

March, 2008

General Information

Time to Spring Forward:

Daylight savings time is just around the corner, which means the days are about to get longer! Don't forget to turn your clocks forward one hour before bedtime on Saturday, March 8th!

“The World in One Day”

Regent's International

Festival—Saturday, March 29, 2008:

Mark your calendars for the return of Regent's exciting International Festival, which is now scheduled for Saturday, March 29, 2008! This is Regent's biggest and most popular international event of the year where our international students delight in preparing special displays (with photos, arts & crafts, clothing, pottery, etc.); wearing their unique and colorful international dress; preparing ethnic foods; and offering unique talents and performances from their home countries (songs, dances, origami, etc.). Students who participate in the festival will gain free admission to the event, and all international students are encouraged to participate! PRIZES will be awarded to the best regional display. **If you are interested in joining this year's festival, please contact the OISS at: ljohnson@regent.edu; or the ISO at: iso@regent.edu.** (See page 7 also.)



Enhancements to OISS Website:

The OISS is pleased to announce some new additions to our website which include:

- Fall, 07 and Spring, 08 Newsletters
- OISS Events Calendars
- Information on “Departing the U.S.”
- Information on “Working in the U.S.”
- Information on “F-1 and J-1 Visas”
- International Restaurant & Grocery Store Guide

Spring Break & The OISS:

While the Spring Break is scheduled for March 3 – March 9, all University offices, including the OISS, will remain open. Our walk-in hours are from 2-5 p.m. Morning hours are reserved for appointments. For some of you, this may be a time to take a break from your busy schedules, for others it is time to take a trip and relax. Whatever you plan to do during this time, please know that the OISS staff is available to assist and to answer any questions you may have.

March Birthdays

Congratulations and blessings to the following students who have birthdays in March:

Feyisara Alayande *Stuart Hiddema*
Joyce Kiplagat *Nobue Kunito*
Sorin Petan *Chelsea Thoms*

The March, 2008 OISS newsletter contains information about the following topics:

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- Congratulations/New Birth Available in OISS
- Tax Filing Information & Assistance/CINTAX Password Distribution

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- Optional Practical Training
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- ISO Office Hours

Presented by:

Office of International Student Services (OISS)
Regent University
201 Student Center
(757) 226-4130

www.regent.edu/oiss

Walk-in hours (without appointment): 2-5p.m., Mon-Fri.

OISS Trip to Williamsburg:

Looking forward to the summer? With the large number of activities planned for the spring semester (ISO Trip to Washington D.C., International Festival, Graduation Dinner, Graduation Rose Sale, etc.) the OISS is looking forward to organizing our trip to Williamsburg during the summer. Please check your emails this summer for details and plan to join us!

Student News/Announcements for the OISS Newsletter:

Students who would like to submit special news or announcements to the OISS newsletter can now do so by completing the special newsletter submission form, which has been added to the OISS website. Such news may include the birthday of a non-student family member who is here in the U.S. with you, the appointment to a certain position on campus (such as COGS senator), news about a special award, the birth of a child, etc. The form can be found on this page of the OISS website: http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/iss_news_cal.cfm

Congratulations/New Birth:

Congratulations and blessings to Emil AbuJaber (MBA student) and his wife, Maran Maayah, on the birth of their baby boy, **Sahem Abujaber**. Baby Sahem was born on **January 18, 2008** and we are delighted to welcome him into the Regent community!

H-1B Related Information

Available in OISS:

The OISS has some leftover information packets from the Information Session on "Life After OPT" (H-1B Temporary Worker Visas, TN and R-1 status), which was presented by Mr. Art Serratelli, Esq. Please stop by during office walk-in hours if you would like to collect a packet for yourself.

