Last November OISS and Rice University celebrated the annual International Education Week with a number of campus-wide events and activities. Our theme for the week was International Education: Key to Global Competence. This was also the topic of our Panel Discussion, “Building Global Competence: Key to Professional Success”, where three expert panelists shared their thoughts and personal experiences on the importance of developing global competencies in the increasingly international work environment of today.

OISS also hosted the traditional Appreciation Luncheon for the presidents of Rice's international student clubs, as well as partnered with the Graduate Student Association in presenting the GSA Coffee Break with international treats from around the world.

(Continued on page 13)
Letter from the Executive Director

Dear International Students & Scholars,

We hope this New Year and new semester has started out to be a good one for you! We enjoyed seeing many of you at our Winter Break events, and hope to see all of you within the next few months.

The OISS staff has been busy working on organizing trainings that we believe will be meaningful to your professional development, as well as to help you maintain your legal immigration status. Please stay tuned to the OISS-announce@rice.edu listserv messages to learn about upcoming events and immigration updates to help you during your time at Rice University.

We want to remind you that the OISS is set up to help YOU (and anyone at Rice from outside the USA). We are sorry that sometimes when you come to our office, we are busy with students, meetings and work, and are unable to stop and visit with you right away. However, please make an appointment to see an OISS advisor, and we will surely meet with you as soon as we can. Your questions and situations are important to us, as we look forward to meeting with you.

We wish you a wonderful semester and hope to see you soon. Thank you for helping make Rice a top academic and vibrant international community!

Best wishes,

Adria Y. Baker

During the Rice Midterm Recess in October, OISS organized a truly epic trip to Space Center Houston. We sold out the first bus in record time and ended up adding a second full size charter bus. In the end, 104 people participated, creating a new OISS event attendance record. NASA Rocks!!
Spring 2014 Events

Honor Code Workshop
Monday, February 24
12:15—1:00
Sewall Hall 303
Hosted by OISS, CWOVC and SJP

Tax Workshop
Wednesday, February 26
4:00—6:00 pm
Keck Hall, Room 100

Culture Fair
Friday March 14
11:30—2:00
RMC Grand hall
For more information: http://oma.rice.edu/

90 Second Thesis
Friday, February 21
5:00—8:00 pm
McMurtry Auditorium
(Duncan Hall)
90 Second Thesis Competition
hosted by GPS.
http://graduate.rice.edu/90secondthesis.

CPT/OPT Workshops
Monday, February 24, 2:30-3:30pm
Wednesday, March 5, 3:30-4:30pm
All workshops will take place in Miner Lounge in the Student Center

Advanced Immigration Workshop
Thursday, March 20
4:00—5:30 pm
Sewall Hall Rm 301
Presentation from Ware|Gasparian on H-1B, Green Cards, and other visa options for employment in the US.

OISS Presents… The New OISS Events Calendar!!

Take a look at the new OISS Events calendar at http://oiss.rice.edu/events/. Through this website you can add all interesting OISS events and activities to your personal calendar, or see information on when the OISS office is closed. You can even subscribe to OISS Events and have them included in your Google Calendar, and never miss a fun or informative OISS event ever again!!
If you are an undergraduate student interested in assisting new international students in August 2014, you are encouraged to apply for one of the iPREP student staff positions, called International Peer Pioneers (IPPs). IPPs will welcome new students, answer questions, ease the transition into life at Rice, and provide logistical support during the iPREP programs. **Applications are due February 24.** For more information on this leadership opportunity, please check your email or email jbrydon@rice.edu.

If you like the idea of assisting new students, but would like to provide leadership through your residential college, consider applying for an O-Week Advisor position. International students come into the position with a greater understanding of the transitional issues new students from abroad face and that is extremely valuable! For more information on O-Week Advisor positions, please contact your College.

