



International Students' Union University of Tromsø

Branch Report *Spring 2008*

1. Introduction

The overall objective of the University of Tromsø is to develop, maintain and disseminate relevant knowledge through education and research of high international standard. The Strategy on Internationalisation is one of the tools in the efforts to reach the University's overall objective.¹ Accordingly, University of Tromsø that celebrated 40 years anniversary on March 2008 accommodates substantial international students than other higher educational institutions of Norway. At present, about 10% of the 6000 students of the university are foreign students. This year more than 200 students have come from 33 countries of the world. Duration of their stay in Tromsø depends on the programme he or she follows. But, whatever their stay may be, it has been ISU that stay at front door to welcome them and trying ceaselessly make their stay more comfortable in that way that they feel a second home in this island city.

ISU Tromsø branch has been officially functioning since the academic years 1990-1991. According to the tradition and procedure, on Spring semester a new board has been elected on the 26th February 2008. A detail about the new board is as follows:

Positions in ISU	Name	E-mail	Mb. Phone
President	Mohammed Kabir	kabirdubd@gmail.com	41551787
Vice President	Shou Wang	Wangshou92@gmail.com	94477132
Secretary General	Sanjaya Babu Dhakal	sanjaydhakal@hotmail.com	95760357
Treasure Officer	Sabine	minakaiser@web.de	46375406
Web master	Jeremy	jeremydeschamps@gmail.com	96888587
Organizing officer	Fatima	nonsense-spb@yandex.ru	40219617
Organizing officer	Joel Potie	jpotie@hotmail.com	96696464
Organizing officer	Heather Sinclair	khsinclair@hotmail.com	94848467
Organizing officer	Yannick	n.yack@hotmail.fr	90880906

2. What we have planned

All our plans for this semester are decided on the board meetings. Here in the following are described the meetings that we took this semester.

First Meeting: Short after the official election of International Student's Union (ISU), the new board met in the first meeting. Newly elected members as well as the out-going vice-president and treasurer, Ms. Natacha Lays, attended this meeting. President officially greeted the new board and briefly stated about the status and functions of ISU Tromsø. Natacha handed over charge of finance to new Treasurer. The new board member greeted Natacha for her contribution and excellent work for the ISU Tromsø.

Then, the new board members scheduled their office hours. Members **agreed upon attending office** 2 hours per week, which would be in application from March 2008. Members also decided that all members should get a key from the office at the bookshop as soon as possible.

Later on, the board decided to do short term **future activities**

- First of all an event should be organized to celebrate the new board and to thank all the students who have voted. Hugin's Report should be organized and contact with *Driv* should be made as soon as possible. Proposed date, Thursday 13th March.
- Further continuation of movie night has been proposed. This could be organized each month. For this *Studentsamfunnet* should be taken in consideration as they have all equipment needed for this type of occasions.
- Last but not least, a trip to *Kautokeino* and *Skibotn* would be an attractive thing to organize this semester. More shall be discussed next meeting.

Meeting ended with the decision that the next board meeting would be held on 13th March 2008 at 16:00-18:00 where a plan of activities might be devised.

ISU-Tromsø Board Meeting I: According to the previous decision, on Tuesday, 13/03/08 ISU Tromsø met in first planning meeting. In this gathering, the new board members greeted each other and specially welcomed organizing officer Fatema from Russia, who met other board members for the first time. All the board members felt a new public relation officer need to be appointed.

Later, the board took plan of actions for next three months and distributed responsibilities among the members. Following are the activities planned in the meeting.

- Kautokeino Trip
 - a. Confirmed the people going to Kautokeino Trip

- b. Plan for volunteer work ISU will do
- c. Practical information people should know(meeting tomorrow)
- d. Food for one night(bring grill and sausage)

Organizers: Shou, Heather, Yannick, Sabine and Mohammed

Suggestions: Next *kautokeino* trip meeting on 19th of March for ISU board at 10am

- Hugin's Report on 13th March starts from 9pm:

Organizer: Heather and Shou

Suggestions: Contact *Driv* to book the place, we should contact NSU and announce this activities to all students.

- ISU representative in NSU meeting

It was Natacha who used to represent in the NSU board meeting from ISU Tromsø. Since she had left, a new member from ISU board need to be selected for this. Sabine is considering doing this.

