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Peace Fellows Program Selects New Recipients for Next Academic Year

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Two Illinois Wesleyan students, Maria-Claudine Villacorta and Monica Shah, are the latest additions to the Peace Fellows Program, which names two students as Peace Fellows annually. The students agree to a two-year commitment during which they will complete three courses outside their major devoted to the study of peace, complete an independent study and complete an off-campus internship in the United States or abroad.

The Peace Fellows Program was established in 2007 by alumnus John Stutzman and his wife, Erma. The program is open to first and second year Illinois Wesleyan students from all disciplines who are interested in commitment and dedication to peace and social justice.

Qualifications require the students to undergo an application process involving writing a personal statement, submitting a plan for their two years of study, expected coursework, ideas for a research topic and internship and an interview with the selection committee of the Peace Fellows Program.

The selection committee for this year's Peace Fellows Program included Irving Epstein, professor of educational studies; James Simeone, associate professor of political science; Paul Bushnell, professor of history and Abigail Jahiel, associate professor of environmental and international studies.

As part of her mission in life, Villacorta, a senior international studies and French double major, has developed an interest in discovering peace and conflict resolutions based on her personal knowledge of growing up in the Philippines where she learned, firsthand, the consequences of unstable governments, civil wars, bombings and terrorism.

"Being a Peace Fellow will allow me to contribute toward achieving the goal of eventually helping my family, fellow Filipinos and people from different parts of the world who struggle with the issues of living in a conflicted area," said Villacorta.

In addition to being a part of the Peace Fellows Program, Villacorta will partake in the Washington Semester Program in the fall, during which students study for an entire semester in Washington, D.C. at American University. She will intern with an international organization that

works toward development in Africa and this internship will fulfill the Peace Fellows requirement. Villacorta will also research non-genocidal societies in Africa, in hopes of finding sustainable solutions for resolving conflict and preventing violence as her independent study project.

“My study will be interdisciplinary. I believe that conflicts are not only political but also anthropological and at their core, economic in nature. Conflict resolution incorporating all of these disciplines provides a process platform to address differences rooted in social justice,” said Villacorta.

Shah, a junior international studies major, applied to become a Peace Fellow because it will aid her in achieving her future goals of working with an international organization and teaching at the high school or college level, introducing international and peace issues to her classes.

This past semester Shah studied in Washington D.C., interning at the Council of Hemispheric Affairs, a nonprofit research organization that increases awareness of political affairs in Latin America and their relations with the United States, writing articles for their journal, *Washington Report on the Hemisphere*, and their Web site, www.coha.org. This summer she will intern in Chicago at the office of Senator Barack Obama.

While in Washington D.C., Shah also researched peaceful resolution of conflict through diplomatic efforts of international organizations as her independent study project. She conducted interviews with United Nations (U.N.) officials, did a study of the U.N. Security Council and will continue to research the effectiveness of the U.N. in promoting peacekeeping and using diplomacy and the promotion of human rights.

“Many people think that institutions like the U.N. are ineffective. However, many of their peacekeeping and diplomatic missions are ‘quiet successes,’” said Shah.

For additional information on the most recent Peace Fellow students contact Villacorta at mvillaco@iwu.edu or Shah at mshah1@iwu.edu. For additional information on the Peace Fellows program contact the Office of University Communications at (309) 556-3181 or univcomm@iwu.edu.