Tax Filing

Information & Assistance:

8843 Forms Must be Filed by All F-1 and J-1 Students Who Were in the United States in 2007

ALL international students who were physically present in the United States during the year 2007 are expected to complete an 8843 form "Statement for Exempt Individuals and Individuals With a Medical Condition" (regardless of whether or not you received any U.S. income, scholarship, or grant funds). The 8843 form can be completed through the special international student tax filing software (CINTAX) which was purchased by the OISS. (See page 3 for details on how to apply for a CINTAX password.) **However, the 8843 is a very simple and basic form that you should be able to complete on your own in just a few minutes without CINTAX.** Failure to file this form could potentially result in problems with any future applications for U.S. Permanent Residence or Citizenship. You can go to the IRS website and print and complete the form yourself: www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8843.pdf; or you can apply for a CINTAX password in the Student Services Office (SC201) to assist you with the 8843. **Please see page 3 for the 8843 filing deadline and mailing address.** You can also visit www.irs.gov.

Watch Your Mail for Important Tax Forms (W-2s and 1042S Forms)

Students who worked in the United States at any time during the year 2007 should have received some tax forms in the mail from their employers. The form that you might have received is called the "W-2" form. The W-2 shows how much money you earned in 2007 and how much money was withheld in taxes. Other students who received scholarship or fellowship grant funds in 2007 are likely to receive a 1042-S form. The 1042-S shows how much money you received in 2007 and how much money was withheld in taxes (if applicable). The W-2s were mailed in January, but the 1042-S forms were not mailed until late-February. **These important forms will be needed for your United States tax filing, so please watch out for them in the mail.**

W-2Forms, 1042-S Forms, and 1040NR/NR-EZ Forms

Students who received a W-2 form or a 1042-S form in the mail may need to file a 1040NR or 1040NR-EZ and can use the **CINTAX** software to assist them with the filing of those forms. **The CINTAX software will help you determine whether or not you need to file a 1040NR/NR-EZ.** For your information, 8 out of 19 students received a REFUND from the IRS after filing the 1040NR/1040NR-EZ last year (see message called “Interesting Statistics...” for details)!

Deadlines and Mailing Address for the FEDERAL 8843 and 1040NR/1040NR-EZ Forms:

►For F-1 and J-1 students who were employed and earned taxable wages (money earned through employment, internships and assistantships)--AND for students who received taxable scholarships, fellowship or grant funds--the 8843 form should be filed together with the 1040NR or 1040NR-EZ tax forms, **and the filing DEADLINE is April 15, 2008.**

►For F-1 and J-1 students who received non-taxable scholarship, fellowship, or grant funds, the 8843 form should be filed together with the 1040NR and 1040NR-EZ forms, **and the tax filing DEADLINE is June 16, 2008.**

►For F-1 and J-1 students who did NOT receive any taxable or non-taxable wages, income, scholarship/fellowship/grant funds in 2007, but were physically present in the United States in 2007, the 8843 form should be filed, by itself, **and the filing DEADLINE is June 16, 2008.**

SPECIAL NOTE: If you are uncertain about whether you received taxable or non-taxable scholarship, fellowship, or grant funds, then it is best to file your taxes by the April 15, 2008 deadline.

►The Mailing Address for the FEDERAL 8843, 1040NR, and 1040NR-EZ forms is:

Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service Center
Austin, TX 73301-0215

Importance of Photocopies

All students should make a photocopy of each form that you complete for your personal records before you mail them to the IRS. You should keep the copies for at least 3 years and use them as examples for after you graduate/return home because you may need to file taxes at that time. **Students who complete a STATE Income Tax Return** will need to make an additional photocopy of the completed 8843 and FEDERAL Income Tax Return (1040NR

or 1040NR-EZ) to mail along with your STATE return. This is important!

