

INSIDE AUA

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MOVING FORWARD: A SNAPSHOT OF AUA ON ITS 15TH ANNIVERSARY

The American University of Armenia (AUA) opened its doors on the same day that independence was achieved by the Republic of Armenia in 1991. Now in its 15th year, AUA is poised to provide an advanced leadership presence in the region as a fully accredited American academic institution. AUA's two-year master's degree curriculum represents the only accessible U.S. graduate training in the area. Utilizing state-of-the-art facilities, an affiliation with the University of California (UC) system, and an established reputation for academic excellence, AUA continues to educate and support Armenia's and Eurasia's government and business leaders of tomorrow.

In 2005, through nearly eight million dollars in private donations, construction began to add needed classroom and laboratory facilities in a dramatic expansion of the university. When completed next year, the Paramaz Avedisian Building will represent the most advanced, state-

of-the-art academic facilities in the region, permitting AUA to fulfill its educational mission and fully become the model western university in the region. The expansion will permit enrollment to more than double in critical fields of political science and law, public health, business, engineering and computer science, and advanced English language studies, as well as enabling regional extension services, continuing adult and professional education, and expanded academic and professional programs and conferences. We eagerly look forward to the completion of these new educational

facilities, and the growing opportunities they represent.



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Every day, AUA contributes to the advanced development of Armenia by encouraging students to apply their skills in creative and innovative ways. The broadly experienced and knowledgeable professors who facilitate the AUA learning experience also guide the activities of the University's seven Research Centers. These Centers, and the talented students and faculty supporting their efforts, are truly the backbone of AUA's success. The quality and reliability of AUA's research has made the University a recognized resource among local and international scientific communities and other groups. Conferences and workshops organized at AUA now attract respected participants from all over the world. In addition, AUA has become a facilitator for meetings between the Armenian government and local groups, which often result in joint project collaborations.

AUA's Research Centers have become vital resources in their own right, and their substantial contributions to the engineering, health, environmental, business, legal, and linguistic fields are significant assets to the future of Armenia and the region as a whole.

—Dr. Haroutune Armenian

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NEW APPOINTMENTS

Robert Agajeenian, Ph.D in Applied Linguistics, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), has joined the American University of Armenia to teach at the Department of English Programs.



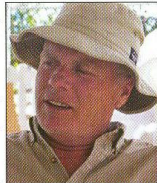
In addition to teaching, Dr. Agajeenian will provide overall administrative oversight of the Department's programs: IEP, CTEFL, MA TEFL and Center for Research and Development in Applied Linguistics.



Dr. Sivakumar Sivasubramaniam, Ph.D in Applied Linguistics, University of Nottingham, UK, has joined the Department of English Programs at AUA. "My wife and I are very happy that we are going to Armenia, a very special country, and to live and work with very special people", stated

Dr. Sivasubramaniam. "I am overwhelmed when I realize that my hometown, Chennai has had a strong historical connection with Armenia. The first Armenian journal, "Azdarar" was printed in an Armenian press in Madras. Armenians command great respect and admiration in my hometown today."

Jon Pearce, Ph. D in Mathematics, University of California, Berkeley, has joined AUA as a Senior Fulbright Specialist to teach Object-Oriented Programming and Internet Programming at the Computer Information Science Program. Dr. Pearce is a Professor at the Mathematics and Computer Science Department of the San Jose State University, as well as a Lecturer at the Corporate Training Division of the University of California, Santa Cruz Extension.

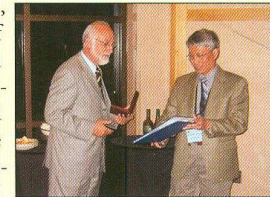


Mary Bane Lackie, currently a Doctoral Candidate in Higher Education Leadership, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, has joined the American University of Armenia as the Registrar/Director of Student Affairs. Mary's previous position was at the American School of Warsaw, where she was the Director of Development. She also served as Director of Alumni and later Executive Director of Alumni and Annual Giving at the Arkansas Tech University, and as Foreign Student Advisor at the University of Central Arkansas, where she participated in establishing the study abroad program.

FACULTY NEWS

Armen Der Kiureghian receives the Alfred M. Freudenthal Medal

Armen Der Kiureghian, Dean of the College of Engineering at the American University of Armenia and Professor of Civil Engineering and holder of the Taisei Chair at the University of California, Berkeley, was awarded the Alfred M.



Freudenthal Medal of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) for his research contributions. Together with several colleagues, Dr. Der Kiureghian also received the Thomas A. Middlebrooks award from the ASCE Geo-Institute for a paper he co-authored at UC Berkeley.

