



## Press Release

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### Northern Illinois University Welcomes Edmund S. Muskie Fellows

Northern Illinois University is pleased to welcome two new international students on campus as part of the U.S. Department of State's Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program. Joining the Northern Illinois University family are Nigorahon Hamidova from Uzbekistan, and Marine Nalbandyan from Armenia.

Established by the U.S. Congress in 1992 to encourage economic and democratic growth in Eurasia, the Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program is a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US Department of State (ECA), and administered by IREX. The Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program aims to promote mutual understanding, build democracy and foster the transition to market economies in Eurasia through intensive academic study and professional training for fellows from 12 countries of the former Soviet Union. In addition to their academic coursework, all Muskie fellows perform community service and complete a summer internship in their field of study.

The Muskie program is highly competitive, averaging over 3,000 applications per year with a 5% rate of acceptance. For more information, visit <http://www.irex.org/programs/muskie/index.asp>.

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State fosters mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries to promote friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations, as mandated by the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchanges Act of 1961. ECA accomplishes its mission through a range of programs based on the benefits of mutual understanding, international educational and cultural exchange, and leadership development. For more information about ECA exchanges, visit <http://exchanges.state.gov>.

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