WELCOME FROM OIS!

Welcome and Welcome Back!

For those who are new here, we are so happy that you have chosen the University of Pittsburgh and we wish you every success. Our sincerest hope is that you take advantage of the many opportunities to become involved in campus and city life and to fully enjoy the cultural and natural richness of our region. We realize that so much is new and different for you, but I ask you to take the time to read through our newsletter, and if you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask us (ois@pitt.edu).

For those who are continuing at Pitt, you will notice several changes in OIS. These are introduced more fully throughout the newsletter, but I want to highlight the following:

- Electronic request and filing for most immigration processes;
- A Student Team of two immigration specialists, led by Diane Hardy;
- An Employment Team of three immigration specialists, led by Betta Risa;
- Student advising teams on the Bradford, Greensburg, and Johnstown campuses; and
- Information workshops and a preview process for Outstanding Researcher/Professor petitions for permanent residence.

One thing has not changed, though, and that is our commitment to provide the highest quality of immigration services to you.

Good luck to all!

Charles Nieman, Ph.D., Director of OIS
Introduction to My OIS: Online Service Center

My OIS is our new Online Service Center for international students, scholars, and employees. This system will allow you to submit all of your requests online and you can monitor information related to your immigration status.

Every form and request previously submitted to OIS via paper, you can now submit electronically at your convenience! How can you start to use this new system? It is very easy!

1. Go to the website (https://my.ois.pitt.edu).
2. Click the blue “Log-In” button.
3. Enter your Pitt username and password.
4. Start submitting requests!

The first time you sign in, you will need your Peoplesoft #, so please have that information handy. If you do not have a Peoplesoft #, contact OIS and we will tell you your My OIS ID#.

STUDENTS, SCHOLARS, & EMPLOYEES

In this system, everyone can update their Biographical Information, as you can see in the menu to your left. (For address changes, students will be redirected to my.pitt.edu.) Here you can update your emergency contact information, change your name, and even notify OIS that you changed your immigration status.

STUDENTS CAN:

- Submit Requests
  - Driver’s License Letters
  - Social Security Number Letters
  - Work Authorization
    - Curricular Practical Training
    - Optional Practical Training
    - Academic Training
  - Replacement I-20/DS-2019
  - Add Dependents
  - Apply for Extensions
  - Reduced Course Load
  - Transfer SEVIS Record
- See Current SEVIS Information
- See Status of Submitted Requests
for the International Community at Pitt!

SCHOLARS CAN:
- Submit Requests
  - Departure Notifications
  - Driver’s License Letter
  - Insurance Attestation
  - Replacement DS-2019
  - Add Dependents
- See Current SEVIS Information
- See Status of Submitted Requests

Scholars interested in extensions need to discuss their options with their sponsoring department.

My OIS Will Keep You Better Informed!

Because the Office of International Services has this new system to help us better track your information, we can more easily help you stay in status.

Over the next several months, we will be sending emails to international students, scholars, and employees for a variety of reasons. One example is to alert you of your passport nearing its expiration date.

You need to have a valid passport while in the United States as a foreign citizen and with My OIS we can help you keep track of these important dates to keep you in good visa status.

Watch for the following Subject Headings in OIS emails!

MONTHLY UPDATES: Once a month with updates, program reminders, newsletters, etc.

PICK-UP: Something is waiting for you to pick-up in OIS.

REMINDER: Notifying you of potential concerns regarding your visa status.

ALERT: Your visa status is about to be terminated—READ!

FOR SCHOLARS & EMPLOYEES

You may notice that there are several things you are unable to do for yourself in My OIS. These include requesting an extension, starting the H-1B application process, or applying for Permanent Residency. Some of these requests, while they pertain to you, must be initiated by your sponsoring department at Pitt.

Department Administrators also have access to My OIS. Their menus for services look different than yours, but they will also use My OIS to submit requests and applications to OIS. Every Department Administrator has been or will be trained on how to use this new system and they will use My OIS to communicate with and update our office on the international scholars and employees working in their department.

