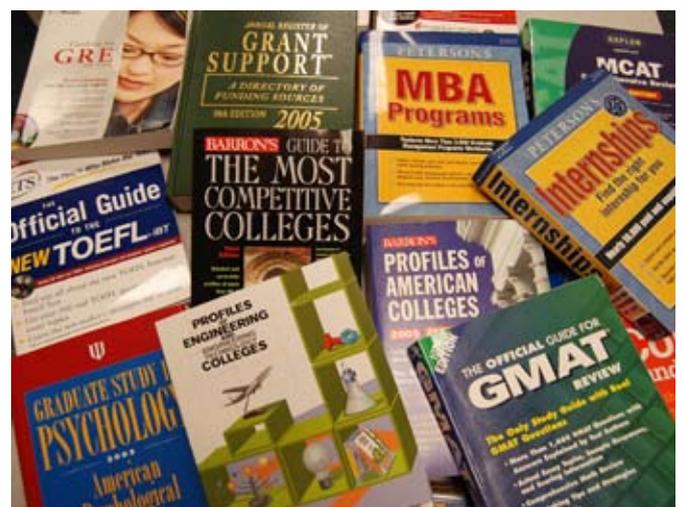


The Educational Advising Center offers the following services free of charge:

- general information about U.S. Education
- individual advising in areas of study and course descriptions
- test preparation materials for SAT, TOEFL, GRE and GMAT that can be used during consultation hours
- U.S. college selection database
- supporting reference materials
- financial aid resources
- application guides
- guides to Distance Learning

The center is supported by an educational advisor, a reference library, and educational software, all of which are geared to meeting the various needs of students that want to study in the United States.

Advising hours are by appointment from 13:00-17:00, Monday to Thursday. To schedule an appointment, please call 120-5450 between 9:30 to 12:00 Monday through Friday or



A sample of the materials offered by the Educational Advising Center at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

e-mail Tashkent-Advising@state.gov.

U.S. Government Exchange Program Alumni

The Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent provides support for alumni of U.S. Government exchange programs after their return to Uzbekistan.

The Public Affairs Section maintains a database of alumni of all U.S. Government exchange programs. Almost two thousand alumni are now registered and receive regular updates from the PAS Alumni Coordinator concerning the Embassy's upcoming events, such as Alumni Movie Nights, concerts, conferences, alumni-driven projects and other important information.

The Public Affairs Section also administers a Democracy Outreach / Alumni Grants Program. These grants are intended to support alumni initiatives in Uzbekistan and to provide travel grants to cover transportation for participation in conferences and workshops within Eurasia. To obtain an application for the Democracy Outreach / Alumni Grants, as well as to register for updates from the Alumni Coordinator, please contact:



Participants of the Second Annual Alumni Conference pose for a group photo. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Alumni Programs

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