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The University of Pittsburgh
Office of International Services

Dear International Students & Scholars,

We are aware that the results of the recent US presidential election have caused concern for some of you. The uncertainty and speculation around what this means for a wide range of US policies and regulations, including immigration, has been stressful and worrisome for many.

Please know that the Office of International Services continues to monitor discussions and proposed changes. Rest assured that we will alert you to any formal immigration changes that may occur in 2017.

In the meantime, I would like to take this opportunity to explain that immigration policy and regulations are implemented according to formal procedures, and the power of one single person to enact sweeping changes is limited. As Dan Berger, an immigration attorney from Curran & Berger LLP, explained in a recent email:

*It is important to recognize what a President can and cannot do.*

_The President cannot change a statute passed by Congress, or the Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage. The President cannot change a regulation without notice and comment, and if he tries he will be sued._

_The President can change discretionary policies such as DACA. The President can also institute new security checks and delays, such as for those from predominantly Muslim countries. The President can appoint high level officials at the Departments of State, Labor and Homeland Security who can set the tone and speed for how cases are processed._

_The President can get sued for doing discretionary things if they are "arbitrary and capricious" (such as revoke DACA EADs suddenly). Those lawsuits could go on for a long time._

OIS remains committed to serving our international population with informed, committed, and respectful staff members. As Chancellor Gallagher wrote in the days following the election:

_Learning and discovery are made possible through values of respect, inclusion, integrity, and freedom of expression. This is why we remain committed to these values and why supporting diversity and an inclusive environment are vital priorities for our University._

On behalf of the entire OIS staff, please continue to focus on the positive reasons you came to PITT and know that we are always here to support you now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Genevieve Cook
Director
Office of International Services

Important Reminders

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

If you will be graduating in December and would like to work in the United States, you will need to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). OPT can take 2-3 months to be approved, and there are several steps that need to be taken before you are able to submit the application. Therefore, now is the time to start this process. The first step is to watch the OPT Tutorial to learn about your responsibilities while on OPT and how to apply. Go to My OIS (https://my.ois.pitt.edu) and click on ‘Optional Practical Training’ for more information.

Travel Signatures

Before you depart the U.S. this winter break, stop and check your I-20 or DS-2019 to be sure you have a recent travel signature on the document. Travel signatures are valid for one year of the date it was signed. For students on OPT or STEM OPT, the travel signature is valid for only six months from the date it was signed. Stop by OIS during walk-in hours (Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays from 1 – 4 PM) to get your document signed. **J-1 scholars must schedule an appointment for a travel signature**

Winter Recess

The University (and OIS) will be closed for Winter Recess Friday, December 23 - Monday, January 2. OIS will re-open Tuesday, January 3 at 8:30 am.

Experience America

Experience America is a series of events and activities offered to visiting scholars, their families, and graduate students with dependents to help them better understand the American culture. The program is designed to introduce participants to campus and the local community. **Upcoming events include an “Arts and Culture Lunch and Learn” in January, and a snow tubing trip in February.**
The *Holiday Season* is generally considered the time between late November to early January. This is roughly Thanksgiving through the first weeks of the new year, and is closely associated with the Christian holiday—Christmas. The season also includes the Jewish holiday *Hanukkah* and the African holiday *Kwanzaa*.

**Hanukkah** is a Jewish holiday that celebrates the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The holiday is observed for eight days and eight nights, a period known as the *Festival of Lights*. On each night, families light one candle on the *menorah*. They also play games with a spinning top called a *dreidel* and eat oil based foods like potato cakes and doughnuts.

**Kwanzaa** is a week long holiday that celebrates African heritage. It is celebrated by members of the West African Diaspora (emigration) largely in the United States. The celebration takes place from December 26th to January 1st and ends in a night of festivities.
Christmas is an annual festival celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, celebrated on the 25th of Christmas. On this day, Christian families exchange gifts, attend mass, and eat a large meal. In some families, these activities occur on Christmas Eve, December 24th.

Families usually place a pine tree in their homes and decorate it with ornaments—metal balls, beads, tinsel, and lights. Sometimes similar decorations are placed around the home. Often, stockings (large socks) are placed over and type of fireplace or mantel. Also, families often place lights on the outside of their homes.

The weeks before Christmas are the busiest shopping days of the year. This time often has high sales and discounts to motivate shoppers. Due to crowded shopping areas and the pressure to buy gifts, many Americans find this time of the year stressful.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>12/2—12/27</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Ballet Theater—The Nutcracker</td>
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<td>12/2, 12/3</td>
<td>EQT Bridge Theater—The Lightening Thief</td>
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<td>12/2, 12/4</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra—Haydn “Creation”</td>
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<td>12/2—12/27</td>
<td>Pennsylvania Trolley Museum—Trolleys &amp; Toy Trains</td>
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<td>12/3</td>
<td>David L. Lawrence Convention Center—Handmade Arcade (Crafts Festival)</td>
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<td>12/3</td>
<td>West Overton Village &amp; Museums—Holiday Open House</td>
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<td>12/3—1/14</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Zoo &amp; PPG Aquarium—Breakfast or Lunch with Santa</td>
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<td>12/4</td>
<td>Soldiers and Sailors Memorial—Patriotic Holiday Concert</td>
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<td>12/9</td>
<td>Westmoreland Museum of American Art—Art on Tap</td>
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<td>12/9—12/18</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra / Heinz Hall—Highmark Holiday Pops</td>
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<td>12/9—12/23</td>
<td>Pittsburgh CLO / Byham Theater—A Musical Christmas Carol</td>
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<td>12/27—1/1</td>
<td>PNC Broadway in Pittsburgh/Heinz Hall—Cheers Live on Stage</td>
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<td>12/31</td>
<td>Gateway Clipper Fleet—New Year’s Cruise</td>
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<td>12/31</td>
<td>Harmony Museum—Silvester’s New Year’s Eve</td>
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<td>12/31</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Cultural Trust / Downtown Pittsburgh—Highmark First Night</td>
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<td>12/31</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Opera, Carnegie Music Hall—New Year’s Eve Celebration with the Opera</td>
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<td>12/31</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Tours and More—Lights, Camera, Pittsburgh! (Movie Tour)</td>
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<td>12/31</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Zoo &amp; PPG Aquarium—Noon Year’s Eve</td>
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<td>1/3, 1/8</td>
<td>PNC Broadway in Pittsburgh—The Curious Incident of The Dog in the Night-Time</td>
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<td>1/14</td>
<td>Byham Theater—One Man Star Wars Trilogy</td>
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<td>1/21, 1/24, 1/27, 1/29</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Opera—Richard the Lionheart</td>
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<td>1/27, 1/28</td>
<td>August Wilson Center—I Am Not Sam</td>
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It is important to be prepared for the season of winter in Pittsburgh, especially if you are not used to cold weather climates. Winter precipitation like snow and ice can make driving and walking difficult. Be sure to drive and walk carefully on cold wet days! Remember, the University of Pittsburgh rarely closed the University, due to the continuing needs of resident students. However, during bad weather, you should only come to campus if you can do so safely!