Law Dean Tom Samuelian receives the St. Sahak-Mesrop Medal



On August 30, 2006, His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, bestowed AUA Law Dean Tom Samuelian with the St. Sahak-Mesrop medal in recognition of his nearly three decades of service to the Armenian Church and nation. The Order of Sts. Sahak and Mesrop is one of the church's highest honors, reserved for individuals who have made outstanding contributions in the fields of scholarship, education, culture, and service.

AUA EVENTS

Lecture at AUA by Ambassador John Evans

On July 10, 2006, the outgoing United States Ambassador to Armenia, the Honorable John Evans, gave a speech to students, faculty, and alumni at the American University of Armenia. The focus of this year's speech was "The Continuing Challenge of the American Constitution."

AUA congratulates its 2006 graduating class of 126 students on a job exceedingly well done and an eventful two years of knowledge sharing and learning. The 2006 graduation ceremonies will be profiled in the next issue of Inside AUA.

ACLOSER LOOK AT THE AUA RESEARCH CENTERS

AUA is well known as a regional center for Western-style education of exceptional quality. Its cutting-edge, socially relevant research is a cornerstone of this success.

The work of AUA's seven research centers merges with that of its academic departments in providing hands-on training in projects, many of which are developing advanced technologies or bridging Armenia with Western institutions. Center faculty pride themselves on utilizing teaching methods that promote intellectually open exchange between faculty members and students.

Students are encouraged to pursue diversity in knowledge and to formulate, critically and creatively, their individual paths of understanding. In this and following issues, every center will be featured for a closer look.

AUA contributes substantial and exciting research that has a global reach in each of these fields. With this issue of Inside AUA, we introduce a series of research highlights and interviews with AUA center directors, beginning with Renee Richer at the Environmental Conservation and Research Center (ECRC).

Environmental Conservation And Research Center

American University of Armenia

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Research Center: Engineering Research Center (ERC)

Associated College: *College of Engineering*

Mission: Conducts basic and applied research on economic and technological problems that are relevant to the industrial development of Armenia and its region; provides service to the industry; holds workshops and technical conferences; collaborates with industry and academic partners on research and development projects.

Research Center: Center for Health Services Research and Development (CHSR)

Associated College: *College of Health Sciences*

Mission: Provides its expertise as a resource to support and facilitate the existing public health infrastructure in Armenia; provides supervised field training opportunities for students enrolled in the AUA Public Health Program.

Research Center: The Turpanjian Center for Policy Analysis (TCPA)

Associated College: *School of Political Science and International Affairs*

Mission: Promotes greater knowledge and understanding through objective and independent research and policy analysis employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Research Center: Center for Business Research and Development (CBRD)

Associated College: *School of Business and Management*

Mission: Helps the economic development of Armenia in its transition to a market economy.

Research Center: Center for Research and Development for Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching (CRDALLT)

Associated College: *Department of English Programs*

Mission: Conducts, encourages, publishes and disseminates research with primary focus on promoting effective language teaching at all levels in Armenia and the region.

Research Center: Environmental Conservation and Research Center (ECRC)

Associated College: *ECRC is a stand-alone research center that contributes to intra-departmental curricula.*

Mission: Works to protect Armenia's unparalleled and strategically important biodiversity and natural resources through research, education and public outreach.

Research Center: Legal Research Center (LRC)

Associated College: *Department of Law*

Mission: Maintains an extensive collection of printed and electronic reference materials covering all major fields of law and concentrating on comparative and international law.

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THE ACOPIAN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH CENTER

ECRC's mission is to protect Armenia's unparalleled and strategically important biodiversity and natural resources through research, education and public outreach.

Established in 1992, ECRC conducts research into conservation, ecology, environmental contamination, and sustainable development, while serving the community through educational outreach and collaboration with local scientists and organizations. Its focus is on probing the basic science of ecology and conservation, promoting the fundamentals of environmental science through education, and protecting Armenia's heritage through public awareness. ECRC is generously funded by Mr. Sarkis Acopian, and its work reflects his commitment to the preservation of Armenia's environment.

ECRC is truly a repository of environmental talent and knowledge in Armenia. In April 2005, the Center appointed Dr. Renee Richer as Director of ECRC and Assistant Professor. Dr. Richer received her Ph.D. in Biology in 2004 from Harvard University, and her Bachelor's Degree in Biology from the University of Chicago. She has also received the Derek Bok teaching award given by Harvard students for excellence in all areas of instruction.

Dr. Richer's in-depth graduate research took place in the rural forests of Zimbabwe, where she was also involved with primary schools to encourage environmental awareness and participation in science.

What do you see as the most pressing environmental issues in Armenia today?

