Abdussalam Alawini, IELP Alumni and 2016 commencement speaker

Abdussalam Alawini is from Tripoli, Libya. He first came to the U.S. in March of 2008. Not only is he an IELP alumnus, but also a soon to be PSU alumnus, graduating with a Ph.D. in Computer Science (CS). Along with these accomplishments, he was also asked to be the speaker for the afternoon commencement for the class of 2016! The IELP recently met up with Abdussalam to ask him about his time in the IELP, at PSU, and any advice he might have for future and current IELP students.

I began with the IELP in level 3/4. Regarding the commencement speech, I feel honored and excited to represent the class of 2016 graduates. Giving the commencement speech is the best way to end my wonderful journey with Portland State University.

When I first came to the U.S. in 2008, I had several goals in mind: improve my English skills, finish my graduate studies, learn more about American culture, and gain professional experience by working on-campus as well as off-campus. I succeeded in achieving my goals with the support of my parents, my wife and kids, my adviser Prof. Maier, and with the support of the IELP program, the CS and the Engineering and Technology Management (ETM) departments.

After I graduated from the IELP in December of 2008, I studied for a dual masters degree in CS and ETM. Then right after I graduated in the summer of 2011, I was offered an NSF scholarship to study for a Ph.D. in CS, which I successfully completed this term (Spring 2016). I also worked as a lab attendant, and later as a lab coordinator for the Office of Information Technology. I had an amazing journey with PSU; I started as an ESL student in the IELP, and now I teach senior undergraduate and graduate classes in the Computer Science department.

I have accepted a postdoctoral researcher offer from the Computer and Information department at the University of Pennsylvania.

The IELP program is a great resource for international students. Unlike university faculty, IELP teachers understand international students' needs very well, and they work hard to help them adapt to the U.S. lifestyle. More importantly, IELP instructors prepare students for their academic studies, which is an important factor for their success.

On a personal level, IELP teachers inspired me in many ways. Mr. Michael Harvey (retired) motivated me to start exercising and biking. Ms. Carla Mortensen introduced me to the concept of "global citizen"—a person who recognizes that our actions may have implications on communities locally, nationally or internationally. Ms. Amber Calderon thought that school and fun can coexist. Even after I graduated from the IELP, I am still in touch with most of my teachers. They're more like friends now. I strongly believe that the IELP contributed to my academic success, and that is why I am a dedicated advocate for this program.

If you are a current IELP student, I advise you to work hard, and not underestimate the importance of homework assignments. Once you graduate from the IELP, you'll notice how fast your English skills have improved as a result of doing your homework assignments. I also advise you to be proud of your culture, and enjoy sharing your values with U.S. and other international students. The IELP provides an amazing opportunity for you to connect with people from various cultural backgrounds. I also advise you to enjoy IELP trips. They introduce you to the beauty of Portland and Oregon. Finally, I advise you to get involved with PSU student groups. They offer many fun activities that will help you improve your English as well as connect to other students on campus.

I wish you all the best.

Stay connected with the IELP
This spring term 2016, the IELP welcomed new students from over 16 different countries! Welcome to Portland and the IELP!

IELP STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

This year, the IELP interviewed a handful of IELP alumni and current PSU students for a testimonial video project. Check out the video below from the IELP's own Bassam Alduhaim!

Bassam Alduhaim
Dammam, Saudi Arabia

The Best for International Students

In the IELP, I really saw how a university or institution can provide the best to international students. With the Conversation Partner Program, I started making connections on campus. The IELP provides a lot of assistance for international students. That's what made me stay in the IELP and at Portland State University.

To see more student testimonial videos, visit our website at: http://www.pdx.edu/esl/testimonials

Are you an IELP alumni? Did you enjoy your time in the IELP? Do you love Portland and love telling people about your time here? Are you interested in giving a testimonial about your experiences? Then email Samudra Kugel at skugel@pdx.edu
VISIT TO COLOMBIA

This spring, the IELP's Pilar Montejo, International Student Adviser (pictured back right), and Samudra Kugel, Associate Director of Outreach and Admissions (pictured front right), had the opportunity to connect with an IELP alumnus, Juan Carlos (pictured front left) while they were on a business trip in Colombia.

While Juan was living in Portland, he enjoyed camping and many other outdoor activities, as well as the Portland food scene.

Juan founded the company "Synergy I&A Consultants", an IT energy saving company, with a friend back in January of this year. To learn more about his company, visit iasynergy.com

Pilar and Samudra were able to hand deliver Juan's IELP certificate of completion to him in Colombia.

We love our Alumni!

Recently the IELP had two alumni stop by our office; Saud Almutairi and Mobarak Almutairi, both from Kuwait. After the IELP, both went on to study at other universities in the United States. Thanks for stopping by! We love to see our alumni and hear about their accomplishments and what they are doing now!
Ruth Chapin, teacher with the IELP since 1984, retires.

This year, Ruth Chapin retired from the IELP. She had been teaching with us for over 32 years! Thank you for being such a dedicated teacher, Ruth. We hope you are enjoying your retirement!

VISIT FROM ESPOL AND COLLABORATION WORK

Two representatives from ESPOL (Escuela Superior Politecnica del Litoral), located in Guayaquil, Ecuador, visited the IELP this term to discuss a possible program developed around teacher training, collaboration in teacher research and publication, and teacher/student exchange.

Wayne Gregory, IELP Academic Director, goes to Ecuador for the summer to further partnership between the IELP and ESPOL

Visit from Taiwan

The IELP welcomed a delegation from Taiwan this term. In collaboration with Travel Portland and Delta Airlines, we are working together to bring more wonderful students from Taiwan to study in Portland.

Wayne is currently in Ecuador, teaching at CELEX (Centro de Lenguas Extranjeras - Center for Foreign Languages) which is part of the Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades (School of Social Sciences and Humanities) at ESPOL. While he is there, he is working with ESPOL to further the partnership between ESPOL and PSU and collaborate more on the development of the teacher training program.

To read more about his time there, visit: https://sites.google.com/a/pdx.edu/ecuador/
Help us continue as one of the nation's leaders in teaching English to international students and preparing students for undergraduate and graduate programs at Portland State University and as a pathway to other U.S. universities. We hope that our IELP alumni will give us the ability to support generations of students to come. We need your support now more than ever. Every gift you make benefits our students and faculty and deepens your connection with the IELP, Portland State University, Portland, and The United States. Please consider donating.

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Thank you for supporting Portland State University’s IELP

**STUDY ABROAD THIS SUMMER**

Interested in studying abroad this summer?
Are you, a spouse, friend, or relative interested in improving their English over the summer? We are still accepting applications for the 2016 Summer Communication and Culture Program as well as our Summer Academic English Program.

[Click here to learn more](#)

Or contact us at:
Samudra Kugel: skugel@pdx.edu
TEL: 503-725-4088