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**Rice University’s Office of International Students & Scholars sponsors... FREE English & Culture Classes!!!**

*General Sign-up will take place online starting on Monday, January 13, 2014, at 10:00 a.m.*

*Instructions will be sent out through OISS-Announce and can also be found at http://oiss.rice.edu/content.aspx?id=112.*

*If you have any questions please contact us at 713-348-6095.*

**Free Classes offered for Spring 2014**

**Advanced/Intermediate English**

**Conversation:**

*Teacher:* Catherine Spain  
*Class:* Mondays from 1-2 p.m., or 2-3 p.m. in the Ley Student Center, 2nd floor; conference room  
*Begins:* Monday, January 27, 2014  
*Ends (tentatively):* Monday, April 28, 2014

**English Idioms & Slang Class**

*Teacher:* Martha Alexander  
*Class:* Tuesdays from 12 noon - 1 p.m. in OISS  
*Begins:* Tuesday, January 21, 2014  
*Ends (tentatively):* Tuesday, April 29, 2014

**Grammar & Pronunciation**

*Teacher:* Lauren Hanson & Chris Sneller  
*Class:* Wednesdays from 1-2 p.m. in OISS  
*Begins:* Wednesday, January 22, 2014  
*Ends (tentatively):* Wednesday, April 30, 2014

**Beginning English Conversation:**

*Teacher:* Laura Russell  
*Class:* Thursdays from 12:10 - 12:50 p.m. in OISS  
*Begins:* Thursday, January 23, 2014  
*Ends (tentatively):* Thursday, May 1, 2014
Time to File Your Taxes!!

By Sandra Bloem-Curtis

As a foreign national in the US, filing your US tax return can seem like a very confusing task. If you were present in the US for any length of time in 2013, this is a legal requirement you must fulfill. We at OISS want to do what we can to facilitate the process for you. Although we cannot complete your tax return for you, below are resources to help you be legally compliant.

The deadline for filing your tax forms with the US government is April 15, 2014. You must mail your completed forms and supporting documentation, as required, by that date. Please note that there are forms to be completed and submitted even if no income was received during 2013.

Tips:

If you did not receive any income during 2013, you may only need to complete the Form 8843. It is recommended that you purchase a $2 license to the Glacier Tax Prep software to assist you with this determination.

If you received a scholarship/stipend/paycheck for employment, you may need to complete the Form 8843 and Form 1040NR. It is recommended that you purchase a $2 license to the Glacier Tax Prep software to assist you with this determination.

Tax forms you may receive:

- **W-2 form** - Rice employees (including student employees) who receive reportable earned income will receive a W-2 to be filed with your tax return. W-2s are mailed or available through your ESTHER account after January 31.
- **1042-S form** - Foreign nationals may receive a 1042-S if they are recipients of tax treaty benefits, scholarships or fellowships from nontax treaty countries. 1042-S forms are picked up from Payroll or may be available online if you have signed up with Payroll’s FNIS.

(Continued on page 6)

Important Information From the Payroll Office

The Payroll Office is using software with the acronym FNIS to process your tax forms beginning in 2014. FNIS allows you to print and sign your forms before bringing them to our office in Memorial Hermann Medical Plaza. It also allows you to receive your 2013 1042-S online. You will receive an email when it is available. To take advantage of FNIS, you should:

1. With the username, password and link provided in our recent email, log into the site and change your password.
2. Consent to receive tax forms and 1042-S via FNIS electronically.
3. Check the information for accuracy.
4. Please do not enter any additional immigration information. It will be updated by the Payroll Office later. Click "Save and Continue" and then "Save with Errors". The Payroll Office will address any errors.
5. Please confirm page 6 and submit.
6. Once submitted, please send an email to payroll@rice.edu so we will know you have completed this process.
Taxes (continued)

(Continued from page 5)

Before filing your taxes, make sure you have received all your supporting tax documents from employers, Rice, or other scholarship/fellowship sponsors.

Foreign nationals who have tax treaties should learn 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 (a SSN and additional forms may need to be completed in Payroll in order to receive those benefits).

A Social Security Number (SSN) or an ITIN is required file your taxes. If you do not have one, please see the OISS on how to apply.

Resources:

Glacier Tax Prep (GTP) software is a web-based software program that Rice provides to its foreign nationals to assist “non-residents” for tax purposes to prepare their tax forms. The program can also help to determine if you are considered a “resident” or “non-resident” for tax purposes. For information on how to purchase a $2 software license visit: http://oiss.rice.edu/content.aspx?id=132

Informational tax filing video by GTP as an additional resource to guide Rice internationals on their tax filing legal requirements.

