



# The English Center

## NEWS

### Spring 2012

In this edition of our newsletter the focus is on the most important part of the English Center—our students! The academic year 2010-2011 saw the largest and most diverse enrollment at the Center in its 35-year history, 327 students from 44 different countries. And this does not include students in training at employer sites. Take a look at the last page of the news letter to see where our students came from. Fifty-nine percent are female; 41% male.

Though diverse in language and cultural background, English Center students share their high motivation to learn as quickly as possible because all see the Center as a springboard to their next goal—university admission, a better job, passing a licensure exam in medicine, starting a business. On p. 4, read about Sophiane and his wife Nadija, newly arrived engineers from Algeria, who relied on the Center to provide not just language skills but also their first jobs...in the middle of the Great Recession. Their classmate, Jaber, (p. 9) from Saudi Arabia, is also planning a career as an engineer. But first, he has to complete a graduate degree. Rather than an internship, he needed to audit a class at nearby UC Berkeley, to get a taste of what his graduate courses would require. That reality check was a great motivator!

Internationally trained doctors and nurses, Tarik Afnoukh, Maria Luisa Herrera Flores,

Alona Bohol and Diana Tenjo, ( p.5) had established their careers in their home countries, but now have to pass licensing exams again, this time in English! The specialized communications class for healthcare professionals and NCLEX preparation class will help not only passing the exam but also getting and keeping a professional position in the very competitive U.S. job market.

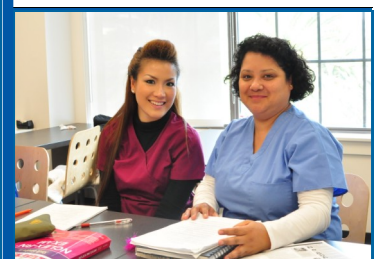
Some students make the English Center a life style! Valedictorian Michael Moldavsky (p. 7) started as a student, then added an on-campus job as an office assistant to his schedule, and still managed to complete a very successful academic year. Now, he's



**Friends of the Center get ready to tour Oakland on bicycles !  
That's Michael Moldavskiy in the middle of things, as usual!**

job hunting for a position in his profession as a sound engineer, but still very connected to the fellow students and alums as a **Friend of the Center**. One of his upcoming projects is recording memories of the first 35 years of English Center history and producing a video of current and former members of the growing English Center family.

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**International nurses prepare for the NCLEX licensing exam .**



**The English Center's 35th Anniversary Celebration**  
**May 19, 2012!**  
**3:00–6:00 at the Center**  
**6:00–9:00 at Scott's Seafood!**

## Customized Training Through the English Center Spans Eight California Counties!

**I**n 2011, The English Center provided customized training to local and employers and outside of the Bay Area employers across 8 counties from Sonoma and Marin in the north all the way down to San Diego County in the south.

The most popular courses were Effective Communication At Work and Computer Fundamentals. Employers included Bay Ship and Yacht (Alameda, Alameda County), Kyocera Technology Development (Concord, Contra Costa County), Mowat, Mackie and Anderson (Oakland, Alameda County), Penumbra Inc (Alameda, Alameda County), Bridge Housing (Contra Costa, Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, San Diego counties, and SEIU UHW-West and Joint Employer Education Fund (Sonoma County).



End of training celebration at Bay Ship and Yacht, Alameda, CA  
Standing L to R: Richard Sproul, HR Manager, Marybeth McCarthy, Business Services Coordinator, Alameda County WIB, Jose Gomez, Sr., Welding, and Janet Johnson and Katherine Meyer, English Center trainers. Seated, BS&Y employees and training participants.

## The English Center One-Stop Career Center Can Help You

**Angelica Garcia, Career Counselor and WIA Specialist**  
**Career Counselor Alyson Jessee**

**L**ooking for a job in the United States is challenging and confusing to many, but especially for newcomers to the United States. Navigating the job search process can be made easier with the support and guidance of an experienced Career Counselor. The English Center One Stop Career Counselors offer step-by-step assistance to job seekers with:

- Creating or editing cover letters and resumes

- Practicing successful interviewing techniques
- Helping clients to understand how to professionally respond to emails and phone calls
- Assisting with on-line job search and the application process
- Serving as a resource and support for the job seeker, listening to their concerns and answering any questions they may have.