Tax Filing Assistance Software Purchased by OISS for International Students

The OISS has purchased a special international student tax filing software which our international students can use for a low cost of \$10 per person. The software is called “**CINTAX Complete International Tax Preparation Software**” and will assist you with the filing of the FEDERAL 8843 and 1040NR/1040NR-EZ forms only. **The \$10 software fee is waived for new students who attended the Spring, 07 or Fall, 07 international student orientation because the charge was included in their orientation fee.** Regent staff members are not qualified to assist students with their individual tax filing, forms, and questions, so please be sure to take advantage of the special software which the OISS has purchased for your use. **The software was created especially for foreign citizens who are completely unfamiliar with U.S. tax filing procedures.** Another alternative is to hire an off-campus international tax specialist/consultant to assist you with your tax filing obligations as a foreign national in the U.S.

CINTAX Software Passwords Available in Student Services

Office Starting Thursday, March 6th:

Passwords for the special international student tax filing software (**CINTAX**) will be available at the front desk of the Student Services Office (201 Student Center) starting on Thursday, March 6 after 1 p.m.. There is no cost to use **CINTAX** this year for NEW students who attended the Spring, 07 or Fall, 07 International Student Orientations. The cost for all other international students is \$10. Checks for the **CINTAX** software passwords should be made payable to: “Regent University”.

►**Students who are not in the local/Virginia Beach Area** and cannot apply for a **CINTAX** password in person must:

--Send an email to Leeanne (ljohnson@regent.edu) to note their intention to purchase a **CINTAX** password;

--Mail their \$10 payment to: OISS, Attn: Leeanne Johnson, Regent University, SC 201, 1000 Regent University Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23464.

--Make the check payable to “Regent University” and note on the check that it is for “**CINTAX**”.

Interesting Statistics from Last Year on FEDERAL Tax REFUNDS from IRS

According to reports received from CINTAX, there were approximately 19 Regent students who completed FEDERAL tax returns through CINTAX last year. 8 out of 19 students received a “refund” from the IRS, and the average refund amount was approximately \$248! *How will YOU spend your refund this year?*

Virginia STATE Tax Filing (Form 760/763)

Students who were employed in 2007 and received taxable wages (money earned from employment, internships, or assistantships), and students who received non-taxable wages (including money received from scholarships, grants, fellowships, dividend funds, etc.) would need to complete the 1040NR or 1040NR-EZ before they can determine whether or not they will need to file a Virginia STATE Income Tax Return. Rules regarding Virginia STATE tax filing were provided by the Commissioner of Revenue’s Office and are as follows:

Residents (including dependents and students) must file an individual Virginia STATE income tax return if:

- Single, and Virginia adjusted gross income is \$7,000 or more
- Married, filing a joint or combined return, and total Virginia adjusted gross income for both spouses is \$14,000 or more
- Married, filing a separate return, and Virginia adjusted gross income is \$7,000 or more

Virginia adjusted gross income is your federal adjusted gross income (which can be found on the FEDERAL 1040NR/1040NR-EZ income tax return once you complete that form) plus any Virginia additions and minus any Virginia subtractions computed on Schedule ADJ. Virginia adjusted gross income does not include standard or itemized deductions, the child and dependent care expense deduction, or personal exemptions.

If you worked in Virginia and had Virginia withholding you should file a return to get all of your withholding back, even if you are under the filing threshold.

For students who live in Virginia Beach, the 760/763 Virginia STATE Income Tax Forms should be mailed with a copy of the 8843 and a copy of

your complete FEDERAL Income Tax Return (1040NR/1040NR-EZ) to this address:

Commissioner of Revenue
2401 Courthouse Drive, Bldg. #1
Virginia Beach, VA 23456-9002

For more information you can go to the Virginia Department of Taxation website @ <http://www.tax.virginia.gov/index.cfm>

Additional Details and Updates

Please continue to check your weekly email messages from OISS for further details and updates.

