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Dodge College Launches Documentary Film Program in Cambodia

Renowned Documentary Filmmaker/Professor Jeff Swimmer and Chapman Law School Professor John Hall Lead Students to Cambodia to Work with Local Organizations

ORANGE, Calif., May 12, 2008 Chapman University's Dodge College of Film and Media Arts announces an extraordinary new scholarship program for Dodge students and faculty to develop documentaries overseas and build awareness and visibility for worthwhile non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in different countries. Focusing on the issue of human rights, the first years team will travel to Cambodia. This unique initiative, funded by a \$1 million private grant, is presented in conjunction with the Chapman University School of Law and Chapman's Wilkinson College of Letters and Sciences.

For this inaugural endeavor, veteran documentary filmmaker Jeff Swimmer and Chapman law school professor Dr. John Hall will lead five students three Dodge students, one law school student and one student from Wilkinson College to Southeast Asia to develop documentaries for the Khmer Arts Academy and Tiny Toones, two arts-focused NGOs in need of assistance to create more public awareness for their work. The two-week trip commences on May 28, 2008. Prior to the trip, the selected students spend spring semester researching the area and organizations not only from a film perspective, but also explore legal and cultural implications of the human rights issues as well. Students complete the project with a course at Chapman in fall 2008, where they edit, complete post-production and also discuss marketing and distribution of their final work.

This unique program reinforces Dodge's commitment to provide our students with unparalleled opportunities in the field of filmmaking. This project illustrates the power of the documentarians craft to help bring awareness and attention to important issues shaping our global culture. We are excited about this project and we look forward to working with the different schools on campus in this unusual collaboration, says Dodge College Dean Bob Bassett.

Having traveled and conducted extensive research in Southeast Asia for more than a decade, Dr. John Hall immediately identified Cambodia as the appropriate destination for this program. Our main goal is to help draw attention to important human rights issues taking place throughout the world," he says. "Since my initial trip to Cambodia in 1993, I have learned a great deal about the human rights situation in that country. I realize that Cambodia offers enormous potential as the initial focus of this exciting new interdisciplinary project.

Professor Jeff Swimmer, producer and director of numerous documentaries which have aired on PBS, BBC, National Geographic, CNN and the Discovery Channel, believes this course is crucial to a young filmmaker's education. What is truly different about this program is the multidisciplinary approach. This is not just about film students traveling to an exotic place and

making a documentary. This is an opportunity for students from different areas of studies to learn from each other and work together to produce a work that will help two very deserving organizations.

The two NGOs central to this project have Southern California ties and focus on dance as a medium for change and a source of hope. The first, Khmer Arts Academy, is led by Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, who founded the dance troupe when she immigrated to the United States from Cambodia in 1991. Growing up in the mid-1970s, Shapiro witnessed firsthand the tragic consequences of her country's civil war, as many of her family and friends were killed by the Khmer Rouge. At the conclusion of the war, Shapiro enrolled herself in the School of Fine Arts and rigorously trained in traditional Khmer dancing. Internationally recognized for her incredible talent, Shapiro and her husband, John, work tirelessly to preserve and continue this fascinating art form and have established locations of their academies throughout Cambodia and in Long Beach.

The second organization participating also utilizes dance as a way to initiate change. Tiny Toones is the "passion project" of Sobil ("KK") Tuy. KK immigrated to Long Beach from Cambodia with his family when he was very young and, as a teenager, became a member of the infamous Crips street gang and also struggled with drugs. His illegal activity led to his deportation back to Cambodia, where he witnessed other young kids also facing the perils of drugs, crime and gang life. Determined to help others avoid his troubled path, Tuy reached out to these youth through breakdancing, an art form he had excelled at in the United States. Tiny Toones currently serves hundreds of street kids in Cambodia and has received international recognition from UNICEF and other relief organizations.