Regent University’s mission statement was expanded a year ago to embrace a more focused global perspective and global competency, the goal being to equip our graduate and undergraduate students in pivotal professions to become leaders of Christian thought and action in the world marketplace.

In spring 2009, Regent will launch a new campus-wide campaign, RUGLOBAL, to introduce the university’s new global focus.

“Our faculty continue their commitment to inspire students to think profoundly and independently as they confront today’s challenges of leadership,” says Dr. Carlos Campo, vice president for academic affairs, adding that Regent is incorporating the principles of global education in order to extend its reach to educate and transform lives around the world. “Our students cultivate lives that unite the heart of a servant and the mind of a scholar to pursue their academic and spiritual goals.”

A number of Regent graduates are already doing just that. Whether teaching disabled Nepali people how to start micro-businesses, providing quality education to children in Afghanistan or taking leadership skills honed at Regent to poverty-stricken people in Tanzania, the three people you are about to meet are already investing themselves in the lives of people in unique international settings. Here are their stories.
Scholarship and leadership mark the amazing life of Steven Kiruswa ’04 (Communication & the Arts). From a simple life of herding cattle in the hills of northern Tanzania to earning a doctorate from Regent University in the United States, this son of a traditional Maasai family, has broken all cultural and educational barriers. Achieving something never before accomplished by one of his tribal kinsmen, Kiruswa has dedicated his life to taking his knowledge back to his homeland, investing in all of those who supported his educational journey.

As the Maasai Steppe Heartland director for the African Wildlife Foundation, Kiruswa is passionate about liberating his people from the tyranny of poverty. As a volunteer advisor for a community organization, Kiruswa also aids in the social development of Longido, his home base. “My dream is to mentor as many young men and women as possible so they might acquire advanced learning. I want them to emulate exemplary Christian leadership that cares for both spiritual and physical liberation from poverty, ignorance and disease,” he states.

Steven Kiruswa grew up in the shadows of Mt. Kilimanjaro, where baobab and acacia trees dot the savannah grasslands in Tanzania’s Maasai Steppe Heartland. When he was only 9, his simple life as a Maasai cattle herder came to a sudden end. The President of Tanzania had encouraged a new law that required one boy under the age of 10 from every tribe and village to attend school. Selected by the elders as the best fit from his family, young Kiruswa was physically carried off to the government school program, screaming, kicking and pleading to stay home.

Despite this brutal introduction to education, Kiruswa excelled. Simply put, he fell in love with learning, and his capacity for education became apparent to everyone. At each educational juncture, Kiruswa’s teachers and principals encouraged his father to let his son continue. The tribal elders negotiated a plan to send Kiruswa on to college, realizing that his education could be an asset to all. Everyone contributed as they could, enabling Kiruswa to attend a reputable Christian university in Eastern Africa. At the conclusion of his undergraduate work, this incredible scholar had risen to the top of his class once again.

Arriving in the United States to pursue graduate school, Kiruswa soon set his sights on Regent University. He examined the course offerings and environment on campus. Kiruswa appreciated the combination of academic enrichment and spiritual nurture he considers essential in a postmodern world. “Regent equipped me with the skills I needed in my field of study, and my degrees are necessary symbols for leadership in my society,” he says.

Kiruswa now eagerly pours his knowledge into the African Wildlife Foundation. The goals of the Foundation focus on conserving Africa’s majestic wildlife, protecting the land through new land trusts and community partnerships, and empowering the people to improve their livelihoods. Projects abound under Kiruswa’s supervision. One of his goals is to bring together all the stakeholders, from village members to safari operators to government leaders.

“My dream is to mentor as many young men and women as possible so they might acquire advanced learning. I want them to emulate exemplary Christian leadership that cares for both spiritual and physical liberation from poverty, ignorance and disease.”
Kiruswa is focused on conservation projects in northern Tanzania. One such undertaking is in the improvement of infrastructure in two famous national parks, Lake Manyara and Tarangire. The once dilapidated roads have been greatly improved, providing easier accessibility. Phone systems, VHF radios and even laptops with Internet communication—unheard of just a few years ago—are all available in the parks now. A marketing plan to reach potential visitors has been developed. Alive with the sounds of wild elephants, lions, giraffes, zebras and other species too numerous to list, Tanzania’s game preserves provide a unique cacophony, a draw to all those adventuresome souls who want to enjoy the rare beauty of raw nature. Kiruswa has promoted successful conservation in these key wildlife habitats, a mainstay of Tanzania’s tourist income.

