



Statue of the "Gorilla," the athletics program mascot, in front of the Overman Student Center.

Winning Formula IN INTERNATIONALIZATION Found in a Kansas Corner

Text and photography by Christopher Connell



EDITOR'S NOTE:
Condensed versions of the profiles of the five winners of the 2008 Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization are being included in IE. The full profiles can be seen in Internationalizing the Campus 2008: Profiles of Success at Colleges and Universities.

IT WAS NO ACCIDENT that the nineteenth century founders of Pittsburg, Kansas, chose a name that called to mind the much bigger and grander Pittsburgh (with an "h" in Pennsylvania's coal mining precincts. Little Pittsburgh in the Sunflower State's southeast corner was awash in coal that drew miners from Italy to the Balkans. The railroads came, too, to ferry the ore to zinc smelters in nearby Joplin, Missouri. The Kansas legislature established the Auxiliary Manual Training Normal School in Pittsburg in 1903 to prepare industrial arts teachers. Soon that mission broadened. It became Kansas State Teachers College in 1923 and Pittsburg State University in 1977. Its graduates include Debra Dene Barnes, the 1968 Miss America, the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet James Tate, and H. Lee Scott, president and CEO of Wal-Mart. Its football team, nicknamed the Gorillas, has won three national championships and amassed the most wins in NCAA Division II history.



More importantly, today Pittsburg State University boasts more than 7,000 students and a reputation as a strong regional university with deep and growing international ties from Paraguay to Korea to Kazakhstan. The student body includes 490 international students, many on exchanges from partner universities around the world. Pitt State sends teams of business majors to Russia to teach high school and university students about ethics in free enterprise, and automotive technology students to Korea to compete—and win—in a “mini-Baja” dune buggy competition. Education majors hone their teaching skills in classrooms in Paraguay and Russia, and enterprising faculty have won several federal Title VI grants for a host of international business and education projects. “This didn’t happen overnight. This has been a long history of this institution,” said President Tom W. Bryant, still jet lagged from a spring journey to visit partner universities and forge new relationships in Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Bryant said the region’s rich ethnic heritage “may be one of the things that made all this possible. This little community reaches out its hands to the international students, and maybe it’s because they remember their grandparents coming over on the ships.”

Faculty Behind the Wheel

At a ceremony celebrating the 2008 Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization, Steven Scott, provost and vice president for academic affairs said, “We owe this to the faculty—the faculty who serve on the International Council, the faculty who’ve had a commitment and a passion for international travel, international engagement, internationalizing the curriculum.”

One such faculty member, John Tsan-Hsiang Chen, joined the Department of Engineering Technology in 1981 and soon bore the title of assistant to the president for Chinese affairs. Over the past quarter century Chen has recruited and mentored hundreds of students from his native Taiwan, and from China as well, and helped cement ties with two dozen universities. Now honored with a scholarship for international students that bears his name, Chen remembers with a smile that on one of his first trips on the university’s behalf back to Taiwan, his department chairman docked him vacation time. In fall 2007, 80 of Pitt State’s international students came on exchanges, half from partner universities in Taiwan and China.

“Life has become much easier” for the international faculty who followed Chen, said Anil Lal, an associate professor of economics who leads education abroad trips to his native India and recruits for the Kansas campus. Pitt State enrolled a record 53 students from India this past spring, and a half-dozen others took classes in its Intensive English Program. Lal said some of the growth is driven by “the internet phenomenon,” with students themselves spreading the word on the Indian equivalent of Facebook. “The students here



President Tom Bryant sampled cake at the campus ceremony celebrating the 2008 Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization.

say good things about this place and then others come,” said Lal. Director of International Affairs Chuck Olcese agreed that word-of-mouth “is the greatest recruiter of international students. Now you add this whole social networking on the internet and we don’t even know where our name is going out anymore.”

