

November/December 2008

OISS Newsletter

General Information

Newsletter Article



Contest for NIEW:

In anticipation of National International Education Week (NIEW), held from November 17 – 21, the OISS held a special newsletter article contest on “Cross-Cultural Experiences”. Regent students, staff, & faculty were invited to submit a story/article on:

- Their experiences abroad and how that has changed their lives; OR*
- How their interactions and experiences with Regent’s international students have impacted them/their families.*

There were nine entries submitted with topics ranging from a trip to Auschwitz and the meaning of hope; differences between American optimism and Slovakian pessimism; the sharing of the love of God across cultures; lessons learned and attitudes changed in Japan; a mission trip to Tijuana Mexico; the search for God at St. Peter’s Basilica; and international student friends at Regent.

Congratulations to the following winners of this year’s contest whose stories are included on pages 7 and 8:

Best Student Article:

Tabitha A. Sierra, School of Psychology & Counseling

Best Faculty/Staff Article:

Carrie White, Associate Professor, English Department

The runner-ups are as follows and will have their stories published in the January/February newsletter:

Student Runner-up:

Emily Hervey, School of School of Psychology & Counseling

Faculty/Staff Runner-up:

Chrystal Walton, Accounts Payable

OISS Director Away



November 3–7:

Please be reminded that OISS Director, Leanne Johnson, will be away for a conference from November 3rd – 7th. This means that immigration requests cannot be processed on these days. Kindly mark your calendars and plan accordingly. Thank you!

OISS Monticello Trip Highlights:



On Saturday, October 11, OISS G.A. Leah Taylor and ten international students enjoyed a trip to Monticello, Thomas Jefferson’s home in the mountains above Charlottesville, Virginia. It was a beautiful day, and everyone enjoyed exploring the lovely house and grounds. Included below are some comments on the trip from two student participants:

“The trip was amazing!!! It increased my knowledge of American history and the fellowship with other students was great.”
--Oluwole Oladele

“It’s a wonderful way to get away from school and campus with friends. Embrace the nature and get close to a Great Mind. When I was walking around inside the house of Thomas Jefferson, I was inspired by his creative mind. It seemed that he still lived there and was telling us that time and life were so precious that we should cherish and value every second of our life.”
--Yujie Yao

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

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- Feature Article from S. Sebastian
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- F-1 Student OPT
- F-1 Student CPT
- Spring, 09 Info. Sessions

Upcoming Events:

- Student Svcs. Offices Celebrate NIEW
 - Thanksgiving Dinners w/Local Families
 - ISO News & Events
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Feature Article from Outgoing International Student, Susan Sebastian:

The OISS looks forward to receiving articles/stories from our international students and their experiences in the U.S. Here is our feature article of the month from Ms. Susan Sebastian who is expected to complete her Master's degree in Business this December:

"Hi everybody! ☺ My name is Susan Sebastian, I've been at Regent since August 2007. It has been a wonderful time living here and meeting new people from all across the world. I come from a very busy city, Dubai, so coming here to Virginia Beach is a stark contrast. I enjoy the greenery, the climate, and above all the people in the United States. ☺ I would love to travel across the United States, and visit museums, and historical places before I go back home.

What I do miss about Dubai is my family, friends, the city bustle and I certainly miss the food. However, it has been an experience living here. Ever since I have joined Regent, I have been blessed with a great cohort and loving friends. Below is a picture of myself and my cohort."



New & Improved Website:

The OISS is pleased to announce that we have a new and improved website, which includes:

- Greater distinctions between the newly admitted and current student information, and the immigration and non-immigration related information;
- The re-organization of the web links;
- The re-organization of the "Immigration Information" and the addition of new immigration forms and information;
- The addition of the "International Festival" video;
- An updated "Photo Gallery";
- The addition of some brand new "Pre-Arrival Information" for newly admitted international students; and
- The addition of a current student profile page (in progress).

We hope you find the new website useful and look forward to receiving your feedback!

Daylight Savings Time! "Fall Back" & "Spring Ahead":

On November 2nd, Daylight Savings Time will end and the days will become much shorter. On Saturday, November 1st, everyone in the eastern part of the U.S. will move 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.

