Twelve Rice international students took time out from their very busy schedules to mentor international high school students at St. Stephen’s High School. These mentors included undergraduate students, graduate students, and one graduate student brought his family to join this mentorship program.

Each week they met with the high school students to be their big brothers and big sisters for an hour. They were there to listen and to share the struggles and concerns of these high school students. Many were paired based on shared language and cultural background. At the first orientation meeting, the mentees’ faces brightened up immediately when they saw their assigned mentors. As the weeks went by, from observing their interactions, we knew their bonds grew and the mentees became very at ease with their mentors. They opened up to the mentors regarding their desires like learning about Space Engineering and future academic pursuits. One mentee enjoyed going to Rice Recreation Center with his mentor to have fun doing physical exercises together. They enjoyed exploring the campus, and shared likes and personal dreams for the future.

Who has benefited from this mentorship experience the most? Both the mentors and mentees counted these experiences as very rewarding and benefiting. Mei Takafumi, a Rice student mentor said that she would definitely want to be a mentor again, and she wished that this program was longer than 4 weeks. Another mentor, Natasha, said that “it is great to get to know young people of different age, it is like being young again.”

What a meaningful way to cultivate the culture of mentorship!
Dear Rice International Students & Scholars,

Welcome to a new semester, new year, and new decade! Our international community continues to grow at Rice, and you are such a crucial part of our becoming an international university.

Our current international growth is the most obvious at the undergraduate level. Just a very few years ago, we only had 85 undergraduate international students. By the fall of 2012, we expect to have well over 400 undergraduate students! Graduate international students continue to be a significant part of our international community, enjoying approximately a third of the overall graduate student population. We host exchange students (mainly undergraduate upperclassmen who stay for only one or two semesters), whose population has grown from 13 just a few years ago, to 40 in the past year.

Our international scholars, including short and long term researchers, visiting faculty and lecturers, postdocs, research students, and short-term visitors have risen to well to over 600 just last year. Special groups, such as government-sponsored programs, have brought to Rice wonderful students and visitor groups from China, Norway and Turkey, to name a few. The Office of International Students & Scholars (OISS) has also taken on the responsibility of hosting the many delegations and special visitors who come from all over the world throughout the year. We connect them with the Rice faculty and administration in an effort to spread the great news of Rice well beyond our borders.

Because of the international expansion that Rice is experiencing and the OISS is trying to manage, we need to hear from you about the services that are provided to you. What do we need to do to help with your transition to Rice? What are the services that the campus needs as we expand? What do we need to do in order to provide clarity, so that it is helpful to visitors from other countries?

The OISS is going to conduct a series of informal panel discussions in the next few months, and if you would like to be part of the conversation, please let me know. We value your perspectives and want to hear your input, so that we can better help make Rice an international-friendly learning and research environment! You can call me 713-348-6095 or email me at: abaker@rice.edu.

Thank you for being a vital part of Rice’s realization of the Vision for the Second Century (V2C). Best wishes and I look forward to hearing from you!

Best wishes,

Adria L. Baker
Executive Director of the Office of International Students & Scholars
We had another successful year of Winter Events!

We had many international students, scholars and families attend our four events that were hosted over the winter break. This is the third year that OISS has hosted these events as a way to provide activities in Houston for those who cannot travel home over the break.

For this year’s events, we went to the Houston Museum of Natural Science and learned all about how science is a part of our everyday lives, we watched an exciting hockey game with our Houston Aeros, cheered on the Houston Rockets as we won our fifth consecutive game, and visited our wonderful Houston Zoo. Since the Museum and Zoo were both free with Rice ID (thanks to the Passport to Houston program) and the Aeros and Rockets tickets were purchased at a reduced group rate, many people were able to enjoy these activities without spending a lot of money.

We have many of the pictures available online on our Facebook page and a full recap on our blog. Don’t forget that we’ll be doing similar events every winter and summer break so stay tuned on the OISS-Announce for more details!

