The Global Perspective

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Applying for Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Students who are graduating in April 2020 can begin applying for post-completion OPT.

Before scheduling an appointment with your Immigration Specialist, please watch the OPT Tutorials located in My OIS (screenshot below). They contain helpful information that will answer many of your questions.

Your Immigration Specialist is happy to meet with you after you watch the tutorials to answer any additional questions you may have and to talk about your specific situation.

Reminder - It takes about 90 days for USCIS to process your application, so apply early!
Weather-Related Closures

The University of Pittsburgh advises all students and staff to use their discretion when deciding whether it is safe to travel to school or work. The University will only close under extreme conditions so it is important to look at the weather and be aware of the situation. If you have questions about if your class or work is still going on, contact your department or school directly. Expect major delays and/or cancellations with the buses when there is inclement weather.

For weather-related information and resources (check the night before, and day of possible storms!):

• Call 511 for weather related closures in Pittsburgh
• Go to weather.gov and type in your area code for storm warnings/weather forecasts

Sign up for the University’s Emergency Notification System to receive University updates:
https://www.technology.pitt.edu/services/emergency-notification-service
Hockey season is officially underway in Pittsburgh! Pittsburgh’s hockey team is called the “Pittsburgh Penguins” also known as the “Pens” as you will see on all the public buses!

In 2017, the Pens won the Stanley Cup, which is the trophy given to the National Hockey League champion. The trophy has a long history dating back to 1892. The trophy travels from team to team depending on who won it that year. The winning team’s roster is engraved onto the side of the trophy, and is a major source of pride for the winning team, as it is the highest honor for the year!

The games are played from February through the first week in April at PPG arena in Downtown Pittsburgh. While the games are somewhat expensive, it is still fun to see the game and experience Pittsburgh fans!

Check out SeatGeek or Ticketmaster for information on game dates and ticket prices.
Every February 2nd in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, the town comes together to celebrate and observe a groundhog named “Punxsutawney Phil.” As legend has it, if Phil wakes up on February 2nd and sees his shadow, we will have 4 more weeks of winter. If he doesn’t, it will be an early spring!

Although this tradition may sound strange, there are similar holidays celebrated in Eastern Europe, as well as other Groundhog Day celebrations in the US and Canada.

The tradition of Groundhog Day started with the Pennsylvania Dutch (Amish) in the 1800s, although there is an older tradition that the weather on Candlemas (also February 2nd) determines the weather for the next 40 days.

Groundhog Day is also a movie! Check out the hilarious 1993 comedy where Bill Murray is stuck re-living February 2nd over and over again.
Culture Corner: Valentine's Day Cards

By Maria Castello

One of the most popular way to celebrate Valentine’s Day in the United States is by sending cards. This is very common in elementary schools, where children exchange Valentine’s cards with each other. Each student makes a special box (usually with a shoebox, colored construction paper, markers, and stickers) and everyone puts a card (and often candy!) in each other’s box. Stores like Target and Walmart sell Valentine’s cards just for this occasion.

Many adults also exchange cards with each other for the holiday, sometimes with romantic partners but also with family members and friends!

This tradition became customary in the U.S. and in Europe during the 19th century, when new printing technology allowed people to send printed cards instead of written letters to loved ones. And no wonder it’s still popular: it’s a simple but sweet gesture that is sure to brighten anyone’s holiday!
Located between Oakland, Squirrel Hill, Homestead, and Hazelwood, Greenfield is a popular neighborhood for Pitt students.

Historically, Greenfield was settled by Irish, Polish, Italian, and Hungarian immigrants and their descendants, and this heritage can still be seen in many of the restaurants in the area.

Greenfield is known for its very steep hills and narrow streets, but don’t let that scare you away! It also has one of the best views of Pittsburgh and the Monongahela River. Although it is a predominantly residential neighborhood, Greenfield is a tightknit community with more than 10 sports centers and a history of professional athletes.

Greenfield is also known for its many old and beautiful churches. If you like architecture, you should check out St. Rosalia’s and St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church.

If you are looking for new housing, or just a good place to pick up lunch and take in a neighborhood baseball game, give Greenfield a try!

**OIS Staff Picks:**

- Hough’s ($$, American Sports Bar)
- Big Jim’s Restaurant ($$, Italian-American)
- China Star ($$, Chinese)
- Capezzutta’s Pizza ($, Italian-American)
- Yesterday’s Bar & Grill ($, American)
- Jozsa Corner ($$, Hungarian)
- Milky Way ($$, Vegetarian)
WHAT IS Pitt Day of Giving?

Affectionately referred to as P-DoG, Pitt Day of Giving is a 24-hour online and on-campus fundraising event when alumni, students, faculty, staff, family, and friends come together to make a gift to the area that means the most to them. On PDoG, your gift to Pitt goes further than any other day.