Important Immigration Information

Attention May Graduates/ Program Completion Forms:

All F-1 and J-1 students who will graduate/complete their studies in May must complete a “Program Completion Form” and submit it to the OISS by March 31. This form is available online at: www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/onlineform.cfm

F-1 and J-1 students who will graduate in May, please note that your “on-campus” employment benefit and authorization will end on the day you graduate, and your May 10 graduation date will be reported to USCIS through SEVIS. **If you plan to work at Regent after May 10, 2008, as an employee of the University (and not as a degree seeking student) you will need to visit the Human Resource Office BEFORE May 10 to complete a new I-9 “Employment Eligibility Verification” form or to update any existing I-9 forms.** You will also need to show proof of proper employment authorization. For F-1 students, that would be the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) you receive when you apply for post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT). For J-1 students, it would be the written Academic Training authorization you receive from the OISS when you apply for Academic Training. OPT employment authorization allows you to work anywhere in the United States (including Regent) in a position that is “directly related” to your major field of study.

Please contact the OISS for any questions you might have about this important matter.

Special Message to all F-1 & J-1 Students from OISS Director:

As you all know from the University's International Student Orientation, and from the I-20s and DS-2019s that you signed before you applied for your visa and entered the United States, **there are certain immigration rules, responsibilities, and procedures that the United States government expects you to know, to understand, and to abide by at all times.** Dropping below full-time status without "prior authorization" from the OISS is a serious violation of the F-1 and J-1 student immigration, whether you drop below full-time status at the beginning or at the end of the semester. An unauthorized drop below full-time status at any time in the semester will lead to the termination of your SEVIS record and can lead to serious problems and consequences. Please be reminded also that you cannot count more than 1 on-line class or more than 3 on-line credits toward the full-time status requirement per semester. Working (providing a service and receiving ANY type of compensation, like money or a "gift") without "proper" authorization (like working for more than 20 hours per week on-campus, working off-campus without prior written authorization, working on-campus as a J-1 student without "prior written authorization", etc.) is another serious violation of the F-1 and J-1 student immigration status. Even if you consider these matters/oversights to be an "innocent mistake" on your part, these matters are not taken lightly by the U.S. government. When you signed your I-20s/DS-2019s you certified for the U.S. government that you read and understood the U.S. immigration rules, and that you agreed to abide by them. The OISS has special walk-in hours from 2-5 p.m. Monday - Friday to assist you with your individual immigration, employment, and travel related questions. We offer special Information Sessions each Fall and Spring semester as well. In addition, the office website contains a lot of helpful immigration information for you. **Please take advantage of these special services provided by the OISS.**

F-1 Student OPT Applicants & OPT Filing Deadline for May Graduates:

All F-1 international students who plan to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) this spring, are required to attend an OPT Information Session--this spring--before their applications can be processed. **There are only two OPT Sessions remaining this Spring.** They will be held on Thursday, March 27 and Friday April 4. OPT applications take approximately 2-3 months for USCIS to process, so please plan accordingly. You cannot begin working until you receive written authorization from the USCIS. Job offers are NOT required to apply for OPT. **The OPT applications for May graduates MUST be submitted to the OISS at least 2 weeks prior graduation (by Friday, April 25).** Details about OPT can be found on this page of the OISS website:

<http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/employment.cfm>

Attention All F-1 Students: I-20 End Dates & Program Extensions:

Please check your F-1 program completion date (section 5) on your most recent I-20. If, for any reason, you will not complete your degree by the date listed there, you **must** apply for a "Program Extension" **at least 30 days before** the end-date listed on the form. If you qualify for an extension, a new I-20 will be issued to you with a revised end-date. For the extension application, you will need to submit paperwork from your academic department, and you will need to show recent financial documents. This will take several weeks to prepare, so please plan accordingly. Students who do not request an extension at least 30 days **before** the completion date on their I-20 could fall out of lawful F-1 status. Application packets for "F-1 Program Extensions" are available at the OISS and on-line at:

www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/onlineform.cfm

Please take care of this important matter as soon as possible. For questions, please call LeeAnne Johnson at 226-4130.