- Trip to *Skibotn* (end of April):

Organizer: Yanik and heather

Suggestions: Contact with the responsible person who is in-charge of Holiday Homes in Skibotn and arrange bus.

- National president visiting during 40 years Anniversary celebration of UiT

Farshad will come and stay from 26th to 28th, we will make a host party for him and Shou will be the host (26th or 27th), it is good to bring one dish per person from our board for welcoming Farshad.

The board meeting ended with fixing a board meeting on April 3 2008

ISU-Tromsø Board Meeting II: On Thursday, April 3, 2008 16:30 ISU Tromsø board members attended second board meeting and decided on the following.

- 1) ISU National Assembly – Update
- 2) Skibotn: Update by Yannick
 - a. Trip itinerary
 - b. Set up committee-Yannick, Heather, Fatema
- 3) Kautokeino

- a. A guide for the kautokeino trip will be written as a guide for the future ISU board. Comments were asked from ISU board members about form and content of the manual. Heather will write this manual and share with everyone.
 - b. Article for Utopia- an article will be written by one student who participated in the trip.
- 4) ISU webpage – Comments and recommendations mainly how to make the website more attractive.
- 5) Other ideas for future events
- a. Tromsø Museum (ask guides)
 - b. Mack Brewery (beer tasting)
 - c. Norwegian godmother/godfather Enhancing integration of international students through- making scope of attending Norwegian host family
 - d. Lofoten trip
 - e. Wheel Safari (Artur, an ex-member of ISU-Tromsø proposed it)

Suggestions: Contact Artur for more information on; contact students counseling centre and ask for cooperation. Board should discuss more detail in our next meeting;

3. What have we done so far?

Spring Huggins Report

Friday, the 14th, the ISU arranged the Spring Huggins Report hosted by the Driv. All international students were asked to attend and demonstrate talents or skills i. e., sing, dance, tell a joke or any other performance! The programme was successful with sufficient students' presence and participation.

Sami Easter Festival in Kautokeino

ISU Tromsø is excited to organized a group tour to the Sami Easter Festival in Kautokeino from the 21st to the 24th of March. We worked as volunteers at the festival; this allows us to attend other events at the festival for free. The Festival is a celebration of Sami culture, with reindeer racing, art exhibitions, concerts, and Sami cultural performances. It was a pleasing experience to get huge enthusiasm to joining on this cultural journey from international students! We had to limit the number of students; we had to make a waiting list of students who wanted to go since the number of seats in the bus was limited. Finally we took 34 students from those who came first to sign up.

Each student contributed 600 NOK for the trip and the paid contribution was nonrefundable except for special circumstances. Participants were asked to bring your own food and drink, and sleeping bag if you think you will need it. We were able to attend the festival for free because we are volunteering at some of the events, so we remind students to keep this in mind when they are deciding whether this is something they are interested in or not. We also arranged MANDATORY information meeting in order to discuss all the details regarding the trip on Friday, March 14th at 16:00 in the ISU office.

We took a bus to Kautokeino costing 20000NOK and stayed at a local school that has allowed us to stay for free. We found all students excited during the trip and had had a lot of fun. We also opened a memory book and asked students to write their feelings. The following is a link for information regarding the festival <http://www.saami-easterfestival.org>.

Website

Since the inception of the journey of the new board, the need of a useful and attractive website has been felt. Our French webmaster Mr. Jeremy has been dedicating his time and creativity for an up-to-date webpage. If you have any question about the creativity of our webmaster, just go and find <http://www.student.uit.no/isu/>. Hope you will get pleasure watching an interesting website of ISU Tromsø.

Dinner party with ISU national President

Farshad Tami, President ISU national came to visit Tromsø between 26th and 28th. ISU Tromsø board members hosted party for him and Shou arranged place and foods. Other board members also brought one dish. This even was very interesting and enjoyable.

Meeting with Tromsø Commune

On 14th April 2008 at 3pm at Tromsø City Hall, Mohammed attended a meeting with the Tromsø commune's international section on the integration issue of migrants and refugee people of Tromsø. The main theme of discussion was how the daily life of the foreign people in Tromsø could be more easy and happy. How the commune could help foreign people living in Tromsø could encourage in entrepreneurship through their activities and funding.

