Musicians from across globe create new art, forge relationships at Northeastern program

BY SUSAN SALK

International music students have spent five weeks at Northeastern learning to harmonize in new ways. Vocalists, bass players, violinists, pianists, guitarists and other musicians from South Africa, India, Ireland and Brazil came to absorb musical knowledge, gain an appreciation of the United States, and build cross-cultural relationships.

In a trip funded through a State Department grant, one of only four awarded to U.S. universities, students attended classes at Northeastern, and visited New York City, Tanglewood, and Washington, D.C. for musical and cultural experiences, said associate professor Anthony De Ritis, who chairs the music department. Grants in other creative areas went to University of Southern California, Rhode Island School of Design and Texas A&M.

“This was a very prestigious grant,” De Ritis said. “We all know that music is the international language, and this experience has allowed people from different cultures to communicate along those lines.”

In a program focused on the history of 20th century American music composition and performance practice, Northeastern’s music department collaborated with Boston-based Chameleon Arts Ensemble to teach works by composers John Cage, Aaron Copland, John Coltrane, George Gershwin and others.

While on campus, students attended classes every day in a wide range of areas.

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Academic, ‘fun’ programs to welcome students

Northeastern University will pull out all the stops for new and returning students during a five-day move-in period, Aug. 29 through Sept. 2, and a week’s worth of Welcome Week activities, Sept. 1 through 8.

With the goal of connecting students with the community, the theme of this year’s introduction to campus life is: “Engage, Experience, Excel,” said Susan Brown, associate director of parent programs and services.

“We’re offering more programming and fun for our students than every before,” Brown said. “This includes everything from the presidential convocation and the Welcome to the Neighborhood event, to Charles River boat cruises, tours of Fenway Park and shopping trips to Ikea and Target.”

The first influx of students will arrive Wednesday, Aug. 29. Included in that first group will be approximately 300 freshman honors students, according to Marina Iannalfo, dean of campus life.

“The honors students will enjoy a whole host of events, including a book panel discussion and a retreat at the Warren Conference Center,” she said. “And this is a nice thing. As part of their community service, they will be named an honorary doc-tor of public service at the ceremony, which begins at 7:30 p.m. Aug. 30 in Matthews Arena. More than 1,200 undergraduates, graduate students and adult learners will receive their diplomas at commencement.”

Gruman established the Center for the Advancement of Health in 1992. Since its establishment the center has worked to ensure that people are able to meet the demands placed on them by health decisions that are increasingly complex, health professionals who are increasingly specialized and pressed for time and health care that is increasingly bili-liant but chaotic.

Previously, Gruman worked at AT&T, the National Institutes of Health and the American Cancer Society. She is a Fellow of the Society of Behavioral Medicine and has received the society’s awards for distinguished service and “Leadership in Translation of Research to Practice.” She was also recognized for outstanding service from the American Psychological Association and was honored by Research!America for her leadership in advocacy for health research. She earned her bachelor’s degree from Vassar College. She has a Ph.D. in social psychology from Columbia University and lectures at the School of Public Health at The George Washington University.

Hope for the future of nanomedical work

Indian researcher speaks to doctoral program

By Susan Salk

An India-based nanomedicine expert offered hopeful predictions for the industry, and its impact on the efficacy of oral drugs during a recent lecture at Northeastern.

Dr. Ravi Kumar, of Nanotechnology-Drug Delivery Group of India, the Department of Pharmaceutics and Center for Pharmaceutical Nanotechnology and the National Institute of Pharmacautical Education and Research described the promise of nanoparticles in drug delivery performance to a group of IGERT Nanomedicine Science and Technology Program students during a lecture on experiments with hypertension, cancer and arthritis treatments.

IGERT — Northeastern’s Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship program — was funded by the National Cancer Institute and National Science Foundation to provide doctoral education in nanomedicine for the next generation of scientists and technologists.

In his talk “Nanomedicines: The Promise of Nanoparticles in Oral Drug Delivery,” Kumar illustrated the results of experiments showing the promise nanoparticles hold for improving the performance of conventional medicines.

Kumar said the new technology, though lacking a deep history, shows great promise in maintaining concentration levels of drugs in the bloodstream, a traditionally challenging area with current drugs.

“The maintenance of drug levels in plasma without too much fluctuation is a big problem” with conventional drugs, he said. “This is the reason oral drugs require (a patient) take multiple pills per day.”

In addition to maintaining steadier levels of drugs in the patient, nanotechnology carriers are also designed to help overcome difficulties related to drug absorption, low solubility of drugs, and difficulties in the gastrointestinal environment that degrades content, he said.

“Oral drugs are the most preferred treatment, but there are lots of hurdles with these drugs related to binding, metabolism and other issues, he noted.

Kumar’s research has focused mainly on ways of improving treatments for drug toxicity, hypertension, cancer, diabetes and arthritis. Working with Cy closporine, he has studied ways of sustaining the drug level in patients with arthritis, and also worked toward developing biodegradable nanoparticles for drug delivery. A bright spot is laboratory evidence that nanoparticles allow for less toxic dosing of the drug, he said.

Other research has focused on the use of Coenzyme Q10 in the treatment of hypertension. Laboratory testing found that initial treatments were successful in temporarily reducing blood pressure in rats, but that after 15 days of treatment, hypertension returned to unhealthful levels, he said.

In explaining the scope of his research, he stressed the importance of keeping the description simple.

“No matter how complicated your research is, it needs to be simplified so it can be presented to the pharmacology industry for funding,” he said.

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including music history and technology and industry, and enjoyed daily practices and private lessons.

Visiting scholars include internationally acclaimed composer Donal Fox, music critic Kyle Gann, and folk musician Peggy Seeger, a visiting professor at Northeastern. Matthews distinguished music professor Judith Tuck also taught students.

Thomas Farrell, deputy assistant secretary of state for academic programs

visited students on campus as well.

In New York City, students were treated to a Broadway performance of “Chicago.” And in Tanglewood, Massa- chusetts’ musical Mecca, they attended performances and lectures.

“I really wanted to make their experience here meaningful,” De Ritis said.

He added, “These students have hopefully gained a new perspective of the United States through creativity and music. We’ve exposed students to top-of-the-line scholars and mentors.”

Welcome Week focuses on academics and fun

they will volunteer to help other freshmen move in.

Students will flow into campus dormitories every day, with the largest group (1,700) arriving on Sunday, Aug. 26, she said.

The campus will be festooned with balloons, tents containing staff, water, refreshment, and important information will dot the landscape, she said. A live band will perform every day on the Stetson East quad.

On Sept. 4 students will be introduced to neighborhood representatives and officials during the mandatory Welcome to the Neighborhood meeting, beginning at 8:30 a.m. in Matthews Arena.

Individual college meetings will also take place on Sept. 3 and 4, and an Experiential Learning Expo, featuring faculty discussions on the benefits of co-op, study abroad, and other pertinent topics will also take place on the fourth.

For fun, students will be taken on boat rides on the Charles River and given tours of Fenway, Brown said.

After Hours will offer entertainment and an “open mic night” every night, culminating with “This is NU: Huskies Gone Wild,” featuring bands, food and student groups on the evening of Sept. 7.

“Our goal is to involve students with their community and to give them opportunities to meet each other and make friends,” Brown said, noting that a detailed schedule of events and activities will be given to student during Welcome Week. “Overall, there will be over 70 different events this year, so it should be fun.”