Lal was a civil servant in India and consultant for the World Bank before completing a doctorate in economics at Washington State University and joining Pitt State in 1995. He draws large audiences on Indian campuses by lecturing on development economics and offering general advice about studying in the United States. Only indirectly does he try to sell students on Pitt State. “If they feel I’m genuine and honest, they might come” or convince someone else to, he said. Lal’s personal connections have opened doors in India, and he hopes to develop those ties to the point that he can pass the recruiting duties on to someone else. “That’s my strategy,” he said.

"One thing I learned in government is no one is indispensable."

When University Professor of Finance Michael Muoghalu, the Nigerian-born director of the M.B.A. program at the Kelce College of Business, joined the faculty two decades ago, Pitt State enrolled more than 100 students from his home country. They came at government expense for degrees in Pitt State's highly ranked technology program. Today only six Nigerian students attend Pitt State, but the M.B.A. program that Muoghalu runs draws students from around the world. "For some reason, I just fell in love with this place," said the finance professor. "If you compare Pitt State to other schools this size, you can't find one that is more international. It's way ahead of the curve." Half of the 140 students in Muoghalu's M.B.A. program are international; they hail from 20 countries. "We have the diversity most schools would pray and dream about. We're on the right path," he said.

Professor of Management Choong Lee is a faculty dynamo who has helped forge deep ties with universities in his native Korea and, more recently, in central Asia. Having taught in Brazil, "Korea was not big enough for Choong," said an admiring Peggy Snyder, dean of continuing and graduate studies. Lee joined the faculty in 1989 after earning a B.S. in nuclear engineering at the prestigious Seoul National University in Korea, and completing two master's degrees and a Ph.D. at the University of Iowa. Lee has won three consecutive Title V/B Business and International Education grants from the U.S. Department of Education—grants aimed at helping U.S. businesses become more globally competitive with university assistance—and is going for a fourth. He consults extensively in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan and hopes to establish a Center for Central Asian Business and Research at Pitt State. "We developed the first sister-school relationship with the National University of Uzbekistan and also Kazakhstan," said Lee, who said Pittsburg State is as well known as Harvard in parts of the region. Lee's interest in central Asia was whetted by hearing U.S. officials emphasize the region's strategic importance to world peace.

Multiple International Partnerships

Pitt State's automotive technology program is ranked near the top nationally and its engineering technology graduates are prized by employers in the auto and aviation industries. The College of Technology, in a showcase, \$28 million, 278,000-square foot Kansas Technology Center, is also one of the



Steven Scott, provost and vice president for academic affairs.

biggest draws for international students. Lee initiated a flourishing exchange of students and faculty with Gyeongang National University (GNU) in Jinju, South Korea. In 2006 Pitt State sent three students for five months to GNU, where they tutored GNU students in English, then competed against teams from 80 Korean

universities in a grueling "Mini-Baja" in a dune buggy-like vehicle they designed and built. Pitt State sent another team in 2007 for a month—returning with the championship trophy from the rugged race.

Cody Emmert, 22, of Seneca, Kansas, captained both teams. "If you told me when I was a freshman that I would be going to Korea for six months or be involved in an engineering competition internationally, I wouldn't have believed it," said Emmert. Students such as Emmert can command \$60,000 starting salaries, said University Professor and Chairman of Technology Studies John Iley. Emmert is a car lover who expects his knowledge of Korea to be a major plus as he pursues a career in the increasingly international automotive industry.

Pittsburg State also has a rich relationship with Paraguay under a partnership inspired by President John F. Kennedy and his Alli-

John Tsan-Hsiang Chen, professor and assistant to the president for Chinese affairs, helped build campus ties with his native Taiwan and with China.



ance for Progress with Latin America. Kansas and Paraguay have collaborated on citizen exchanges since 1968, and the Kansas legislature allows Paraguayan students to pay in-state tuition. In 2007 Paraguayans comprised approximately 10 percent of the international students. "It's a very good deal," said Cecilia Crosa, 21, a junior from Asunción. Jazmin Ramirez, 24, a junior political science and international studies major, interrupted her six-year program in law at the National University in Asunción to obtain a Pittsburg State degree in political science and international studies. Ramirez, who interned for the United Nations office in her capital this past summer, believes the American education and degree will help her fulfill her goal of becoming an envoy for Paraguay.