Congratulations UGs:

Congratulations to the following undergraduate students for their outstanding academic achievement and recognition in the Spring, 2008 Dean's List:

*Hanisha Besant, Psychology
Frieder Dappen, Government*

Farewell to Our 2008 Handong Exchange Student:

The OISS would like to offer a fond farewell to our Exchange Visitor who attended Regent this year from Handong University in South Korea: *Mija Lee*. Ms. Lee was an active member of the international student community, and we will miss her presence on campus very much. Best wishes to Mija in her future endeavors, and God bless!

Congratulations Graduates:

Congratulations to the following Regent-sponsored international students who are expected to complete their degrees this Fall:

*John C. Rajan
Master of Business Administration
Rebeca Ferreira
Master of Communication
Susan Sebastian
Master of Business Administration
Yuliya Paslavska
Master of Business Administration*

We are proud of your achievements and appreciate your many valuable contributions to the Regent community. We wish you well in your future endeavors and look forward to hearing about the various ways in which you will be *Changing the World* as Christian Leaders in the years to come!

November & December Birthdays:



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

November

Alexander Berry
Abera Dewo
Oluwole Omotoso

Faith Chilongo
Hyo Lee

December

Augustina Amakye
Hanisha Besant
Rebeca Ferreira
Timothy Lim

Alejandro Arana
Daniela Cuadrado
Richard Helsby



University Holiday Closing:

Please be reminded that the University (including all offices) will be closed for the holidays from Wednesday, December 24 through Thursday, January 1. Please plan accordingly and be sure to submit all immigration requests (including travel signatures) before the December 10 deadline (see details on page 5).

Upcoming Events



Student Services Offices Celebrate National International Education Week (NIEW), November 17th-21st

Various Student Services Offices at Regent will join together during the week of November 17th – 21st to celebrate NIEW—a joint initiative of the U.S. Departments of State and Education to help promote the importance of international education and exchange. There are approximately 200 foreign nationals enrolled in on-campus and on-line programs at Regent representing over 50 countries. We invite you to celebrate Regent's diversity and to join in the following events offered during NIEW:

Monday, November 17

► **International Festival Promotion (OISS)**
12 – 2 p.m., Student Center Lobby

The OISS will introduce this year's International Festival with popular international snacks, a video from last year's festival, and the Indian henna art or Asian calligraphy for just \$1. Mark your calendars now for this year's event which will be held on Saturday, March 21, 2009!

Tuesday, November 18



► **National Garb Day**
9 a.m. – 6 p.m., Regent Bookstore

Wear your beautiful national garb to the Bookstore and receive a \$9.99 t-shirt for just 1 penny!

Wednesday, November 19



► **Common Questions About American English**
12 – 1 p.m., Fountain View Room, Student Center

The University Writing Center is offering a workshop for international students only. This workshop will discuss the most frequently asked questions the Writing Center has received from international students over the years. **The first 30 registered students will receive a discount coupon towards the Asian Chef's Palate lunch!** Registration for the workshop is available from the following website: www.regent.edu/writing.

► **International Bake Sale (ISO)**
12 – 4 p.m., Regent Ordinary



Don't miss this! International students and spouses will prepare popular sweets from their home countries for sale at the Student Center. All proceeds will go to the International Student Organization (ISO).

► **Asian Chef's Palate, Lunch & Dinner, Regent Ordinary**



The Regent Ordinary will feature some Asian favorites including Egg Drop Soup, and Tempura Chicken Skewers with Spicy Peanut Noodles.

Thursday, November 20

► **Information Session: Optional Practical Training (OPT) Employment Benefit**

11 a.m., 252 Student Center

The F-1 student OPT employment benefit will be discussed and the application process reviewed. Sponsored by the OISS.

► **Money Managing Tips for International Students**



4 p.m., 252 Student Center

Receive special tips on how to spread the U.S. dollar and manage your personal finances from the Office of Central Financial Aid.

Friday, November 21

► **Information Session: Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Employment Benefit**

3 p.m., 252 Student Center

The F-1 student CPT employment benefit will be discussed and the application process reviewed. Sponsored by the OISS.

► **Ping-Pong Tournament**



Friday, November 21, 5 p.m., Student Center Lounge

Had enough of American football, baseball, and basketball... how about the popular Asian sport of ping-pong for a change? Don't miss this exciting tournament with prizes for the 1st and 2nd place champions! Sponsored by Regent University Intramurals, Office of Student Life.