Imagine 800 Maasai children in a boarding school, taught by only 15 teachers—crammed into ramshackle buildings designed to serve 400. The Manyara Ranch Primary School was situated on a 44,000-acre bankrupt cattle ranch right in the path of a natural wildlife corridor. In other words, the children shared their schoolyard with herds of elephants, lions and other species traversing through their habitat. The children relied on water unfit for consumption due to high sulfur levels. Due to these health and safety hazards, this school site was obviously unsuitable. As another example of progress under Kiruswa’s leadership, Manyara Ranch Primary School has been moved to a new site, where its more than $1 million facility is now considered a model school by others in Tanzania.

Bridging the diversities of cultures, Kiruswa is passionate about improving the conditions of his own people group, the Maasai. He says, “I want to collaborate with both local and international partners who can help me achieve my dream. One of the first steps is to set up an education scholarship fund to support needy students with the potential to become leaders. I want to be assured that my dream will live on long after I am gone!”

Kiruswa has accomplished what international students often plan, but sometimes fail to do. With strong ties to his homeland and a fierce loyalty for his people and all they have done for him, Kiruswa returned to Tanzania one week after earning his doctorate. “Without their help, I never would have gotten this education. I owe them.” By using his education to benefit his country and people, Steven Kiruswa has become another Tanzanian national treasure.
Two vastly different lifestyles and cultures lie juxtaposed, both belonging to Gail Goolsby ’07 (Education). Since the summer of 2005, the contradictory, yet complementary, lives of Goolsby have created unique challenges: one life in America, another life in Afghanistan. Alternating between her work in Kabul, Afghanistan, and her home, family and friends in St. Joseph, Mo., Goolsby has taken on a daringly unique enterprise. When most couples in their 50s are busily planning and dreaming of retirement, Goolsby and her husband, Mike, are making a difference in the world.

Goolsby was happily engaged as a counselor at St. Joseph Christian School when the recently freed people in Afghanistan captivated her husband’s attention in 2002. While visiting there, Mike noticed colorful kites of tissue paper and plastic filling the skies. “Why are these kites everywhere?” Mike asked. He was told they were flying kites because they could! The Taliban had formerly banned it. The colorful, kite-filled sky struck Mike with its symbolism of freedom and the resiliency of the people. He came home changed and presented his desire to live in Afghanistan to his wife. It took some time for the plan to unfold, but unfold it surely did.

Goolsby was happily engaged as a counselor at St. Joseph Christian School when the recently freed people in Afghanistan captivated her husband’s attention in 2002. While visiting there, Mike noticed colorful kites of tissue paper and plastic filling the skies. “Why are these kites everywhere?” Mike asked. He was told they were flying kites because they could! The Taliban had formerly banned it. The colorful, kite-filled sky struck Mike with its symbolism of freedom and the resiliency of the people. He came home changed and presented his desire to live in Afghanistan to his wife. It took some time for the plan to unfold, but unfold it surely did.

Goolsby was soon asked to serve as the principal of an OASIS International School (ISK) in Kabul, Afghanistan, while she pursued an M.A. in Educational Leadership at Regent University. So in July 2005, the Goolsbys launched a new life in Afghanistan, leaving behind their young adult children and network of family and friends. A USAID grant would fund a once-private school, changing its trajectory while charging Goolsby with oversight of the school’s development. There were immediate needs like the development of an admissions policy and remodeling the row of dilapidated little classroom buildings. Her husband was quickly diverted from his original assignment as a school/community liaison to overseeing school reconstruction. The school was soon ready to welcome the children of Afghan nationals as well as children of people who had come to help rebuild the country. A good education was mandatory in restoring this nation, and Goolsby was determined to do her part to make it happen.

ISK provides for children from kindergarten through high school, serving about 250 students in 2007-2008. Since its inception in 2005, the school has grown.

In the past year, 60 percent of the students were Afghan, with a total of 25 countries represented in all. Proudly, Goolsby reports 39 percent of the students were girls, with the hope of more to come. Knowing this brings Goolsby and her staff satisfaction.

One of Goolsby’s challenges is to help the Afghan families understand the differences between the American styles and standards of education and the Afghan/Pakistan schools. As an example, the Afghan schools place more emphasis on end-of-year tests, while ISK stresses daily attendance, ongoing assignments and quizzes or projects.

ISK students often require extra instruction in English or special attention to learning needs as English Language Learners (ELL). Compared to the native schools of Kabul, however, ISK is far ahead of the curve with tuition incentives for female students (encouraging the education of females in a place where it was once forbidden) and all the instructional quality of a modern American school. The typical Afghan school often lacks books, teachers, libraries, labs and other essentials of learning. Teachers in Afghanistan recently went on strike for better wages, which average only about $50 a month. In contrast, the Minister of Education recently remarked at the 2008 high school graduation ceremony that ISK is the most prestigious school in the country.