Pitt State professors travel to that land-locked country to teach a series of four-week general education evening classes in English. In a year, students can earn 24 credits, transferable to Pitt State or other U.S. universities. Professor of Social Science and Director of International Studies Paul Zagorski was one of several professors who traveled to South America in 1998 to see about expanding opportunities for study and research abroad. They got their warmest reception in Asunción, and that is where Pitt State planted its flag. The push in Paraguay was helped by the Title VI federal grants that Pittsburg State received to internationalize its faculty and curriculum. Alice Sagehorn, a professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, was intrigued by the possibilities. She approached the dean of Arts and Sciences and said, "This is wonderful, but I noticed two things: there's no one from the College of Education and no women on the committee."

"He said, 'You're on the committee,' and that's how it started," recalled the busy Sagehorn, who earned her master's degree at Pitt State. After returning to join the faculty in 1992, it took the former elementary school teacher just seven semesters to complete a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction at the University of Arkansas. Quickly Sagehorn became adept at securing large federal grants to expand the work of the College of Education, including one to train more Kansas teachers to teach English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and another to bring teachers from China to teach Mandarin to children and teens in the Pittsburg



Anil Lal, professor of economics, leads education abroad trips to his native India.



Chuck Olcese, director of international affairs, chairs the 15-member Internationalization Council.



Michael Muoghala, director of the M.B.A. program at the Kelce College of Business, is a native of Nigeria.

public schools. She coordinated Pitt State's education abroad activities for a year and became the founding director of the Pittsburg State University in Paraguay program in 2004. She has made 14 trips to Paraguay in the past eight years, including taking education majors every other summer to practice teach in an international school in Asunción. Sagehorn conceived the Pittsburg State in Paraguay program on a long flight home after overhearing a Paraguayan mother tell her college-age daughter that leaving home to study in the United States before turning 21 was out of the question. "I got to thinking: If we can't bring the students to Pittsburg, how can we bring Pitt State to Paraguay?" Sagehorn said. The program attracts upwards of two dozen students each year, some of whom complete their undergraduate studies in Pittsburg like Cecilia Crosa and Jazmin Ramirez.

There is "very much a private college feel" to Pittsburg State, said Bruce Dallman, dean of the College of Technology. "The student-faculty interaction here is out of the ordinary, especially for a public institution." Students, domestic and international, savor the attention. Ankit Jain, 22, a senior automotive engineering major from New Delhi, India, said it came as no surprise that Pitt State won the Senator Paul Simon Award. "They made a good choice. This is the second best in the whole U.S. for automotive engineering, and our university is improving day by day," said Jain, president of the Indian Student Association.

Why Pitt State

Semonti Sinharoy, 21, a senior from Calcutta, India, who double majored in plastics engineering and chemistry, said, "I came here for the plastics program. Basically, there are only three or four schools in the U.S. with a plastics program like this." Coming from a city with 4.5 million people, Pittsburg (with 20,000) took some getting used to, Sinharoy said. But the town and the "continuous exchange of culture between the Americans and international students" grew on her. Sinharoy, headed next to Columbia University in New York for a master's in engineering management, recently won an undergraduate research award from the Society of Plastics Engineers for helping recycle foams and plastics made from soybean oil.

Sung Hwan Kim, 24, a junior accounting major from Seoul, Korea, first came to Pittsburg State on an exchange. "Now I'm paying tuition," said Kim, who believes that finishing his degree in Kansas will provide a faster route into the accounting profession than if he had returned to a university back home. "I'm a little bit older than these [other students]. I served in the army for two years before coming here," Kim said.