Thanksgiving Dinners with Regent Families:



During OISS Director Leeanne Johnson's overseas experiences in Japan and Spain, the opportunities that were most profound and memorable to her were the times when she was able to share in special customs and traditions with local families. Once again this year, the OISS is organizing a special opportunity for our international students to join local/Regent University families in their Thanksgiving Dinner celebrations on Thursday, November 27. Please consider taking a break from your studies for just a few hours to participate in this rare and special opportunity. **Spaces are limited, so if you would like to participate please notify OISS G.A., Leah Taylor, (leahstay@regent.edu) by Noon on Thursday, November 20.**

News from the ISO Desk:



Dear Friends: Hope that you all are doing well. We had a fabulous time at the Game Night, on Friday, October 17 at the Student Center Lounge where the fantastic 15 met to play ping pong over some chicken wraps. Alejandro proved to be the winner and was awarded a certificate by ISO for his terrific display of skill and sportsmanship.

-Upcoming Events-

► **International Worship:** Do not miss this month's International Worship presenting Erik Olson who will be acting out the Sermon on the Mount. This is a great experience where the Lord has taken several opportunities to speak to people directly from His powerful word. Also, we will be enjoying a wonderful time of worship as we sing to the Lord in different tongues. So be there at the **Moot Courtroom at 12:00 pm on the 31st of October (Friday)**, with great expectations. Who knows what the Lord might have to say to you!!

► **Bake Sale:** On **Wednesday, November 19th, from noon to 4 pm in the Ordinary**, sumptuous snacks from all over the world will be available. The International community will come together in participating in the Bake Sale by baking or cooking snacks of their countries. This event will be held during the International Education Week. The proceeds from the sale will help ISO to organize

events for international students in which even their families can participate at no extra cost.

► **Christmas Dinner:** On **Friday, December 12th from 6:30pm until 11pm** ISO will host a Christmas Dinner for international students and their families. There will be gift bags for the children, an optional gift exchange for the adults (under \$5), an appreciation time, and prizes for various games. ISO will need volunteers to help set up for the event; conduct games; take care of the children; and clean up after the event. Those interested, please sign up by sending an email to ISO's secretary, Yohane Kina at: yohakin@regent.edu

► **Christmas Carols:** On **Sunday, December 14th from 6:30pm onwards** the international students will have an opportunity to go caroling around the campus and its nearby neighborhoods and spread some good Christmas cheer. Do not miss out on this opportunity. Sign up by sending an email to our Vice-President, Hanisha Besant at: hanibes@regent.edu

► **ISO Town Hall Meeting & International Festival Planning:** All international students are cordially invited and encouraged to attend this special Town Hall Meeting where planning for the 2009 International Festival will be discussed. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for Friday, January 23 at Noon (Location TBA). Students who are returning to your home countries for the Winter Break are encouraged to bring traditional/ethnic items back with you for the festival to help your region win the "Best Regional Display" award! Such items might include clothing, snacks, arts & crafts, toys, posters, etc. Those who are not traveling may want to ask family members to start sending these items to you now so you'll have them on time for the festival.

As always, ISO is here to serve you. Please do not hesitate to call or send us an email if you have any needs. We would love to hear from you.



Immigration Information



“Life After OPT” Brochures

At the end of September, immigration attorney Art Serratelli gave students an insightful explanation of the immigration options available after OPT. Extra materials from his session are available in the OISS. Feel free to stop by during office walk-in hours (2-5 p.m.) to collect your free copy.



Attention ALL

F-1 Students/Expiring I-20s:

Please check your F-1 program end-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 end-date in Section 5 of your I-20 is December, 2008 (or sooner) and you will NOT complete your degree this December, you **MUST** apply for an F-1 Program Extension at least 1 month prior to the end-date on your I-20. Application packets are available on the OISS website. 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 Program Extension, so please take care of this important matter immediately.**

Attention F-1 Students Who Will Not Graduate & Will Not Return to Regent after the Fall, 08 Semester:

All F-1 students who will not graduate and will not return to Regent after the Fall, 2008 semester **MUST** notify the OISS for immigration purposes **BEFORE** you leave Regent. You will need to complete the form called “Request for Approval to Withdraw, Cease Attendance, or Take a Leave of Absence.” **Failure to complete this form can result in serious immigration problems for you in the future.** Students who terminate their studies prior to

graduation and who notify the OISS, in advance, will have 15 days to depart the United States. Students who terminate their studies without notifying the OISS are NOT subject to the 15 day grace period, will need to depart the U.S. immediately, and may experience immigration problems in the future.