Attention All J-1 Students:

DS-2019 End Dates

& Program Extensions:

Please check your J-1 program completion date (section 3) on your most recent DS-2019. If, for any reason, you will not complete your studies by the date listed there, you **must** apply for a “Program Extension” **at least 30 days before** the completion date on the form in order to maintain your lawful J-1 status. If you qualify for an extension, a new DS-2019 will be issued to you with a revised end-date. You will need to submit paperwork from your academic department and to show recent financial documents before a new DS-2019 can be issued, and this will take several weeks to prepare, so please plan accordingly. Students who do not request an extension at least 30 days **before** the completion date on their DS-2019 could fall out of lawful J-1 status. Application packets for “J-1 Program Extensions” are available at the OISS and on-line at:

www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/onlineform.cfm

Please take care of this important matter as soon as possible.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Employment

Authorization (for F-1 students):

Thursday, March 27, 3 p.m.

Room 118, Student Center Building

All F-1 students who are planning to do a mandatory academic internship this spring or summer must attend a CPT session this spring before the OISS can process their CPT application. This is one of two remaining sessions for the spring term with the final session on Friday, April 11. Attendance will be taken, so please be on time. Details about Curricular Practical Training can be found here:

<http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/cpt.cfm>

News from the International Student Organization (ISO)

February Related Events:

International Worship

Service with Dr. Bekker

We were very glad that many of you came to our International Worship Service with Dr. Bekker. We had a powerful message from the Lord, many were touched by Emily’s testimony, and we prayed for African countries. Let us continue to intercede for Kenya and all of Africa.

ISO Lunar New Year Potluck and Fellowship Evening

Thank you very much for blessing us with your presence and delicious foods on February 10. What a turnout: we had 28 adults and 7 kids in our little apartment! Even though it was a bit crowded, we had wonderful fellowship and lots of food, didn’t we? Playing Jenga was real fun too. ☺ It was great to see many of you and pray for one another.

Later, some watched *Ultimate Gift*, which was a very good movie with an important message for everyone. It is highly recommended, especially the Special Features! Thanks to Olga and others who recommended the movie. We also celebrated

Information Sessions for March

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Employment

Authorization (for F-1 Students):

Thursday, March 13, 3 p.m.

Room 118, Student Center Building

All F-1 students who are planning to apply for OPT this spring must attend an OPT session this semester. This is one of two remaining sessions for the spring term with the final session on Friday, April 4. **A job offer is NOT required to apply for OPT, and applications for May graduates must be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to graduation on April 25.** Attendance will be taken, so please be on time. Details about OPT can be found here:

<http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/opt.cfm>

Andrey, Edith, and Olga's birthdays (we missed you, Rachel and Kang-Ming!). Thanks to Andrey, our official photographer of international students, who took these wonderful photos from the party.

Wishing you all the best during this mid-term season!

ISO Events for March: The International Spring Festival

Mark your calendars: **March 29th Saturday** from noon to 3pm, you can experience "**The World in One Day!**" The International Spring Festival will be held in the Library Atrium this year allowing us to have more space to "show case" the displays of your country, "show off" your talents, and "highlight" your culinary skills.

We need YOUR help to represent your country. So please send us an email at iso@regent.edu and let us know if you, your spouse, and your family are willing to help ISO and OISS to proudly represent your country. You can ask your American friends as well to be a part of the Festival, either by the way of volunteering, or by attending the Festival, or both!

We are specifically looking for volunteers to help represent the regions of Canada, Africa, Asia, India, Europe, and Latin America. We are looking for folks who can sing, dance, dress up, cook, and generally have a good time! **So write to us (iso@regent.edu) or call us at 226-4950!** There will be a couple of meetings for Team Leaders before the festival and they will be contacted by email. We look forward to hearing from you!

ISO Office Walk-in Hours:

Monday: 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday: 9:45 – 11:45 a.m.

Wednesday: 2 – 4 p.m.

Thursday: 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

In His service,
Javkhaa, Varsha, Hanisha, & Alejandro, ISO Board

Previous International Festivals:



*Which region will be voted the **BEST** display at this year's festival???*