4. What we are going to do?

Skibotn Trip

We planned to make a trip for international students at Skibotn. It would be an overnight trip **on Saturday, April 26th to the 27th**. Departure will be at **10:15 am** and return to Tromsø will be late Sunday evening (Around 20h). During our stay we will offer a hiking trip (weather dependant), a barbecue, board games, and other outdoor group activities. We have already announced that we can only accept **29 participants**, so registration will be on a first come, first serve basis. Those interested should come to the ISU office **Friday the 18th of April beginning at 14:30 with the 350kr payment**.

Movie Night

ISU board decided that international students will be asked what movie they want to watch. It was also decided that the movie that would be showed has an English version or at least some English title. We would welcome some innovation and creative piece of work from the student, if they have any.

Spring Huggins Report

On 29th April 2008, the ISU has planned to arrange second the Spring Huggins Report hosted by the Driv. All international students will be asked to attend and demonstrate talents or skills i. e., sing, dance, tell a joke or any other performance! It is expected that the programme will be successful with sufficient students' presence and participation.

International Food Festival

On 29th April 2008, before Huggins Report, the ISU has planned to arrange an international food festival hosted by the Driv. All international students will be asked to attend and demonstrate talents or skills in cooking! It is decided that all participants' food making costs will be paid by ISU Tromsø upon showing receipts. We also planned to give a symbolic price to the winner of the food festival. We expect that the programme was successful with sufficient students' presence and participation.

Ardna Party

The word "árdna" means a place with a treasure or something of value. Against this back drop on Friday (19/05/2008) ISU will arranged Ardna Party at Sami Centre, Ardna - the Sami cultural house on campus. The party will be started from 8 pm and continued around the fireplace as long as the students could gossip each other. In this party Mohammed would like to say goodbye to all students.

Bye-Bye party

On 29th May 2008, the ISU Tromsø has planned to arrange Bye-Bye party hosted by the Driv. All international students will be asked to attend and celebrate their departure! It is decided that all participants' food making will be subsidized by the Driv. We also planned to give a symbolic price to the best dancer on that party. We expect that the programme was successful with sufficient students' presence and participation.

5. The most important concerns for international students at Tromsø

International students came from many different countries with different expectations. Generally, the first thing they got to face a huge language barrier in doing different administrative and academic stuff. More importantly, they can't find the building they want to go for class or buy the foods they want to eat for there is no English version of name of these things.

Another, and perhaps with great concern, students find cost of living is too expensive here in Tromsø. Even, staying in the student hostel is not anymore cheaper than staying outside. And all commodities seem too expensive and most of the time unaffordable for most of the students. There is no cheap shop for students in the campus form where they can buy books or stationary.

Apart from this, to get more intensive understanding about the concern of the international students, we are undertaking a small survey where respondents are asked to mention about their concerns for international students being a student at the University of Tromsø. Hope we will be able to come up with the result of the study and present their opinions at the National Assembly. We need to make further discuss on it in the National Assembly.

6. Challenges for the future and potential solutions

Challenges in future are many. First and foremost is to keep all the board members active and motivated for playing their roles properly in different occasions and activities of the organization. Besides, it is very important to continuing the existing warm relations with different organizations including Student Society and Norwegian Student Union. We would like to develop more friendly relations with the Norwegian peoples and different Norwegian institutes so that they could potentially help international students in whatever way building their strong base for the future from this foreign learning centre. More way to integrating international students in the Norwegian society and culture has been also a big challenge that ISU have to deal as had to deal in the past.

The path might not be so smooth but we have promised to pass it. We are inspired to find a good board with some interested and creative people in different capacity. Now, we need to nourish them with cooperation and let them enjoy the work that they would like to accomplish. Fraternity with the fellow organizations needs to be kept warmth with more interactions, exchange and organizing activities together that serves achieving goal for both. Current programme like arranging host family for the foreign students shall have to be expanding and popularize. Some more excursions, game and sports activities between Norwegian students and foreign students can be a good way to enhance the integration process. Last but not least, time has to think about the living cost of the students. The ISU board would like to pursue student welfare and other respective bodies on finding the way that can be reasonably reduce the cost of living for the international students. In general, ISU Tromsø would like to advocate for a happy student life for the international students where cost of living no longer bother them.

ⁱ <http://uit.no/english>(access date 29/02/2008)