There is one large change to your responsibilities in our new system. In the past, your Department Administrator has been notified by OIS when your program or visa was about to expire or when we had concerns about your visa status. With My OIS, you, as the international scholar or employee will receive the email notifications from OIS. (Please read the section “My OIS Will Keep You Better Informed!” for more information.) One of the most important things to remember is that OIS will use your Pitt email account (if available) for all emails. It is imperative that you check and read all OIS emails to make sure you are maintaining status!
Meet the OIS Staff!

Genevieve Cook (Associate Director)
I am originally from Connecticut but I grew up in Pittsburgh and I’ve lived here most of my life. I’m a Pitt alum – bachelor’s in anthropology – and several members of my family, including my husband and sister, are too. I love to travel with my family – usually to places near the ocean. One of the things I enjoy doing on my vacations is scuba diving, which I have been doing for a few years. I’m a certified rescue diver and I’m working on my master scuba diver certification. When I am not at work, my other hobbies/interests include: hiking, reading, movies, food - especially trying new restaurants although I like to cook, too. It is my last name, after all ;)

Diane Hardy (Senior Immigration Specialist, Student Team)
I take pleasure in helping new international students and scholars since I have lived abroad when I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Romania. One of my hobbies is traveling around the world and I plan to visit Peru this Fall on my honeymoon! When I am not working I play outdoor sports such as tennis and swimming and indoor sports such as yoga. I have two dogs I love—one of which is a therapy dog at Pittsburgh Children’s Hospital.

Sara Jones (Immigration Specialist, Employment Team)
I have been a part of the University of Pittsburgh community in some capacity since 1997! I attended undergraduate and graduate school here, and have worked in the Office of International Services since 2005. I adore Oakland (especially its restaurants!), and enjoy visiting the Carnegie museums and library frequently. My favorite part of the world is the Adirondack Mountains in New York State, where I have vacationed for over 20 years. Although I’ve traveled to many parts of Europe, some places I’d like to see in the future are Scandinavia, the Netherlands and Alaska. When I am not working, I enjoy spending time with my family, watching my kids grow into their personalities.

Juliann Mehall (Administrative Assistant to the Director)
I am a true Pittsburgher, born and raised in the South Side Slopes area of the city. I love spending time with my family and grandchildren, Dylan and Lucas. We are awaiting the arrival of our newest granddaughter in November. You may find my husband and I walking around the City visiting various flea markets and yard sales looking for “hidden treasures”! I enjoy talking with our new students and scholars and sharing stories of their travels and interesting foods from their home countries. Welcome to Pittsburgh!

Charles Nieman (Director)
As a kid I loved geography games and would dream about interesting adventures and faraway places. An early degree in Anthropology and Art History reflected my curiosity about people, places, traditions and cultures, and over the years I have been blessed to travel widely and live and work for an extended time internationally. Throughout these years, my wife, Rita, and I shared fun adventures with our sons, and now it is our greatest joy to see them as husbands and fathers and to share a new set of fun adventures with their children, like riding a carousel on a lazy summer day. Traveling, hiking, exploring historic national parks, enjoying the arts, repairing antique furniture, and baking continue to be high on my list of interests.
Meet the OIS Staff!

Lauren Panetti (Immigration Specialist, Employment Team)

Originally from the Philadelphia area, I came to Pittsburgh as an undergraduate student majoring in Anthropology. In 2006, I began working in the Undergraduate Admissions Office at Pitt working mostly with international students and later earned my master's degree Higher Education Management through the School of Education. I live in Point Breeze and enjoy exploring the city and trying new restaurants. In my spare time, I love to do yoga and travel. Some of my favorite places I have visited are Australia, Jamaica, Las Vegas, Hawaii, Mexico and the Bahamas.

Melissa Reinert (Immigration Specialist, Student Team)

I am originally from Northeastern Ohio, but now at Pitt since April 2012 by way of Little Rock, Arkansas, where I lived for five years. My background is in regulatory compliance, working in the pharmaceutical industry before returning to Higher Education which is my true passion. I hope that you will love Pittsburgh as much as I do! In my spare time, I love to cook pasta, fresh baked bread and cookies and I am learning to make Indian and Chinese inspired dishes! I also enjoy ziplining, hiking, biking, knitting, telling snarky (hilarious!) jokes, and reading. My favorite color, most days, is blue, but occasionally it is green instead! Welcome to Pitt!

