The Churchill Institute for Global Engagement (CIGE) held its first annual "International Smorgasbord & Open House" which enticed over 100 students, faculty, and staff on Thursday, April 23.

The event was designed by CIGE and Study Abroad and Off-Campus Program student workers Jamie Striler, Bethia Kadoe, Paul Kelei, and David McDermott. Under the guidance of Dr. Jeremy Straughn, Director of the SAOCP office and Assistant Professor of Transnational Studies in the CIGE and Dr. Kurt Jefferson, Assistant Dean for Global Initiatives/Director of the CIGE, the event was carried out to highlight the Institute, its location on campus, its programming, and to help students know where the campus’s “one-stop-shop” for all things global is on the Westminster campus.

Food included cuisine from Africa, the Arab world, American fare, Chinese food, and French food. The event was also a purely fun, social, and relaxing event just prior to final examinations. It was seen as a pre-finals stress release. Music was provided by the Beta Theta Pi fraternity and acoustic music was provided by ukulele player Mahima Poudel and vocals by Becca Cameron. Coincidentally, both are participating in the Take A Friend Home program in summer 2015 (see story below).

Several faculty and campus leaders, such as President Forstyhe and Senior Vice President/Dean of Faculty Carolyn Perry attended as well. It came a day before the start of the annual Alumni weekend festivities.

Given its popularity, the CIGE will be planning another global smorgasbord for spring 2016 as well.

Becca Cameron and Mahima Poudel entertain at the international smorgasbord event

Study abroad maintains its popularity in 2014-15

Study abroad continues to be a popular experience for Westminster students. In 2014-15, 21 students studied abroad including junior Amelia Ayers studying for a full year at the London School of Economics and Political Science. In summer 2015, 28 students are studying via faculty-led travel abroad experiences to places like Belize, and Guatemala.

Westminster’s signature “Take A Friend Home” will, for the first time in several year, see four teams of two students travel to domestic and international destinations. The winning students and their destinations include Ethan Parent (Dallas, Texas) and Mahima Poudel (Kathmandu, Nepal); Becca Cameron (Chicago, Illinois) and Kate Crawford (Maastricht, Netherlands); Jaynie Coffman (Auxvasse, Missouri) and Lejla Shrestha (Kathmandu, Nepal); and Bailey Mitchell (Fulton, Missouri) and Shahil Shrestha (Kathmandu, Nepal).

Overall, 67 students studied off-campus domestically and abroad for credit in 2014-15 according to Dr. Jeremy Straughn, Director of Study Abroad & Off-Campus Programs.
Assistant Dean Jefferson recognized by national organization

Assistant Dean for Global Initiatives and Director of the Churchill Institute for Global Engagement (CIGE), Dr. Kurt Jefferson, was named one of a small group of campus global leaders nationwide (15 in total) to attend the Association of International Education Administrators’ inaugural “SIO Academy.” The spots were awarded by competitive application.

The academy for senior international officers (SIOs) was held on the Duke University campus in Durham, North Carolina from May 11-15, 2015.

Dr. Jefferson, who just completed his 22nd year at Westminster, has led the CIGE since fall 2010. He has been responsible for expanding the CIGE into a broad global institute that includes several components including various programs and offices. The CIGE has relationships with several countries, two majors (transnational studies and international studies), an award-winning model United Nations program, and other co-curricular events. It also serves as the umbrella organization for the Study Abroad and Off-Campus Programs office, the annual Hancock Symposium at Westminster College, the college’s Honors Program, the Green Lecture series and IBM Lecture series. The CIGE began in 2008 when current chair of the History Department, Dr. Sam Goodfellow, was named its director.

The SIO Academy at Duke focused on campus internationalization, strategic planning, assessment, international student recruitment, and other topics.

Global Issues Forum celebrates 35 years of women at Westminster

By Scovia Aweko

In celebration of the "Women of Westminster: 35 years," The Churchill Institute for Global Engagement sponsored a panel of four students to speak about global issues affecting women today. Because we live in a globally connected world today, one must become increasingly aware of issues affecting women in different parts of the world today and be able to find solutions to them as women are the building blocks of society and are fundamental in solving some of the most ingrained problems in society. Political science professor Dr. Kali Wright-Smith organized and moderated the panel.

Scovia Aweko a sophomore from Kampala, Uganda spoke about the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM). Although many countries have laws against the mutilation of women and young children, FGM has continued to thrive in rural areas of most African and Middle Eastern societies. Today, the issue is getting the much needed attention it deserves with the United Nations and World Health Organization designating February 6 as the “International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation.”

Senior international studies major Erin Smith, from St. Charles, Missouri, spoke on the issue of “comfort women” in Korea. She became interested in this issue during her study abroad experience in South Korea in summer 2014. The comfort women are committed to getting redress of their grievances from the Japanese government. In order to get attention for their case, former comfort women and their advocates erected a statue in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul. This statue sparked a lot of debate and controversy and was later taken down. According to Smith, this shows how important the issue is to South Korean women and how willing the Japanese are to keep the issue in the dark.