Tax Workshop for Internationals – February 26, 2014 from 4pm-7pm


Additional resources available on the OISS Tax webpage

Identity Fraud Targets Internationals

DO NOT FAX any information to this number: +1-718-709-7573

This is a scam. This is a hoax. This is attempted fraud.

If you fall for a phishing scam that requires your Rice login, contact the IT Help Desk immediately for assistance. 713.348.HELP (4357) or helpdesk@rice.edu.
Transitions, Immigration Benefits and Timeframes

By Adria Baker

During your academic tenure as an international student or scholar in the USA, you will need to be aware of how long it takes to process some of the various immigration benefits and transitions, so you can plan ahead. [http://oiss.rice.edu/forms](http://oiss.rice.edu/forms)

**How long does it take to get on-campus employment and an SSN?**
The answer is that it depends. Working on-campus is usually quick, as long you have the proper visa status and an acceptable job.

**International students** can work up to 20 hours per week (and full-time on vacations and holidays), as long as it is on-campus, if you are on an F-1 or J-1 visa. (*Special note for J visa students:* You must get PRIOR approval from an OISS advisor to work on-campus.) The permission includes completing an I-9 with Payroll. You will also need to apply for a social security number (SSN), which requires a trip to the Social Security Administration office (SSA). The wait at the SSA office can take a while, so bring something to read. You will receive your SSN in about 3-4 weeks. As soon as you get your job, you will want to apply for your SSN, as it may include tax benefits, which you can learn about with the Payroll Office. (*Special note for doctoral / Ph.D. students:* as soon as your university pay changes from a fellowship grant to RA or TA monies, you are eligible to apply for an SSN).

**How long does it take to get off-campus employment?**
This depends upon what kind of employment. If you are a J visa student applying for Academic Training (AT), or an F visa student applying for Curricular Practical Training (CPT), it is a matter of meeting the right criteria and securing the proper signatures. As soon as this is completed, authorization can be as quick as 48 hours, depending upon the circumstances.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) takes much longer, as it has an application and fee to send to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In order to get your work authorization card (EAD), you should plan months ahead to: 1) read about requirements, 2) attend an OPT/CPT workshop, 3) get your paperwork and signatures ready, and 4) submit the paperwork to DHS. Receipt of an EAD card can take up to 90 days, if there are no problems in the system.

Click here for *employment handouts and forms*.

**I’m graduating this year. What should I plan for?**
You will need to think about if you want to gain practical experience in the USA right after you graduate, and are eligible to do so. See information above about OPT (for F visas) and AT (for J visas).

If you have family and friends coming to your commencement ceremony, you can apply for an [invitation letter on-line on the OISS website](http://oiss.rice.edu/forms), which can help with their application for a visa to come to the USA. You can pick it up in two days.

*(Continued on page 8)*
Winter Events Recap

By Vonne Tarverdi

The 2014 Winter Events kicked off with a trip to the Houston Zoo! Ben Colston, OISS international advisor, led a group of 20 participants to the zoo where they enjoyed watching wild, exotic animals in action. We had an overwhelming response to the Houston Rockets vs. Dallas Mavericks game! 50 students and scholars attended the game and the first 18 people who signed up got a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to stand on the court to high-five the players as they ran out onto the court!

This year, we added more dinner outings to restaurants in Rice Village including Ruggles Café and Bakery (known for their famous desserts) and the very popular Torchy’s Tacos (specializing in Tex-Mex cuisine)! The dinners took place over the weekend and were well attended by undergraduate students since the campus serveries do not have dinner service on Saturdays. Rice Village is within walking distance from the campus so it was easy to get back and forth. We also had a lunch meet up at Au Bon Pain in the Medical Center.

The purpose of the Winter Events is meant for cultural learning as well as a way for community building where international students and scholars can meet each other and enjoy a new, fun experience together during their time in Houston. We are currently planning our Summer Events and will include the very popular Cookies & Cultural Conversation lessons in our programming as well as trips to NASA Space Center and nearby museums. We look forward to having many of you join us for the Summer Events!

