

The Center Report

Fall 2014



Ecumenical Center and International Residence

**An Intentional
International,
Intercultural
Interspiritual,
Living Learning
Community**

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A Call for Volunteers!



ECIR needs you! Are you interested in being a part of our program committee? Available to drive or participate in ECIR events?

email us: info@ecir.org

Core Values

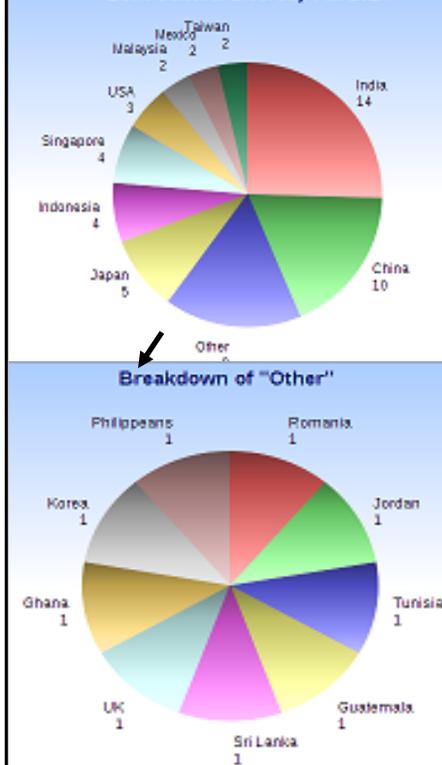
Created a month ago by Abdurrahman Baris, Beth Eliason, Bruce Martin, and Raja Rajmaling, the new Core Values Commission (CVC) focuses on elevating and integrating the following values into existing and new ECIR educational programs.

- **Understanding and respecting cultures in context**
- **Pursuing justice and equity in local and global communities**
- **Nurturing local and global traditions of peacemaking**

While most of our programs are designed to promote social interaction, cultural understanding, and community building, dialogue on local, national, and international issues as well as events from the perspective of the above core values adds depth and dimension to an already diverse community. The goal of the CVC is to provide information and to promote discussion of topics like human rights, peace and nonviolence, social justice, and systemic injustice in diverse societies around the world. The CVC is planning to promote a monthly series on human rights in 2015 as part of our weekly Global Village Square Program. These programs will be presented through speakers and/or documentaries followed by panel and group discussions. The CVC welcomes additional members who are interested in promoting these core ECIR values. Our first program will be held on Nov. 11, 7:00 PM.



ECIR Cultural Diversity Fall 2014



Residential Diversity

This fall, 49 international students and scholars will be living at ECIR, a full and diverse house. This diversity includes 29 females and 20 males from 18 different countries. Two pie-charts (left) show each country represented and the number of residents who identify with each country. In a few cases, students and scholars identify with more than one country or nationality. This occurs when students/scholars are born in one country and move for personal or professional reasons to a second country, creating new national associations and multi-layered identities

ECIR continues to meet the needs of an expanding international community at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. ECIR has turned away nearly 200 inquiries and applications for the fall semester alone. That so many students and scholars are seeking to make ECIR their home away from home is a sign of changing times, increasing comfort with diversity, and growing demands for the extraordinary services we provide.

Program Highlights

Detroit

This past July, ECIR residents and friends put to use the University of Michigan's FREE Detroit City Connector bus to downtown Detroit. Residents were free to do as they pleased once in Detroit, but many stayed in groups while exploring the Detroit Institute of Arts, Greek Town, Comerica Park, and more. Visiting Detroit seems to be a resident favorite!



Moonlight Paddles



Gallup Park Canoe Livery extends their hours to 11pm to allow kayakers and canoers to watch the sunset and paddle after dark. Jessica Greenfield, Residential Program Manager, and 15 residents participated in this journey on the Huron River. For several residents, kayaking and canoeing were familiar activities. However, there were some who stepped into canoes for the first time. This was a fun and memorable evening for all!

Summer Picnic

June is a time to be outdoors and enjoying the warm weather. It is also the month in which ECIR holds its annual picnic for residents, staff, and volunteers. The popularity of the picnic can be attributed to the food prepared by volunteers. Residents enjoyed the food and relaxing time away from their research projects and studies. More than 40 attended making this a popular summer



Message from the Director

Choose a job you love and you'll never have to work a day of your life (Confucius). I have been doing work that I love for the past five years as Executive Director of ECIR. The arrival of new residents in the fall, and the flurry of activities that follow, is always a special time. Masa Juginana, Professor of American History, Yamaguchi University, Japan, an alumn of ECIR, makes this point: *Certainly U of M offered me a superb environment for research....But...the most memorable experience is the good feeling of "belonging" living in the ECIR. It's an amazing experience for me, because I am living in a "foreign" country. Living with differences, or more precisely, living "for" difference is the most wonderful and memorable experience for me at ECIR.*

