

Mentoring One Student at a Time

His fellow students considered him least likely to leave his country for study abroad. “When I left home for a nearby country to study at a Christian university, it seemed to my parents as if I had gone to the moon.”

“**James**” was from a remote region of his country (not identified for security reasons) and walked 13 miles *each day* to school. So, when fellow students from more affluent regions of his country saw him go abroad for graduate school, they were shocked.

Later he was admitted for studies at Columbia University, only to be blocked from going by a power-hungry senior administrator in his organization. James finally has achieved the impossible: a year of study in the USA, courtesy of the US government. His goal upon return is to establish a Christian human rights and conflict resolution organization in his *deeply troubled* home country.

“I mentor him almost weekly on how to apply a Christian worldview. He needs little coaching, as he is a man devoted to Christ and unfazed by opposition,” said **Dr. Bob Osburn**, the Academy’s executive director.

Besides James, Dr. Osburn also mentors “**John**,” another US State Department-funded visiting scholar with a Christian background who strategically works to develop civil society in his highly oppressed country. “We’re utilizing a book by evangelical social activist **Vishal Mangalwadi**, as well studying Jesus’ strategies, recorded in the Gospel of Luke, for instituting the Kingdom of God among Jews,” said Osburn.

Mikalia King, the Academy’s new organizational coordinator, mentors **Karolina Bermudez**, an Ecuadorian exchange student at Northwestern College, utilizing the Academy’s course *Introduction to Making a Redemptive Difference*. “Karolina has been very enthusiastic about being equipped before traveling back home in May. She has also given Wilberforce Academy invaluable feedback about our curriculum,” said Mikalia King.



Karolina Bermudez and Mikalia King

In addition, **Dan Trautmann**, an Academy associate who is field testing the Academy’s *LifeCall* course, mentors “**Jock**,” a Chinese visiting scholar seeking Christ while conducting policy research at the University of Minnesota.

“Our conferences (three planned for 2012, one involving former protégé **Thangboi Haokip**) will complement the critical work of mentoring,” said Osburn. “When it’s all said done, mentoring is critical to preparing future change agents for Christ.”

Refining Our Mission

“This is a work in progress!” noted Bob Osburn in recent conversations. Early forecasts suggested that in two years the Academy would complete its curriculum to train international students as redemptive change agents. Two years later, we now know the process will likely take five years.

“This is an intensely complicated effort, because we must take account of cross-cultural differences, variability in the use of English as a second language, complex theological assumptions, a wide range of vocational and disciplinary callings, and educating people who are generally not well-acquainted with language about worldviews,” said Osburn. Wilberforce Academy staff and associates met recently to wrestle with many of these implications, as well as larger strategic considerations. One important outcome is a re-commitment to mentoring as a central part of our educational methodology.



*Wilberforce staff & associates:
Dr. Linda Leonard,
Mikalia King, Dr. Larry
Selin, & Dr. Robert
Osburn
(Dan Trautmann &
Peter Swanson not
pictured)*

The first two courses, *LifeCall* (Christianity and vocational calling) and *Introduction to Making a Redemptive Difference*, are completed and in various stages of field testing. Our third course, *Comparative Worldviews*, has just been completed, with field testing beginning in Fall 2011.

Passion for International Students Animates New Organizational Coordinator

Although **Mikalia King** grew up in the small town by Byron, MN (8 miles west of Rochester) she has always had a global outlook. Growing up, she was blessed to have opportunities to travel abroad, to countries such as England, Ireland, Wales, Australia and New Zealand. In December 2009 she was able to travel to China, Thailand, Singapore and the Sea Tribe Islands in Southeast Asia for an internship. She gained invaluable insight about people-oriented cultures (vs. the task-oriented US). Mikalia is currently conducting field tests, manages the database, organizational communications and meetings, and brings a fresh perspective to the team. “Mikalia brings both a high aptitude for administration as well as a genuine love for students, and that makes her the perfect fit for Wilberforce Academy,” said Dr. Bob Osburn, Wilberforce Academy’s executive director.

I’ve Been Thinking...

Does Christ change society for the better? Our mission to train international students and others to be redemptive change agents in their home societies assumes this. For a powerful summary of the evidence, read good friend Vishal Mangalwadi’s new book *The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* (due out soon). But a nagging problem had my attention while I was in Ghana recently: Why do some societies with large numbers of Christians still lag? Ghana’s Christian movement is powerful, but the lights are off for hours each day, roads have gaping holes, and poverty abounds. Come with me to Manipur in northeast India. Home to many large Christian churches, Manipur is a textbook case of systemic dysfunctionality.



The central problem: Most Christians in these areas do not possess a truly Christian worldview.

Yes, they are converted and are sincere, but their underlying assumptions are shaped more by traditional culture than by Christ. This is the central, though by no means the only problem that we hope to address with our training.

Bob Osburn