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## Afghan professors join Group Study Exchange team

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*The Rotarian*

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GSE team members tour the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in San Diego.

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Six professors from Afghanistan traveled to California last May as members of Afghanistan's first Group Study Exchange (GSE) team.

One agricultural professor, two English as a Second Language (ESL) professors, and three medical professors, all from Nangarhar University in Jalalabad, spent a month in San Diego as guests of Rotarians in District 5340 (California).

The professors received laptop computers from the San Diego Futures Foundation and basic computer training through a program run by San Diego State University. The equipment and training will facilitate communication between the two universities, which are working together to reduce the isolation that Nangarhar University's professors feel. Located on the outskirts of Jalalabad, Afghanistan's second-largest university was left in disrepair under Taliban rule.

"[It] had no computers, few usable textbooks, and the professors taught off of 20- to 30-year-old lecture notes," says Steve Brown, past governor of District 5340. "The buildings were rather run-down and electricity [was] very intermittent."

Nangarhar University now has 200 textbooks donated by departments at California Polytechnic State University. The donation came about after one of the Afghan professors toured Cal Poly and was impressed by the books he saw

there. The San Francisco-based nonprofit Asia Foundation shipped the books free of charge.

Team members also toured agricultural schools, observed ESL programs, and visited hospitals, medical centers, and private medical practices. In addition, they found time to enjoy the San Diego Zoo, SeaWorld Adventure Park, and a San Diego Padres baseball game.

GSE is a program of The Rotary Foundation that provides travel grants for groups of people in business and professional occupations. For four to six weeks, they experience the host country's institutions and ways of life, observe their own vocations as practiced abroad, and develop personal and professional relationships across cultures.

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