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**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**

**NAFSA Region VIII Conference**

Most OIS staff will attend a conference held by the regional chapter of our professional association during the week of November 14. The office will remain open, but **Walk-In Hours are cancelled for F and J students from November 14 - 18**. Appointments may be limited.

**Thanksgiving Holiday**

The University (and OIS) will be closed for the Thanksgiving holiday **Thursday, November 24 – Friday, November 25**. OIS will re-open Monday, November 30 at 8:30 am.

**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.
As the University of Pittsburgh’s immigration specialists, we strive to effectively serve the international community here on campus. Part of our mission is to welcome and orient new international students and scholars to the University community, and increase cross cultural understanding within the University of Pittsburgh.

Therefore, we would love to hear from **YOU** about your experiences as an international visitor to the University of Pittsburgh. If interested, please write to us about your time here in Pittsburgh. Your submission should be approximately one paragraph.

There is no specific theme, but we would love to hear about:

- What has been the best and worst aspects of living in Pittsburgh?
- What has been valuable about your experience?
- What advice would you give to a nearly arriving international visitor that you wish you would have known

Please send all submissions to: KES215@Pitt.edu
It’s the middle of the semester, and things could not be more hectic. Perhaps you have a tough midterm exam approaching, a research project, or work to grade and assess for many students. Almost nothing can be as relaxing and stress relieving as spending time with a furry friend. Luckily for us here at Pitt, we can always stop at the Therapy Dog Night, hosted by volunteers from the Humane Society—Tuesdays at 7pm in the Cathedral of Learning.

These fur balls are not just fluffy and cute, they are actually certified as therapy dogs. In addition to being very sweet and kind, they are relaxed, calm, engaging and know how to cheer you up. While therapy dogs are not necessarily “assistance” or “service” dogs, they are commonly used at medical facilities, disaster areas, and schools.

- Kyle Simpers—Graduate Assistant, OIS

https://www.facebook.com/tdt.pitt
http://www.wpahumane.com/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>Byham Theater</td>
<td>Concerto for Violin, Rock and String Orchestra</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.4 to 11.13</td>
<td>Prime Stage / New Hazlet Theater</td>
<td>To Kill a Mockingbird</td>
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<td>11.4 to 11.6</td>
<td>Heinz Hall</td>
<td>Music of Porgy &amp; Bees, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra</td>
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<td>11.4 to 11.19</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Filmmakers</td>
<td>Three Rivers Film Festival</td>
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<td>University of Pittsburgh</td>
<td>46th Annual Jazz Festival</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Heinz Hall</td>
<td>Lea DeLaria, Hot Jazz, Cool Comedy</td>
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<td>11.5 to 11.13</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Opera / Benedum Center</td>
<td>Richard Strauss’ Salome</td>
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<td>11.6</td>
<td>Byham Theater</td>
<td>Capitol Steps: What to expect when you’re electing</td>
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<td>August Wilson Center</td>
<td>Lalah Hathaway Soul Sessions</td>
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<td>Westmoreland Museum of American Art</td>
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<td>Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra—Mountains of Rome (A Weekend in Rome)</td>
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<td>A Simple Space</td>
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<td>11.12</td>
<td>Byham Theater</td>
<td>River City Brass Presents the Red Hot Chilli Peppers</td>
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<td>11.12</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Ballet Theater</td>
<td>Pointe in Time: Gala Giselle</td>
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<td>11.12</td>
<td>Heinz Hall</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra—Around the House!</td>
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<td>11.14</td>
<td>Cabaret at Theater Square</td>
<td>Karen Mason</td>
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<td>11.19</td>
<td>Benedum Center</td>
<td>Tedeschi Trucks Band</td>
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<td>11.22 to 11.27</td>
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<td>A Christmas Story, The Musical</td>
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<td>A Very Electric Christmas, Lightwire Theater</td>
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<td>11.26</td>
<td>Downtown Pittsburgh</td>
<td>WPXI Holiday Parade</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.27</td>
<td>Byham Theater</td>
<td>Mark Milovats in Concert</td>
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Light up Night 2016 will be on November 18th!

The holiday season will kick off with fireworks, music and food. The Peoples Gas Holiday market will be open until December 23rd.

http://www.downtownpittsburgh.com/holidays
Shopping during Holiday Season 2016

**November 25th—Black Friday**
The day after Thanksgiving, this is the first day of the shopping season and the busiest of the year. Many stores have extended hours and special sales.

**November 28th—Cyber Monday**
Day of online internet sales and shopping.

**December 16th—Free Shipping Day**
Some, but not all, retailers will offer free shipping.

**December 19th—Super Saturday**
The last major shopping and sales day before Christmas on the 25th. Some sales may still exist until the 24th, but that is cutting very close to Christmas!
**US POLITICS**

*Above—Kyle Simpers, Graduate Assistant for OIS, presents during the Lunch and Learn event about US Politics. Attendees enjoyed pizza and salad while learning about the US government structure, political issues, and discussed the 2016 elections.

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**TRAX FARMS**

On October 15th, approximately 40 visiting scholars / researchers and dependents joined OIS on a trip to Trax Farms.

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**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:**

- Lunch and Learn: Winter in Pittsburgh—11/18
- Trip to Outlet Mall—12/3 (details to come via email)

*All events require registration with OIS*
What is a Credit Score?

A credit score is a numerical analysis of a person’s credit history, which determines his or her “creditworthiness” (can he or she be trusted to repay loans). The number is based on five criteria: 1) payment history 2) credit utilization 3) length of credit history 4) credit mix 5) new credit

How do I Build my Credit Score?

First, you will need to get a social security number (SSN). This will be needed for any banking, credit cards or loans. Next, if you already have loans or a credit card, build good credit using the five criteria above. Be sure to pay on time!

If I have no credit already, how do I start?

Obtain a secure credit card. These cards are available through your bank, and only allow you to charge up to the limit placed on the card. Often, you will make a deposit to the bank in order to open the card.
## USCIS FEE CHANGE

<table>
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<th>New</th>
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Changes announced on Oct. 24th, to take effect on December 23rd
This is a brief list of most common forms—other changes apply
affinity group

noun us plural noun affinity groups
a group of people linked by a common interest or purpose.

DO YOU WANT TO PARTNER AND COLLABORATE ON IMPORTANT INITIATIVES AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

WHY NOT JOIN AN EXISTING AFFINITY GROUP FOR FACULTY AND STAFF OR MAKE A RECOMMENDATION FOR A NEW ONE!

Benefits of joining an affinity group include the following:
• Professional development and networking opportunities
• A collective voice and relationship with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion
• A role in fostering a community of support and respect
• Opportunity to become engaged in recruitment and retention efforts
• Opportunity to broaden cultural awareness

Learn more at diversity.pitt.edu/diversity-resources/affinity-groups.

University of Pittsburgh
Office of Diversity & Inclusion
**IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES**

**November 11** Last day for Spring Term enrollment appointments

**November 12** Spring Term open enrollment begins

**November 23-27** *Thanksgiving Recess for students (no classes), all schools*

**November 24-25** *Thanksgiving Recess for faculty and staff (University closed)*

**November 28** Classes resume (all schools)

**December 9** Fall Term: Last day for undergraduate day classes; *Spring Term deadline for continuing students to register*

**December 10** Reading Day

**December 10-17** College of General Studies classes, Saturday Only classes, graduate classes, and evening classes will continue to meet during this period; final examinations should be held during the last scheduled class meeting

**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