The EC One Stop also provides skill assessments that help job seekers identify their skills and values that they find important in the workplace. In reviewing the results of these assessments, clients can research and explore new careers and job opportunities that are currently available in the local job market.

The job placement results of the 2011 graduates are summarized in the charts below:

## English Center Teachers and Volunteers Stay in Oakland for Professional Development!

The annual CATESOL (California Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages) conference, Deeply Rooted, Always Growing, was held in Oakland at the Oakland Convention Center/Marriott City Center Hotel April 12 – 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012. EC faculty that attended included Sonia Slutzki, Programs Manager; Sally Wong, Technology Education Coordinator; Lynne Wilkins, Associate Director for Programs; April Shandor, Instructor II; Paula Landers, Instructor II; Carolyn Kernberger, CTI trainer; Colleen Doherty, CTI trainer; and Larry Wexler, Volunteer teaching assistant.

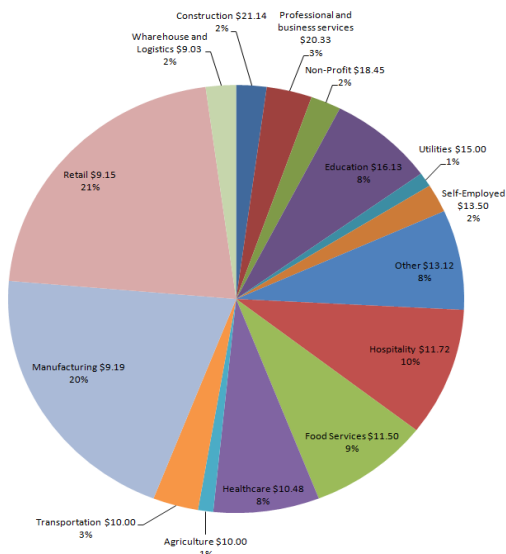
Sally Wong presented “Maximizing Learning with Multiple Strategies and Resources”. One particular conference theme strand was workshops and presentations relating to the learning challenges of Arabic speakers in Bay Area programs – a strong interest of English Center faculty as we have an increasing number of Arabic speaking students in our classrooms across all levels of our program!



Pictured: (l to r) April Shandor, Larry Wexler, Lynne Wilkins, Colleen Doherty Not Pictured: Sonia Slutzki, Sally Wong, Paula Landers, Carolyn Kernberger

**More than 70% of 2011 graduates found jobs & most of the rest continued their education at a college or university. The average hourly wage for 2011 graduates was \$11.45, lower than recent years due to the recession.**

**Job Placements for 2011 Cohorts by Industry Sector with Average Wage and Percentage of Placements**



Industry Sector	Number of Placements	Average Wage per hour
Construction	2	\$21.14
Professional and business services	3	\$20.33
Non-Profit	2	\$18.45
Education	7	\$16.13
Utilities	1	\$15.00
Self-Employed	2	\$13.50
Other	7	\$13.12
Hospitality	9	\$11.72
Food Services	8	\$11.50
Healthcare	7	\$10.48
Agriculture	1	\$10.00
Transportation	3	\$10.00
Manufacturing	19	\$9.19
Retail	20	\$9.15
Warehouse and Logistics	2	\$9.03
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>\$11.45</b>

# Journey to a New Life in the United States

**Alyson Jesse, Career Counselor, English Center One-Stop Career Center**

VA

**I**n Algeria, everyone has his own idea of America. Some say it is beautiful, some say that it is easy to find a good job, some say life is easy, says Sophiane Khalfouni, a recent graduate of the English Center. Sophiane Khalfouni and Nadjia Hadi had their own vision of what their life might look like in the United States. "For us, America was a place where we could improve our lives. We hoped to get a better education and advance our status by getting a good job in our profession", says Sophiane, an Electrical Engineer from Algeria. Their vision of a better life started to fade even before they arrived. "Our problems started on the plane coming here" says Nadjia Hadi, an Environmental Engineer (and Sophiane's wife), "When the flight attendant asked who wanted water, we had no idea what she was saying, until she held up the bottle of water!" With very limited English and no idea where to go for school or employment, they felt lost and unsure how to achieve their goals in their new community in Oakland, Ca. "When we first arrived, we would try to walk on the streets where there weren't a lot of people, so we didn't have to talk to anyone," comments Nadjia, reflecting on their first months here in the San Francisco Bay Area. One day after attending prayer at the local mosque, they found a flyer for the English Center, printed in their native language, Arabic. They brought the flyer home and put it among the other papers they had begun to collect.

