19 international tables were represented in the successful Cultural Fair on Friday, February 28th. The award went to the beautiful wedding feast table set up by the Iranian students. All the other students organizations have put in so much of their efforts to make this Cultural Fair one of the best.

Many international students, together with Marta, wore their national costumes for the International Education Week on November 19, 2002.
A Letter From the Director:

Dear International Student & Scholars,

As a foreign visitor in the USA, you hold many important roles at Rice. Besides being a Rice student, researcher, faculty member, or visitor, you bring to us the opportunity to see beyond our own US perspective, as well as offer us the ability to learn about your culture and region of the world.

However, living in the USA requires you take on many additional responsibilities in order to maintain your visa status. As you are aware, recently the laws affecting foreign nationals have increased and tend to continue to change. In some cases, it has been complicated to comply with the laws since they may include tremendous delays, trips to the Immigration Houston District office and waiting in lines for hours, mounds of paperwork, and confusing emails from the OISS telling of the newest law.

Please know that we, at the OISS, will continue to do all that we can to keep you abreast of the changes. I also regret if there are times that we may not be able to respond to your requests as quickly as we want. Due to the new SEVIS tracking system, and other responsibilities that have been added to us, I can assure you that there will be times of unwanted delay. Therefore, you are strongly encouraged to:

1) Make appointments to ask questions well in advance about employment benefits, travel, changes of status, and any other visa issues,
2) Check often the BCIS website (www.bcis.gov) to see anything new that may affect your status; and
3) Subscribe and read the emails that are sent through the OISS-ANNOUNCE@rice.edu listserv.

What a privilege it is to work with Rice internationals! We will continue to do our best to try to help you during your stay at Rice!

Sincerely,
Adria L. Baker
Office of International Students & Scholars

New Face in OISS

Many of you would have known Marta in our office if you have visited us lately. Let us introduce to you, our great addition to our team, our new staff assistant, Marta Kapusta. Marta has been associated with Rice University in various roles for over 25 years, and has a very strong attachment to the institution. She came to Rice from Argentina as an international student spouse. She was an international Class III student, and more recently an international student parent.

She has traveled extensively: she has lived and studied in South America, USA, Germany and the Netherlands. She moved back to Houston last August, having lived in the Netherlands for the past seven years, where she was very active in the international community. From her “nomadic” experience she has learned to face and overcome the types of challenges that foreign students and scholars also have to confront.

Marta is easy going and has a great capacity for building connections with people from many cultures. She is so much fun to be around.

Marta is married to Dr. Sergio Kapusta (Rice’79) and has 3 children: Marcela (Rice ’02) Pablo (Princeton ’05) and Ari (hopefully future Rice ’09). She has a MS in Computer Science and a MS in Museology, as well as formal training in resolving transition problems.

She wants to use her knowledge and experience to serve and benefit the community, and there is no better place to do this than at Rice University.

ADDRESS LAWS

The INS requires all foreign nationals (including permanent residents) to report any change in address within 10 days of moving. Failure to provide notification to BCIS is a misdemeanor offense that could result in a fine and/or sentence. If the failure to provide notice is found to be willful, the alien could be removable from the U.S. The BCIS form to use for an address change is the AR-11. It is available on the INS website at www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/forms/fee/forms/ar-11.htm.

Each family member must submit a separate form to the BCIS to the address listed on the form, however, they can be mailed in the same envelope. It is advised that the form be mailed using certified mail, return receipt requested so you have proof of compliance.

In addition to filing the Form AR-11, if you have a pending application with the BCIS, you should notify the INS office where your application was filed. If you have a naturalization application pending, you can report an address change by calling 1-800-375-5283. If you have any other type of BCIS application pending, you can notify the local BCIS office or Service Center that is processing your case. See the BCIS website for a list of addresses at www.bcis.usdoj.gov.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: For Rice, you must change your address in the Registrar’s office (for students) or Human Resources (for employees). The address cannot be a department or a P.O. Box, but must be a physical address. This must be kept current always.