I would have to say first and foremost are deforestation and desertification; after this would be water quality throughout the country, and air quality in urban areas. All of these have a major impact on Armenia's environment. The Environmental Conservation and Research Center focuses on these vital areas by coordinating innovative research efforts with local environmental groups, and by taking a strong stance on issues such as deforestation.

What is the role of ECRC in addressing these issues?

The central challenge of conducting environmental research in the region is coping with a fundamental lack of scientific data. Having baseline data is key to opening doors for environmental conservation in Armenia. For instance, ECRC's strong stance on deforestation requires strong and basic data to back it up.

Because it's such a challenge to get solid, irrefutable data, ECRC has a critical role to play in gathering data for Armenia's scientific community, the

government, non-governmental organizations, and the ECRC itself, as well as in training others to do so. This is an enormous plus for the environmental community in Armenia. Meaningful scientific research and data collection has had a remarkable impact within the Armenian government. It has also been extremely significant in soliciting financial support and research contracts for the center.

What are the major strengths of ECRC?

The strength of ECRC lies in the faculty of visiting scientists who contribute their talent by teaching important, relevant courses, such as pollution control. The Center has also attracted a gifted and highly knowledgeable staff. For example, the new GIS (Geographic Information Systems) leader, Armen Asryan, is skilled in remote sensing using GIS software, a technology essential to environmental fieldwork and data collection. Armen shares this knowledge with NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and project partners by offering GIS training. He will also be teaching an AUA course called GIS and Remote Sensing for Natural Resource Management, which demonstrates the use of this software in monitoring water and other resources.

What current ECRC projects are you most excited about?

In recent decades, Armenia has seen large fluctuations in the population of the White Stork, a culturally and historically significant species. The "White Stork Project" seeks to determine the role that water quality plays in the stork's reproductive success by geographical area.



Educational outreach is a major component of this project to map and monitor every nest in Armenia using GIS technology. We are training schoolchildren all over the country to tag and observe each nest over an extended period of time. The activity ties ECRC closely into Armenian communities, integrates environmental awareness into school curricula, and offers a springboard for introducing larger conservation issues into rural communities.

What types of community involvement and educational outreach programs do you foresee ECRC undertaking in the future?

The Center would like to further its role as a catalyst of change in Armenia's scientific community by encouraging collaboration on joint projects, and providing open-source, scientific information, and trainings. This could help Armenia overcome some of the information management challenges that are holdovers from Soviet times.

For example, I am currently working with government and UK-based organizations to obtain funding for updating the Red Book, an important publication that lists endangered and threatened species in Armenia. ECRC has written some proposals with government agencies to begin this process, and we are beginning to receive a good response.

ECRC is working jointly with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Armenian Forests NGO and Armenia Tree Project on deforestation issues. I am also in close communication with the Armenian government to establish and expand the Forest Monitoring Center (FMC), which would accurately monitor illegal logging using GIS. We have already approached FMC to undertake some large-scale joint

proposals between the government & NGOs. In fact, ECRC & the American University of Armenia just hosted a landmark meeting between NGOs and the Forest Monitoring Center.

What has been students' general reaction to integrating environmental courses into the curricula at AUA?

In the past, there was only one course available to fulfill the University's requirement for an Environmental Certificate, so there was initially some resistance. My goal is to give students a basic understanding of environmental issues, so that they can make responsible decisions as citizens. So I've added a variety of courses for students to choose from, thereby increasing the relevance of environmental studies to all AUA programs. Students are now much more open to the idea of the Certificate, and the courses are gaining in popularity.

The new environmental ornithology class taught by Karen Aghababyan, for example, has gotten a great response. The Caucasus region has a disproportionate biodiversity of plants & animals, including birds, of which there are around 350 species. First, Dr. Aghababyan introduces the students to Ornithology; then he discusses the effects of specific environmental threats in Armenia to each of the major functional groups of birds, such as raptors and waterbirds, etc.

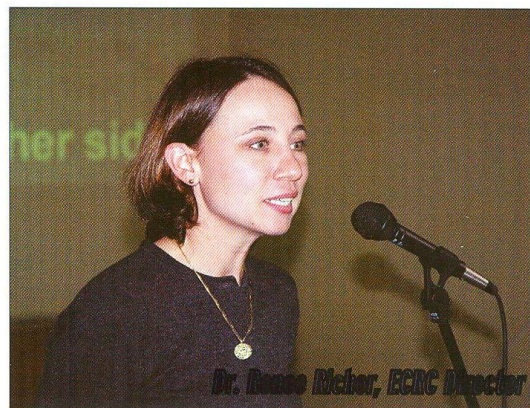
Do you feel there is a place for a full AUA Masters program in Environmental Conservation in the future?

