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Changes to the OPT Application Process

OIS has updated our Optional Practical Training (OPT) process for F-1 students. In the past, students had to attend an hour long informational session before their OPT Request would be processed by OIS. These informational sessions were every other week and some sessions had very limited seating, so if students didn’t plan well in advance of needing to submit their application, they could be faced with limited options.

The OPT Information Sessions have been updated into online tutorials. Students will watch the required presentations, answer a few questions to test their knowledge, and then be able to submit their OPT Request. The information has been divided into several tutorials and the total time to watch these presentations is about 40 minutes.

Tutorials

- **Basic Information and Application Process**— general information about Pre-Completion and Post-Completion OPT as well as review the application process and timeline.
- **OPT STEM Extension**—information regarding specific OPT STEM application and reporting requirements.
- **Maintaining Status**—how to maintain status on OPT, employment requirements, reporting requirements, and additional information such as travel and taxes.
- **After OPT**—information on different options once OPT period has ended.

Reasons for Change

- Students do not have to wait for available seats to be open for informational sessions. Once students have watched the tutorials and answered the review questions, they can immediately submit their OPT Request.
- Students will always have access to the presentations. If a student doesn’t remember what was said during the tutorial 6 months later, he can quickly access the information online.
- Because OIS has divided up the content, when we send email reminders about needing employment information or approaching the end of the OPT period, OIS can add the links to the appropriate section and students can quickly access information they might need.
- Each presentation is dynamic to allow students to only receive the information they need. For example, if a Bachelor’s student is applying for Post-Completion OPT, she can skip the chapters on Pre-Completion OPT and Post-Completion OPT for Doctoral students.

OIS is very excited to be able to offer this new, enhanced service for our students!
Europe Day Festival
Saturday May 7, 2016
12:00 - 7:30 PM
Wesley W. Posvar Hall

Hosted by Pitt’s European Studies Center
www.ucis.pitt.edu/eurofest

An event to celebrate European cuisine & culture

Artisans, food booths, cultural performances, & activities for children

Admission is FREE & open to the public
Meet the New Student Team

Immigration Specialist

Kate Madeano

Hello, my name is Kate Madeano and I am excited to return to Pittsburgh after living in Philadelphia for the past eight years. My position at Pitt is Immigration Specialist on the Student Team. After graduating from IUP, I began my immigration career at La Salle University. After about six years, I transitioned to University of Pennsylvania where I was an immigration advisor for two years. At La Salle, I was the sole immigration advisor which allowed me to connect with students on a personal level. I was fortunate to be able to teach a section of freshman orientation crafted solely for international students, as well as teach in the English Language Institute. I also found a passion for mentoring and advising undocumented students. At Penn, I focused more closely on the immigration regulations and policies, as well as advised the J-1 scholar population and processed H-1B cases on behalf of the university and health system. Now that I am at Pitt, my plan is to couple both my La Salle and Penn experiences into a position that maximizes student potential. Although I will no longer advise an international scholar population, the exposure I had with J-1 and H-1B visas at Penn will help my current F and J students navigate their way through the U.S. immigration experience.

In my personal life, my son AJ (Anthony Joseph) was born in December 2015. I am also a proud newlywed to my husband Paul. We purchased our first home in McCandless and are kept busy with filling it with love, laughter, and furniture.

Student Team

Kate will be working on the Student Team primarily with the following schools:

♦ School of Education
♦ School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
♦ School of Information Sciences
♦ School of Medicine
♦ School of Pharmacy
Pennsylvania State Parks

By Jessica Hartman

Pennsylvania has over 100 State Parks which provide visitors with the opportunity to experience the scenic beauty that this great state has to offer. State Parks offer an inexpensive place for people to hike, picnic, fish, swim, and so much more. With warmer weather here, camping at a state park is a great way to take a break from the busy city of Pittsburgh and immerse yourself in the great outdoors. If you have never camped before, Pennsylvania has started a program specifically for first-time campers. For only $20, new campers get two nights of camping, equipment rental, and hands-on instruction on how to camp by state park expert campers. Learn more about this program here: First-Time Camper Program. If sleeping on the ground does not appeal to you, many of the State Parks rent cabins, cottages, or yurts.

There are many State Parks within a few hours drive from Pittsburgh. Listed are just a few:

- **Keystone State Park**: Located just one hour from Pittsburgh, this park offers camping, cabins, hiking, and swimming. A great place to spend just one day or a whole weekend.