(This information has been adapted from an immigration update sent to the OISS by the immigration law firm of QUAN, BURDETTE & PEREZ, P.C.)

Immigration Documents

You are now required by law to keep your immigration documents with you at all times. You may make copies of all these documents and keep them at home as a record in case you lose any documents, but you must be very careful not to lose them.
IMPORTANT IMMIGRATION INFORMATION

Visa Renewal
If you are planning to travel outside of the State and your F-1/J-1 visa has expired, please make an appointment to come to meet with one of the advisors in OISS. We need to update you of the latest immigration changes. We also need to issue a SEVIS I-20 for your travel. Please allow us two weeks time ahead of your travel plan to process your request.

Visa Unit of the U.S. Embassy in Caracas, Venezuela closed effective January 20, 2003. On December 27, 2002, the Embassy of the United States in Caracas, Venezuela announced that effective Monday, January 20, 2003, the nonimmigrant and immigrant visa units will be closed to routine visa applications until further notice. The reason stated for the closure was due to a reduction in staff.

Transfer to Another School
There are new transfer procedures for F-1 students under the new SEVIS regulations. If you plan to transfer to another school, please contact the Office of International Students and Scholars for specific instruction. If you are new student at Rice, please make an appointment to meet with the staff of our office with your passport, I-20 card and I-20 form immediately after you arrive at our campus. Our office will complete immigration transfer for you.

Visa and Passport
Waiver Revoked for Certain Permanent Residents of Canada and Bermuda
Interim rules were published by both INS and the Department of State on January 31, 2003 that will change the documentary requirements for entry into the U.S. for a permanent resident of Canada or Bermuda who is a citizen of a British Commonwealth country or a citizen of Ireland. Currently, these individuals do not require a U.S. non-immigrant visa or a passport to enter the U.S. However, beginning March 17, 2003, a Canadian landed immigrant or permanent resident of Bermuda who is a citizen of a British Commonwealth country or a citizen of Ireland will need to present a valid passport and a valid non-immigrant visa (eg. H-1B, L-1, F-1, O-1 etc.) to enter the U.S.

Fee Increase For Entry Visa Stamps
The U.S. Department of State is increasing the fee for processing an application for a nonimmigrant visa from $65.00 to $100. This increase became effective November 1, 2002. If you are traveling abroad and renewing your nonimmigrant visa (J-1, H-1B, O-1) after October 31, you will need to pay the new application fee of $100.

INS Ceases to Exist as of March 1, 2003
Effective March 1, 2003 the Immigration and Naturalization Service’s benefits function became a part of the new Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) within the Department of Homeland Security. In a recent press release the following information about the transition was provided:

“Yes, the INS technically ceases to exist, but we are committed to making this transition as seamless and smooth as possible for those we serve,” said Acting INS Commissioner Michael Garcia.

Official forms and documents issued by the former INS are still valid and will continue to be accepted by BCIS and other agencies as evidence of status in the United States.

BCIS local offices will remain in existing INS locations, including Application Support Centers and Service Centers. There will be no immediate change in office locations.

Forms should continue to be mailed to the address indicated in forms and notices.

The National Customer Service Call Center will continue to be available at 1-800-375-5283, or for the hearing impaired at 1-800-767-1833.

Customers will still be able to download forms and check the status of their case online (for cases pending adjudication at Service Centers). The new web address for BCIS will be www.immigration.gov.

The services provided by the BCIS include: the adjudication of family and employment-based petitions; issuance of employment authorization documents; asylum and refugee processing; naturalization; and implementation of special status programs such as Temporary Protected Status.

While the administration of immigration benefits will be taken over by the BCIS, the vast majority of INS’ other functions will be incorporated into two other new bureaus under the Department of Homeland Security. Those bureaus are: Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement - (BICE) and Bureau of Customs and Border Protection - (BCBP)

This information was provided to us compliments of:
Judy J. Lee
Quan, Burdette & Perez, P.C.

