

Letters to *The Bradley Herald*

From Silvia Ursu '00 Moldova

Dear *Bradley Herald*,

I am doing fine at Oxford. The first term is over and the students are on vacation, however, the Oxford definition of vacation is moving to the library and start working for real now :). I have a few assignments and I already have to start working on my master thesis proposal, which as you can imagine might be considered a bit early since I have three more terms at Oxford. Oxford is very nice as a city and as a student town. However, in less than three months since I've been here, I have only got to know Oxford from the university perspective. I hope to get to know the real Oxford in the next few months. Being involved with a charity that writes portraits of various Oxford inhabitants, *Oxford Muse*, I will have the chance to meet some other Oxfordians that are not necessarily academics.

The program is good, however, it is less so than I expected. Comparative Social Policy, MSc, is a rather new program and the faculty is working to adjust it to the current students' and labor market's needs. The professors in this program are few in number, unfortunately, and most of them are specialized in the British welfare system and less in other welfare regimes, even less in developing countries' welfare regimes, which actually are my main interest. However, the good part about Oxford is the fact that all other departments are open for all students, and I can speak with professors and specialists from Centre for Migration COMPAS, for example, or the Department of International Development to get more knowledge on the area of my research or I can attend lectures at other departments. For example, next term I will attend a course on ethnicity and nationalism offered by the sociology department. At the same time, the University of Oxford is famous for its seminars, lectures and speeches given by famous people, academics and professionals, that are open to members and even non-members of the university. Oxford is a great challenge. The students studying here are very smart and hard working, thus, the program is highly competitive. But Oxford is also a socializing nest with many venues and parties going on. I am glad to say that I have met some of the most interesting people here in Oxford. I hope this information is helpful for the newsletter. If you have more specific questions, I will be glad to answer them.

Best regards,
Silvia (Ursu)
s_ursu@yahoo.com

Nurzada Jaldoshbekova '01 from Kyrgyzstan is currently studying in a Master's degree program in American Studies at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA) in Germany. The HCA is a central academic facility of the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg. The HCA serves as an intellectual center dedicated to the study of the United States, providing space for scholarly and public debate in a global context. It provides education and research opportunities for international students and scholars. The University has a high international reputation, and its strong record in the study of the United States has presented ideal prerequisites for the creation of the Heidelberg Center for American Studies. She was accepted to the HCA for winter semester 2005 and awarded a full scholarship.

In order to make her dream come true, however, Nurzada had to raise funds to cover the cost of medical insurance, accommodations, books, and travel. She did a lot of networking, which in the end paid off. One of the places where Nurzada found help was the Bishkek Rotary Club. They connected her to the Heidelberg Rotary Club and the Heidelberg Roteract Club.

Dear *Bradley Herald*,

I have been meeting with the Rotary Clubs here in Heidelberg. I attended their meetings and had a chance to introduce myself and tell them about my educational background. Most of them told me that they are impressed with my achievements and called me a "young brave lady." One of the Rotarian members, Mr. von Kretschmann, assured me that I do not have to worry about my financial support here in Heidelberg and he will manage it for me and they will support me with a monthly allowance. He told me that he is obligated to do that since he was the one who received the phone call from the Rotary Club in Bishkek. I am very thankful to Rotary International Clubs and I hope to join the Rotaract Youth Club in Heidelberg.

There are 19 of us in the Master's program and everyone seems to be very nice. We have students from Romania, U.S., Mexico, China, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, and Japan. Some of them have been to Germany several times before and surely know German. Those who do not know German, including me, are still trying to say one sentence! However, my Swedish roommate told me that I have a talent to learn German or any other foreign language, because I can pronounce the words correctly, while some people do not. Back to my university, we went to the Heidelberg

University Library yesterday. Believe me; I have never seen so many books, journals, and encyclopedias as in this library!!! Tons of books! We even saw the basement of the library that was full of books on different subjects and the librarian claimed that they are looking forward to opening another building's basement to keep more books! So, this is the real resource center!!!The first two days were like a dream for me, because I could not believe that I made it. I really wanted to study in Europe and never thought that I would make it. But, here I am with my dream that came true! I would not reach it without you all. You were the ones who pushed me to make steps and who enormously supported me!

And then later in the semester, Nurzada writes:

Things are going great in my life. My classes are going very intensively, so much reading and writing assignments that I enjoy so much. Most of our professors are from the U.S. and so far they seem to be helpful in everything. I am taking three major courses out of six: American Constitutional Law, Government and Business, and the U.S. Political System, and Social Geography. I found these courses very interesting and I hope to learn many useful things from these courses since I have no background knowledge, especially in the American Constitutional Law course. Besides these courses, we are required to attend minor lectures on history, literature, and religious studies; also actively participate in mandatory courses: Methodology I and II, and Colloquium. The mandatory courses are interdisciplinary and there are so many topics to discuss.

I am staying in a student dormitory and have my own room. Unfortunately, I have no roommate, as I prefer to share a room. My floormates are nice and they help me out with everything. Since everything is in German, they put English signs for me, so that I can understand it as well. I thought it was very nice of them. I hope to start learning German in March, when I will finish my courses and have more time for writing my thesis. I always see some of my floormates in the kitchen watching "The Simpsons" cartoon endlessly. I can see the strong influence of American culture!

As soon as I will have a chance to take pictures, I will do my best to send you some shots of Heidelberg and other interesting events.

Love and Best Wishes,

Nurzada