Insurance Policy Update for Rice International Students

After several semesters reviewing and paying for various “band-aid” options to Rice’s insurance policy for students, the Rice administration undertook a comprehensive study of many “like-minded” universities that host international students. Not surprisingly, we found that we were the outliers in our policy, and the risks were very high to our international students. In addition, there were great risks to the families, who have to deal with unexpected medical expenses; and these risks were very high.

We seldom believe that when we are young that we could get hurt badly, very sick, or worse yet pass away. Furthermore, many countries have a national health care system, where all health issues are covered automatically, and one does not have to deal with complex medical issues. In the USA, medical issues are very expensive and payments are complex.

However, to fall in line with other like-minded institutions in the USA, and to create reasonable solutions to the risks, Rice instituted a university student insurance policy. Effective Spring 2011, all Rice-sponsored F and J visa students are required to enroll in to either the Rice student insurance or the Rice-approved alternate insurance. We believe that this is the best to minimize risks as much as possible.
Students and scholars who are on an F (student) or J (exchange visitor) visa status, hear about their "SEVIS number", "SEVIS record", SEVIS compliance", etc. What really is SEVIS and what should Rice internationals know about it?

SEVIS is the Student & Exchange Visitor Information System which is a real-time on-line interface that the Office of International Students & Scholars (OISS) has with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of State (DOS). It is a system that tracks nonimmigrant students and scholars on an F or J visa status.

For degree-seeking and exchange students on F and J visas, the OISS is required to report updates on your immigration status on a continuous basis, including:

1. your full-time status (a minimum of 12 credit hours for undergrads and 9 credit hours for graduates),
2. updated local address (you are required to update any change within 10 days visa ESTHER, which downloads into the OISS visa-managing system),
3. your major field of study or research,
4. your updated financial information,
5. your anticipated program length and ending date, and
6. work authorization, and many other details.

Unfortunately, we are also required to report within a certain time limit your non-compliance of the issues listed above through SEVIS. In order to insure that you maintain your immigration status, the OISS often sends you reminders about taking a full course load, travel signatures, visa and passport renewals, etc. The last thing the OISS wants to do is to terminate your F or J program, unless you are ready to return home. However, non-compliance, and not working through all the legal issues ahead of time might require us to do so.

The OISS sets up appointments with Rice internationals to discuss any immigration questions that you might have. All you need to do is call 713-348-6095 (x6095 on-campus) and ask to make an appointment with an advisor. We urge you to do it early and BEFORE you drop below hours, study abroad, take a semester off, work off-campus, etc.

The agency that supervises the SEVIS system is SEVP (Student & Exchange Visitor Program). They report to the Department of Homeland Security under the enforcement arm of immigration, which is Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE). If a student or scholar is terminated, the report goes directly to ICE, which is investigated. I can guarantee that no one ever wants a visit from an ICE agent. Therefore, you are strongly urged to see an OISS advisor if you need to drop below hours, if you wish to discuss work authorization, or any immigration benefit and question.

SEVP also has a place where you can contact them directly in the case of emergency. For example, when schools are shut down temporarily due to unexpected events, such as hurricanes/earthquakes, then you can contact them directly about your immigration status. They also give updated information and links that are helpful for international students and scholars on F and J visas. You can access their information at: http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students/

The OISS is currently going through a review of their SEVIS processes and has applied for recertification. This is the first time that SEVIS has required such a review, which is being done in anticipation of the upcoming SEVIS II (expected roll-out is for 2013). We are hopeful that a positive response will arrive soon. We want you to know that we are doing our part in keeping Rice up-to-date on compliance. However, SEVIS compliance for you is a partnership. You must plan ahead and do your part to maintain your valid immigration status and keep your SEVIS record compliant. Do not hesitate to set up an appointment or contact us for any questions – including personal issues that affect your studies, adjustment and acculturation, as well as your immigration status.
Texas Driver License Renewal – PLAN AHEAD!

If you have gone through the effort of obtaining a Texas driver license, you are well aware of the many documents required by the Department of Public Safety. If you are an international visitor, you should have noticed that your driver license has a special “Temporary Visitor” status expiration date in addition to the expiration date of the license itself. Yes, it can be a bit confusing.

