

International Student Union (ISU)
Universitetet for Miljø-og Biovitenskap (UMB)
(Norwegian University of Life Sciences)
Ås, Norway - October 3, 2005

Report of Activities

Introduction

This report is presented to the members of the International Students Union for the National Assembly in Oslo, Norway. It details some of the activities that the previous board members of the ISU chapter at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences in Ås managed to accomplish. In addition, the new board members want to share what we have achieved in the last month and some of the activities and political issues we would like to see undertaken and addressed throughout this upcoming year.

New Board Members

We held an election on September 9th, which was very well attended. We managed to draw a voting crowd of approximately 60 international students throughout the course of the evening and almost everyone voted. The voting was highly democratic and there was some competition for membership in the new ISU board. The resultant elected members are as follows:

President	Andrea Lawseth (Canada)
Vice – President	Shimelse Mekonnen (Ethiopia)
Treasurer	Joseph Kawuki Kiggundu (Uganda)
Social Secretary	Melaku Tefera (Ethiopia)
Secretary	Tawina Kopa (Malawi)

Accomplishments of the 2004-2005 ISU

Student Welfare

The previous board managed to organize many events last year in order to improve the standard of international student welfare at UMB. They held many parties including a Christmas party, a New Year's party, a Welcome Back party for second year students returning from field-work, and an Easter party, which were very well attended by both international students and Norwegian students. Also, two international and cultural dinners were held in Samfunnet (our student union building) and further worked to increase the integration of international students with Norwegian students.

Furthermore, a Norwegian Course was offered for those interested in the Spring semester of 2005. The ISU worked closely with the International Committee to organize this and it was well attended. The course was offered twice a week for a total of two months.

Political Issues

The 2004-2005 board, unlike their predecessors, managed to be somewhat more political. The previous president, Ashaba Hannington, attended all university student parliament meetings and presented issues regarding international student welfare to be discussed with a more active university student body. Also, an attempt was made at forging a more congenial relationship with Studentsamskipnaden i Ås (SiÅs), our student run organization that arranges housing and rental of space in Samfunnet.

The ISU also lobbied for direct funding from the university instead of the Norwegian Students Union (NSU). This was very important in ensuring the financial independence of the ISU for future years.

In addition, the ISU maintained close contact with the International Office as well as the university rector and his deputy. This worked to strengthen the ISU's position in university issues and gave us a strong voice within this small community of students.

Achievements and Future Plans of 2005-2006 ISU Board

Achievements

The current ISU board has managed to have four meetings thus far. The first two meetings were meant to define our individual roles as well as narrow our focus for what we hope to accomplish this year. In the second two meetings we were mostly concerned with trying to set up a party to kick off this year's board. However, we encountered many obstacles in regards to location, sound system, and finances that we decided to collaborate with Samfunnet to throw a large party on the 14th of October instead.

We have also managed to push for a Norwegian course to occur this semester. Originally, the goal was to have the course in the Spring semester, but the ISU disagreed because guest students will be leaving in December and we feel that they should be allowed the option of participating in the course. We were successful and the course is due to begin this week (week 40) and will run two times per week for two hours each time for a total of six weeks. We are hoping that we can continue next semester as well.

I have also had the opportunity of attending meetings with the Student Parliament, the International Office, Samfunnet and the Student Information Center. I was able to sit in the Student Parliament meeting and present the current ISU so as to give us a face and a presence at the university. I was not able to bring up many issues as it was only the first meeting of the year, but I plan to be much more involved and active in the meetings to come. Unfortunately, I was the only person who spoke English and found that I was not able to effectively contribute to any discussions. I plan to do my best to push for more English at these meetings in the near future.

My meeting with the International Committee, Samfunnet and the Student Information Center dealt mainly with the initiation of the Norwegian course. However, there was

some discussion on starting an English course for those students needing to pass their TOEFL test. We are hoping to find some students within the International student body with English as a first language to teach the courses. There was also some discussion about International newspapers in Samfunnet. The representative from the International Office agreed to look into funding the purchase of some of the most widely read publications.

Future Plans

Some of the activities and issues that we would like to address for the following year are as follows:

- International dinners/cultural exchanges
- Establishment of a fund for private international student functions
- Lobby for the reduction of entry fees and prices in Samfunnet
- Establishment of a webpage for the ISU
- Sports competitions
- Family program – community and families are matched with international students to share experiences and cultures
- Mentoring program – a first year international student is set up with an older international student to share information and experiences before arriving in Ås and throughout their time studying here
- Bike exchange program to ease the process of finding a bicycle when arriving
- Lobby for desktop and laptop computer loans for international students
- Facilitate seminars with NGOs (for volunteer or internship opportunities)
- Improve the student contact with General Practitioners (GP)
- Lobby the Ministry of Education on a national level to set aside a fund for low-income international students who find it difficult to pay the visa fees

Financial Status

Here is the financial status of our bank account at present. The financial support was what was paid to the ISU last year. As of yet, we have not received our support from the university or the welfare fund.

Current Date	Financial Support 2004-2005	Finances Used 2004-2005	Available Budget for 2005 - 2006
05.10.2005	62712.60	48133.56	<i>14842.59</i>

The makeup of the student body at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences consists of 10% international students. Therefore, we will continue to work with the university organizations to improve the integration and welfare of international students. We are looking forward to a busy and exciting year!

Andrea Lawseth
ISU President - Ås Branch