International Education Week 2018

By Andy Meretoja

The annual International Education Week (IEW) celebration took place November 12 – 16, 2018, and OISS was excited to see so many great events and activities celebrating Rice’s campus diversity and international population! Several offices and departments all across Rice hosted events for IEW, including the following highlights:

OISS started International Education Week with an outreach program, by hosting K-12 P/DSOs on campus for a special immigration training provided by the Student & Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). You can read more about the event in the Rice News article: https://news.rice.edu/2018/11/13/educators-explore-immigration-law-at-rice/

On Sunday leading up to IEW, OISS was excited for the opportunity to host a table at SA and RISA’s International Night Fall 2018. The event highlighted Rice’s diverse student body with food, games and wonderful dance performances!

The annual OISS Presidents’ Lunch provided us an opportunity to thank the leaders of the international students clubs at Rice. OISS was joined by VIP guests Dr. Fred Higgs (Vice Provost for Academic Affairs), Ms. Klara Jelinkova (Vice President for International Operations), Mr. David Tenney (University Registrar) & Dr. Robert Bruce (Dean of the Glasscock School of Continuing Studies).

OISS partnered with GSA for what has become another IEW tradition, the International Coffee Break! The Latin American Graduate Student Association (LAGSA), Rice Pakistani Student Association (RPSA), Indian Students at Rice (ISAR), Brazilian Student Association (BRASA), and Korean Graduate Student Association (KGSA) provided the delicious treats for this event!

The Center for Career Development, GSA, RISA and OISS co-hosted a panel discussion on International Student Employment in the U.S. Students and Postdocs got an opportunity to learn valuable information from professionals representing Facebook, Goldman Sachs, and other companies.

Finally, there is no International Education Week without our Thanksgiving Lunch! 90 international students & scholars received tickets to join the OISS staff for this traditional meal, and thanks to their generosity OISS was able to make a $100 donation to the Houston Food Bank in honor of IEW! To revisit the lovely lunch, please check out the Rice News article at http://news.rice.edu/2018/11/19/thanksgiving-comus-early-for-international-students/ (including a video by Brandon Martin, Manager of Videography at Rice’s Office of Public Affairs!)

We were also able to expand our list of International Recommended Reading. Submissions continue to be accepted throughout the year, so please take a look at http://oiss.rice.edu/recommendedreading to learn more!

For more information on all International Education Week events, please see http://oiss.rice.edu/iew. For the Rice News article about IEW, please see https://news.rice.edu/2018/11/07/cornucopia-of-celebrations-coming-to-campus-for-international-education-week
Dear Rice International Students & Scholars,

I hope you had time during the winter break to catch up on rest and inspiration organizing things you don’t have time to do most of the year, visit new and favorite places, as well as connect with friends and family.

The OISS closes for one week during the winter break, but we never rest, we constantly seek to have an “open door” welcome to you through our active Winter Events, communicating with new incoming students and scholars for the spring, as well as responding to many needs throughout your break.

The new calendar year gives us a renewed outlook on what we can do to support your continued academic and research success. While we have planned many workshops and programs to help, we are very open to your thoughts and suggestions. Please write me with your ideas at: abaker@rice.edu.

Have an outstanding 2019, and new semester! Thank you for the wonderful things you bring to Rice University!

Gratefully,

Adria L. Baker, Ed.D.
Executive Director, Office of International Students & Scholars
Associate Vice Provost for International Education
Immigration Today — Practical Tips from Lawyers

Adapted from final comments at the "Advanced Immigration Seminar“ on October 11, 2018 at Rice University by Judy Lee and Kari Blackman of Foster, LLC

- Take ownership of your immigration status and process – be responsible and responsive.
- Learn the rules of your visa and comply with guidance from your DSO or attorney.
- Work closely with your DSO if F or J status and comply with SEVIS rules.
- Pay attention and be responsive to correspondence from your employer and attorney.
- Calendar critical dates and deadlines.
- Be proactive / start immigration processes early.
- Review ALL information / dates on immigration documents for accuracy.
- Carry I-797 approvals and your I-94 at all times or at least copies.
- Keep copies of all immigration related filings and correspondence in a safe place.
- Be careful about your social activities and who you associate with – avoid actions leading to charges or arrests for DUI, assault (especially domestic), drug use, firearms violations, etc.
- Social media usage – use good judgement and/or curtail posts.
- If you encounter any immigration or law enforcement officer be polite, cooperative and professional, even if provoked.
- Avoid traveling to the border or within 100 miles, if possible.
- Avoid foreign travel for leisure vacation – choose a U.S. destination instead.
- Talk to your dependent spouse and children about the above.
- Pay and/or file your tax returns – comply with IRS obligations.
- Try to maintain calm and control what you can control that is immigration related – this too shall pass.
- Understand that there may not consistency or logical thinking in our immigration laws and processes.
- Immigration challenges and perspectives have been trying in the past as well, but this does improve and regulations are never stagnant.
- Encourage your friends and colleagues to lobby their elected officials for immigration reform and for them to VOTE.
- Note from all of the members of the OISS, the Rice community and Foster: YOU ARE VERY, VERY WELCOME HERE!!