Transitions (continued)

(continued from page 7)

I am going home to visit my family. How long ahead should I plan?
If you need to get a re-entry visa, the timing to apply for a visa, and for the US Consulate to issue and return the passport, depends upon the procedures of each office. F and J visa holders will need to bring their passport and I-20 or DS-2019 to the OISS in advance and leave the form overnight. Documents can be picked up the next day in OISS after 3:00pm. Signatures for travel are valid for about six months (documents say one year, but we find a more recent signature is always better, and tend to reduce questions at the port-of-entry back into the USA.)

I’d like to make an appointment to see an advisor. How long does it take?
Depending upon the time of the year, you can usually get an appointment within a day or two. Walk-in appointments are usually hardt for us, since the advisors have so many meetings on the calendar, and we hate to make our students and scholars wait. We value your time. That said, if it is a true emergency, we will make sure that you speak with an advisor right away. Call: 713-348-6095 (quickest option) or write: oiss@rice.edu for an appointment.

Being an international student or scholar comes with many challenges. Planning ahead for any immigration benefit and/or transition opens options for you. Last-minute planning usually limits what you are able to do. Please let us know at OISS how we can be of help to you.
Student Wellbeing Dialogue with International Students

By Agnes Oi Yee Ho, LMSW

Well-being can be described as judging life positively and feeling good. While the Student Wellbeing Office aims to help students to stay well and be successful here at Rice, we understand that students experience stressful periods of time due to their studies and other student responsibilities. Sometimes, it may be even more stressful for international students who may experience cultural adjustment, homesickness or other stressful life changes. Don’t worry if you have encountered some of these experiences, here are five wellbeing tips that you can try on.

· **Balance is a key of life** - Set realistic goals and expectations for your academic and personal needs. If you have too many things to do, make a list along with the deadlines and prioritize them. Make sure you also reserve times to take a good care of yourself and explore the American culture!

· **Learn about yourself** - We all have strengths and limitations. It’s important to recognize your physical and mental limits. Don’t be afraid to talk to someone like your friends, professors, department advisors, etc. and ask questions about what they like about you and what you need to work on. You can also share your culture with your American friends. You might find interesting knowledge not only about yourself but also your own culture as well.

· **Take responsibility** - Responsibility is taking care of our own actions and consequences. Be aware of the rules at Rice and the laws in the U.S. are very different than those in your home country.

· **Express your feelings appropriately** - Feelings are neither good nor bad and it is okay to express them in an appropriate way. You can talk to someone or write your feelings down. Don’t forget to call your family and friends back home even they are far away from you.

· **Seeking help is a sign of strength!** - Trust your gut instincts. Tell someone if you or your friend needs help. You can talk to the College personnel team or department advisor. Or you can talk to mental health professionals like the Rice Counseling Center at 713-348-4867 (24/7), or the Student Wellbeing Office at 713-348-3311. In emergency, please don’t hesitate to call the RUPD/Rice EMS at 713-348-6000 immediately.

Each student’s situation is different, but it is important for all students to recognize and address wellbeing problems before they persist and become larger issues. Remember, it is okay to ask for help!

Agnes is a Licensed Master level Social Worker and the Associate Director with the Student Wellbeing Office. She was also an international student in the U.S. back in 2006! Come and talk to Agnes at the Student Wellbeing Office: 713-348-3311 located at the Gibbs Wellness Center.
WITHOUT PAIN AND HEADACHE,
OR
PAIN AND HEADACHE WITHOUT

By Agnes Vajtai

Coming to the US from a foreign country and trying to navigate and manage health insurance required by your school, the US or your home government might seem very challenging for most students, confusing, perhaps expensive for some, and even unnecessary for others. Furthermore, thinking about health insurance might not be the first thing on your “to do” list when you’re young, happy and healthy. You might not even know at the first time you arrive to the US what kind of service or treatment you will need throughout your study. Since no one plans to be ill, get treated in a hospital or break a leg, and because healthcare in the US is very expensive, having an appropriate insurance to cover basic medical fees for accidents and illnesses is a must.