Pay careful attention to these dates! According to the DPS website, “If the applicant does not provide the necessary documentation, and update the Temporary Visitor status date on or before the status date expiration, the card will be cancelled; and the person may not operate a motor vehicle until the cancellation has been lifted.” In short, you will be driving illegally.

So make sure to plan ahead if your DPS Temporary Status end date is before your I-20/DS-2019 completion date, or if you plan to stay after your Rice program ends for a period of OPT employment. The issue for F and J student, scholars, and their family members is – according to the DPS Temporary Visitor Issuance Guide – that you “must have at least six months remaining on the period of lawful status from the date of issuance for a renewal Driver License or Identification Card.” This means that if you don’t remember to renew six months before the completion date on your I-20 or DS-2019, your renewal will be denied.

According to the DPS Temporary Visitor Issuance Guide, here are the documents you will need to present in person (not online or by mail):

- F-1: Social Security Card or SSN Affidavit (obtain at DPS), passport, visa, I-94, I-20, and letter of Rice enrollment from OISS (unless you are on OPT, in which case you need to present your EAD card)
- F-2: Social Security Card or SSN Affidavit (obtain at DPS), passport, visa, I-94, I-20s of F-2 and F-1, and letter of Rice enrollment for F-1 from OISS (unless the F-1 is on OPT, in which case need to present F-1’s EAD card)
- J-1: Social Security Card or SSN Affidavit (obtain at DPS), passport, visa, I-94, DS-2019, and letter of Rice enrollment or employment from OISS
- J-2: Social Security Card or SSN Affidavit (obtain at DPS), passport, visa, I-94, DS-2019s of J-2 and J-1, and letter of Rice enrollment or employment for J-1 from OISS.

Web links listed in article:

- DPS web site: www.txdps.state.tx.us/DriverLicense/LawfulStatusDLID.htm
- OISS blog post about OPT: oiss.blogs.rice.edu/2010/09/29/work-part-3-employment-after-graduation-opt
- DPS Visitor Issuance Guide: www.txdps.state.tx.us/administration/driver_licensing_control/ImmigrationStatusChart.pdf

As usual, please feel free to make an appointment with an OISS advisor if you would like to discuss your specific case.
Do you need to file taxes?  
By Sandra Bloem-Curtis

If you were an international student or scholars in the U.S. for any period of time during 2010, then the answer is “yes, you must file U.S. tax forms, even if you did not receive any income during 2010”.

If you did not receive any income during 2010, you may only need to complete the Form 8843. If you did receive income (scholarships, stipends, on-campus or off-campus employment, etc.), you may also need to complete forms like the 1040NR. Check out the helpful resources below for assistance on knowing which forms you are required to complete.

To be in compliance with all US laws, please be sure to mail off your tax forms to the U.S. IRS on time.

**Tax Filing Requirements:**

- Tax forms are due to the IRS by April 15, 2011 to avoid penalties.
- Before filing your taxes, make sure you have received all your tax supporting documents.
- Check your mailbox for tax documents from employers, Rice, or other scholarship/fellowship sponsors! You should receive a W-2 (for wages earned) or a 1042-S (for scholarships or fellowships).
- Foreign nationals who have tax treaties should pay close attention to the terms of their treaties (http://www.irs.gov/publications/p901/ar01.html). If you have questions concerning benefits you think might apply to you, please inquire at the Payroll office (please note that you would have to provide your SSN and you may need to complete additional forms in Payroll in order to receive those benefits).

Do you have an SSN or an ITIN to file your taxes? If not, please see the OISS on how to apply.

**Helpful Resources for tax filing:**

CINTAX – A web-based software program that will assist “non-residents” for tax purposes to prepare their tax forms. You may also use CINTAX to help determine if you are considered a “resident” or “non-resident” for tax purposes. For more information visit: http://oiss.rice.edu/content.aspx?id=132.