After attending a local adult school for a couple of months, the reality of overcrowded and under-staffed adult schools in the East Bay left both Sophiane and Nadjia feeling unsatisfied. They realized that it would take a very long time to achieve the level of English proficiency needed to pursue their professional goals in Electrical and Environmental Engineering if they continued at this adult school. Then they remembered the flyer they had seen at the mosque for the English Center.

Sophiane and Nadjia both attended the Intensive English, Career Readiness, and Computer Technology training program at the English Center

for 6 months. They progressed rapidly, encouraged by the excellent teachers, devoted staff, and motivated students studying alongside them, 5 days a week in their classes. "The difference between the English Center and adult school is that the students and teachers at the English Center are more serious about learning, it is more challenging and intensive, which helps the students excel more quickly," according to Nadjia. "At the English Center, there are people from all over the world that speak many languages, but the common thing you share is English. You know that everyone is learning, so you don't feel that others will make fun of you. Now when I am walking down the street, I realize that I don't have to speak perfectly, what's important is that I can communicate my ideas on some level!"

Not only did Sophiane and Nadjia advance their language skills but also they learned how to navigate the job search process with the support

difficult to believe that I would find a job, any job, let alone a good job in my field. For me, entering a restaurant or store and asking about a job opening was the most difficult part, I felt very small. But if there is a person that can

help you in making that connection, that is even better. This is how I gained my current position as a Panel Wire-person at ST Johnson Company."



**Sophiane is now working as a Panel Wire person at ST Johnson Co.**

"The career counselors

encouraged me to continue in my job search, even after I had given up. If I hadn't found a job in my field, I would have taken any job and started to save for a plane ticket for me and my wife, back to Algeria." Sophiane is very happy in his full time position complete with benefits at ST Johnson Company, a local family owned business that provides combustion solutions to industrial and commercial users. He is happy to have a position in a company where he will gain many valuable skills and make connections in the industry.

Nadjia is now working as an Account Manager with a local employer, iWorld Services, that promotes voice over internet products in developing markets across the globe. "Before starting at the English Center, I envisioned my first job in the U.S. as an office assistant. I wasn't aware of other possibilities. Alyson told me about the opening at iWorld Services and I applied, interviewed, and was hired! This job is perfect for me. If I want to continue my studies here in the U.S., this job allows me the flexibility to work and go to school and take care of my family. I am thankful to the English Center. If I hadn't gone to the English Center, I wouldn't know how to send a professional email or speak in a professional way. Now I have these skills that will be with me, no matter where I go!"



**Nadjia Hadi in her new position as Account Manager for iWorld Services.**

and guidance of the Career Counselors in the One Stop Career Center. Sophiane was determined to find a job in his field of Electrical Engineering. With the state of the economy and lack of jobs in a heavily impacted area such as the Bay Area, Sophiane's search for employment was full of disappointment and frustration. "In that period it was

# The Healthcare Careers Program Helps International Healthcare Professionals

A foreign physician's dream of becoming a Cardiovascular Surgeon in The U.S. is closer to reality with support from the Healthcare Careers Program at The English Center. **Tarik Afnoukh**, a medical doctor from Algeria immigrated to the US upon completion of a General Surgery residency in 2009 to pursue his dream of becoming a specialized Cardiovascular Surgeon. As an international medical graduate, his dream of obtaining a medical license is subject to the certi-



Coordinator Magdalena Montalvo (left) with HCP participants.

fication process from the Educational Commission for Foreign medical Graduates that requires passing three exams known as the USMLE exams. After the exams, the nationally recognized entity assesses whether international medical graduates are ready to enter residency or fellowships programs in the U.S. Committed to the process, Tarik passed two of the clinical science exams while he is preparing for the last exam which focuses on clinical and communication skills. Tarik's first language is Kabyle and he's also fluent in French and Arabic with adequate language skills in English. However, he wanted to improve his communication skills in English. After meeting the HCP advisor, he enrolled in a specialized English course for internationally trained healthcare professionals. Tarik was immediately impressed with the high caliber of the program and its relevance to meeting his goal. In his first day of school he said, "I am so excited to follow this program to the end.... the teacher's English is so professional, very clear and articulate Tarik is interested in taking the one year sequence of the Healthcare Communication & Culture curriculum because he wants to improve his listening, speaking, writing and communi-