Xiao Wu, 22, who was born in Shanghai, China, but raised in Nagoya, Japan, first came to Pitt State for the noncredit Intensive English Program. He returned to enroll in electronics engineering technology, which involves extensive coursework in math and physics. Wu, the director of activities for the Chinese Student Association, said with a laugh that when he mentions his major, "people kind of want me to fix their computers. I can't do that." He expects to wind up in electronics, like his parents back in Nagoya.



Choong Lee, professor of management, initiated student and faculty exchange with South Korea and helped start a sister-school relationship in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

A Variety of Program Opportunities

Pittsburg State takes great pride in the Intensive English Program (IEP), staffed by seven full-time faculty and directed by Christine Mekkaoui, a Peace Corps veteran fluent in Arabic, French, and Spanish. "Pitt State has been very supportive in keeping full-time faculty in the Intensive English Program. We don't have graduate teaching assistants; we don't have faculty wives. Everybody has a master's degree in teaching English and is well qualified, and that makes a huge difference," said Mekkaoui. The IEP had 77 students in fall 2007 and 68 for the spring semester. Traditionally most students have come from Asia, but Saudi Arabia has begun sending large contingents of late. Most stay at Pittsburg to pursue degrees, others use their English skills to win admission to other U.S. universities. "We're able to take a personal interest in our students and help them with everything. We help them find places to live

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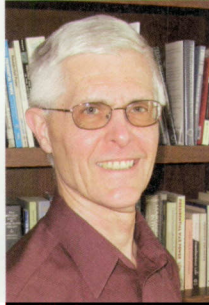
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Alice Sagehorn, professor of education, became the founding director of the Pittsburg State in Paraguay program.

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and, if they have a car accident, we're dealing with the insurance company. We're really here for them," said Mekkaoui.

IEP occupies spacious offices in Whitesitt Hall, down the corridor from the flag-filled Office of International Programs and Services, where domestic students come to learn about study/education abroad opportunities and international students come for academic advice as well as help with visas. Under Olcese, director of international affairs since 1999, the office has been transformed into the hub for much of the international activities on campus. "Chuck has taken it to a different level," said Mekkaoui. "He is more the international face, trying to involve the upper administration and the whole campus in making things international." He heads a staff of six that includes a full-time study abroad coordinator—a position created in 2006 and held by Julia Helminiak. President Bryant observed, "We've got good leadership and staff over there." He believes the next challenge for Pitt State is to convince more students to go abroad. More



Cody Emmert (left), graduate student, and John Iley (right), professor and chair of technology studies, captain and instructor, respectively, for the Pittsburg State winning team of the Society of Automotive Engineers Mini Baja in South Korea.

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Rebecca Casey, interim chair of the Department of Accounting and an alumna, has led three of the SIFE program trips.

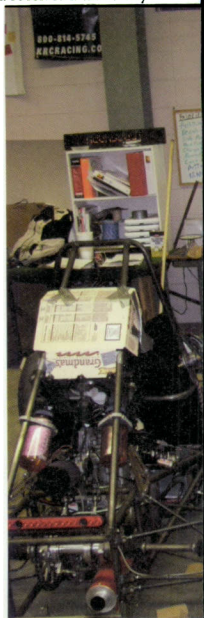


William Ivy, dean of enrollment management and student success, oversees the Office of International Programs and Services.

than 100 Pitt State students studied abroad in 2006-07—triple the number from seven years earlier—and others went overseas on service trips. Every student who studies abroad receives a university scholarship ranging from \$200 to \$1,000 to defray costs. In the past two years, 17 faculty have led students on 18 education abroad trips to 13 countries, including Korea, China, India, Paraguay and Brazil.

Turkish-born Meltem Tugut entered Pitt State as a freshman in 2000, became president of the International Student Association, graduated summa cum laude, and later served as coordinator of international programs while completing the second of two master's degrees in business. Tugut, who this fall started studying for a business doctorate at St. Louis University, said one of her favorite memories is International Recognition Night in October, when international students are honored by being called out onto the court during halftime of a women's volleyball contest.

