Muskie scholars enrich liberal arts

Muskie scholars give as much as they receive at RIT. The Edmund S. Muskie Freedom Support Act Graduate Fellowship Program allows students from the former Soviet and now recently independent states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan to study at some of the top universities in America. In 2002, only 335 fellowships were awarded.

The program was established in 1992 when Senator George Mitchell of Maine and other members of Congress included the program into the Foreign Relations Authorization Act. Edmund Muskie was the governor of Maine before going on to represent the state in the Senate for 21 years.

"Muskies is a very competitive program," said Rashad Bayramov, and he should know. Bayramov is a Muskie scholar enrolled in the Communication and Media Technologies graduate program. "Coming here, I have discovered many things. I think my professional background has been enriched. Studying in the United States has changed my life, at least from a professional point of view," said Bayramov.

"I believe that a U.S. education has given me a much broader perspective in education."

The Muskie award truly makes a contribution to the United States and those students bring their new skills back to their Eurasian countries. Bayramov agrees. "When I go back, I will be able to contribute a lot to my organization in my country with the knowledge and experience I have acquired here."

The Muskie program makes a contribution to the quality of education for students at RIT as well. Dr. James J. Winebrake, Associate Professor and Chair of the Public Policy Department said, "Muskie students have brought a lot to our program. The Public Policy program has a mission to have students consider global issues, so what the Muskie students have brought to our program is this global perspective." According to Winebrake, Muskie scholars have brought a wealth of applied knowledge of international policies to students of RIT.

The Muskie program is truly a winning scenario for everyone. When asked how many Muskie scholars he'd like to see in the future for the Communication & Media Technologies graduate program, Dr. Rudy Fugliese answered, "As many as I can get... I would love to have more. The 'Muskies' add so much to our program by offering a fresh perspective rarely experienced in typical classes."

Thesis Season

Spring quarter at RIT is a time of sunshine, and for PTC seniors, thesis completion. After months of compiling information, this year's PTC seniors are ready to finalize their research.

Dr. Bruce Austin, chair of the Communications department, said that the sequence of both the Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods classes is a big help to students. "If they keep the same topic throughout each class, with the plan of using that subject as their senior thesis, 60 percent of their work will already be finished before senior thesis class," said Dr. Austin.

PTC seniors have chosen a wide variety of topics this year. Martin Fischer is researching intrapersonal communications among college athletes and how these athletes' perceptions of intrapersonal communications affect their performance. Using 50-question surveys, Fischer has decided to seek answers from actual RIT athletes to complement his research.

Jennifer McKeen is studying viewer's perceptions of how primetime television depicts lawyers in its shows. Her study will be compared with the actions of real-life lawyers to see how television influences viewer's perceptions of these institutions.

Marci Savage is researching the portrayal of women in magazine ads and how these ads affect the self esteem of men and women. From this concept, she has chosen to analyze whether thin, normal, or overweight models affects the choices of a consumer.

Dr. Austin said that senior thesis projects help students through the planning, layout, and implementation of ideas. The projects are a big help to students who plan to read research reports in graduate school or in the professional world.

"We've had great students come through the program," said Dr. Austin. "It's rewarding for them and me as a teacher!" The faculties of the communications department along with other departments are always available to help students with their research.

Through commitment to a project and an enthusiastic attitude, the class of 2003 is sure to succeed. Best of luck to you all!