**Tax Workshop for Internationals:**

OISS has invited an international tax expert to lead a workshop on filing taxes for all Rice internationals. Be sure to bring your questions and learn how to navigate the often confusing tax reporting requirement on Thursday, March 10th. http://oiss.rice.edu/events.aspx

University of Texas international tax website, an excellent resource for any international: http://www.utexas.edu/international/taxes/. IRS: www.irs.gov or call 1-800-829-1040. Additional resources available on the OISS website: http://oiss.rice.edu/content.aspx?id=132

**CINTAX Sign-Up:**

Sign-up for CINTAX for 2010 tax year is already underway.

**CINTAX licenses are only valid for a particular tax year so you must sign-up every year**

CINTAX is a web-based software program designed to assist internationals with tax form preparation. It is available to Rice international students and scholars who have been in the U.S. for less than 5 years and are considered non-residents for tax purposes. CINTAX can also help you determine if you are a “resident” or “non-resident” for tax purposes.

How to Sign-up:
1) Visit OISS between until– April 15
2) Pay $2 for a user license
3) Receive a unique access code to use CINTAX by email
4) Login to the CINTAX website and complete a questionnaire – the proper tax forms will be prepared based on the answers you enter
5) Mail off your tax forms, and you are done!
IEW celebrated all continents!
By Vanessa Uribe

International Education Week 2010:

As it’s customary every year, the Office of International Students and Scholars, along with the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education celebrate International Education Week. This year, OISS celebrated the seven continents with talks on leadership around the world!

We had a great IEW kick off! Arjun Kurup and Suman Khatiwada, visited Smaller Scholars Schools to give a talk about their countries and their culture. The kids there gave them a great welcome and were very enthusiastic to learn about India and Nepal.

The official International Education Week started with a talk on leadership in Africa, continued with Brazil, the Americas, Asia, and ended with the Rice Mini Soccer World Cup, which was conquered this year by team... ASIA!!! Congratulations!

Thanks to everyone who participated and stay tuned for this year’s celebration!
Dear International students at Rice:

You may have heard the Dean of Undergraduates, Dean Hutchinson, talking about the “Culture of Care” at Rice, or you may have even read his recent column in the Rice Thresher. Hopefully you are hearing more about the “Culture of Care” at Rice, and many of you are continuing the discussion with other students, faculty, staff and community members on campus. For those of you who have asked what is going on with Culture of Care and how you can get more involved:

What is the Culture of Care?

Culture of Care gives a name to something many of us already recognize on our campus: A caring community. The initiative is grass roots and is aimed at fostering intentional conversations about care at Rice. We hope that by placing additional attention on this important aspect of the Rice community, it will not only highlight those areas in which we are successful at supporting one another, but also those areas which need greater support, resources or attention. Students, faculty and staff who inspire conversation and action related to care on our campus facilitate the Culture of Care.

What are some examples of care?

In conversations with faculty, staff and students we have heard some of the following themes and examples of care:

- **Student leadership and responsibility:** for example, student leaders making the decision to host an event that will be intentionally inclusive and supportive
- **Actions by staff:** for example, a staff member going out of their way to have lunch with a student who is sitting alone in the commons
- **Actions by faculty:** for example, taking time to serve as a mentor for a student
- **Actions by students on campus:** for example, students calling one of the resources at Rice when another student needs assistance
- **Group action:** for example, a staff team reaching out to a colleague they notice is having a difficult time
- **Community action:** for example, emphasis on the network of care at Rice including university resources and student led initiatives

Why does it matter?

You may be wondering, “Why do we need this initiative?” “Isn’t this something that we already do at Rice?” The wonderful ways in which we take care of each other at Rice are evident on a daily basis, but we hope that by placing additional attention on this important aspect of the Rice community, it will not only highlight those areas in which we are successful at supporting one another, but also those areas which need greater support, resources or attention.

How can you get more involved?

As members of the academic, residential college and caring community at Rice, you are encouraged to start having intentional conversations with students, faculty and staff. If you would like some tools to help get the conversation started, please email cultureofcare@rice.edu, we hope to have these online soon.