Upcoming Immigration Seminar – Stay Tuned!

With so many changes in immigration law, it is critical to stay abreast of the regulations, and how they affect you and your plans while in the USA and at Rice. Stay tuned for the upcoming Immigration Seminar in early February!

- **Who:** Immigration Attorney
- **Date and Room:** TBD (stay tuned via OISS-Announce messages)
- **Time:** 4:00-5:30pm
- **Topics:** Updates on immigration laws that affect university international students and scholars. Visa options beyond F and J visas, as well as visa category benefits and limitations.
Academic Integrity at Rice and Beyond

By Scott Pett

Every semester, Rice University puts a hold called "Honor Code Affirmed" on each active student’s account. To clear the hold, students are supposed to read Honor Code statements (including Student Code of Conduct and Rice’s Alcohol Policy), then click a box affirming that they have read the Honor Code and accept its terms. The hold is then immediately cleared.

If only it were as easy to practice day-to-day academic integrity as it is to clear a semi-annual hold on class registration.

Indeed, it is not always convenient or immediately advantageous to follow Rice’s Honor Code. It’s tempting to misrepresent yourself on social media as a PhD before defending your dissertation. It seems harmless to copy someone else’s computer code for a project. It’s easy to fall short of responsible citation practices. In the face of incredible pressure and workload, it’s often expedient to contract someone else to complete an assignment for you.

It’s not always easy to practice academic integrity—at least, not in the short-term. In the long-term, failing to be honest in your academic and professional life will cost you time, money, credibility, and self-pride.

Academic integrity is bigger than blatant acts of plagiarism. And, for international students, the stakes are extremely high. If any student is reported to Student Judicial Programs for breaching the code of student conduct, they could be suspended. For a domestic student, facing the Honor Council could result in the loss of a semester; for an international student, suspension would also result in termination of visa status.

Academic integrity extends beyond the hedges. If, as the employee of a tech firm, you copy from third-party code, that company might not only fire you—they might pass on hiring alumni from Rice in the future. The same applies for all employers regarding students who misrepresent themselves on their applications or during the interview process.

It’s true that the Rice Honor Code is partly a culturally bound idea. You might come from somewhere with a different sense of what it means to exercise academic integrity. But when you come to Rice, and when you graduate from Rice, you are an ambassador for this school (and to some extent your nation of origin). Every semester, you affirm that you understand and promise to live by university standards.

If you have questions about what it means to follow the Honor Code at Rice and practice integrity in your academic and professional lives, there are many resources available to you. I encourage you to start here.

On my honor, I have neither given nor received any unauthorized aid on this newsletter article.

Further Reading

OPT “Priority Processing”

By Andy Meretoja

OISS is once again offering “Priority Processing” for early OPT applications for students graduating in May. If you submit the first part of your OPT application to OISS (i.e. OPT Student Form, OPT Faculty Advisor Form & I-765) Friday, February 1st, we guarantee that you can get a priority OPT I-20 pick-up appointment during the week of February 11th, which is the earliest time when USCIS will allow you to send in your application. Please remember that you don’t need a job offer in order to apply for OPT!

You definitely want to take advantage of this opportunity if:

1. You would like to start your OPT employment soon after graduation, or
2. You would like to travel internationally between graduation and starting your OPT employment.
3. Important note: If you’re planning to travel outside of the U.S. during Spring Break, you may want to wait until after your trip before applying for OPT!
4. For more information, please see http://oiss.rice.edu/priorityprocessing/.
5. Also check out http://oiss.rice.edu/studentwork/ for the OPT materials.

SPRING 2019 CPT/OPT WORKSHOPS

Do you plan on applying for internships in the Spring?