A service learning program called Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE) also turns Pitt State students into world travelers. SIFE, supported by a phalanx of U.S. and multinational corporations, sponsors competitions worldwide in which teams of students vie to demonstrate mastery of business skills and ethics. The





Meltem Tugut, coordinator of international programs and a native of Turkey, became president of the International Student Association.

50-member SIFE chapter at Pitt State has traveled to Russia and Kazakhstan on several occasions. Rebecca Casey, interim chairperson of the Department of Accounting, has led three of those trips, including one in which her students brought along a video they made in Russian with Pitt State students' role-playing a scenario about bribery in the workplace. The video ended with tax agents' arresting the buyer and the business falling apart. "It really made them stop and think," said Casey, an alumna. "I think we convinced a lot of them."

Eric Herbers (left), engineering science undergraduate, and Bruce Dallman (right), dean of the College of Technology.



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Both Bryant and Scott, the provost, are former deans of education who began their careers as high school teachers. Although their background was not in international education, "we value those experiences," Scott said. Both have avidly supported the institution's international undertakings and looked to create more opportunities for students, faculty, and administrators "to travel and learn about international issues," said Scott. One of his first moves as provost was finding the resources that allowed the Office of International Programs to hire Helminiak as the campus's first full-time education abroad coordinator. Scott recalled a meeting at the outset of the academic year where senior administrators and faculty discussed their international travel plans and agenda. "We didn't have a globe, but it's almost like you've got the whole world laid out in front of you," said Scott. "We talked about India, China, Taiwan, Korea, Kazakhstan, Russia, and certainly about Paraguay, figuring out where we were going and who's going to do this work. To think about a small community in southeast Kansas where that's the perspective is pretty remarkable."

The provost, an alumnus, believes one reason that Pitt State has carved out such a significant international profile is that the faculty aren't territorial. "You've got these early adopters, these pioneers, that now have offspring taking their own trips. Somebody took Alice Sagehorn to Paraguay to begin with," he said. "Part of our culture is this helping, helping, helping. It's not about smugness or 'I know more than you.' It's about, 'If I know something and you'd like to know it or understand it, I'll help you,'" said Scott.

Pitt State also encourages the international interests of professors in a wide range of fields. Education Professor Dan Ferguson, whose field is recreational therapy, has led students to Romania to work in orphanages in the former communist country. Professor of Nursing Barbara McClaskey leads two trips over winter break to give nursing students an opportunity to volunteer in hospitals in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, across the Rio Grande River from El Paso, Texas. "It opens your eyes to see what they go through down there," said senior Sarah Manthei, 22, of Shawnee, Kansas, who had a job waiting after graduation in the organ transplant unit at Saint Luke's Hospital of Kansas City.

Raising Funds for More International Activities

The international office reports to Dean William Ivy, who oversees Enrollment Management and Student Success. Ivy came to Pitt State in 2007 from Oklahoma State University. "I kind of jumped on a moving train here," Ivy said of Pitt State's large international



profile. He noted that at the annual international banquet, "six deans and three vice presidents show up for the dinner as well as the president. It's quite impressive. The international students don't have any questions that they're important here and that people appreciate their being here."

The lanky Bryant, a onetime college basketball player, will be retiring at the end of the 2008-09 after a decade as president. He completed one major fund-raising drive soon after becoming president and is nearing the finish line on a second that is seeking \$120 million, including \$2.5 million for international initiatives. That money would fund scholarships and incentives for faculty to internationalize their courses.

Five percent of undergraduates and 10 percent of graduate students are international. Bryant would gladly see that number increase. "We love the diversity. We need to do that for our students from here in the Midwest," he said. Students from Crawford County and small towns "need to be able to compete in this global economy and be as marketable and as successful in that economy as we can make them. Why shouldn't our kids have that opportunity?" **IE**

CHRISTOPHER CONNELL is a veteran Washington, D.C. journalist and former assistant bureau chief of the Associated Press.

Barbara McClaskey, professor of nursing, and nursing students who volunteered to work in hospitals in Mexico during their winter break.



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