November/December 2012 OISS Newsletter

General Information

Congratulations, Graduates!
Congratulations to the following international students who are expected to complete their degrees this Fall:

Flora Khoo, MA
Gedeon Mbaiononde, MA
David Van der Merwe, MFA
Youngheok Yun, PhD

We are sad to see these students go, but we are proud of their achievements and appreciate their contributions to the Regent community. We wish them well in their future endeavors, pray for God’s abundant blessings, and look forward to hearing about the various ways in which they will be Changing the World as Christian leaders!

OISS Director Away in November:
Please note that OISS Director, Leeanne Johnson, will be out of the office from November 15-26. In addition, the University will be closed for Thanksgiving on November 22 & 23. Immigration requests cannot be processed on the days Leeanne is out, so please plan accordingly and submit your requests around these dates. Thank you!

Reminder: End of Daylight Saving Time! “Fall Back” & “Spring Ahead”:
On November 4th, Daylight Saving Time will end and the days will become much shorter. On Saturday, November 3rd, everyone in the eastern part of the U.S. will turn their clocks back one hour to return to Eastern Standard Time (EST) before they fall asleep. Don’t forget to move your clocks back one hour on Saturday night (for example, from 11 p.m. to 10 p.m.) or else you will be 1 hour early for everything on Sunday! In the Spring, we will all “Spring Ahead” by turning our clocks ahead one hour. (Special Note: You might want to appraise your family members in your home country about the time change so they can call you at the appropriate hours.)

Is Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.) Getting You Down?
Some people experience a type of depression called “Seasonal Affective Disorder” (SAD) around this time of the year, when the days are becoming shorter, darker, and colder. Just a few of the symptoms of “SAD” include: loss of energy, hopelessness, oversleeping, appetite changes, difficulty concentrating, and anxiety. If you are experiencing any unusual changes in mood/behavior, or if you would like some support, assistance, or tips for any difficulty, depression, or stress you may be experiencing, please:

--Visit the Psychological Services Center (188 CRB / phone: 352-4488/ http://www.regent.edu/acad/schcou/psc/), Or
--For after-hours assistance, you can contact Regent C.A.R.E.S.--Communication & Response for Every Student (352-4738 http://www.regent.edu/students/cares/).
More information about SAD can be found here: http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/seasonal-affective-disorder/DS00195

The November/December 2012 OISS Newsletter contains information about the following topics:

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--Gedeon Mbaiononde

The Office of International Student Services (OISS)
201 Student Center Phone: 757-352-4130 www.regent.edu
Office Walk-in Hours: 2-5 p.m. Monday – Friday
G.A. Opening in OISS:
A 20 hour per week G.A. position will be available in the OISS in January! This position will manage the library flag display, coordinate information sessions, manage the ISO storage unit, and assist with the office website and newsletters among other things. The successful candidate must have a valid Virginia driver’s license. Preference will be given to candidates who have an automobile since driving is necessary for some of this work. If you are interested, please send your resume, cover letter, and list of at least 3 references to Leanne Johnson (ljohnson@regent.edu).

Special Thanks to Gedeon!
The OISS will be sorry to lose another faithful servant this December when our G.A., Gedeon Mbaïrornonde, will graduate and transition to the higher calling of fatherhood! Gedeon was a dedicated and conscientious worker who always arrived on time, had a special eye for detail, an eloquent style, and a great sense of humor! We appreciate his contributions to the OISS and will miss him dearly, but we are also excited for his bright and exciting future! Thank you, Gedeon, and God bless you and your family!

November & December Birthdays:
Congratulations and blessings to the following on-campus international students who have birthdays in November and December:

**November**
- Flora Khoo

**December**
- Ranjit Abraham
- David Jimenez Cardenas
- Timothy Lim Teck Ngern
- Andrea Francis
- Solomon Ketsela
- Alicia Panganiban

University Holiday Closing:
Please note that the University (and all offices) will be closed on Thursday, November 22 and Friday, November 23, 2012 for Thanksgiving, and on Monday, December 24, 2012 through Tuesday, January 1, 2013 for Christmas Break. Please plan accordingly and be sure to submit all immigration requests (including travel signature requests) before the November 21 deadline (see details on page 4).

Founder’s Inn Airport Shuttle Reminder:
Looking for a ride to the airport for Christmas break? The Founder’s Inn has a shuttle that goes to Norfolk International Airport and is available to Regent students. The cost for students is only $10 one way. **Reservations must be made, in advance, by calling 424-5511 and asking for “Guest Services”**.

