OIS would like to introduce you to our new continuing orientation program called “Experience America!” This program is designed for graduate students, but anyone interested is welcome, and will offer information and topics to help you learn more about the American culture during your time at Pitt. It is also a good way to meet international students that you may not have the chance to meet otherwise. We will have food and drinks while an expert gives a presentation on the given topic. Afterwards please feel free to meet different people and ask questions from the expert. All the meetings will be held on the 6th floor of the William Pitt Union Building. Bring a friend, your roommates, or your spouse.

Hope to see everyone there!

EXPERIENCE AMERICA TOPICS:

- Understanding American Football
  (January 31st) Learn about American football just in time for the Super Bowl! Try on some of their equipment!

- Health and Wellness
  (February 28th) Speaker from the Pitt Health Center

- Resumes and Careers
  (March 27th) Speaker from Career Development

- Apartment Rights & Responsibilities
  (April 17) Speaker from Off-Campus Living

Please RSVP at (xperienceamerica.eventbrite.com)
Are You Registered? Full Time?

IF YOU ARE A(N) …

→ Undergraduate Student — you MUST be registered for at least 12 credits.

→ Graduate Student — you MUST be registered for at least 9 credits.

These are the minimum number of credits that you have to SUSTAIN in order to maintain your visa status. If you drop below this number of credits, whether it is the 9th day of classes or the 9th week, your visa status will be in jeopardy. If you need to take less than a full time course load, because of a medical condition or if you only need a few credits to graduate, you may need to take a Reduced Course Load.

STEPS TO A REDUCED COURSE LOAD:

1. Visit the OIS website to download the Reduced Course Load form.

2. Fill out the student portion of the form.

3. Meet with your Academic Advisor to discuss taking less than full time credits. Have your Academic Advisor sign your form.

4. Submit the form to OIS for your Immigration Specialist to review.

Remember: You can only have ONE term with a Reduced Course Load during your time at Pitt! Use this option wisely and discuss all possible solutions with your Academic Advisor.

Baby, It’s Cold Outside!

Depending on your country of origin, you may not be accustomed to cold weather, but Pittsburgh winters can be very cold. Please bundle up when you go outside and remember — if you wear a lot of layers, you can always take one off to get more comfortable! If you think it’s too cold, icy, snowy, or windy to have class/work today, you can always check the Pitt website to see if the University is closed.
Spotlight On: Chinese New Year & CSSA
(Chinese Student & Scholar Association)

Chinese New Year:
This is the most important holiday in China. This festival marks the first day of the new year in the Chinese traditional calendar (Lunar calendar). This Chinese New Year is on January 23rd and starts the year of the dragon. Every year is represented by one of 12 different animals of the Chinese zodiac. Last year’s animal was the rabbit. Legend says that this celebration started centuries ago when mythical creatures called “Nian” would come and eat animals, crops and even the people that lived in the villages. In order to stop this, the people of China would put food in front of their doors and wear the color red because the Nian were found afraid of this color. The most important traditions of the spring festival include, but are not limited to; thoroughly cleaning the house to get rid of any bad luck; decorating the doors and windows with red couplets and red paper cuts indicating “good luck,” having a family-reunion dinner, as well as visiting and honoring the oldest of the family. This holiday marks the beginning of spring and is celebrated for 15 days with each day having its own traditions. The last day is called the lantern festival and people eat rice dumplings and carry lanterns as a way to help spirits find their way home.

CSSA:
The Chinese Student and Scholar Association of the University of Pittsburgh has been an important part of the Chinese student’s life here at Pitt for many years. From their website: “The Chinese Student & Scholar Association (中国学生学者联谊会), CSSA, is one of the largest international students groups at University of Pittsburgh, helping orient new Chinese students, disseminate Chinese culture, celebrate traditional Chinese festivals, offer group activity opportunities and communicate with other students groups as well as local community.” CSSA is also a versatile organization which serves graduate students, brings Chinese culture, communicates and collaborates with other student organizations as well as community organizations. We have 1000 enrolled members, providing services from airline pickup to housing information, entertainment from movie events to karaoke clubs, sports from Ping Pong to basketball, cultural celebrations from Chinese New Year to Mid-autumn. CSSA touches every aspect of the students’ life, helping them finding a home and making friends.