There is certainly interest in such a program among stu-

dents, both at AUA and YSU (Yerevan State University). For instance, two AUA Political Science students are doing their theses in conjunction with the Environmental Certificate. Their topics include the potential benefits of developing organic agriculture, and how reforestation would help Armenia conform to the Kyoto Protocol. In addition, two YSU students have written their theses on the White Stork project. I have been approached by many YSU students who want to come to AUA specifically for the environmental courses.

So, there is definitely a place for a full MA in Environmental Conservation at AUA in the future, and ECRC is poised to provide this - not a lot would be required to start such a program. There is currently no real modern environmental science program in all of Armenia, but all of the components are in place for one at ECRC. However, it is important for students to have access to faculty, so additional full-time professors would be required. Overall, there is a lot of untapped potential and a tremendous need for environmental studies in Armenia.

—Thanks to Dr. Richer for this telephone interview.



Dr. Anne Richer, ECRC Director

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TRIBUTE TO VARTKES BARSAM

*from Dr. Haroutune Armenian,
President of the American
University of Armenia*

Vartkes Barsam, age 80, founder and chairman of Datatech Electronics Corporation of Houston, Texas and distinguished board member, treasurer and friend of the American University of Armenia, passed away in Los Angeles on Saturday, September 19, following a courageous battle with cancer. He leaves behind his loving and supportive wife Jean, his son Charles and daughters Linda, Diane, and Janine; their spouses and 8 lovely grandchildren, Christina, Andrew, Melissa, Lauren, Taleen, Grant, Nicholas and Catherine. He will be missed by the many hundreds of friends who saw Vartkes as a man of dedication, ability, and courage. I was honored by our friendship and opportunity to work together in supporting the future of Armenia and its youth.

Vartkes Barsam received his Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree in Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering from the University of Wyoming in 1949 and spent the next thirty years working in the defense industry on highly classified programs, then turned to developing shopping centers and founding the Datatech Corporation.

In 1988, Vartkes Barsam visited Armenia with the group of Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America, to identify assistance priority needs in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that year. He soon became actively involved in several activities. He established a fiber optics program at Armenia's Polytechnic University, and accepted the treasurer position at the American University of Armenia. He was known to be a "doer" who always followed his altruistic ideas with solid actions; his extensive, active involvement with the Eyecare Project of Arme-

nia was evidence of this. Vartkes also supported youth development through numerous pro-education ventures, as demonstrated by his sponsorship of a new elementary school in Karabagh. Vartkes served on many Armenian community boards, including the parish council of the St. James Armenian Church, the Diocesan Council of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, the Armenian Professional Society, and several other organizations.

During the establishment of the American University of Armenia, Vartkes assisted President Mihran Agbabian and later worked alongside me by providing invaluable guidance and clearing hurdles at each step of the way. In fact, Vartkes helped establish not only the solid foundation of AUA, but also many essential components that would sustain Armenia's growth and development, including the telecommunications infrastructure, a western business hotel to attract investment, and diplomatic interventions with all levels of government and the global business communities. Through the Barsams' generosity, the former landmark HyBusiness Suites Hotel is now AUA's Barsam Building, affording the opportunity to house visiting faculty and students, as well as provide rental income for university operations. The Barsams' contribution to the Computer Information Sciences program has been important to the entire university. These and many other gifts over the years complemented Vartkes Barsam's years of devoted service and guidance as a respected AUA trustee.

The Barsam family will be among the honorees at AUA's 15th Anniversary Banquet in Los Angeles on November 12. That evening will feature a tribute to Vartkes and Jean, which will now become a fitting memorial. The other tribute will be paid as AUA's graduating students of 2006 move forward to assume their places of leadership in Armenia's future, one made far brighter because of Vartkes Barsam.

UPCOMING AUA ONLINE CHANGES

Keep a close look at www.aua.am, as exciting new developments are in store. Links will soon allow online giving and estate planning, event and conference hosting and lodging opportunities, even online shopping.

University Gift Shop

AUA is excited to announce the development of a University Gift Shop. A variety of items bearing the AUA logo will soon be available for secure online purchase in support of AUA programs. Now is the time to let us know what you would like to see: hats, coffee mugs, neckties, and wallets are just a few of the possibilities. Send your suggestions to Maggie@auac.net.

Online Giving

Interested in contributing to AUA by credit card? Name a University classroom after a loved one, or have your family's name engraved on an AUA floor tile. Online donation opportunities coming soon to our home page; in the meantime, contact 510-987-9125 to make a gift or learn more.

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