



International Student Union (ISU)

**Universitetet for Miljø-og Biovitenskap (UMB)**  
(Norwegian University of Life Sciences)



**Report for the National Assembly**

Ås, Norway – 10 October 2007

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## **Ås Branch – UMB**

Records from the ISU branch in Ås go back as early as 1993. According to the last couple of ISU Board Members, information showing the exact year when the branch was initiated is not available since records have not been well kept throughout the years. UMB has a large international student body composed of approximately 10% of the entire student population. This adds up to close to 300 students of which the mainly come from Africa and Asia. This year, UMB recorded one of the highest in percentage of international students among Norwegian University coming from over 60 countries. Ås is well known for its diverse constituency.

UMB offers a broad range of study programmes that closely correspond with major research issues related to development, food, environmental sciences, biology, land use and natural resource management. UMB has exchange agreements with approximately 50 universities worldwide, including 6 Nordic, 44 European and 8 North American institutions. Moreover, UMB has various institutional partnerships with universities in South Eastern Europe and in developing countries in the South. These partnerships are mainly carried out through the Department of International Environment and Development Studies (Noragric). Hence, a major bulk of the international students is from Noragric Department and has reflected on the number of ISU Board Members from the mentioned department as well.

The members of the board have been meeting weekly at the student democracy centre (next and above the post office) to discuss concerns of international students and activities that would include both international and Norwegian students.

## **Board Members (2006 - 2007)**

The ISU board was established in September 2006 and below is the list of its 8 members:

- Patrick Lubega- President
- Bertha Shilunga- Vice President
- Saidur R.- General Secretary
- Asfaque - Treasurer
- Lene Lochen- International Committee Representative
- Sushila Nepali- Social Secretary
- Rose Bote- Rep. Social Secretary
- Przemyslaw Patejko- Sport Secretary/Web master



## **Activity Report (2006 - 2007)**

### ***International coffee evenings***

International coffee evenings was organised at least once a month. The main reason for organising such event is to integrate all the international and National students to participate in various social activities arranged by the student's board. This way, students were able to meet and build some bond that contributed positively to the overall objective of integration.

### ***Farewell Party for Exchange (national and international) Students***

A farewell party was organised for all guest students leaving UMB in December 2006. All the international and national students were invited to attend the party, which took place on the 8th of December 2006. The farewell party was sponsored by Noragric Department. The main objective for organising the event was to show solidarity with guest students and also to integrate all the international and national students to participate in various social activities arranged by the student's board.

### ***Christmas Party and New Year Party***

The International Student Union has been conducting several events for National and International students to meet and share their respective cultures. ISU and the students that have stayed at the university during the break organised on December 25th, 2006. Though the party was meant to be integrated and invitation was sent to everyone, only few local residents came and celebrated Christmas with the international students.

Another event was celebrated, the New Year's Eve on 31st of December. There were around 150 participants, some with their families. Various food items were served and after mid night fireworks were displayed from many corners of student residential buildings.

### ***International Food Festival***

ISU was involved in organising the international food festival with Samfunnet International Committee on March 9th, 2007. There were more than 45 dishes displayed cooked from various countries and was followed up by cultural evening. The event was participated by more than 200 students and staff members.

### ***International Easter Dinner Report***

The International Student Union organised the Easter dinner on April 5th, 2007. The objective of the event was to integrate all students and around 80 people participated in the party. The dinner was funded by Welfare fund from UMB.

### ***ISU and NSU Boards members dinner***

All the ISU and NSU boards members were invited to dinner by ISU in Samfunnet. Altogether 11 members participated at the dinner and the program was financed through welfare fund. The objective was for all the members to meet and discuss important issues as well as to socialise.

### ***Farewell Party (Spring Semester)***

The International Student Union organised a farewell party for all guest students leaving UMB after this spring semester in May 25th, 2007. During the farewell party, ISU gave thanks to all the new and old members of NSU, Noragric and other departments that have support ISU programs. Representatives from NSU, Noragric Department, SIT and around 200 students participated at the farewell party.

## Board Members (2007 - 2006)



On the 12th of September 2007 the General Assembly and the Annual Election took place and the new ISU board was elected. The first ISU meeting was held on the 20th of September 2007.

Position	Name	Nationality
President	Farshad Tami	Iran
Vice-president	Gori Gjini	Hellas (Greece)
General secretary	MD Hafizur Rahman	Bangladesh
Treasurer	Tendai Chella	Zimbabwe/Canada
Social secretary 1	Alex Mugiraneza	Rwanda
Social secretary 2	Jörg Parschan	Germany
Web-master	Maya Minwary	USA
Sports representatives	Rita Osei	Canada
Social committee member 1	Hehe Zhang	China
Social committee member 2	Lindsay Ringer	USA

## Activities Planned (2006 - 2007)

### *Objectives*

The main aim of the ISU is to ensure that the rights and interests of all international students are suitably represented and protected; to provide and organise international students' social life; and to foster a spirit of co-operation and understanding between the international students, Norwegian students and the university authorities.



### *Approach*

ISU will focus on maintain a high level of student welfare in a democratic and team spirit. The fact that there is a need for international students to socialise, where their fellow Norwegian students will be an integral part of, ISU will plan as many as possible events and activities using the principles of inclusion and harmony. ISU will also be focusing on getting more funding for certain activities by establishing a sub-committee that will tap on available sources of funding outside the university.