Some ways you can facilitate discussion about the Culture of Care, include:

- Talking to other students during meals at the residential colleges or at programs on or off campus about the Culture of Care at Rice
- Facilitating conversation in student leadership meetings
- Incorporating the topic in student leadership trainings
- Starting a dialogue about how you as an individual and how we as a community define ‘Care.’
- Asking how do we hold each other, our community, and ourselves responsible for upholding these expectations of Care?
- Asking how do we begin to implement this idea of Care on an everyday basis while continuing to renew our commitment to sustaining a Culture of Care at Rice?
We want to hear your feedback, ideas and suggestions

We need you to make these things happen, and we hope to work with you to support your efforts every step of the way. Together we can take these efforts to the next level. As a community we can take action, we can ask for help from our campus resources, and we can help others. We can truly create a Culture of Care.

You can provide insights into how these principles are demonstrated within your community and provide feedback on ways where we can make improvements. In the meantime please feel free to send your thoughts and insights to cultureofcare@rice.edu.

Article written by Executive Committee of Culture of Care:
E. Kate Abad, Director of Student Activities
Shelah Crear, Director of First Year Programs
Mac Griswold, Director of the Community Involvement Center

Computer Availability

Have you ever gone all the way to Fondren hoping to get work done, only to find out that all the computers are taken?! There is a new website now available to help save you that walk. Now, you can go online and see all the computers in use, available and offline at the Fondren and in the college computer labs. http://library.rice.edu/tools/fondren-owlnet-computer-availability-map

Tax Workshop

On March 10th, over 120 students and scholars attended OISS' Tax Workshop. We want to express deep appreciation to the workshop's speaker, Mr. Andrew Lai, ESQ, CPA. Please go to the OISS website to download the handouts and Powerpoint presentation.

For more tax questions, call 267-941-1000, IRS' International Customer Service.

Free English and Culture Classes

We still have room, so join us! Learn more at: http://oiss.rice.edu/content.aspx?id=112.

Culture Fair
(Sponsored by ADVANCE)

Date: Friday, April 1st, 2011
Time: 11:30 am to 2:30 pm
Location: Grand Hall RMC
Please plan to get with friends to do a table that will tell us about your region or country.

International Ladies Networking Luncheon

Date: Wednesday, April 6, 2011
Time: 12-1:00-noon
Location: Founders Room, Lovett Hall (Entrance A, 2nd floor) next to the OISS.
We’ll have pizza and snacks and meet new friends.
Since last August, the Office of International Students and Scholars has taken on a new and exciting responsibility of hosting international groups, delegations and special visitors when they come to Rice.

These guests visit our university for different reasons. Some of them are interested in exchanging ideas, looking for opportunities for future cooperation and research collaboration, faculty exchange and student training; others arrive to participate in various workshops or professional development programs to learn, for instance, about the US culture or its educational system. Based on their field of interest we arrange appropriate meetings, organize lectures, campus and lab tours, as well as other activities, and proudly show some of Rice’s uniqueness, outstanding academic achievements and rich culture in its history to them.

This new responsibility is very exciting for all of us in the OISS. We welcome the new challenges of the different situations. This new responsibility is rewarding not only because our office has become a link in building international relations, but also because we have the chance to work closely with the President’s office, academic departments, Rice representatives, deans, other school officials, professors and, of course, our international students.

Our main objective is to ensure Rice’s guests leave with a pleasant impression about our university and find the time spent at Rice profitable. The essence of organizing such events is to partner with our wonderful faculty, staff and students who for instance, offered their time and expertise so generously during the visits we have had, or happily shared their students’ experiences when their former professors or alumni of their home institutions visited Rice.

We’re looking forward to continuing the partnership with colleagues in the different departments, and are very grateful to the entire community for helping us warmly welcome Rice’s visitors and provide high quality service that lives up to Rice’s outstanding reputation.

So far we have organized visits or have helped other departments with delegations from Tianjin, Fudan, Shanghai, Tsinghua University, and the National University of Tainan. We have received visitors not only from educational institutions but for instance from the Beijing Municipal Bureau of HR and Social Security. We have hosted workshops and cultural enrichment trainings for several sponsored groups through the Institute of International Education (IIE). Some of our special visitors came from the Royal University of Fine Arts, Cambodia; from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore; and from Tianjin University, China.