- **Raccoon Creek State Park**: One of the largest state parks in Pennsylvania, Raccoon Creek State park is just an hour from Pittsburgh and has a 101 acre lake where visitors can swim, boat, or fish.

- **Ohiopyle State Park**: Located one and a half hours from Pittsburgh, this popular State Park offers a vast assortment of activities including whitewater rafting.

- **Linn Run State Park**: A beautiful place for picnicking, hiking, and cabin rentals. Linn Run State Park is located an hour away from the city in the Laurel Highlands. For a unique way to experience the Laurel Highlands in the Spring, consider the Birds and Blossoms Scenic Driving Tour!

For a complete list of state parks and information on activities and rentals, please visit Pennsylvania State Parks website.

Amusement and Water Parks

There are many amusement parks within a short drive of Pittsburgh. Many of these attractions have more than just rides to enjoy.

- **Kennywood Park**: Located in West Mifflin, Kennywood is the closest large amusement park to Pittsburgh and offers dual tickets with Sandcastle water park. Its great for a quick day of fun!
◆ **Idlewild Park and Soakzone**: Only an hour away in Ligonier, this amusement park is great for fun-seekers of all ages! The amusement park is great for older kids and adults, but for younger children, Idlewild has a Story Book Forest where kids can meet the Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe, the 3 Blind Mice, and other storybook characters.

◆ **Hershey Park**: Hershey, PA is a 3+ hour drive, but this town (home to Hershey’s chocolate) has one of the biggest parks in the state and a chocolate museum! This park was originally designed to be a special park for the Hershey employees, but now we can all enjoy this sweet treat!

### Sights to See

◆ **Fallingwater**: A little more than an hour from here is Frank Lloyd Wright best known architectural wonder. This house was built over a waterfall in the 1930s and every inch (both indoors and out) is breathtaking. You aren’t allowed to bring kids under 6, so get a babysitter if you need one! As an added bonus, there is another Frank Lloyd Wright home (**Kentuck Knob**) just a few minutes from Fallingwater.

◆ **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame**: Head north to Cleveland and you will find the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. This museum is dedicated to some of the most influential and popular American musicians. While you are up in Cleveland, you may also want to check out the **West Side Market**, which is home to more than 100 very diverse vendors.

◆ **Gettysburg**: About 3 hours away, you can find the site of the biggest battle in the American Civil War. If you are interested in learning more about American history, this is a great place to go! In addition, near Gettysburg is **Cherry Crest Adventure Farm**, where there are plenty of farm animals and fun activities for the whole family.
FEATURED EVENTS

May 2016

6  **Phipp’s May Market**  
*Ends May 7th, Phipp’s Conservatory*  
Unique plants and accessories for sale and 50% admission for this weekend.

7  **Europe Day Festival**  
*12—7:30pm, Posvar Hall*  
Pitt’s European Studies Center will be hosting this day long celebration of European food and culture.

8  **Mother’s Day**  
Don’t forget to tell your favorite mothers that you love them!

8  **Greek Food Festival in Oakland**  
*Ends May 14th, St. Nicholas Cathedral*  
Come enjoy gyros and other delicious Greek food and music at St. Nick’s on Fifth Avenue.

9  **Start of Summer Term**  
This is the official start of 12 week classes and Summer Term 1 (for 6 week classes).

12  **EQT Children Theater Festival**  
*Ends May 15th, Cultural District*  
This festival features plays and other performances to entrance children of all ages from 6 countries. There are also over 40 free hands-on activities and tons of public art.

14  **200 Dinners**  
This is a Bicentennial Event where Pittsburgh residents can sign up to host or attend dinners where people can discuss the future of Pittsburgh.

14  **Bicentennial Sketch Crawl**  
*Starts at 10am, Cultural District*  
Bring your sketch book to this 4 hour sketching marathon. You will travel around downtown and sketch whatever catches your eye. RSVP!

21  **Venture Outdoors Festival**  
*12—6pm, Point State Park*  
Almost everything athletic you can think of to do outside will be at this festival. Rock-climbing, kayaking, biking, and more equipment provided.

29  **First Open Streets PGH**  
*Starts at 9am, Downtown*  
This event will be held every last Sunday of the month until July 31. Streets will be free of cars and open to bikes, skateboards, kids, etc.

30  **Memorial Day**  
The University will be closed. Have a fun, free day!

For more OIS events, please visit the [OIS Events page](#).