

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY CONNECTS UZBEK STUDENTS TO SEATTLE CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE (04/23/2008)



On April 23, 2008 the Educational Advising Center (EAC) at the U.S. Embassy held a Digital Video Conference (DVC) with Seattle Central Community College (SCCC) admissions officers to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Relationship.

The DVC connected SCCC Dean of International Admissions Andrea Insley, her colleague Johan François, and President of the Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Association Dan Peterson with more than 45 students, teachers and community members from Tashkent.

First, Ambassador Richard Norland welcomed everyone to the event. In his remarks, he explained that the relationship between Tashkent and Seattle dates back to 1961, commenting that, "After the mayor of Seattle visited Tashkent in 1972 on one of these exchanges, he decided that Seattle should be the first American city to acquire a sister city in the Soviet Union." He also highlighted other activities that the Embassy and the Sister City Association are organizing to commemorate this anniversary, including a reunion for all Seattle-Tashkent Alumni in Seattle earlier this month, a showing of the American film "Sleepless in Seattle" at the Embassy this summer, and a visit by an official delegation from Seattle to Tashkent.

From Seattle, President of the Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Association Dan Peterson then greeted the audience in the Uzbek manner, "Assolom Alaykum," which the audience applauded. Mr. Peterson emphasized the importance of the people to people relationship that has developed between the citizens of Seattle and Tashkent and which can break many cultural barriers, misunderstandings, and myths between peoples.

Next Dean of International Education Programs Andrea Insley presented information about community colleges in general and in particular about SCCC. Ms. Insley explained some advantages of community colleges. They offer two years of university education after which students can then transfer to a four-year university and also provide training and professional development opportunities. Additionally, community colleges respond to community education and training needs and can play vital role in workforce and economic development. She stated that there are 1,195 community colleges in the U.S., and about 50% of all American students begin their higher education at a community college. She explained that students choose community college for a variety of reasons, including lower tuition fees; smaller class sizes; professors that focus on teaching, rather than researching; and transfer options. She also emphasized SCCC's advantages: great downtown location, award winning programs and services, diverse student population with 1,000 international students from more than 60 different countries, easy transfer to top universities with a transfer guarantee option, top notch facilities, and the availability of scholarships for prospective and current international students. In addition she pointed out that students can also finish High School in the college's Fast Track program.

Moreover she advised students that in order to pursue higher education in the U.S., they should research different schools, take the necessary exams, submit their applications to institutions for admissions and scholarship, receive the I-20 form and apply for an F-1 visa, make housing arrangements, and arrive at the school 2 weeks before classes begin.

After the presentation students asked numerous questions about student support, transfer options, student life, and the availability of scholarships. In response, Mr. François explained that there are a few ways that students can receive free assistance in writing English compositions. He also described the kinds of scholarships that the college offers for international students, including a few that are geared to new students and others that focus on students already studying at SCCC. The panelists explained that there are many opportunities for students to socialize with others and learn about American culture. They highlighted the fact that downtown Seattle is within easy walking distance of the college's campus, and there is a beautiful park across the street from the college where students can exercise or just relax.

To learn more about Seattle Central Community College, visit their website <http://seattlecentral.edu/international/>. You can also learn more about the U.S. Embassy's Educational Advising Center at <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/advising>.