Elizabeth (Betta) Risa (Senior Immigration Specialist, Employment Team)

I am a Pittsburgh native who has lived and worked with international students for longer than I would care to mention. I like to say that since my father was an international student, I have been working with international students my whole life. I have been with the University of Pittsburgh for almost ten years, and am now heading up the Employment Team in OIS’ new structure. I have travelled Europe extensively, but have yet to make it to Asia, Africa or South America. (I almost made it to Africa, but there were high seas that day.) In addition to writing epic tales of heroism and adventure, I publish articles related to my work from time to time. This winter, you'll see me on the slopes doing my best to connect with my Scandinavian roots by actually staying upright on my skis.

Kati Von Lehman (Compliance Coordinator)

I grew up in Pittsburgh and attended Penn State University. Over the past 10 years, I have worked at a number of different colleges and universities across the country. I have travelled to 47 states in the U.S. and my favorite places to go are national parks (such as Yellowstone, Grand Teton, and Arches) and quirky towns with lots of history and art. I also love attending arts festivals and seeing the amazing things people make. Here in Pittsburgh, I try to go kayaking on the rivers and find new places to go hiking. Finally, when I am at home I enjoy crocheting and watching my 4 year old daughter dance and/or chase our dog.

Alison Zappa (Immigration Services Coordinator)

I was born right here in Oakland at Magee hospital. I was meant to be at Pitt! Other than at the front desk of OIS, you may find me running around campus or taking classes in the HPA program. I love to cook and bake, but ironically I do not like chocolate! I absolutely love to travel with my husband; I actually got engaged in London! Don't hesitate to ask me questions, I am here to help!
Culture Corner

Mid-Autumn Festival (or Zhongqiu Festival)

The Mid-Autumn Festival is a harvest festival celebrated by Chinese and Vietnamese people. The Mooncake Festival, as it is also known, is celebrated as a public holiday in Taiwan. The Festival, also known as the Moon Festival celebrates the end of the fall harvest under the full moon of the eighth lunar month. In 2012, the holiday will be celebrated on September 30th.

Chinese people travel all over the country to return to where their family is located to celebrate this Festival together. It is the second most important holiday in the country, after Chinese New Year.

Mooncakes are a traditional pastry eaten during the festival. The mooncakes can be filled with various fillings including more traditional lotus-seed paste or sweet bean paste and more contemporary fillings such as taro, pineapple, vegetables, meats, or nuts. The cakes are usually round- or square-shaped with ornate designs, with some including gold-plating!

Matchmaking and Social Dance are traditions used to celebrate this holiday.

Similar to other Festivals, Lanterns are incorporated into these celebrations. Sky lanterns are beautiful and have been traditionally incorporated into the celebrations.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mid-autumn_festival

Experience America, OIS' continuing orientation program, is designed for international graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. The program will offer information and topics to help individuals understand better and feel more comfortable participating in American culture during their time at Pitt.

The events are also a way to meet other international students / postdoctoral fellows.

An expert or guest speaker will provide a presentation on the topic of the month. All the meetings will be held on the 5th floor of the William Pitt Union Building.

Pizza and drinks are provided for the sessions, scheduled for lunch time, generally the first Thursday of each month during the academic year.