This year, we are going to have our 2012 Year of the Dragon spring festival celebration on Saturday, January 21st, 2012. Starting at 2pm at WPU first floor, we will have a Tea House and Chinese Culture Exhibition featuring Chinese snacks and a new year tradition exhibition, followed by a reunion dinner, and concluded by a Stage Show at night at Alumni Hall auditorium.

If you are interested in learning more visit their website at: www.pittcssa.net
Or facebook page at: www.facebook.com/groups/2232892153/
Or email them at: sorc+cssa@pitt.edu

Is Your Address Up-To-Date?
One of your responsibilities while staying in the United States is to keep us informed any time that you move. Please check your addresses listed on my.pitt.edu to make sure that they are all accurate. The most important addresses to maintain for your visa status are your mailing address and your SEVIS US address (listed on my.pitt.edu as SEVU). Again, if you do not update your address information when you move, you are out of status! If you have difficulty updating your address on my.pitt.edu, please contact OIS.
In early 1996, Abbas "Bobby" Quamar was a 22-year-old captain with Air India and enjoying the job he had worked hard to attain. He had graduated at the top of his class from the Indira Gandhi National Flying Academy and had been a licensed commercial pilot for two years.

Then came the accident.

On March 23 of that year, Mr. Quamar was landing an 11-seat turboprop on a short flight from Lucknow to Patna in Northern India, when a vulture flew into the windshield.

Vultures -- common to Patna because of its butcheries -- had hit planes before and usually were sucked up into their engines. This time was different. Because of the speed and altitude of the plane in landing mode, the plexiglass windshield did not remain intact as it was designed to do. The vulture's impact created a large gaping hole that sent splinters and shards into the pilot's face and eyes.

The co-captain managed to land the plane safely, and Mr. Quamar was transported to a New Delhi hospital, where his broken nose and jaw and facial wounds were treated. Because specialized treatment for his eyes was not available, Mr. Quamar lost his sight.

Thus began a long and sometimes bumpy journey to build a new life, craft a different career and strive to make a meaningful contribution in this world. That journey eventually led the former pilot to the University of Pittsburgh's School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, where he is working on a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling and where, on Nov. 5, he was inducted into Delta Alpha Pi, the international honor society for students with disabilities.

Over the years, Mr. Quamar has been asked to explain his journey many times, and he will tell you it can be summarized in two themes: One, leave no stone unturned; two, never give up.

Initial attempts to restore his vision were unsuccessful. The splinters had torn and damaged the retina, which is the beginning of the optic nerve with its millions of fibers and cells. No medical facility in India had the technology for restoration surgery. The delay in obtaining surgery caused further damage. Scar tissue had formed.

He and his father, Mafood Quamar, an anesthesiologist, traveled to Belgium for treatment from one of the top eye surgeons in the world. But by that time -- six months after the accident -- it was too late for surgery to be effective. The surgeon promised to do what he could. The operation restored less than 1 percent of his vision -- enough to allow him to see light colors and make out a little bit of shadow but far from restoring function.

"My search for a cure or treatment will never end," Mr. Quamar says, even 15 years later. "No stone will be left unturned. But whether I gain that or not, I still need to move forward."
When he speaks about the second theme of his journey -- the relentless drive to create a meaningful life -- he refers frequently to a constant voice in his ear, that of his mother, Bano Quamar. From the earliest days of his recovery, she urged him to reach his potential to his fullest.

"My becoming blind was a shock to my family," he said. "We never knew much about blindness." But the family, which also includes an older brother, had a "fighting spirit" that served him well.