### *General guidelines for the activities*

A lot of the activities mentioned below are recommendations by previous ISU Boards. The current board will also collaborate with all democratic and social entities; such as Samfunnet International Committee, UKA Loop, Tuntreet Magazine, Sports Clubs and of course the NSU. ISU will also be finding solutions to common challenges faced by the International Students; such as, providing more information at the disposal of the students before coming to Norway and during the school days. ISU has started an open door office hours twice per week for two hours. ISU also attached posters and announcements where students can write on the poster and or e-mail the ISU with their challenges and difficulties where ISU can be of help in solving them.

### *Activities taking place from October 2007 to February 2008*

#### International Food Festival

The event is taking place on the 11th of October and is organised jointly with the Samfunnet International Committee. The project got support from the Inclusion Fund where each group will get 300 Kr. to prepare for a traditional dish.

#### Eid party (In co-ordination with the Muslim Student Society)

The event is taking place on the weekend of 12-14 October. ISU will co-ordinate with the Muslim Student Society and help arrange for the event. ISU will extend any help needed and circulate the information about the event for all.

#### Dinner with NSU

A "pot-luck" dinner is being planned during early November where both board member of NSU and ISU will get together. The objective of the event is for both entities to socialise and discuss current challenges facing student democracy at UMB.

### Quiz Day Party

Samfunnet International Committee is arranging for a Quiz Day Party on the 17th of October in collaboration with ISU. The quizzes will be in English and aimed to include all UMB students.

### Trip to Freia

A trip for all students is currently being planned to the chocolate (sjokolade) factory in Oslo. ISU is planning to cover the main bulk of the trip costs from UMB's Welfare Fund. The trip would be advertised for all students and would give equal chances for International and Norwegian students. Plans are being made with the factory to book the trip in November.

### English Courses (TOFEL)

Based on a previous recommendation of a former ISU report, English-speaking instructors among the international students would help both International and Norwegian students prepare for TOFEL examination. These courses would be arranged with the Student Information Centre.

### Christmas Party

ISU will hold a Christmas Party on the 24th of December.

### Host Family Program

Based on a previous recommendation of a former ISU report, ISU will work with the community of Ås (perhaps through the municipality or the Church) to find families that are willing to take in International Students on a cultural exchange during the Christmas vacation period. Such a project had worked in other ISU branches in Norway.



### Recycling of the Basic equipment package and Bikes

The university provides an optional package for International Students that contains basic needs for their accommodation. ISU is organizing the establishment of a group that will collaborate with the university to collect and reassemble student packages. The project is meant to recycle and to provide the choice of cheaper equipment package for the students. Also, there has been a short supply of used bikes around the campus and because of the increase of number of students, it is becoming hard to purchase used bikes. ISU will also work in providing a system where unused bikes will be repaired and reintroduced for students to use.

### *Activities taking place from March 2008 onwards*

#### General Assembly

A second General Assembly is going to be scheduled for International Students late January, early February.

### International Evening

ISU is planning an International Evening that would bring Norwegian and International students together. The event will have a theme and will take place in March.

### Trip to Denmark

A trip for all students will be organised by ISU in collaboration with other groups and or clubs. The event will take place on May 1st. The trip would be advertised for all students and would give equal chances for International and Norwegian students. ISU is also planning to cover the trip costs partially from UMB's Welfare and Inclusion Funds.



### Norsk National Day

During this event where International students will celebrate with their fellow Norwegian students, ISU is planning to have activities or join in with current activities taking place by the university and by the student bodies. The event will take place in May.

### *Regular activities*

### Coffee and Movie Night

ISU will be arranging Coffee and Movie Night in collaboration with some student groups. The event will take place once or twice per month.

### Trips Nationally and Regionally (in collaboration with others clubs and or student groups)

### Skating and Skiing activities

### Participate in the monthly Tuntreet Magazine

ISU will be co-ordinating with the editors of this magazine to provide reports of activities that would encourage the readers to participate in future activities and do know more about ISU in general.

## Challenges

### *ISU Web-site*

ISU is planning to launch a better website that would be of great value in terms of organising activities and linking the students to various events where the ISU is not directly involved. Also the website will allow students to voice their concerns electronically. The website needs to be updated regularly (<http://www.umb.no/isu>)

### *Student Parliament Meetings*

ISU President has already attended the Student Parliament Meetings and has been actively involved in discussions. However, the language barrier during the meeting has been of a great challenge where NSU helped by providing a volunteer from among the attendees to help in translating. A more solid solution has been suggested and currently ISU is waiting for replies from volunteer that do not have duties during the meetings. Good translation would insure that ISU would be involved more efficiently. Meanwhile, the student bodies are considering conduction the sessions in English.

### *English Language Limitation*

Although the university, NSU and other social and student bodies are conducting and or translating most of their material from Norsk to English Language, but there is still more room for improvement. ISU should locate those points of weakness and work along with NSU to solve them.

### *Preparing a package of information about the ISU Branch*

The ISU Elections are currently taking place as early as September where not only the International Students are still green but the new Board Members might be. Usually little information and or knowledge would be transferred to the new ISU Board the following year. The challenge is to find a system that could provide enough knowledge about all admin, finance and activities for the next year ISU.



## Contact List

ISU Ås Branch – UMB Contact Information:

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