Order a FREE ticket via the website at right.
# Experience America Topics and Schedule

## Academic Year 2012-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>American Football and Other Sports</strong></td>
<td>A survey of the most important rules and keys to speaking smartly about football in Pittsburgh. As time permits, other sports will be discussed as well (i.e. baseball, hockey, and basketball).</td>
<td>06 Sep 2012, 12-1 PM</td>
<td>WPU 538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>American Politics and the Presidential Election</strong></td>
<td>During this important election year in which the US will decide its next president, this session will provide a brief description of the American Political System, Election Day, and the Electoral College.</td>
<td>04 Oct 2012, 12-1 PM</td>
<td>WPU 538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Winter in Pittsburgh</strong></td>
<td>A discussion to help students prepare for winter in Pittsburgh. Including resources to obtain cold-weather clothing, how to protect oneself from the flu, and cold-weather activities such as sledding, ice-skating and skiing.</td>
<td>01 Nov 2012, 12-1 PM</td>
<td>WPU 538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>American Culture and Values</strong></td>
<td>A discussion of American Culture and Values in the context of how international students can better understand and relate to Americans, either in the classroom, the workplace or in a friendship situation.</td>
<td>06 Dec 2012, 12-1 PM</td>
<td>WPU 539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socialization and Making Friends</strong></td>
<td>Frustrated because you feel like you’re not being understood? Want a better description of some of the cues others may be sending or that you may be sending unknowingly? A panel discussion including skits to illustrate the various types of non-verbal communication and how to “read” what others are telling you without saying a word. Learn other tips on how to meet others with common interests and how to build relationships.</td>
<td>Tentative: 17 Jan 2013, 12-1 PM</td>
<td>(not yet scheduled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Networking in Professional Organizations</strong></td>
<td>Participating in Professional Organizations in Pittsburgh and Elsewhere</td>
<td>Tentative: 07 Feb 2013, 12-1 PM</td>
<td>(not yet scheduled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transportation: Buses, Bikes and Bipedal Locomotion</strong></td>
<td>Getting around in Pittsburgh can be challenging and dangerous if travelers don’t take the proper precautions! Learn about steps you can take to stay safe!</td>
<td>Tentative: 07 Mar 2013, 12-1 PM</td>
<td>(not yet scheduled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>American Baseball and Other Sports</strong></td>
<td>A survey of the most important rules and keys to speaking smartly about baseball in Pittsburgh. Some of the other types of sports will be discussed as well (i.e. football, hockey, and basketball).</td>
<td>Tentative: 04 Apr 2013, 12-1 PM</td>
<td>(not yet scheduled)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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For your FREE ticket or more information:
http://www.ois.pitt.edu/new-here/experience-america/
OIS PRACTICAL TIPS for STUDENTS

On-Campus Employment

Many students will seek employment while studying at the University of Pittsburgh. International students have a few different options for working in the United States without violating their nonimmigrant status.

On-campus employment is typically work performed on the school’s premises that is paid by the University of Pittsburgh. NOTE: UPMC is NOT considered an On-Campus employment! On-campus employment may also include work at on-location commercial firms which provide services for students on campus, such as the school bookstore or cafeteria.

Both F-1 and J-1 students are permitted to do on-campus employment, although the requirements for each visa category are slightly different.

F-1 students are permitted to accept on-campus employment without additional authorization from OIS as long as the student is currently enrolled, has a valid I-20 issued by the University of Pittsburgh, is otherwise maintaining F-1 status, and employment is restricted to 20 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters. F-1 students may work full-time during the summer or winter breaks.

J-1 students sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh ARE required to seek authorization before beginning on-campus employment. J-1 students can do this by contacting their Immigration Specialist and requesting an on-campus work authorization letter. J-1 students who are sponsored by an organization other than the University of Pittsburgh will have to contact their sponsor to request permission for on-campus employment.

A J-1 student will receive a work authorization letter from OIS as long as the student is currently enrolled, has a valid DS-2019, is otherwise maintaining J-1 status, and the employment is restricted to 20 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters. J-1 students may work full-time during the summer or winter breaks.

International students who need to apply for a Social Security Number can get the letter necessary from OIS through My OIS. Students will get further instructions when they pick-up this letter.

Questions? Email ois@pitt.edu.

Health Insurance Verification for Student Health Services!

If you have not already completed the Student Health Services online form verifying your health insurance, do so now! This is necessary information for the University and if you do not supply your insurance information, you will not be able to register for Spring Term classes! Log in to My Pitt for more information!

Maintaining Status—Full-time Registration

International students must be registered full-time in order to maintain their F-1 or J-1 status.