Mahima Poudel, a sophomore from Kathmandu, Nepal, spoke on the issue of women in the military in Nepal. Participation of women in the Nepalese army has helped to break down the gender barriers in the country. Nepal is a country were gender roles are dictated by the religious mores and strict lines of social relations in the largely Hindu society. By joining the army, a predominantly male occupation, women have proven that they are just as important as men in society.

Sanaa Khan, a senior from Sanaa, Yemen, talked about the concept of feminism in the Arab world and the role that it played in Egypt during the Arab Spring. Sanaa had previously participated in a special study abroad program in Europe where she extensively studied women’s issues.
Undergraduate Scholars Forum sees multiple Transnational Studies panels

The 2015 Undergraduate Scholars Forum (USF) had three Transnational Studies panels. Dr. Jeremy Straughn, an Assistant Professor of Transnational Studies and Director of the Churchill Institute for Global Engagement’s Study Abroad and Off-Campus Programs office, moderated the panels.

Several students participated including transnational and international studies majors Nicolas Lopez-Cano, Harmony Nelson, Ryan Harrison, Ana Zadro, and Erin Smith.

The USF was started to highlight student research and to promote the rigors of intellectual inquiry in coursework at Westminster.

Many students have taken USF papers and given them at professional meetings. Some have been recognized nationally by various conferences, professional associations, and honor societies for their research.

The USF has been a launching pad for many students for graduate school fellowships, professional school admission, and improvement of placement in professions after graduation from Westminster.

Highlights of global activities at Westminster in 2014-15

The 2014-15 academic year saw a number of important global activities on the Westminster campus. Sir Bob Geldof’s magisterial Green Lecture on the arts, politics, and humanitarianism left a lasting impression on students, faculty, staff, and the community at large. It was “Churchillian” in its scope and depth.

The events of November 9, 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall were remembered in celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the event. The Churchill Institute for Global Engagement sponsored two interactive events. One with Mark Klugmann, a former speechwriter for presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush, who was working in the White House when the wall fell.

Junior Amelia Ayers, a transnational studies and security studies student, from St. Louis, spent her junior year studying at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She provided a live interactive Skype session from the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin for her fellow students back on the Fulton campus.

The Model United Nations team participated in the Midwest Model United Nations conference in February 2015. The team represented the Netherlands in St. Louis. Dr. Kali Wright-Smith is the director of the MUN team.

The Honors Program, directed by English professor Dr. Heidi La Vine, continued to grow and see high quality students from all over the world. One of the Honors Program’s students, Ayush Mandahar of Kathmandu, Nepal, won the McFarland Family Scholarship.

Dr. Jeremy Straughn continued to lead the study abroad and off-campus areas at Westminster and study abroad continues to be popular and draw outstanding students to the college. Exchange students in 2014-15 from Britain, France, and Kenya were popular on campus (see the story on page one).

Transnational and international studies continued its growth with over 20 majors.

Finally, Dr. Benjamin Akande, dean of the business college at Webster University in St. Louis was named the Westminster’s new president in May 2015. From Nigeria, Dr. Akande brings a wealth of knowledge on globalization in higher education and business to the campus.

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About the Institute:

The Churchill Institute for Global Engagement (CIGE) was founded in 2008 and provides global academic and co-curricular programming such as the transnational studies and international studies major programs, Study Abroad and Off-Campus programs, global summer programming for high school and college students, the Model United Nations program, the college’s Honors Program, the Hancock Symposium at Westminster College, a fellows program for scholars, and the John Findley Green Lecture series and IBM Lecture series. The CIGE also serves as the college’s chief diplomatic arm and it has signed new partnership agreements and maintained partnerships with higher education institutions, high schools, governments, and businesses in Britain, China, France, Jordan, Mongolia, Russia, South Africa, and Turkey.

Churchill Institute for Global Engagement Staff (2014-15)

Dr. Kurt W. Jefferson
Assistant Dean for Global Engagement/Director/Professor

Dr. Jeremy Brooke Straughn
Director/Assistant Professor of Transnational Studies
Study Abroad and Off-Campus (SAOCP) Office

Dr. Heidi La Vine
Assistant Professor of English
Director, College Honors Program

Dr. Kali Wright-Smith
Assistant Professor of Political Science
Director, Model United Nations Program

Ms. Harmony Nelson
Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Dean/Director of the CIGE

Mr. Paul Kelei and Mr. David McDermott
Student Assistants to the Assistant Dean/Director of the CIGE

Ms. Bethia Kadoe and Ms. Jamie Striler
Student Assistants to the Director of the SAOCP Office

Right: Dr. Benjamin Akande is named the 21st president of Westminster College in May 2015.