

PRESS RELEASE
December 8-31, 2007
NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY IC-CAE PROGRAM
INTERNATIONALLY DIVERSE EDUCATION AND AREA STUDIES (IDEAS)

On December 8-31, 2007, ten students—a Philosophy major from Howard University, four Optical Engineers, two Electronics Engineering, one Biology, one Mathematics and one Physics major from Norfolk State University departed from Norfolk, Washington, DC for Casablanca for a three-week cultural orientation into studying Arabic and learning more about Islamic Culture. A few of these American students had never traveled abroad and were really not sure of what they would encounter. Some had studied some Arabic but they had little idea of what to expect. AMIDEAST, a non-profit company in Washington, DC that provides students in the Middle East connections with American Universities provided all of the logistic support for this trip. Much of AMIDEAST's work is with the State Department in the United States. The students were involved in 60 hours of intensive language instruction in Arabic, which was taught by a woman whose family had been servants to the King and still lived in the "Palais Royale" complex. In addition, there were six two- hour lectures that were organized and conducted by Professor Ezoura Mohammed, Vice Dean and Professor on the Faculty of Letters and Humanities at Mohammed V University in Rabat. There were a total of 72 hours of formal classroom instruction for this three week program. The close working connections between Mohammed V University and AMIDEAST were evident throughout our visits. A number of the lectures were given at the Offices of AMIDEAST.

Several discussions were held with Professor Ezoura about an interest in establishing an undergraduate program in Islamic Studies at Norfolk State University. Mohammed V already has an undergraduate program in Islamic Studies and Professor Ezoura has graciously agreed to serve as a consultant if Norfolk State University decides to establish such a program. There are several ways to initiate such a program. For example, Mohammed V University is free of charge to all students who attend. Since there are a large number of students at Mohammed V University (current student population is about 25000 students) and many wish to study the English Language.

Some of the students' impressions follow:

"This experience has been so beautiful because of the people and the culture. My host family is remarkably welcoming. Since the first moments I arrived, the family has made efforts to include me in every event. I was fortunate to celebrate an important Muslim holiday with my host family. This holiday is most closely related to Thanksgiving but a little different. Instead of a turkey being the main course, the family sacrifices a sheep in the name of Allah. The reason why they kill a sheep is that the blood of the sheep is considered holy and able to wash sins away."

Stanford McKenzie

“The time that I spent in Morocco was very rewarding, because I not only got to learn about another culture but I was able to learn about the differences in our everyday way of living. The Moroccan people are agrarians by trade and much crafted people in the arts. The structure of their houses is phenomenal in the way they are warmed in the winter and cooled in the summer. This opportunity to travel internationally will give one a better insight of all that the U. S. offers in the perspective of education.”

Cecelia West

“Our Arabic classes were held in the home of one of the other students, where we were in the hands of our teacher. In class, we received instruction on the Arabic alphabet, handwriting and basic conversations. We also learned some of the French translations and ‘Moroccan Arabic’ words. Sometimes we found it hard to communicate with our teacher, as everything does not literally translate into English from Arabic or vice versa. However, it was fun playing what we dubbed “Moroccan Charades;” how we used hand gestures, with or without sounds, sometimes actions, and drawings to depict what we were trying to say or ask someone in Morocco with whom we could not communicate with or to get someone in Morocco to describe what they were saying.” Tracey Mamma

“This cultural understanding and intensive Arabic language study was viewed through the lens of Morocco. Morocco is a melting pot of European, North African, and Arab culture. Said culture, is the culmination of customs and artifacts left behind by a myriad of civilizations. I encountered fashion, technology, and methods of transportation in a modern-day context. For example, in the city of Fez there were men wearing jalabas (the traditional dress of Morocco).” Michael Henderson

“Fes and Marrakech are two of Morocco’s most interesting cities to visit. They are rich in tradition, especially with the architecture. Through the labyrinth medina of Fes, one can observe what life was like in the Middle Ages. Unlike the medina of Rabat, this one will make you feel as if you have gone back in time. As I walked through the congested dirt roads and alleys, I was amazed by everything I saw. I saw mules, with goods on their backs, making their ways through the moving crowds of people. The liveliness of the souks was incredible, but at the same time, serenity seems to always linger inside the beautiful mosques.” Mercy Dicuangco.



IC Group Picture at Going Away Party at Host Family with Musicians



IC scholars at the Mohammed V Mausoleum Library



IC Scholars, Dr. Mohammed Ezroua, and Dr. Salima Elmandjra, Architecte-Enseignate a' gave a lecture on architectural structures of building in Morocco and Sale and its historical designs.