What does full-time mean?

For undergraduate students, full-time means at least 12 credits a semester. For graduate students, it means that you are required to complete at least 9 credits a semester.

Are there any exceptions to this rule?

Yes. You do not have to register for classes during the summer UNLESS it is required by your academic program. There are very few exceptions to this rule during the fall and spring semesters. The most common one occurs during a student’s final semester when he/she does not require a full course load to complete the academic program. For other exceptions, please visit the OIS website.

How do I request a reduced course load?

If you qualify for an exception to full-time registration, you can request a reduced course load by visiting the OIS website and clicking on the “Drop Below Full-Time” link in our F-1 student section. A form will come up for you to print and complete with your academic advisor. Make sure to read the instructions carefully!
INTERNATIONAL PHOTO CONTEST 2012 for STUDENTS

The University of Pittsburgh International Photo Contest is sponsored by OIS, ELI (Department of Linguistics), CCLD, and the Study Abroad Office.

During the month of October, University of Pittsburgh International students, Study Abroad students, and all staff and faculty are eligible to submit photos about their experiences.

There are three categories for International Students:

1. Life Changing Experience: Something that you saw or did that changed your perspective on how you see the world (at Pitt).
2. My Cross Cultural Experience in Pittsburgh: How you immersed yourself into the Pittsburgh culture by eating, wearing, doing, or making something representative of that culture.
3. Postcard: If you had one photo you would use as a postcard (at Pitt), what would it be?

Judges will choose the top 5 photos and essays from submissions in each category. The top 5 photos and essays will be on display in the Kimbo Art Gallery in the William Pitt Union during International Week in November. Pitt faculty, staff, and students can vote for their favorite photo and essay. Winners will be chosen from each category and additionally judges will choose one photo as the overall Judge’s Choice. Winners will be rewarded with prizes and be announced during the International Photo Contest ceremony.

More details on Contest Rules, Information and Dates to come!

Updating Addresses

Many of you new to Pittsburgh may still be looking for a place to call home for your first academic year. Please remember that you MUST notify the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) within 10 days of any address change. Both F-1 and J-1 students can do this by following these simple steps:

1) Log into my.pitt.edu
2) Click on Self Service
3) Click on Campus Personal Information
4) Click on Addresses. Make sure your “SEVIS U.S. address” is your current residential address in Pittsburgh

Please remember that this requirement applies to ALL international students, regardless of how long you have been in the United States!
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 15th (Saturday): Pitt Football vs. Virginia Tech at Heinz Field
- 16th (Sunday): Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown
- 22nd (Saturday): Pitt Football vs. Gardner-Webb at Heinz Field
- 25th (Tuesday), 11:00AM—4:00PM: Fall 2012 Career Fair at Petersen Events Center, http://www.hire.pitt.edu/
- 30th (Sunday): Mid Autumn Festival (China), Sukkot begins at sundown, Yom Kippur

OCTOBER

- 4th (Thursday), Noon: Experience America—American Politics and the Presidential Election. Register for your free ticket here: http://www.ois.pitt.edu/new-here/experience-america/
- 8th (Monday): Fall Break, no classes in observation of Columbus Day
- 13th (Saturday): Pitt Football vs. Louisville at Heinz Field
- 20th (Saturday): Pitt Make a Difference Day (PMADD), 9AM—4PM, www.pitt.edu/~pmadd
- 24th (Wednesday): United Nations Day
- 26th - 28th: Pitt Family Weekend: including Pitt Football vs. Temple at Heinz Field. www.familyweekend.pitt.edu
- 31st (Wednesday): Halloween
- Coming at the end of the month Student Barometer Survey! More details coming soon

ONGOING

- First Sunday of every month—International Market Days in the Strip District 10AM-4PM.
- Every Friday we host a session on Optional Practical Training (OPT) from 2PM-3PM. Register on our OIS website.

Tell us about your student organization’s event via ois@pitt.edu for inclusion in our next Global Perspective!

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Office Hours:
Monday to Friday,
8:30 AM to 5:00 PM

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