University Weather Policy:
http://cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/07/07-04-02.html
The University’s Emergency Notification Service (ENS) provides University students and employees with critical information in the event of an emergency using voice, text, and email channels. All University students, faculty, and staff are eligible to subscribe to the service and are strongly encouraged to do so, but it is not mandatory. ENS is not the sole means of communicating with the University community in the event of an emergency.

How to Subscribe via my.pitt.edu:

1) Log-in to my.pitt.edu
2) Click on the PROFILE link on the top right corner
3) Click on MANGE YOUR ACCOUNT
4) Click on EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SUBSCRIPTION

- Follow instructions on the site

http://technology.pitt.edu/service/emergency-notification-service
Hello fellow students!

I am Aishwarya, people here call me Ash because it’s convenient. I arrived in this beautiful city in August 2016. This is the first time I have lived in a foreign country for over a month. Pittsburgh makes this transition easier mainly because of the people here. Pittsburgh is diverse and open, lively and vibrant. The rustling of the dry leaves, the ornate buildings and the prompt buses, they just make your day splendid among several other things!

For those who have arrived in Pittsburgh:
Welcome!

You will feel happy when you learn new things and the best part is that you will learn a lot of things during your first month here. Undoubtedly, it is difficult to adjust to the food, weather, and time difference immediately, and so there can be periods of homesickness. During such times, regularly calling friends and family at home and eating favorite cuisine works out well for me. Also, make sure that you make at least one or two good friends from your country, that way you won’t be alone. As you move ahead with the semester, the momentum of the classes, exams, and other activities increase without you realizing it. Keep a diary and write the new things you have learned; even a small thing like taking a new route on the bus because that may be your adventure for the day! When in Pittsburgh, be like the amazing people here, smile more and thank everyone. At the end of the day you will be happier.

For those who are yet to arrive:
Hail to Pitt!

Bring your favorite things without worrying about the additional cost you need to pay to the airport authorities! Believe me that’s better than paying for the courier/mail charges. For the people coming from warm regions, I would advise purchasing light sweaters and similar clothes when here in the US, because of the quality of products here. Also, learn about the different semesters in advance: fall, spring and summer. It may be useful to talk to a current student before planning your academic schedule. The most unique thing about studying here is the amazing student-teacher rapport. It is always helpful to improve your networking skills. If you have time before coming here, learn new skills like foreign languages or computer software or even native cooking. Keep a positive mindset and be confident about the path you have chosen.

Aishwarya
Master of Public Administration—GSPIA
Major: Governance & International Public Management
Class of 2018
Pittsburgh Neighborhood Tour…

**LAWRENCVILLE**

Lawrenceville is a neighborhood of 11,000 residents. Located 3 miles north of Downtown, Lawrenceville neighbors Bloomfield and the Strip District. The main throughway of the neighborhood is **Butler Street** which contains many restaurants, bars, and small boutique shops.

There are too many good food/drink spots to list! For restaurants, there are more expensive fancy spots as well as “hole in the wall” small places with great food. There are three great cafes: Espresso a Mano, Constellation Coffee, and The Abbey. Lawrenceville is also home to four breweries (Church Brew Works, Hop House, Roundabout, and Full Pint) as well as Arsenal Cider House. Finally, there are numerous bars like Atlas Bottle works (varieties of beer) and Round Corner Cantina (Spanish/Mexican drinks).

**For more info, be sure to check:**

http://lvpgh.com/

December 12-17 Final examination period for undergraduate day classes

December 17 Fall Term Ends: Official date for degrees awarded in Fall Term

December 18 Residence halls close

December 18-January 3 Winter Recess for students (no classes), all schools

December 20 Fall Term grades must be approved by instructors by 11:59 p.m.

December 23-January 2 Winter Recess for faculty and staff; designated University offices, including major responsibility centers and research projects, will be staffed as necessary during this period

January 2 Monday Residence halls reopen

January 3 All University offices and buildings reopen

January 3 OIS Spring Orientation

January 4 Spring Term enrollment period ends for all students

January 4 Spring Term classes begin

January 16 Dr. Martin Luther King’s birthday observance (University closed)

January 18 Spring Term Add/Drop Ends

February 13 Summer Term Enrollment Appointments Begin (Non-Veterans)

February 24 Honors Convocation

March 5-12(incl) Spring Recess

March 15 Last day for Monitored Withdraw from Spring Term Courses

March 27 Fall Term Enrollment Begins (Non-Veteran Students)