

3/23/07

Dear International Students,

I am very pleased and excited to serve & assist you in as many ways as I possibly can as the new Director of International Student Services at Regent University. I join the Regent community after serving as the Associate Director of the Immigration Services Office at the University of Notre Dame and as the Director of International Student Services at the College of William & Mary. I have several friends and family members in the Tidewater area of Virginia (including Jennifer Repko Nowlin), and I am delighted to be back in the region and look forward to serving you!

I have worked in the field of International Education since 1991 and have enjoyed every minute of it! In addition to my most recent work at ND & W&M, my immigration experience includes the 2 year participation in a national pilot program with the INS (now USCIS), the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Department of Education. Through my participation in this program, I had the rare opportunity to help develop and test the electronic student record keeping and reporting system (called SEVIS), which all institutions in the U.S. are now required to use. I also served as an F-1 immigration consultant to other International Student Advisors within the state of South Carolina through the Association of International Educators (NAFSA).

I was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where my grandparents settled from Ukraine and Poland. My family still preserves several Ukrainian traditions, such as “psynky” (very detailed Easter egg art that entails a painstaking waxing and dying process), which is one of my most enjoyable hobbies. I love to travel and have visited about 14 countries, so far. I also taught English in Barcelona, Spain for 1 year and in Gifu, Japan for 3 years.

Some of my most memorable experiences in Japan include: my two treks to the summit of Mt. Fuji for a breathtaking view of the land from above the “sea of clouds”; planting rice with the local farmers by hand; and participating in all-night autumn dance festivals clad in my colorful Japanese yukattas! With my brown hair and “big eyes” (as they’d say), I stuck out “like a sore thumb” in a land where they say, “the nail that sticks up gets hammered down”, but I was welcomed with warm smiles and open hearts, nonetheless. I sincerely hope that the same warmth and kindness will be extended to all of you here in the United States. Some of my most memorable “challenges” include getting on the wrong buses; having my futon fly off my 7<sup>th</sup> floor balcony in the wind; and surviving cold winters with no central heat! As you can see, I can truly empathize with the unique rewards and challenges of the international student experience; and I hope that I can assist you in finding as much humor and support in any trying times you may encounter here in the U.S.

In closing, I think that you will find that I have much energy and enthusiasm for the field of International Student Services, that I am often looking for ways to improve, and that I am committed to providing you with the best services possible. Some of those services will include: proactive immigration advising; informative and educational publications; helpful information sessions; timely responses to your inquiries; and the timely and accurate processing of your immigration requests. As I strive to assess and improve the OISS services, I will be asking you to complete a few questionnaires from time to time and will greatly welcome and appreciate your important feedback. Once again, I am really looking forward to serving you!

Sincerely in Christ,

*J. Leanne Johnson*  
Director  
International Student Services