Children’s Relief International (Christian Leadership in Action):
“Children's Relief International is a non-profit organization saving the lives of children by partnering with local visionary leaders to create healthy, sustainable communities.” This is an international student mission program—an evangelical sending mission agency with eight projects in four countries. The focus of the program is on “taking Christ to the poor”. The program helps international students “return to their home countries and serve in Christian work through funding, planning and communications”. For more information, please visit their website at: www.childrensrelief.org/ismp.
Outgoing Student Farewell Messages

A Warm Farewell from David van der Merwe:

“I’m very excited to be graduating in December 2012 with an MFA degree in Scriptwriting. My time at Regent University has been richly rewarding. I have made new friends and have had countless adventures. Looking back now, I realize that I’m graduating exactly seven years after I had started applying to Regent University. The number seven in Bible numerics speaks of spiritual completeness and perfection. I therefore see God’s hand upon my studies at Regent from beginning to end. I am grateful for the experience and express particular gratitude to those at Regent University who have served and supported me during this time. God bless you indeed.”

A Gracious Farewell from Gedeon Mbaiornonde:

“God’s Beloved,

I am grateful for the opportunity the Office of International Student Services (OISS) gave me to bid my farewell. One chapter of the story in my journey at Regent University is about to end. I am not sure what the next page is going to be. I can anticipate that it will involve family, career and more studies, God willing. Apart from this list, I do not know much. All I know is that God is Good and Faithful; I am trusting Him with all the details including the unknown terrain ahead of me. Any advice you have for me would be welcome.

I came to America in 2005 as a visitor. I had just three months to stay. However, I went from being a visitor to becoming an international student, to now a permanent resident. I went from being a single, naïve young man to a married man, soon to be a father, still ignorant but more educated and more mature. All of these accomplishments did not result from my strength, capacity or abilities. They are testimonies of God’s sovereign manifold provisions, spiritual and material blessings bestowed on a sinful, undeserving worm, saved by Grace, blessed because the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is Merciful, Gracious and inherently Good!

Thanks to Regent University’s generosity, I plan to graduate from the Robertson School of Government (RSG) this upcoming December with a Master of Arts in Government with a concentration in International Politics. Special thanks to the Former RSG Interim Dean, Dr. Gary E. Roberts, and the current RSG Dean’s Assistant Mr. J. Clayton Ricker, the Heritage Foundation, Regent University’s founders, board members, donors, staff and faculty members as well as students for contributing one way or another to my admission to the RSG and subsequent success. Special thanks also go to my lovely wife Nicole Birchak, extended family, countless church family members and friends for supporting me throughout my studies and stay here in America.

While studying at Regent University, I had the opportunity to work as a Graduate Assistance (G.A.) in the OISS. I thank God for giving me the opportunity to serve and learn. I am grateful to my supervisor, the Director of the OISS Ms. J. Leeanne Johnson, for allowing me the opportunity to serve and learn under her authority. I am thankful to all the former OISS staff, including the former Graduate Assistants for their contribution in establishing a well-functioning system in the OISS for me to plug in and be productive. I am grateful to the personnel in the Student Center and Career Services at Regent University for their collaborations, kindness and generosity.

Only God can pay you all back for reaching out to me in so many special ways!”

Much Obliged,
Gedeon Mbaiornonde
Getting Involved & Upcoming Events

► RUE (Regent Upcoming Events)
Be sure to check the RUE each Wednesday (through your Regent email) for a multitude of programs, activities, events, and opportunities that are offered campus-wide!

► Information Session:
Optional Practical Training (OPT) Information Session
(Mandatory for all F-1 students who plan to apply for OPT this Fall)
Friday, November 2, 1:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Room 252, Student Center
All F-1 students who are planning to apply for OPT this Fall must attend one of three information sessions offered this fall where OPT applications will be distributed and the application process will be discussed. (This is the last of the 3 sessions offered this fall.) All other F-1 students are invited to come learn about OPT as well. For students who are graduating in December, the OPT applications must be received by the USCIS within 60 days of your academic program completion date (the official university Term End date) and within 30 days after the OISS recommends you for the benefit in SEVIS. It takes the USCIS approximately 3 months to process the applications. The sessions will start on time, so please arrive on time. Attendance will be taken.
(Details about OPT can be found here: http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/employment.cfm)

► Thanksgiving Dinner
Thursday, November 22, 12-3 p.m.
LOCATION: Regent Ordinary
Thanksgiving holiday is a special time of year to spend with family and friends. However some from our community may not have the opportunity to travel home to be with family. The Office of Student Activities & Leadership (OSAL) will host this special meal for any student from our campus community. Please RSVP by November 19, 2012. For more information, please email activities@regent.edu or call 757-352-4927.

► Interested in Spending Christmas with a Host Family?
A family of three (3) living in Norfolk, Virginia is interested in hosting an international student, preferably a female undergraduate student or a couple, for the Christmas/Spring Break. If interested, please contact the OISS for further information. The family has a daughter who currently attends Regent.