Know the policy, so you’ll have fewer headaches:

Across the country every educational institution has different health insurance requirements for their students, and Rice recently revised its insurance policy and implemented a new system in the Fall of 2013. According to this policy, all students at Rice are required to have health insurance coverage, and to show proof of coverage before registering for classes. It further states that international students on an F1 and J1 visa must enroll in either the Rice’s Student Health Plan by Aetna or the Rice Approved Alternate Plan by SAS. Both plans are carefully selected and approved by Rice Administration because they not only comply with Rice’s regulations, but they also meet the minimum requirements for specific visa categories such as J-1.

Follow the procedure, so it won’t be a pain:

Students must be enrolled during the open enrollment period which begins usually at least a month before the semester starts. You need to:

1) select an insurance provider/plan,
2) fill out an application form,
3) pay for the chosen plan, and if you enrolled into any other plan than Aetna
4) fill out a waiver form.

Important: paying your student bill (including the insurance fee) does not automatically enroll you into the insurance plan; go through all of these steps.

The whole enrollment process can be completed online. The application forms for Aetna and SAS can be found in the OISS Health Insurance website: Every student’s insurance coverage and waiver are reviewed for compliance that might render questions, or additional documents. So don’t wait until the last minute to start applying.

(continued on page 11)
Health Insurance (continued)
(Continued from page 10)

Don’t fall for myths, so it will not hurt:

1. “I will not need it.” Unfortunately accidents do happen without prior notice, even when you’re not at fault, and even seemingly simple issues can have expensive consequences.
2. “I can sign up anytime or when I need it.” You may enroll only at certain times, for instance during the open enrollment period, or if you’ve a qualifying event.
3. “I have paid for Rice’s Health Services and I can get treatment there.” While the Student Health Center is staffed by physicians, nurses and a medical assistant, they are not able to provide primary care or certain laboratory testing or radiology services.
4. “I don’t have extra money for the insurance.” As an international student, you already have certified that you have the necessary funding, and provided proof of funding to obtain the necessary immigration documents to study at Rice.
5. “It’s wasted money if I don’t use it.” Complying with health insurance requirements is not an option or a choice, rather a condition of your visa category and/or a requirement by your school. Also, it is for peace of mind; knowing you’re covered if needed. If you have not used it, means you’re healthy. It’s not a product you must receive in return for your money.

Take these tips, so you’ll be prepared for every pain and headache:

1. Read your insurance information brochure, and be familiar with the treatments and services covered by your plan.
2. Study your insurance Preferred Provider Directory, and choose a physician in advance, so you know where to go if you need to see a doctor.
3. Know the contact information of your insurance company. Your doctor’s office might need to verify this before you can get an appointment. Print out the insurance card and carry it with you.
4. Complete the enrollment process on time. Missing the deadline always has negative consequences such as late fees, holds that prevent you from registering for classes, or even jeopardy of your immigration status.

Got questions? It never hurts to ask! Email us at oiss@rice.edu or call the office at 713-348-6095.
F-1 Students: Do your summer plans include . . . research, an internship, or a job here in the U.S.?

If you are an F-1 student and plan on participating in one of above activities off-campus then you will need to apply and be approved for Curricular Practical Training (CPT), through OISS, before starting the opportunity. CPT approval will be noted on a new I-20.

It doesn’t matter if the position is paid or unpaid, you still need authorization. To qualify for CPT, you must have completed two semesters and currently be in F-1 status. For undergraduates, this usually means enrolling in a course designating the opportunity as an integral part of the course and for graduate students this usually means that the CPT experience is a needed component of your graduate research.

CPT is limited to part-time (20 or fewer hours per week) during academic terms, but may be full-time (more than 20 hours per week) during the summer, semester breaks, and holidays. A student may apply for as many periods of CPT as necessary during their course of study; however, after a total of 12 months of full-time CPT, a student will be ineligible to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). No amount of part-time CPT affects OPT eligibility.

For more information on CPT, please visit the OISS Employment website. On this website, you can also find the CPT authorization form that must be turned into OISS along with an offer letter. In addition, there are several upcoming workshops on CPT/Optional Practical Training (OPT) workshops; these are a great way of finding more information regarding CPT.

Upcoming 2014 CPT/OPT Workshops:

Monday, February 24, 2:30-3:30pm
Wednesday, March 5, 3:30-4:30pm

You also always have the opportunity to meet with an OISS advisor to discuss your specific plans (oiss@rice.edu /713-348-6095).