Ms. Juginana highlights that differences are important for the formation of genuine community. Human beings usually seek what is known and familiar when fearful and uncertain. Genuine community, however, emerges and grows in the midst of differences, especially when students are open to change and personal growth. While the process of community building may appear to be organic and effortless, observation suggests otherwise, especially when the cultural, religious, linguistic and political differences of 18 countries are all welcomed under one roof. The community which emerges in the fall and deepens during the academic year depends on accepting differences, acknowledging misunderstandings, and learning from each other. I was made aware of this process again this past weekend during our Resident Retreat at Camp Talahi. This retreat provides opportunities for residents and non-residents to create friendships and memories. I am still amazed by how quickly and deeply these connections are made through sharing meals, interactive games, and a bonfire. Even though every student who attended represented a different culture, religion, and political system, all shared a desire for community.

Irish Fernandez, Philippines, one of several non-residents in attendance, sent this message to staff: *I've found great friend in all of you who were there in the camp.... Thank you very much for welcoming us even if we never got the chance to live in ECIR.* Irish's e-mail shows that the retreat experience gave her a sense of belonging, of being welcomed into a community. She also identifies the need for a "home away from home" shared by many UM international students/scholars, all of whom "never got the chance to live at ECIR." When Irish applied to our program, all of our apartments were leased. (We are also full for the winter term and are still turning away a steady stream of inquiries and applications.) Because the UM International Community is growing by 5-10% annually, because community thrives in the midst of diversity, and because our mission is to provide a space where diversity and community flourish, ECIR hopes to expand its capacity to better fulfill its mission to include Irish and all who are searching for the kind of community ECIR so richly provides.



Meet the Newbie!

Meet Alexandra Lefevre (Sasha),
ECIR's 2014-15 Office Assistant

"I was born in Paris, France, after my parents ran away from the collapsing Soviet Union. We moved to Chicago, IL, when I was three and a half years old. I am a student at the University of Michigan and am currently studying computer science, economics, and international relations. I am a huge advocate for intercultural respect as well as for human rights in general. I love photography, music, and studying other languages and cultures."



Why Volunteer?

Volunteering at ECIR is always a rewarding experience and a chance to become part of a close-knit and diverse community. As volunteer Isaac Garrison explains, "I currently volunteer for ECIR to apply my love of social justice and my belief in the importance of community-based hospitality." Isaac became an ECIR volunteer a mere three weeks ago by helping the office reach out to the ECIR alumni. Even though he joined ECIR recently, he has learned what it means to be a part of the ECIR community. He was already welcomed with open arms to ECIR community events, such as the GVS dinner, and made friends with the ECIR residents. Contact us at info@ecir.org to become an ECIR Volunteer and help promote ECIR's mission of intercultural respect and community!

Wish List

Many Ways to Give to ECIR—

- Toasters
- Microwaves
- Blenders
- New Carpet
- Mattress Covers (twin size)
- New pillows & Covers
- Computer & Dining Chairs
- Wash Cloths
- Vacuum Cleaners
- Kitchen Pots & Pans
- Love Seat (not full couch)
- 12 or 15 Passenger Van
- Volley Ball Net/Balls

All new or used items (in good condition), as well as cash, are tax-deductible



Global Friendship Program

ECIR pairs international students/scholars with American hosts to develop cross-cultural understanding and friendship. International scholars meet at least twice each year to share their cultures and traditions. The Global Friendship Program (GFP) matches students and hosts based on shared interests, activities, and frequency of meeting. Bridging cultures and continents, GFP is an exciting and rewarding experience for all!

[Apply online at ecir.org/educational-programs/cultural-engagement/global-friendship/](http://ecir.org/educational-programs/cultural-engagement/global-friendship/)

GIVE APPRECIATED STOCK!

"If you itemize your deductions & own appreciated stock that you have held for more than one year, by donating the stock to charity you can deduct the stock's value as a charitable contribution and avoid paying taxes on the stock's gain. Just make a gift of appreciated stock by the end of the calendar year."

GIVING

"By combining our donations, large and small, we create a legacy to advance our vision to expand our Center, to extend our program as a living learning community promoting understanding and peace between diverse peoples and cultures of the world."

—Bruce Martin, Director

DONATE AN IRA DISTRIBUTION

"For the tax year 2014, retirees can redirect all or part of their required distribution to charity without paying tax on the withdrawal. Making this tax free transfer can help retirees who want to support a charity but who don't itemize their deductions and as a result can't deduct their charitable contributions. Qualified charitable distributions must be paid directly from the IRA to the charity by the year's end."

**SHARE
WITH US!**

ECIR is looking for residents, supporters, and volunteers who are interested in writing about their experience. Submissions can be emailed to info@ecir.org. We will do our best to utilize all submissions so that future residents and supporters can enjoy your story too!