Mark your calendar for Tuesday, February 25th to make your gift on Pitt Day of Giving and share your Pitt pride by encouraging your own network of family and friends to be a part of the day, too. Together, we will make Pitt even stronger!

Give Today. Transform Tomorrow. [#PittDayofGiving]
Tax Identity Theft

The following information was offered by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) during Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week.

What is Tax-Related Identity Theft?

Tax-related identity theft occurs when someone uses your stolen Social Security number (SSN) to file a tax return claiming a fraudulent refund. If you become a victim, the IRS is committed to resolving your case as quickly as possible.

You may be unaware that this has happened until you e-file your return and discover that a return has already been filed using your SSN.

Know the Warning Signs

Be alert to possible tax-related identity theft if you are contacted by the IRS about:

- More than one tax return was filed for you,
- You owe additional tax, have a refund offset or have had collection actions taken against you for a year you did not file a tax return, or
- IRS records indicate you received wages or other income from an employer for whom you did not work

How You can Reduce Your Risk

Join efforts by the IRS, states and tax industry to protect your data. Taxes. Security. Together. We all have a role to play. Here’s how you can help:

- Always use security software with firewall and anti-virus protections. Use strong passwords.
- Learn to recognize and avoid phishing emails, threatening calls and texts from thieves posing as legitimate organizations such as your bank, credit card companies, and the IRS. (These scams have been known to target international visitors.)

- Do not click on links or download attachments from unknown or suspicious emails.
- Protect your personal data. Don’t routinely carry your Social Security card, and make sure your tax records are secure.

NOTE: The IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email to request personal or financial information. This includes any type of electronic communication, such as text messages and social media channels.

Please visit the FTC for more information from the Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week and what to do if you are a victim of identity theft.

Click here to learn your rights when encountering law enforcement and suggested steps to confirm their authenticity.
GlobalPittsburgh is a non-profit organization offering year-round activities, networking events, free tickets to events in the city, holiday dinners, and much more to help international students, professionals, and other globally-minded individuals connect with the local community. They have a network of over 500 members, volunteers, and citizen diplomats.

**First Thursdays**

Join us every first Thursday of the month to celebrate everybody and everything global in Pittsburgh at the most diverse networking happy hour in the city! Our monthly First Thursdays is a great way to connect with people from other countries and experience the world without leaving Pittsburgh. For newcomers, it's a great way to meet people who are sharing the same experience of being far from home. Everyone is welcome!

**Intercultural Potluck Dinners**

Our Potluck dinners are for GlobalPittsburgh members and host families only. It is one of the most popular activities according to our members and host families, both international and local. It is a great chance to meet new friends, try new foods and show off your culinary skills (store bought items are welcome as well, no need to cook if you normally don‘t). Everybody brings something to the table and we share a great meal and friendly conversation.

If you are not a member or not sure about the status of your membership please contact Nadya Kessler at nkessler@globalpittsburgh.org. If you are a member and wish to bring a friend who is a non-member, we expect that he or she will strongly consider joining us in the future! Location for each potluck dinner will be announced separately. This event is limited to 50 guests and is RSVP only.
Valentine’s Day Party
11 AM—2 PM, Maggie & Stella’s Cards and Gifts
Celebrate the loved ones in your life with raffles, snacks, and tea. Find the hidden heart and win!

Flamingo Fest
11 AM—3 PM, National Aviary
Get up close to the National Aviary’s flamingo flock and learn all about this fascinating species. Enjoy games, crafts, a story and other fun flamingo activities while learning how to help protect flamingos and other wetlands species.

Flower Arranging
11 AM—3 PM, William Pitt Union
Celebrate love with the Pitt Program Council! Craft your very own, personalized bouquet! No tickets or sign-ups are needed, and the event is completely free! Flowers available while supplies last. Open to all undergraduate Pitt students with a valid (Oakland) Student ID.

History Uncorked: ‘80s Night
7:30-11 PM, Heinz History Center
Grab your legwarmers and jam out to your favorite mix-tape – the 22nd annual History Uncorked, presented by BNY Mellon, is all about the ’80s! Pittsburgh’s premier party for young professionals returns on Friday, Feb. 21, 2020.

CATS
Benedum Center
CATS, the record-breaking musical spectacular by Andrew Lloyd Webber that has captivated audiences in over 30 countries and 15 languages, is now on tour across North America!

Global Brew: Africa
9:30 AM—12 PM, Pitt Global Hub
Drop by the Pitt Global Hub for our third installment of Global Brew! This time we will be featuring coffee beans produced in Africa. Come by, sample different coffees, and learn about the coffee industry in Africa.