► Looking for a New Opportunity this Christmas?
How about spending it with an American family? Christmas International House is a Christian ministry designed to offer hospitality to students during the Christmas holidays through churches and civic groups in different parts of the United States. Applications are accepted between September 15 and November 15. Visit the Christmas International House website for more details: http://www.christmasih.org/

Immigration Information

Recertification Approval:
Great news! The University’s application for the “recertification” of our F-1 visa program was approved by SEVP (Student Exchange Visitor Program) in mid-October! The recertification approval allows Regent to issue I-20s and sponsor F-1 student visa holders for another 2 years. Recertification is a new process that all schools with F-1 programs must now complete every 2 years. As a part of the recertification the University was asked to pay close attention to the federal regulation that does not allow an F-1 student to count more than 1 online or distance education class or more than 3 online/distance education credits toward the full course of study requirement. Classes/credits that do not require physical attendance for completion are considered to be “distance education” from an immigration perspective. If a course is coded as an MAT/on-campus course but does not require physical attendance, it is considered to be a distance education course for immigration purposes, so please be careful and come see the OISS director if you have any questions.
Attention ALL  
**F-1 Students/Expiring I-20s:**
Please check the program completion/I-20 expiration date, which is listed in Section 5 on Page 1 of your current/latest I-20. There are two dates listed there: the date that your studies began, and the date by which you are expected to complete your studies. If the completion date in Section 5 of your I-20 is December, 2012 (or sooner) and you will NOT complete your degree by that date, you must apply for an I-20/F-1 Program Extension at least 1 month prior to the completion date on your I-20. Application packets are available on the OISS website and may take you several weeks to complete. Failure to submit the request for an F-1 Program Extension by the deadline can result in the loss of your lawful F-1 status and ability to complete your degree at Regent. It is YOUR responsibility as an F-1 student to apply for a timely I-20/Program Extension, so please take care of this important matter immediately.

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**Not Graduating & Not Returning to Regent After the Fall, 2012 Semester?**
All F-1 students who will not graduate and will not return to Regent after the Fall, 2012 semester are required by immigration regulation to notify the OISS before they leave Regent. You will need to submit the OISS form called “Request for Approval to Withdraw, Cease Attendance, or Take a Leave of Absence.” Failure to submit this form to the OISS before your departure from Regent can result in serious immigration problems for you in the future. Students who fail to graduate/terminate their studies prior to graduation--and who notify the OISS in advance--will have 15 days to depart the United States. Students who fail to graduate or who end/terminate their studies--without notifying the OISS in advance--are considered to be in violation of their immigration status. These students are NOT entitled to the 15 day grace period, will need to depart the U.S. immediately, and will likely experience immigration problems during any future attempts to reenter the United States.

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**DEADLINE for I-20 Travel Signature Requests:**
Please note that the deadline to request a travel signature on page 3 your I-20 for Christmas Break travel is Friday, November 21, or two weeks before your departure date, whichever date comes first. Each travel signature is valid for 12 months at a time, so check to see if you have a handwritten travel signature on page 3 and make sure that it will not expire before the date you will return to the United States. The request form can be found here: [http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/documents/RequestForTravelSigRegent43008_000.pdf](http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/documents/RequestForTravelSigRegent43008_000.pdf)

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**Departing the U.S. Soon?**
For a complete list of everything you will need for a smooth reentry into the United States after a temporary departure of 5 months or less, please read the OISS webpage entitled, “Departing & Reentering the United States”. [http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/documents/DepartingtheUnitedStatesWEB102611.pdf](http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/documents/DepartingtheUnitedStatesWEB102611.pdf)

This page should be read several weeks prior to your departure. If you have any questions or would like the OISS to check your documents before you go, feel free to stop by the OISS between 2-5 p.m. (“walk-in” hours)

- Students who will need to apply for a new F-1 visa should read this page of the OISS website carefully and should make their appointment as soon as possible, for the earliest date possible, to help insure that the visa will be processed in time for your return trip to Regent: [http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/documents/F1J1VisaHandoutMay242012.pdf](http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/documents/F1J1VisaHandoutMay242012.pdf)

It is important to note that the embassies will be operating on limited days and hours during the holidays and that it may take longer than usual for a visa application to be processed. If you are in need of a new visa to re-enter the U.S., you may not make it back to Regent on-time for the start of classes, so you should discuss this with your School/Academic Advisor and consider the decision very carefully.

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**Change of Address Reporting Reminder:**
All F-1 students please be reminded that, outside of web-registration periods, you are required to report any address changes BOTH to the Registrar’s Office AND to the Office of International Student Services within 5 days of the change. Please do not hesitate to contact the OISS if you have any questions. The online OISS Information/Address Change Form can be found here: [http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/information_change.cfm](http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/information_change.cfm)

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**Merry Christmas, safe travels, & happy New Year!**
On behalf of the OISS, we wish you a blessed and merry Christmas, and a safe and restful holiday! We look forward to serving you in the new year!