"I did not want to live a life of mediocrity. I had excelled at aviation and all the sciences, and now it was as if the world was moving at jet speed and I was standing still. I knew that unless I started moving, I wouldn't achieve."

His hometown of Indore in Central India had limited rehabilitation resources. He learned to use computer screen readers and other technology designed for people with vision impairment. He mastered Braille in just six sessions -- the shortest time of any student at that particular center. (His first Braille sentence: "I don't want to learn Braille or have anything to do with blindness.")

His next step was to pursue a degree in tourism studies, a field he chose because it doesn't require many accommodations for blindness. During that period, he arrived at an unexpected turning point when Deshraj Arya, director of a complementary medicine center, told him, "You are a young healthy man. You can help others."

"His comment changed my perspective," Mr. Quamar said. "I began to think about what I could do for others, not just what I could do for myself."

He began to study acupressure and worked in Dr. Arya’s center for a number of years. He then heard about the Royal National College for the Blind in Hereford, England, where he could expand his education in complementary medicine.

The school was pricey: $64,000 per year. He refused his parents' offer to sell their house to pay his tuition, looking instead to every other possible source of scholarship assistance. (He even sent a request to the Queen of England, who politely declined in a letter that has become a keepsake.)

He earned a degree in therapeutic massage, worked in London, then decided to pursue a degree in physical therapy in the United States, known throughout the world as one of the most accommodating environments for people with disabilities. However, in respect to his blindness, he encountered barriers to pursuing a degree in the field. After 18 months in the physical therapy doctoral program at Pitt, difficulty with accommodations led him to redirect his studies to the field of rehabilitation counseling. He will graduate in 2013.

"Compared to other countries, there's a big difference here in the U.S. in regard to disability. But in spite of all the laws, it's not always a level playing field," he said.

Nevertheless, he said he is pleased with his decision to join the rehabilitation counseling program. "The school is fortunate to have Bobby," said associate dean Kathryn Seelman, one of his professors this term. "He is an engaged and excellent student."

Mr. Quamar's life took another turn in 2008, when he met his future wife, Tina, a native of India who was a physical therapy student at Michigan State University at the time. The couple, who found each other through a singles group sponsored by their religious community, discussed his blindness in many phone and email conversations before finally meeting.

"When we were planning to meet in Pittsburgh for the first time, I told him that if I felt I could not handle his blindness, I would immediately turn around and return to Michigan. That didn't happen," she said with a laugh.

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PITT ARTS has been connecting Pitt students to Pittsburgh’s vibrant arts scene since 1997. One way we do this is via the **Cheap Seat Program**, for which we sell to Pitt people greatly reduced tickets to cultural venues.

International students are often lovers of the arts because so many of them come from countries where the arts are greatly valued. There is no language or cultural barriers to certain types of arts. They transcend differences and appeal to all equally. The first one is music of any kind, but many OIS students demonstrate a true passion for classical music. The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra offers an extraordinary number of high quality concerts. Some of the upcoming concerts that are sure to thrill: Rachmaninoff’s Symphonic Dances, January 13-15; The Brahms Requiem, February 3 & 4; Beethoven, Mozart and Respighi, February 10 & 12; and Emanuel Ax and The Enigma Variations, March 2 & 4, to name a few.

Another art form that has no barriers of language or culture is dance. Upcoming Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre productions include a ballet based on the American play: “A Streetcar Named Desire” running from March 9-11; and the beloved “Coppélia” on April 13-15.

Cheap Seats are available to Pitt students and they may buy up to four tickets per show (there are some exceptions), and they may even buy tickets for non-Pitt people if the purchasing Pitt person attends. We take exact cash, checks, debit and credit cards. Deadlines do apply, so purchase early. Please be prepared to show a valid Pitt ID when you come into the office to buy Cheap Seats and when you pick up reserved tickets at the Will Call window at the Box Office of the appropriate venue.

