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American Studies Institute

Chilean and Brazilian Teachers Learn To Blend Study of Language and Culture

Twelve teachers of English from Chile and Brazil spent two weeks of July studying instructional methods and American culture at the Texas Intensive English Program (TIEP).

Sponsored by the United States Department of State, with funding through the U.S. embassies in Santiago and Brasilia, the program was the eighth TIEC American Studies Institute for Teachers of English from Central and South America. Since 2006, the program has brought teachers to study in Austin from Argentina, Costa Rica, Paraguay, and Uruguay, in addition to Brazil and Chile. Other TIEC training programs have brought teachers of English from Korea, Japan, and Taiwan to Austin.

On the final day of the program, the *TIEC Gazette* talked with two of this year's participants. Ariella Alves teaches elementary school, high school, and university-level English in São Luís, Maranhão, Brazil. Rodrigo Gonzales teaches middle school English and supervises practicum programs at two universities in Viña del Mar, Chile.

On their arrival July 4, Independence Day:

Rodrigo: "We always heard about the importance of this holiday in the United States. To be here and see the fireworks and hear the orchestra [only two blocks from the hotel] was really something meaningful."

On experiencing Texas:

Ariella: "I've lived here before as a nanny. But this time the experience is much more exciting. We are living what we see in the movies. We went to Barton Creek [park]. We went to a bar that is all Texas, the Broken Spoke."

Rodrigo: "It was two weeks of amazing things. In my case, I had never traveled to the States so everything was new to me. Being in the capital of music, that is what I love."

On what they learned as teachers:

Ariella: "Lesson #1—being nice with students. Lesson #2—being just as motivating as our TIEP teachers were. They were good role models for us because they used various techniques. We learned about different tools we can use in our own countries."

Rodrigo: "Americans have the feeling that with hard work you can achieve things. This is something I want to use as a value in my classes."

On teaching culture in the classroom:

Ariella: "I think our interest in the culture may have come out of our interest in the language. Now we have exposure to the culture."

Rodrigo: "And also, how to combine culture and language in the class—for example, by requiring newspapers and using them in a way to help us learn. This is something I have to learn to use in my class in Chile."



"We must have done something really good to deserve this," said Rodrigo Gonzales of Chile.



"We are going to be the ones to motivate students to experience the culture themselves," said Ariella Alves of Brazil.

On the people they met:

Ariella: "One thing we did that was really important was a visit to a public high school."

Rodrigo: "At TIEP, we had the chance to talk with people from all over the world—from Saudi Arabia and Japan. Our teachers gave us assignments to talk with other students."

On the future:

Rodrigo: "Most of us belong to teachers' networks. We can show them how to use culture in the classroom."

Ariella: "The most important thing is the imagination we got here. We learned a lot, but there will be even more learning when we get home."

International Student Mobility

TIEC Attends Launch of New Iraqi Scholarship Program in Washington

TIEC President Ronald Aqua joined international education colleagues from around the country in a special event in Washington, DC on July 25 that featured a formal announcement of the Iraq Education Initiative by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. This new \$1 billion program will bring thousands of Iraqi scholarship students to American universities over the next five years.

"This exciting new program will offer great opportunities for Texas public universities," said Dr. Aqua. "Historically, Iraq has been an important center of learning in the Arab world, with well developed universities. Texas has tremendous resources that can help Iraq to rebuild its higher education system after years of war and economic dislocation; and, at the same time, Iraqi students coming here can offer new insights to our own institutions and students."

A pilot program that is currently underway will create the first class of 500-600 students for the 2009-2010 academic year. The Iraqi government has set aside \$54 million during this initial phase to fund the students' tuition, fees, room, and board.