Mandatory Immigration Trainings for F & J Visa Holders
The OISS is requiring that all F-1 and J-1 visa holders attend one of the two (30-minutes only) identical trainings on SEVIS (Student & Exchange Visitor Information System). Dependents are welcome, too.

When: Tuesday, April 1, 2003 4:30-5:00pm
Where: Duncan Hall, Room 1055
or
When: Wednesday, April 23, 2003 3:30-4:00pm
Where: Sewall Hall, 301

Additional bonuses:
Tuesday, April 1: Ann Pinchak, an immigration lawyer, will be addressing faculty and departmental administrators from 4:00-4:30 (right before the SEVIS presentation) about misconceptions about H-1B for employers and employees. She’ll also address other new immigration issues that have major affects on foreign nationals, and employers who hire them.

Wednesday, April 23: Judy Lee, an immigration lawyer will be addressing nonimmigrants from 3:00-3:30 (right before the SEVIS presentation) about travel, getting visa, looking ahead and applying for the H-1B, and special registration now and more to come.

RECOMMENDATION: Come both days to get as much information as possible.

Calendar of Spring OISS Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Day to Drop Classes (Undergraduate and Graduate)</th>
<th>Wednesday, April 23, 2003 3:30 to 4:00PM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duncan Hall, Room 1055 or Sewall Hall, 301</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last SIR Meeting</td>
<td>Wednesday, May 7, 2003 12:00 PM to 1:15 PM (SIR meetings currently run on the first Wednesday of the month)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commencement</td>
<td>Saturday, May 10, 2003</td>
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Rice World Spring 2003
This bi-annual publication is designed specifically for the needs of Rice international students and scholars. Please take time to read it.

**Fall Orientation**
A few good men or women needed for the Fall Orientation Program. Please sign up to welcome and assist the students during the last two weeks of August.
You may sign up from one hour to many hours as your schedule allows. Contact Lily Lam at llam@rice.edu or X8755 for signing up.

**Free English & Culture Classes Offered**

**OISS Volunteer-led Classes:**
This is a volunteer service offered to international students, scholars, and dependents.

**Catherine Spain** teaches two Intermediate/Advanced English & Culture Classes.
Time: 1:15 -3:15 PM a, Wednesdays, Blair Lounge (RMC).
**Michelle McCall** teaches Beginning Conversation English class.
Time: 12:00 PM- 1:00 PM, Fridays OISS Lounge.
**Herb Craft** teaches English Idioms and Slang.
Time 12:00 - 1:00PM Mondays, OISS Lounge.

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**What is Sevis?**
SEVIS stands for Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, it is the database the INS uses to track international students and scholars. Rice was approved as a SEVIS school on January 9, 2003. Currently, our office is working on entering all international students and scholars who are on F-1 status and J-1 status into this database. All approvals or adjustments regarding students and scholars statuses must be approved by SEVIS, which requires more documentation and time. Please note that this means there will be a longer wait for the completion of your requests at our office like CPT, OPT, change of educational level, extensions, etc. The target date for our office to complete the data entry for all our students and scholars is May 16.

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**OISS-Announce**
It is vitally important that you have subscribed to OISS Listserves since we need to inform you frequently of the forever changing immigration regulations. Our office is also offering many different workshops to help you be prepared for Immigration requirements, tax preparation and job searching skills, and we rely on the the OISS-anounce to be connected to you. On the top, we often receive donation of tickets to special concerts, performance and cultural events, if you are not subscribed to the OISS-announce, you will miss the opportunities to enjoy these events free. To subscribe, please follow these directions:

oiiss-announce: write to listserv@rice.edu. No subject. Message should say: subscribe oiiss-announce.

**OISS-Market**
If you want to get information to buy and sell, as well as communicate with your fellow students and internationals, please send the message: subscribe oiiss-market to listserv@rice.edu (no subject).