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US delegation tours India

THE US UNDER SECRETARY of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs accompanied a delegation of university and college heads to India earlier this year in order to promote US education to Indian students. India is currently the largest student market for US higher education institutes, sending 76,503 students to US universities and colleges in the 2005/2006 academic year.

Representatives from Johnson and Wales University, the University of Washington, Oakton Community College, Baylor University, North Carolina State University and Kalamazoo College met with students, higher education leaders, government representatives and businessmen during the seven-day trip in order to discuss education collaboration initiatives such as student exchanges and joint degree programmes.

Karen Hughes, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, said that they were making every effort to speed up the visa process for Indian students. "We are very much committed to assuring every Indian student admitted to a legitimate institution of higher education in the USA will be granted a visa on time. We have increased the number of visas for Indian students and we want to further increase the number."

Margaret Lee, President of Oakton Community College, who was part of the delegation, said that the trip was a good way to build bridges after September 11. "What we're doing is waging peace by building bridges through educational opportunities."

Launch of school info service

An information service for boarding schools in the UK wanting to recruit more international students was unveiled at the second British Boarding Schools Workshop held in May this year. The service has been developed by SR Events, who is also behind



Suzanne Rowse at this year's British Boarding Schools fair

the organisation of the agent workshops for schools.

The online service will be available to members from September and will provide specific market information on a number of student destinations, news about issues affecting international enrolments and advice about working with agents.

From 2008, schools will be able to pay to use an online database of agents, who have been reference checked, as well as take part in fam trips and training seminars on networking with agents. Schools will also be able to post a detailed profile, including downloadable literature, on to a secure website that will be available to member agents.

Suzanne Rowse, Director of SR Events, said that they started

organising the workshops and set up the information service after finding little marketing material specifically tailored towards the needs of UK boarding schools. "Following the disbandment of the Independent Schools Council International there was an obvious gap in the market. The information service will enable schools to source agents quickly and efficiently online. Rigorous reference checks take place, taking the pressure off schools to source reliable agents."

Mike Conolly from Kent College in Canterbury has attended the British Boarding Schools Workshop for two years running and said, "The agent fair is a great way to establish agent networks."

Chinese students find integration hard in NZ

A RECENT STUDY commissioned by Education New Zealand and funded by the Export Education Industry Development Fund has revealed that many Chinese students studying in New Zealand find it hard to make friends with local inhabitants, although over half would like to stay and work in New Zealand after finishing their studies.

The study, called *The Experiences of Chinese Students in New Zealand*, was carried out by the University of Waikato and involved questioning 80 Chinese students in Auckland,

Rotorua, Hamilton and Christchurch. Robert Stevens, Chief Executive of Education New Zealand said, "Improving the student experience is a work in progress and the fact that the industry has supported and funded this research shows that institutions are keen to learn what the perceptions are, what progress has been made and where the priorities lie. This report will be an excellent resource in helping providers in their quest to maintain high standards," he added.

Highlights of the report included the high satisfaction

rates among Chinese students regarding their teaching and learning environment and the fact that twice as many students gave New Zealand as their first choice of study destination compared with those studying in the country before 2003.

Stevens added that he was keen to ensure prospective students had adequate information regarding studying in New Zealand before they arrived in the country. "This report will give [institutions] further guidance as they ensure that their educational offering is the best it can be," he said.

UK school in Kazakhstan
The first UK independent school in Kazakhstan will open its doors to students in September 2008. Haileybury-Almaty is the product of collaboration between Haileybury boarding school, based in Hertfordshire, UK, and Capital Partners, an international real estate developer in Kazakhstan. The school in the UK currently has 14 pupils from Kazakhstan in its classrooms.

New student accommodation in Queensland
A consortium of Korean businesses has announced plans to build a AUS\$73 million (US\$60.6 million) accommodation facility for international students in Queensland, Australia. The building will have up to 600 rooms and will be located on a site adjoining the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE, Ridgeway Campus.

Peter Beattie, Premier of Queensland, said, "The project is expected to result in significant economic benefits for the Gold Coast, attract hundreds of international students, and create some 300 jobs during construction," he said.

Online visas in Malaysia
The Malaysian government has been trialling an e-student pass online application system that could see students get their student visas in two weeks rather than the current four-to-five-week waiting time.

The system was piloted in May and was due to become fully operational in June. Higher Education Minister, Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, said, "To make Malaysia an attractive country for foreign students, we have to improve the efficiency of our service."

q&a



Full name: Australian Council for Private Education and Training
Year established: 1991
Organisation's main role: to enhance quality, choice, innovation and diversity in Australian education and training for individual, national and global development and to work proactively and cooperatively with government, education and training providers, industry and community organisations
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How have you been involved in shaping government/visa policy? Acpet plays an active role in the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's consultative committee which provides industry input including changes to the assessment levels for student visas, trials for e-visas; issues around education pathways and visas; changes to visa requirements; and English language levels for general skilled migration.

What international promotional activities have you been involved in? Acpet has hosted senior international delegations including Ministry of Education officials

from Indonesia, Pakistan, India, China, Singapore and Colombia, and has participated in Australian missions as well as international conferences organised by government and other private provider bodies. Acpet has supported the education agent training programme run by Professional International Education Resources (Pier), and has invited qualified agents to join Acpet.

What particular challenges do your members face in terms of increasing international enrolments? Acpet members often face the double challenge of regulations through the domestic frameworks and those superimposed by the

Education Services for Overseas Students (Esos) legislation, as well as the visa regulations imposed by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. The three major challenges facing members currently are: the transition to the National Code 2007; the transition to the revised Australian Quality Training Framework; and changes to the general skilled migration programme.

What plans does Acpet have for the future? Acpet will continue to maintain strong links with senior Government and opposition officials through regular meetings at national and state levels; hold discussions around free trade

agreements for education services; continue to promote the sector through consultations with international delegations; continue to support and promote high quality education outcomes, including recognition for qualifications in the trades, quality agents and homestay services, and to support our members.

What has Acpet been doing lately to further the interests of your members? As a powerful industry lobby group, Acpet represents its members on government-industry consultative committees. In particular, Acpet has been actively involved in four major Government projects.

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