

# International Office reaches out

***In 2005, Stellenbosch University's International Office scooped the prestigious IEASA/Golden Key award for Excellence in Internationalisation for an unprecedented 3<sup>rd</sup> time in a row. Media and Publications Liaison, Liezel Visser, provides an insight into the success of the International Office.***

[www.sun.ac.za/international/](http://www.sun.ac.za/international/)

Two hundred Namibian students and about 10 students from other countries. This was the start of the International Office of Stellenbosch University in 1993 - the first of its kind in South Africa.

However, we have come along in leaps and bounds since then and in 2005 we received a staggering 2 350 students from all over the world, more than half of whom came from Africa. Their presence on campus is an integral part of the University realising its policies with regards to internationalisation.

In 2003, 2004 and 2005 our office successfully competed with other tertiary institutions in South Africa for the prestigious IEASA/Golden Key (International Education Association of South Africa) award for Excellence in Internationalisation.

The International Office is responsible for the entire administration and admission process of all non-South African students, including the evaluation of foreign qualifications and assistance with study permits and medical aid coverage.

We offer a similar service to students from Stellenbosch who want to study abroad. We receive two intakes of students annually, in January and July.

Before the academic term commences all new arrivals attend a special three-day orientation programme hosted by the International Office with the view to prepare them for all aspects of life at Stellenbosch University. The programme includes sessions on safety and security on campus, how to deal with culture shock, Survival Afrikaans, as well as dealing with issues pertaining to administration.

In addition to its administrative functions, the International Office prides

itself on providing students the opportunity to become involved in social events and community projects through ISOS (International Student Organisation of Stellenbosch).

This organisation is an invaluable part of our students' lives as it presents them with both the opportunity to get to know Stellenbosch and student culture on a social level and it confronts them with the socio-economic realities of living in South Africa through its Kayamandi Project. This project was started 8 years ago by international students with the aim of making a difference in the lives of the children in Kayamandi. International students volunteer in Kayamandi twice a week to teach English and sports as well as arts and crafts.

Apart from encouraging students to become involved in the community in order to have an authentic and memorable South African experience, we also encourage them to learn Afrikaans. To this end the International Office, in co-operation with the Language Centre's Unit for Afrikaans, offers a beginners' course in Afrikaans at the start of each semester. It is aimed at new students and lecturers with no prior knowledge of Afrikaans.

This fun-filled course offers a linguistic and cultural taste of Afrikaans as a language in a wider cultural context in the Western Cape. It comprises lively interpersonal activities in the classroom, as well as an instructive extramural component. The course is taught using an interactive methodology based on the whole-person approach to language learning. The class atmosphere is informal and conducive to the assimilation of enough vocabulary for everyday use.

The International Office, with the support of academic departments, has also developed IPSU (International Programmes Stellenbosch University), a number of courses spanning virtually all fields of study, to cater especially for the needs of international students.

We also offer a Certificate in Community Engagement in co-operation with the Unit for Service-learning and Community Interaction, which provided students from abroad with the opportunity to demonstrate and develop their global citizenship through service-learning. Students who opt for this course have the opportunity to develop an understanding of the historical background and current issues impacting on community life and problems in South Africa and experience it first hand by rendering a service to a South African community while earning academic credits.

Highlights for the rest of the year include our second semester student-intake as well as our fourth annual Family Meeting in August, when representatives of our partner institutions abroad will visit Stellenbosch to meet with local faculty members and to explore the town and surrounding areas.

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