cation skills. Most importantly, he wants to pass the USMLE exam that is standing in the way of applying to a residence program and ultimately applying for a medical license to practice medicine in the United States. Tarik is a volunteer at Highland hospital in the healthy hearts clinic and in the emergency department. and an inspiration to other foreign trained physicians like **Maria Luisa Herrera Flores**, a graduate from La Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM). Maria Luisa came to the HCP program with a degree in General Surgery. She also obtained the physician's license and practiced medicine in Mexico prior to immigrating to the US. Her goal is to become a licensed medical doctor and practice medicine as a cardiologist. Currently, she's employed as a cashier in San Francisco. She's enrolled in HCP to improve English language skills, and to prepare for the USMLE exams. Dr Herrera is also engaged in job search services because she wants a better paying job.

Since the inception of the program in 2009, the Healthcare Careers Portal has provided services to 211 international medical professionals. We developed a program model that incorporates individual case management, career counseling services, and specialized English courses. Over a period of two years, the program served doctors, nurses, dentists, optometrists, acupuncturists, clinical lab scientists, pharmacists, psychologists, and other health professionals from many different countries. HCP provided services to many nurses like **Alona Bohol** and **Diana Tenjo** who obtained a bachelors' degree in Nursing in their home countries. They passed the NCLEX

in 2011 and enrolled in HCC to improve their communication skills and to prepare for the job market. Alona obtained part-time employment at Maxim Healthcare, and she was also admitted to the volunteer program at Highlands Hospital. Diana Tenjo a nurse from Colombia and an HCP client since Fall A 2010 enrolled in HCC because in her own words, "it's important to know how I can explain myself to patients and to healthcare staff" She also wants to gain confidence in her communication skills.



Nurse educator Linda Johnson (left) with her NCLEX class.

Diana plans to return to school to obtain a Masters in Nursing with a specialty in Women's Health at UCSF. Statistics show that 55% of clients served in the Healthcare Careers Program are from Asia, and 20% are from Spanish speaking countries, while 25% represent many different countries like Africa. 90% of people served are women while 10% of the healthcare careers program

## Smart Classrooms & Expanded iBTOEFL Preparation and Testing

**A**s you walk through the new suite of the English Center, you will be impressed by the feel of each classroom. When the English Center relocated in the summer of 2011, students, instructors, and staff were enthusiastically anticipating upgraded technology in the English Center's new classrooms. We are proud to announce that each classroom has a computer, sound system, and ceiling-mounted LCD projector to enhance instruction. Immediately instructors began utilizing the classroom technology. With the new equipment, instructors have easily incorporated media into their instruction and students are enjoying having access to this technology for class presentations using PowerPoint and audio or

video clips. The English Center's computer lab classrooms now have a capacity of 20 student workstations in each lab. Instructors often bring their classes into the computer labs, so you will find the labs busy with activity as students conduct internet research, type papers, or work on group projects. In computer classes students are gaining useful computer skills in Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, improving their typing skills, navigating web sites and using email. As we offer technology-enhanced instruction and computer skills training, we equip our students with the skills they need to succeed in their future endeavors.

Furthermore, the English Center has been growing as an Educational Testing Service (ETS) test center for the internet-based TOEFL exam. As of Fall 2011, the English Center doubled its capacity from 18 seats to 36 seats, using two computer labs. The demand for TOEFL testing is high in the San Francisco area, so we have had full capacity on each test date. In September the English Center launched a TOEFL Preparation course that we have been advertising to TOEFL candidates. We are pleased to function as a TOEFL test center and resource for our international community

## Celebrating Halloween in the Speakeasy Cafe!



### Fall 2011 Valedictory Address by Michael Moldavskiy

“Good morning members of the Board of Trustees, teachers, staff, and students. Welcome dear guests, fellow graduates, former classmates, family members and friends. Thank you for being with us for this very special moment. It is a great honor and blessing to stand here before you today as an English Center graduate. Congratulations - all graduates! Congratulations - all teachers! Congratulations - all staff members! And Thank you. Our mutual hard and dedicated work made this graduation real (applause)

As a morning student and evening office-assistant at the English Center, I have spent the last 8 months there, 5 days a week, from 8.30 AM to 10 PM. It is not 24/7, but... You can see that I am not a total stranger to the English Center. Therefore I would like to share some behind the scenes information about my life-changing, learning experience.