DEADLINE to Request I-20/DS-2019 Travel Signatures for Thanksgiving and Christmas Break Travel:

Please note that the deadline to request a travel signature on your I-20/DS-2019 for Thanksgiving Break travel is **Wednesday, November 12, or two weeks before your departure, whichever comes first.** The deadline to request a travel signature for Christmas Break travel is **Tuesday, December 9, or two weeks before your departure, whichever comes first.** Each travel signature is valid for 12 months at a time, so check to see if you have a travel signature and make sure that it will not expire before the date you will return to the U.S.



Departing the U.S. Soon?

For a complete list of everything you will need for a smooth reentry into the U.S. after a temporary departure (5 months or less), please read the OISS webpage entitled, “Departing the U.S.”. <http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/departing.cfm> 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, be sure to visit the OISS between 2-5 p.m.



Program Completion Forms for December Degree Completers:

All students who will complete their studies in December should have submitted a “Program Completion Form” to the OISS by October 31, 2008. If you haven’t done this yet, your immediate submission of this form is very important for immigration purposes. The form can be found on this page of the OISS website:

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

New Regulations on I-901/SEVIS Fee, Student Records, & School Recertification:



New immigration regulations went into effect on October 27, 2008 which will **increase several fees** including the I-901/SEVIS fee that all F-1 and J-1 students must pay prior to their initial visa application or initial entry into the United States. The I-901/SEVIS fee will increase from \$100 to \$200 for F-1 students and from \$100 to \$180 for most J-1 Exchange Visitors (including students); but the fee does not apply to current students who are maintaining lawful immigration status. Details about the increased I-901/SEVIS fee can be found here:

http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/immigration_info.cfm

The **amount of information that F-1 program sponsors must maintain on each student has increased** and now includes such things as the GPA for each term or session; and the period of enrollment, course title, course number, and grade for each course taken.



Finally, starting in January, 2009 **all U.S. institutions that sponsor F-1 international students must apply for recertification of their F-1 programs.** The recertification process will involve a close look at each school's F-1 program administration, record-keeping, and reporting procedures. As a part of the recertification process, all schools are also subject to on-campus site visits by USCIS officials.

Upcoming Information Sessions



F-1 Student Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Thursday, November 20, 11:00 a.m., SC 252:

All F-1 students who are planning to apply for OPT this fall must attend one of three OPT sessions offered this semester where OPT applications will be distributed and the application process will be explained. This is the final OPT session of the semester. Please see the Information Session Calendar on the OISS website for details: www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/iss_news_cal.cfm



F-1 Student Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Friday, November 21, 3:00 p.m., SC 252:

All F-1 students who plan to do a mandatory academic internship during the Spring, 09 semester are required to attend this CPT Session this fall before the OISS can process the CPT application. Please see the Information Session Calendar on the OISS website for details: www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/iss_news_cal.cfm



Spring '09 Information Sessions :

The OISS's Spring 2009 Information Session Calendar will be sent to all international students in January. For planning purposes, here are the dates and sessions to mark on your calendar.

Maintaining Lawful F-1 Status
Friday, January 16

Employment Rules & Options for F-1 Students
Friday, January 23

F-1 Optional Practical Training
Friday, January 30
Thursday, February 12
Thursday, April 23

F-1 Curricular Practical Training
Friday, February 19
Friday, April 17

First Place Student Contest Winner:



