

IU World's Fare



International groups organize an extravaganza, and the Bloomington campus is invited.

IU abounds in international student activities. The Leo R. Dowling Center offers weekly coffee hours, concerts, and conversation groups. International student groups mount major festivals, everything from Chinese New Year, to Thai Night, to the Asian American Fashion Show, to Navrus, the Central Asian New Year celebration. What IU has not had for a long time, however, was a big event that brought all these groups together. The Office of International Services (OIS) was in the initial stages of planning such an event when it was approached by the IU student Union Board: What about an international event that would feature international diversity and appeal to the entire campus community? That spark fired the first IU World's Fare which, in November, opened IU's International Education Week 2007.

The planning committee began work last July with representatives of IUSB, OIS, and international student organizations. Some international students, home for the summer, had to join in by e-mail. The core of the event would be booths and food representing cultures around the world. International student groups took on the tasks of assembling materials for the booths and guiding the cooks at the Indiana Memorial Union in the preparation of ethnic dishes.

International music and dance groups came forward to provide performances on stage at the Alumni Hall throughout the event. International scholars were recognized with poster displays of their research.

The turnout for this first-time event surprised everyone. A few hundred were expected; more than 1,500 members of the IU community came to celebrate. The planning committee had decided to have an awards competition for the best booth and the best performance. IU VIPs, when they reached the front of the long lines to enter, were handed clipboards and asked to judge the booths and award prizes.

IU's international students and scholars provide the campus and community with a remarkable resource. "They bring the world to our doorstep," said Christopher Viers, associate vice president for international services. "The IU World's Fare was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate their contributions to our vibrant intellectual community. By the end of the evening, the conversation was not whether we should do the event again next year, but how to make sure we had enough space for it to happen."



The Bharatnatyam is a classical Indian dance, originating in the southern part of the country. The movements resemble a dancing flame.



Fare Feedback

We asked student and staff members of the planning committee to tell us what they remembered best about the event.

Erin Clark, scholar advisor. We were expecting only one or two hundred and had so many people in attendance that you could barely move across the room. I couldn't get any good photos from the main floor until the event had ended, so I went to the balcony of Alumni Hall for this view. I had been eagerly anticipating the first IU World's Fare since planning began in January 2007, and found myself looking forward to next year's event as soon as the evening had come to a close.



Adam Shahrani, former Computer Network and Program Analyst, OIS. As I re-entered Alumni Hall, I was captivated to be welcomed with sentimental ornaments on an altar celebrating *Dia De Los Muertos*. This exhibit won the judge's prize for best cultural display.

Then, I realized I had never seen Alumni Hall as full as it was. It must have taken me over five minutes to get from one side to the other because there was such a large crowd. When I walked outside, there was a line of people extending past Starbucks waiting to get in.



A Day of the Dead (Dia De Los Muertos) display.

I will never forget the camaraderie that students openly developed. Amid the audience stood a Latina student teaching a dance to a Saudi national in a traditional robe. Pakistani students volunteered to paint intricate henna patterns at the Malay booth. African students walked with "I love Kazakhstan" stickers on their shirts.

Sandra Britton, director of the Leo R Dowling International Center. IU World's Fare 2007 was especially meaningful to me because it was the result of a common goal that brought together international and domestic students as well as staff. Planning the event was a lot of fun and having the student groups helping with the process was even more fun. It felt good to know that everyone wanted to be a part of it and contribute. I was also glad that we had an international student group and an American group as members of the planning committee. Their input was extremely valuable as we tried to plan an event that would appeal to the IU and Bloomington communities. I think this is what made it so successful and why it exceeded our expectations.

Besides having a successful event, one can't help but to feel good to see the interaction that went on among the 22 international groups represented. The sharing of ideas and resources was great and it was obvious that everyone was enjoying the event. After the World's Fare, a number of representatives of U.S. student groups came up to her and asked how they could get involved in this program, and Sandy is looking into ways of involving more American students. So many students have already been asking about plans for next year! I can't wait to get started!

Talgat Yeslamgaliyev, president of the Kazakh Student Association, wanted to help the IU community understand what life is like in a country that was formerly part of the USSR. "There's an older generation in Kazakhstan who miss the days of the USSR, and a younger generation who have experienced enough democracy and personal choice to make a return to the old world unthinkable. The education system is one example. In the days of the USSR, everybody had to go to school where they were told; they had no choice in what they would study. International study was forbidden. Now you can study anything you want." Talgat started playing with computers when he was six or seven, and never got over it. He is majoring in computer science at IUB.

He started working on the Kazakh portion of the event in September. His group assisted IMU food staff in preparing manti, a Central Asian dish. And in addition to an exhibit, members of the group performed the Dance of the Mountain Flowers. Talgat admits there was so much going on, that few visitors to the Kazakh table talked in depth about that country, but he felt that the planning and preparation was as important as the result. "I enjoyed the teamwork and cooperation that it took to get all this ready, and would be happy to do this again."

Evita Luminto, president of the Indonesian Student Association agreed that the preparation was as much fun as the event itself. She was also a member of the event planning committee and began work with the committee in July by e-mail while she was at home on the island of Sulawesi. She saw the event as both an opportunity to share her culture and a chance to get together with other groups. "Also, I knew this was the first time IU tried such an event, and it felt great to be part of the first time. At their exhibit table, they tried to represent the variety of Indonesian cultures, although Bali, the beautiful resort that attracts visitors from all over the world, had the best representation. The Indonesian group also worked with IMU to prepare a peanut and avocado salad. We were not able to put a performance together. Maybe next year."



Serdar Abaci, Sandra Britton, and Evita Luminto chat at the International Center a few weeks after the event about what they liked best and what they would do differently next year.

Evita, too, would like to find ways to improve the interaction at the event. "Things were so busy, we don't get a chance to present our country as much as we would like." Still, that goal, Evita explains, was accomplished in the planning of the event as the Indonesian students worked with other student groups, with members of the Union Board, with the International Center staff and others.

Serdar Abaci is a graduate student in the School of Education. His hometown is Antakya, a resort on the Mediterranean in Southeastern Turkey. "Most of us from Turkey at IU are graduate students, and graduates students are always busy." As a result, Serdar had to assemble the Turkish portion largely on his own. He got videos from the Turkish consulate, set up a PowerPoint with questions and answers about Turkish culture, and even spent two hours helping

to roll the 17 trays of meat balls in a lemon sauce that was the Turkish contribution to the cuisine. He agreed that things were so busy that he couldn't accomplish all he wanted to. "I brought my saz—a kind of Turkish guitar—to play at the booth, but I never had a chance." Still, Serdar comments, "People on campus are more aware of Turkey and more aware that IU has many Turkish students."

Links:

Office of International Services:

www.indiana.edu/~intlsvr

Leo R Dowling International Center:

www.indiana.edu/~intlsvr/ic/ic_info

Union Board:

imu.indiana.edu/thingstodo/unionboard/unionboard.shtml

IU Student Association:

www.indiana.edu/~iusa

International Student Organizations:

www.indiana.edu/~intlsvr/ic/student_groups/index.php