In the beginning, I thought that the EC was an ordinary language school like many others which teach only languages. How far from the truth I was!

First of all, I would like to reveal a secret. At the EC they teach magic. When I came to the EC I could hardly speak English. I was cursed with speechlessness. You probably know how depressing it is to be speechless. The EC was like a wonderland, where I was Harry Potter in Hogwarts. Wizards took away the evil magic and gave me a voice. Some of them regret that, because now I won't shut up. Sorry, it is too late.

Sorceress Kaya Cohn taught us how to make friends with tables and keep our bodies and souls in good shape just with three simple magic words: Drop, Cover, and Hold on. Thank you for that.

The Fairy, Sonia Slutzki taught us how to play Devil's advocate, so now we can easily put two and two together and get five. Simple yet powerful magic, thank you.

The good witch of the West coast, Ms. Tolman, showed us the skills of telepathy and omnipresence when she was able to reach and help us with homework even during weekends.

The senior magician Lynn Wilkins has taught us many sophisticated voodoo-idioms. So that now, I don't start searching for insects on my skin when I hear the question “What's eating you, Mike?” Thank you, Ms. Wilkins.

The mighty magical elf, Rimma Shchukina, showed us her powerful ability to teleport supplies, so that the school works smoothly and everyone is happy and has everything they need. Thank you for keeping the school running.

There are too many amazing magical creatures which populate the English Center to mention them all. However, I would like to thank you all for casting a very special spell, which transformed us into something united. Into a family. Thank you.

Let me tell you more. Unlike other magic schools, ours is different. At the EC we study social science as well. For instance, Ms. Marcy Jackson and Mr. Tony Vigo taught me what community is when, during the move, I watched them both trying to install a cork board. Marcy was holding the cork board while Tony worked with a drill. At the same time, teachers, staff, students, board members, husbands, and daughters came and worked together to help the EC move. And it wasn't just once that I saw a sense of community. From the first day of my studies I was amazed how involved and dedicated everyone is.

Overall, The EC gives us a gift. The gift of education. This is more than just English language. This is education for life. The language of life. Once again We are a family. You did not let us down.

One more time congratulations, Thank you and good luck to us all.”



# Are You a Friend of the Center?

## Who we are

“Friends of the Center” is the new name for the English Center’s alumni association. There is no cost to join. All current and former students, instructors, staff, Board members, donors and volunteers are invited to become members!

## What we do

After joining the Friends of the Center, you...

- will be invited to all events for our alumni.
- will receive our occasional eNewsletter, with stories about students and information about new opportunities.
- may use our computer labs when they’re not being used for a class.
- may attend free workshops to support your career success.
- may reconnect with our One-Stop Career Center. It’s here to help you, your friends and your family members find jobs.
- may develop lifetime support for your career journey.
- will have opportunities to participate as a volunteer student mentor, event planning team member, tutor, guest lecturer, or Board member.
- will be asked once a year to give us an update about your life.

In 2011, we held 6 events for the Friends of the Center

- May – Movie Party
- June – Picnic in Crab Cove
- July – Ice Cream Social
- September – Bicycle Outreach Tour and Picnic

October – International Potluck Picnic

December – Winter Game Day

To see photos of Friends of the Center having fun at these events, find “The English Center” on Facebook.

In 2012, the Friends of the Center will vote to select a President from its own members. This person must be a former student and will also serve on the English Center’s Board of Directors.

## How to join

For more information or to join, please send an email with your name, address and telephone number to our Development Director, Melissa White, at [development@englishcenter.edu](mailto:development@englishcenter.edu). You may also call Melissa at 510-836-6700 ext 125.



## New Home Sweet Home for an English Center Student

**J**aber Aljaeed, a scholarship student bound for a graduate degree in electrical engineering, left his country believing that he pretty much knew all about America from the media and what he had heard from others in Saudi Arabia. But his encounter with his English Center classmates—and perhaps most of all his homestay family—changed his assumptions profoundly.

His American family, Beth and Keith Criss and their son, Matt, have provided him with a degree of acceptance and comfort that he never expected. “The family was very kind,” he said, “but I felt a bit tense and under pressure at first, because I thought they might have views about my coming from the Middle East, like maybe I was sympathetic with Al Qaeda or would be different culturally. But instead they were very interested in Saudi culture and traditions. They asked me lots of questions. I like to talk, and I was afraid they might not want to talk to me as much. But instead they were just as talkative as I was.”