Heart Attitudes

My time spent living in Japan changed me forever. I'm embarrassed to say that before we moved there, I used to have an ethnocentric attitude. When I saw foreigners speaking their own language, my first thought was, "They should learn to speak English if they're going to live here." Because I never acted on these thoughts or discriminated against those from other countries, I felt that I could believe whatever I wanted in my heart. Nonetheless, good behavior is not enough with God. To Him the heart attitude of the person is just as important as the behavior. God usually has a way of helping me out of wrong heart attitudes, and His help for me this time was to send me to live in Japan for four years with my Marine husband. It was definitely a culture shock. If God had placed me in a European country, I might have been able to comprehend enough of the language to get by. However, the Japanese language is so different from English that I couldn't understand a word of it. I couldn't even ask where the bathroom was. Talk about humiliating. I tried learning Japanese but in four years of living there, all I could master were counting and the basic greetings (I never could say "bathroom" well

enough for a Japanese person to understand me). Now, I was the foreigner and I couldn't learn the language no matter how hard I tried. The full realization of my ineptness in speaking Japanese came when our young son went missing in a large department store. Thank God the store clerks knew enough English to understand me because my pittance of Japanese would never have allowed me to communicate my dilemma to them. After our son was found and I recovered from the panic attack, I realized that the Japanese clerks had been more Christ like in attitude to me than I had ever been to foreigners in my country. I came to the conclusion that I had been deluding myself to believe it was OK to have a discriminatory attitude in my heart. Eventually, that attitude would have been expressed in my actions, no matter how hard I tried to keep it out. Jesus said, "for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45b, KJV). God in his infinite mercy, sent me to Japan to help me learn the lesson that my heart attitude and my behaviors both have to be pleasing to Him.

--Tabitha A. Sierra, School of Psychology & Counseling



First Place Faculty/Staff Contest Winner:



My ex-husband used to quote an old country song to me, “How can I miss you if you won’t go away?” From 2004-2005, I spent a year teaching American literature as a Fulbright scholar at a university in Slovakia. That year made me not only miss America, but understand it--and myself—a little bit better.

A recurrent theme in American literature is the American dream—what it was, what it is, and what it will become. 20th century writers often bemoan the abasement of the once glorious dream of freedom and opportunity. Most of my Slovak students had an accurate view of American lifestyle—they fully realized all Americans were not rich, tricked out in jewelry, or rude (although they did think we were all fat.) However, trying to explain the American dream to Slovak students, as well as to myself prompted some interesting insights into the American mentality.

The American dream originated in the search for equality and freedom—freedom for religion, certainly, but freedom for many pursuits and from many oppressions. Logically, the dream became translated into the belief that hard work guarantees success: America was the land of opportunities as boundless as its wide-open vistas. Gradually, however, this vision morphed into the slightly seedy, “everyone-can-be-rich,” with lessening emphasis on the hard work aspect. As a result, today many of us have the “I-deserve-to-be-rich-just-because-I-am-American-and-am-thus-entitled” mentality.

How is this typically American? Don’t all people want easy wealth? Indeed, I didn’t meet any Slovak who would turn down a million dollars. However, Slovaks didn’t expect wealth. While they had the lottery, I never actually saw anyone buy a lottery ticket, maybe because they didn’t expect to win. Americans, however deep down inside, think they will hit the jackpot. Slovaks admitted to a certain pessimism. Having lived under Communist rule for so long, the people had been taught not to hope but to accept what came along. They waited patiently for public transportation; they waited in long lines to pay their bills; they rushed through

check-out lines so as not to hold up others. They expected delays, they expected bad weather, and they didn’t expect their groceries bagged.

Americans, on the other hand, because of our wonderful and horrible boundless optimism, originating in our forefathers’ dream, expect everything. We expect the bus to arrive on time, if not early. We believe in instant and easy weight loss. We demand prompt service with hot food hot and cold food cold—and if we don’t get it, we complain or sue. These complaints are premised on the fact that we expect perfection, and our expectations have not been met. We expect to *be* happy, while Slovaks only expected *some* happiness. The Declaration of Independence tells us we have the right to the pursuit of happiness, implying that happiness is attainable, and, by extension, our birthright. If we aren’t happy, we change our jobs, homes, or spouses. Conversely, Slovaks endured, realizing that happiness is not a permanent state—although maybe they neglected to realize that neither is misery.

So which is better? A realistic pessimism or an unrealistic optimism? I flipflop, but am gosh-darned tootin’ sure that one day, and one day real soon, I’ll find out.

--Caramine White, PhD

Associate Professor, Department of Language and Literature



International Festival:

**Saturday,
March 21, 2009**



**Which team
will win the
“Best Team
Display” this
year?**

Don't miss it!