Goolsby not only dared to undertake this enormous endeavor in Kabul, but in doing so, returned to the classroom herself. Having no prior experience as a principal, Goolsby needed her educational leadership degree. Her husband had graduated from Regent University Christian Leader.
Regent 1990 with a Master of Divinity, and, with family in the area, Goolsby felt it would fit her educational needs. “I wanted the Christian perspective but also the public school mentoring training since most of my teaching/counseling experience came from private Christian education,” she explains. “The course information at Regent provided top-quality instructional leadership with ethics and integrity. I gained confidence and great ideas from the research, professional interviews, textbooks, peer interactions, discussion boards and classroom instruction.”

In a chaotic and impoverished city of four million, the Goolsbys live with the ISK staff behind the walls of their compound. As a woman in Afghanistan, Goolsby faces a noticeable lack of freedom in this foreign land, her second culture. She accepts residing on the same compound where she works with her staff, rarely going anywhere alone and never driving. She dons the headscarf and endures the unwelcome stares of men. Occasional mortar blasts and threats of Taliban activity are a part of daily life.

Each December, the Goolsbys transition to family living in St. Joseph, Mo., and the comforts of American life. After the holidays, they’re back to Afghanistan for a cold winter and the work to which they feel called. In the summers, Goolsby and her husband return yet again to the freedom to which they are accustomed in the United States. “It feels like I have two lives,” Goolsby says.

Returning to Kabul is a choice Goolsby has made to serve others with greater needs than her own. Because of ISK, parents don’t have to choose between their work rebuilding Afghanistan and their children’s education. Goolsby says, “I feel good about that … they tell us over and over, often with emotion.”

In the springtime especially, the kites are still flying. Goolsby says, “We still notice them and smile at their presence. They are a sign of freedom in a country still struggling to be whole, to be free of war and turmoil.” Goolsby’s motivation is strong. “I know I am obeying God’s call on my life, so that brings much joy. All of us at ISK know we are making a huge difference in Afghanistan.”

GLOBAL CHANGE IN DUBAI

East met West in Dubai as women practitioners, faculty and students representing more than 60 countries and a variety of faiths and cultures from around the globe converged in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, for the Women as Global Leaders Conference hosted by Zayed University in March 2008. Several Regent women were among these global leaders.

Participants included faculty members Dr. Myra Dingman from the School of Global Leadership & Entrepreneurship (GLE), Dr. Doris Gomez (GLE) and Dr. Linda Grooms from the School of Education (EDU); GLE doctoral students Julianne Cenac and Melissa McDermott; divinity alumna Lea Carawan ’87; and Dr. Kathaleen Reid-Martinez, former Regent School of Leadership Studies (now GLE) dean. They were selected by conference organizers to lead several sessions on leadership topics that included shared and cultural values, understanding one’s life purpose and experiential learning.

McDermott learned about this annual conference through a GLE student who had attended the 2005 conference in Dubai. A few months later McDermott attended the International Leadership Association Conference in Amsterdam where she took part in a session with representatives from Zayed University who answered questions about submitting proposals and addressed concerns of women traveling to the Middle East. McDermott and fellow alumna Dr. Diane Chandler (Divinity) attended the 2006 Women as Global Leaders Conference in Abu Dhabi, the capital of United Arab Emirates.

“The experience was eye-opening and life changing, so I wanted to share this with others from Regent who had an interest to work with women and leadership development in the Middle East,” she says.

According to McDermott, the 2008 conference provided a unique venue that allowed people from different faiths and cultures to unite with the common goal of learning to be better equipped as women leaders so they can create change in their own communities and families.

“It was wonderful to see them [Middle Eastern women] experience similar challenges in their own leadership that women here would face and to see that they were looking for a reason to explain it and practical ways to overcome it,” says Cenac.

Despite anti-American comments by keynote speakers from the U.S., the Regent contingent welcomed the opportunity to interact and share with participants to dispel misperceptions about American women and Christians.

“The goal of several of the Regent presenters was to connect with the Middle Eastern women as mothers, as wives and as women in leadership—and we did just that,” says Dingman.

“Women have a unique ability to communicate with each other and build bridges of understanding based on common experiences and challenges,” observes McDermott. “Women from all cultures and faiths seem to share the desire to care for their families and friends while also being part of a vision that is greater than themselves, and each one will make a difference in their communities and the world.”

During a Regent-led workshop, members of the Regent team shared their personal testimonies of overcoming obstacles and were thrilled when several of the Muslim women shared openly about their dreams and struggles as well.

“There are many courageous women in the Middle East who have overcome challenges and are making a difference in their region,” says McDermott. “We were all inspired and given a broader perspective of the needs of women in the Middle East. Perhaps we will be able to collaborate together in the future with leadership development programs in the region.”

For more information about the conference, visit www.zu.ac.ae/leadership2008.