He says that the Criss family has made him feel that he belongs. They appreciate his jokes, and they invite him to every event that the family goes to, including camping trips in the Santa Cruz Mountains and Yosemite. He can hang out and go to movies with 24-year-old Matt and his friends. His host father, Keith, who likes music and knows people who play in concerts, has even introduced him to musicians with whom he’s become friends.

The variety of people who are his classmates at the English Center opened him to new kinds of understanding. He expresses amazement at the many stories and life experiences he’s heard from his classmates, including how they struggled to come here.

Of course Jaber studied English in Saudi Arabia,

but he says that his classes here helped him to better organize the English language in his mind, to develop a much greater comfort with it. He’s especially happy about his speaking skills: “I don’t have to think about what I want to say next. I can just speak without thinking about it.” He appreciates learning about the structure of an essay, and even learning about many topics he hadn’t thought about before.

In the Fall semester, he attended a UC Berkeley electrical engineering course, and he brought his experiences in that course back to share in his Academic Preparation class. “The class was really fast-paced, and there were references to concepts from earlier courses that I wasn’t familiar with. I was embarrassed to speak out because of my accent, and I thought all the other students were native speakers.”

This Spring session, Jaber is focused on his transition to graduate study. He has submitted his applications to Stanford and Berkeley, as well as to San Jose State University and others. He’ll ensure that he has a Plan B with at least fifteen applications.

Jaber traveled from Saudi Arabia to California a year ago with concerns about how he would fit into a new and maybe strange culture. Now he is concerned about the prospect of having to leave the families he now belongs to at home in the Oakland hills and at the English Center in Jack London Square.



**Jaber (left) & classmates  
at the Ice Cream Social.**

# The English Center Student Body Reflects the World

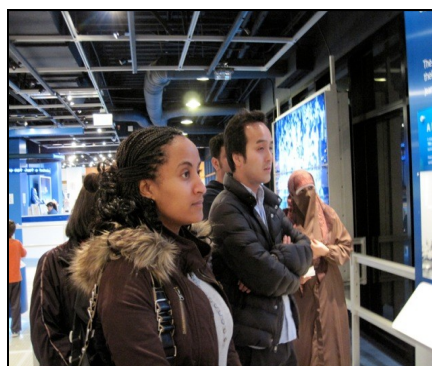
The Students enrolled at the English Center in 2010-2011  
 were the largest and most diverse group ever!  
 There were **327** students from **44** different countries!

Africa		
Algeria	4	1.2%
Congo	2	0.6%
Eritrea	32	9.8%
Ethiopia	22	6.7%
Morocco	1	0.3%
Nigeria	1	0.3%
South Africa	1	0.3%
Sudan	3	0.9%
<b>Total Africa:</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>20.2%</b>

Americas		
Brazil	1	0.3%
Colombia	4	1.2%
Cuba	1	0.3%
El Salvador	12	3.7%
Guatemala	8	2.4%
Honduras	1	0.3%
Mexico	31	9.5%
Nicaragua	1	0.3%
Peru	3	0.9%
USA	2	0.6%
<b>Total Americas:</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>19.6%</b>

Asia, East		
Burma	5	1.5%
Cambodia	2	0.6%
China	61	18.7%
Korea	2	0.6%
Japan	2	0.6%
Malaysia	2	0.6%
Mongolia	15	4.6%
Philippines	4	1.2%
Thailand	2	0.6%
Vietnam	10	3.1%
<b>Total East Asia:</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>32.1%</b>

Total Enrollment 327  
 Number of Countries 44



Asia, South & Central		
Bhutan	26	8.0%
India	1	0.3%
Kazakhstan	1	0.3%
Nepal	5	1.5%
Sri Lanka	12	3.7%
Tibet	1	0.3%
Uzbekistan	1	0.3%
<b>Total So &amp; Central Asia:</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>14.4%</b>

Europe		
Georgia	1	0.3%
Germany	1	0.3%
Russia	4	1.2%
Ukraine	3	0.9%
<b>Total Europe:</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2.8%</b>

Middle East		
Turkey	1	0.3%
Iran	5	1.5%
Iraq	20	6.1%
Saudi Arabia	6	1.8%
Yemen	4	1.2%
<b>Total Middle East:</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>11.0%</b>

## Come study with us. We're waiting for you!

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