Pictures were provided by Jeff Fitlow, University Photographer
Globalization from a young age  

By Su Yeon Yoo

Since I am working at the OISS, I often have a chance to bring my eight-year-old son Jayha to participate in many different kinds of events held by our office. He came to the Football Clinic and the Mini-Soccer World Cup during International Education Week (IEW), pumpkin carving events for Friends of International Students & Scholars, Winter Events... a few times, he even got to work as a photographer for events and quarterback!

Through those events, my son has had a chance to meet and interact with people from around the world. The first time, he was a bit shy to talk to them and looked uncomfortable, but as he got to interact with them more, he gradually opened his heart and began to enjoy it. He even told me right after one of the events had ended, “I can’t wait until the next event”. He became socialized, confident, and comfortable.

I assumed that he would feel natural surrounded by people from different countries because he grew up here in the U.S., often called the “Melting Pot” and raised by immigrant parents, but he still felt a little awkward. Frequent involvement through activities with people from many countries and being friends with them makes it less likely that he’d feel barriers between him and them, since he was meeting them to play together and be friends rather than just encountering them.

He is living in a global world which requires frequent contact with people from all over the world. I have no doubt that often exposure to mingling events with internationals will give him natural contact with them and a great background for his future. We are the world.

I want to take this opportunity to thank OISS for being so flexible and extending care to staff family members.

My name is Virginia Johnson, but most people call me Ginny. I’m from a small Texas town about 2 ½ hours north of Houston called Fairfield. Houston is a big change from Fairfield but I’m enjoying all the city has to offer, thus far. I am sophomore at Martel College. My major is psychology and I’m currently contemplating a minor in sociology. On campus, I play women’s Rugby, serve as a PAA (peer academic advisor) for Martel, give tours for the admissions office, serve on the executive board of the Student Admission Council, and play a wide range of other sports including powderpuff, volleyball, and basketball. I love working at the OISS office and enjoy working with everyone. If you ever see me around stop and say hi!

My name is Natasha Kappaya, and I’m a student worker at OISS. I’m currently a freshman at Sid Richardson College, and I’m from Toronto, Canada. I enjoy working at OISS, because of the people in the office. Every day, I find myself motivated to work hard because of the people that surround me. They are friendly, supportive, and entertaining! This is only my second semester at OISS, but I look forward to plenty more!
Our graduate international students bring so much value to Rice University at so many levels. Clearly we know that the academic and research assets they share are a special merit to the entire Rice community.

The second annual Graduate International Culture Night (GICN) exemplified an even further level of meaningfulness that international graduate students bring to our campus. The amazing talents and diversity of cultural arts was never so vividly shown as it was at the GICN. We saw the world at our front doorstep, with the enthusiasm of our brilliant students expressing their cultures and countries around the world in amazing (and very different) ways.

Thank you, Graduate Student Association (GSA), who has made it their priority to reach out and include the international student population, so as to help them become a much more active part of our community and the GSA’ work. The GICN is a reflection of the GSA’s dedication to Rice, through embracing the valuable capital that students from all over the world bring to our campus, and expanding our school’s cultural vibrancy.

Thank you, Rice graduate international students, for a wonderful program!! Thank you, GSA, for your work in putting this together!

Thank you GSA Executive Committee, who are just amazing leaders!

For more on this event, visit: http://www.media.rice.edu/media/NewsBot.asp?MODE=VIEW&ID=15392
TOPICS:

March 11:
Time Management and Academic Success

April 1:
Food and Emotions

Free lunch will be provided to the first 25 students at each session! The group is open to both undergraduate and graduate Rice international students. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to evagortner@rice.edu

Directions to Wellness Center
The Wellness Center is on the first floor of the Administration Wing right behind the building sign. The entrance is across from the main entrance of the creation Center. (Number 80 on the Campus Map)

2011 Schedule
Fridays

- March 11
- April 1

Time: 12-1:00 pm

Lunch Hour Location
Wellness Center Classroom
Adjacent to the Recreation Center