Employment Workshop Review

By Jenny Brydon

The Employment Workshop for International Students took place on February 5, 2014 in the Huff House. The event was co-sponsored by OISS and the Center for Career Development. The workshop included an opening from OISS reviewing visa requirements for employment and a presentation by Associate Director, Jackie Hing, on the differences between looking for a position in the U.S. vs. abroad. The event concluded with an informative alumni panel discussion. Alumni, Ms. Seoyeon "Tara" Hong, Dr. Pei Dong, and Dr. Sumedh Warudkar, discussed their employment journeys from internships, to networking, to the H1-B sponsorship process.
The International Ladies Networking Luncheon welcomes you!

By Su Yeon Yoo

The International Ladies Networking Luncheon is a wonderful way to experience and exchange different cultures, develop friendships, and enjoy crafts. Our members loved learning about Korean traditional music from the Rice Samulnori (Korean percussion) team and about emergency response from Rice EMS, holding potlucks, and participating in fun activities, like stamping cards for Valentines day and making gingerbread houses during Christmas. They also love our free snacks every meeting!

We meet on the first Monday of the month; since we don't meet every month, please stay tuned in! OISS will send out an email letting you know the date and location of the next meeting, and you can also contact our office at 713-348-6095.

All women who are international students, scholars, or spouses of Rice are welcome to join us.

Through different kinds of events, international ladies here at Rice can build friendships and explore different cultures. We hope these invaluable traditions continue through the International Ladies Networking Luncheon.

Find more information, please visit the International Ladies Network webpage.

There will be two more Networking Lunches this Spring 2014 semester. Please mark your calendar for the following dates:

**March 3, 2014  Self Defense/ Personal Security**
Learn about self-defense and how to stay safe from Rice University Police Department

**April 7, 2014 International Potluck**
International food and end of the semester Party!

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**International Education Week (Continued from page 1)**

OISS also hosted the traditional appreciation luncheon for the presidents of Rice’s international student clubs, as well as partnered with the Graduate Student Association in presenting the GSA Coffee Break with international treats from around the world. Other highlight events included the first ever Badminton tournament, and the annual Thanksgiving Lunch. Unfortunately the Mini Soccer World Cup, an IEW tradition since 2005, had to be cancelled due to bad weather and field closures, but as a result all four teams – Africa, Americas, Asia and Europe – were declared as the official champions of this year’s tournament.

For a complete list of all the events hosted during IEW 2013, please visit the OISS IEW website.

During IEW, the Fondren Library displayed a selection from the OISS Centennial International Children’s Book Collection.
Address Updates in ESTHER

By Agnes Vajtai

Esther is the online campus database that Rice students, faculty, and staff use for managing personnel profiles, including phone and address information. Esther is used by many offices on Campus, so it is important to have your information updated at all times. For example, the Campus Crisis Management Team communicates alerts and other emergency related notifications by using information from your Esther account.

Having the US address updated in Esther is extremely important for F1 and J1 visa holders since it is required by law to report the correct address to the US Government. It must be updated within 10 days of the start date at Rice University or anytime an address changes while here in the U.S.

These are the steps to update your address in Esther:
1. Go to https://esther.rice.edu/
2. Login to your account
3. Click on Update Addresses and Phones
4. Update the information in the "Mailing Address" field
5. Click on Submit
6. OISS will then receive an electronic update of your address.

In many accounts there may be more than one address field. If you have a "mailing address" field you need to write your local address information in this field. Important your local address is the place where you stay in Houston. The university or department address cannot be used for this purpose. If you do not have a "mailing address" field you need to write your local address in the “permanent address” field.

It is also important to pay attention to the format. For addresses in the United States the format should be:
   Line 1 = First line of address (example: 1234 Main St.)
   Line 2 = Second line of address (example: Apt 11B)
   City= Houston
   State or Province = TX
   ZIP or Postal Code = example: 12345-1234
   Nation (LEAVE BLANK)

   The OISS is here to help with any questions or technical difficulties you may have. On behalf of the entire OISS team, thank you for your compliance!