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, $15 for students
Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, $15-$30 for students

In addition, we offer **Pitt Nights**, which for a great price we feature the Pittsburgh Public Theater on January 28th for Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* starting at $17 and Pittsburgh Cultural Trust’s Pitt Night for *Cedric Watson and Bijou Creole* on February 8th with prices starting at $17.

Pitt students attending a **Pitt Night** can get optional free transportation with us, enjoy a free dessert reception, and meet the cast and artistic directors.

Another PITT ARTS program that OIS students should enjoy is called **Free Museum Visits**. All Pitt students with valid Pitt ID’s; part-time, full-time, grad or undergrad, **get in free** during the academic year and over winter break to: The Andy Warhol Museum, the Carnegie Museums of Art and Natural History, The Mattress Factory, the Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, and The Senator John Heinz History Center, and Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall and Museum. All students need to do is swipe their ID at the admissions desk. Free visits are suspended during the summer months. For directions, visit the PITT ARTS office.

We urge OIS students to enjoy and take advantage of all that PITT ARTS has to offer to them, and to connect to the arts that cross all boundaries with ease!

PITT ARTS is located in 907 William Pitt Union. If you have questions, call 412-624-4498 or just come into the office.
Pitt’s Office of Career Development and Placement Assistance is here to help you develop the tools needed to conduct an effective internship or job search, career planning, resume development, interviewing skills, etc. We can work with you directly to connect you with businesses and organizations who are actively seeking jobs or internships.

Securing employment in the United States can be a challenge whether you are a U.S. citizen or a citizen of another country. Cultures vary by country and professionally, it can be difficult to adapt to a new environment with unfamiliar customs. Fortunately, the Office of Career Development and Placement Assistance can help you! We can help define or sharpen your career plans and assist you in creating a resume or translating a C.V. (Curriculum Vitae) to a resume appropriate to American standards. We also coach students through the job and internship search process by providing services such as interviewing preparation through mock interviews, information on networking and searching for and locating opportunities through our FutureLinks system and other venues. For those interested in graduate school, our office has many resources available from information on entrance exams to reviewing personal statements.

For further information or to schedule an appointment, please come to our office in 200 WPU, call us at 412-648-7130 or make an appointment through FutureLinks.

CHECK OUT THESE UPCOMING EVENTS!

**Spring Career Fair Sneak Preview Week**
- Tuesday, January 31st, 2012 - Posvar Hall
- Wednesday, February 1st, 2012 - Benedum Hall
- Thursday, February 2nd, 2012 - Sennott Square
- 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

**Spring Career Fair Technical Career Day**
- Tuesday, February 7th, 2012 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
- Non-technical Career Day
- Wednesday, February 8th, 2012 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
- William Pitt Union

**Summer Career Fair**
- Wednesday, April 4th, 2012
- William Pitt Union
- 12 p.m. - 3 p.m.

Learn more at [www.hire.pitt.edu](http://www.hire.pitt.edu)
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY
2 — New Student Orientation
4 — First Day of Spring Term
13 thru 15 — Rachmaninoff’s Symphonic Dances (Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra)
16 — Dr. Martin Luther King’s Birthday Observed (University Closed)
17 — Add/Drop Deadline: Are you full time?
23 — Chinese New Year
29 — Murder Mystery Dinner (O’Hara Dining Room, O’Hara Student Center)
31 — Experience America!: Understanding US Football (6th Floor, WPU)
31 thru February 2 — Spring Career Fair: Sneak Preview Week (Various Locations, see page 7)

FEBRUARY
1 — Tropical Forest India (Phipps Conservatory)
7 thru 8 — Spring 2012 Career Fair (WPU)
8 — Pitt Night for Cedric Watson and Bijou Creole (Pittsburgh Cultural Trust)
11 — Maya Lin Art Exhibit Begins (Carnegie Museum of Art)
14 — Valentine’s Day
18 — Black and White Ball (Carnegie Music Hall)
28 — Experience America!: Health and Wellness (6th Floor, WPU)

MARCH
4 thru 11 — Spring Recess (No classes, University Offices open Monday to Thursday)

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