Come learn about the work authorization process for F-1 student visa holders. OISS will answer questions regarding Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT).

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Remember that all off-campus work MUST be authorized by an OISS Advisor.
J Visa Health Insurance Requirement: Are you covered from “Entry to Exit”?

By Agnes Vajtai

When exchange visitors on a J visa arrive to the US they need to purchase health insurance that meets certain minimum standards. This is an immigration requirement independent of the person’s actual physical condition or individual needs, and intends to make sure exchange visitors will have sufficient coverage and will not be left with huge medical bills in case they need any services in the US. The regulation also specifies that the plan should cover the persons from the formal start date of his/her research to the formal end date. However, since visitors can and most of the time do spend time in the US before and/or after the formal program dates, the Department of State (DOS) suggests purchasing a plan which covers not only the obligatory dates but to have “entry to exit” insurance coverage which would provide protection from the time the exchange visitor departs his or her home country until he/she returns.

It seems logical; after all why would anyone pay for insurance coverage for an entire year for instance that covers the program dates only and opt out protection for days before or after, when engaging in other than business activities like sightseeing, travelling or recreation? However, more often than not exchange visitors tend to end their health insurance plan sooner than they actually depart the US—leaving them and their families vulnerable. Perhaps they try to save money this way not realizing that the risk of getting injured and needing medical attention will not change, or mistakenly believing that if coverage beyond program dates is not required for immigration purposes they will not need it for personal reasons either.

Since unfortunately accidents do happen and they do not discriminate against dates, places or activities it is common sense and strongly recommended to stay enrolled in the plan until you arrive back home safely, and OISS advises to follow the DOS’ recommendation to choose an insurance plan that covers you and your loved ones not only for the minimum immigration requirements but also for your individual needs, e.g., for your entire stay in the US.

As a quick reference, minimum health insurance requirements under J regulations are:

- Medical benefits of at least $100,000 per accident or illness
- Repatriation of remains in the amount of $25,000
- Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of exchange visitors to his or her home country in the amount of $50,000
- Deductibles not to exceed $500 per accident or illness
- A pre-existing “wait period” limitation of no more than six months
- The policy must be backed by the full faith and credit of home country government (for those covered by their home country’s national insurance plan), or the company providing the insurance must meet minimum rating requirements established by the U.S. government (an A.M. Best rating of "A-" or above, an Insurance Solvency International, Ltd. (ISI) rating of "A-1" or above, a Standard & Poor’s Claims-paying Ability rating of "A-" or above, or a Research, Inc. rating of B+ or above).
- Policy must be in English
- Minimum 75% coverage for each accident or illness
- All exchange visitors and any accompanying dependents may also be subject to the requirements of the Affordable Care Act (22 CFR 62.14(a))
U.S. Taxes – Not Fun, But A Federal Requirement

by Sandra Bloem-Curtis

Filing a US tax return is not exactly fun, but it is required by US federal law. Anyone present in the US for any length of time in 2018, must file a tax return to be legally compliant – regardless of whether you received US funds or not. The deadline for filing your tax forms with the US government is April 15, 2019.

While OISS does not have a US tax specialist on staff, OISS does have some great resources to help you comply with this legal requirement.

Tax 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/tax

GTP video resources: Stay tuned to your email for video resources by GTP that OISS will disseminate, including “Welcome to the US Tax System” that explains the US tax system and the helpful tutorial video on how to use the GTP software.

Tax Workshop for Internationals – see advertisement below.


Additional resources available on the OISS website: http://oiss.rice.edu/tax

Continued on next page.

SPRING 2019
TAX WORKSHOP
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20
4-5PM
KECK HALL 100

PRESENTED BY TAX PROFESSIONALS FROM BRIGGS & VESELKA CO.
WWW.BVCCPA.COM

WE UNDERSTAND THAT FILING YOUR U.S. TAX RETURN CAN BE A CONFUSING PROCESS, BUT IT IS A LEGAL REQUIREMENT. JOIN US FOR THE TAX WORKSHOP, WHERE WE WILL HAVE EXPERTS GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS AND ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.
U.S. Taxes – Not Fun, But A Federal Requirement continued...

Helpful Tips:

What is the deadline? April 15, 2019 - Mail your tax forms on time to avoid financial penalties.

Do you have an ITIN or SSN? You will need a SSN or ITIN to file your taxes. If you are receiving wages, you may be eligible for a Social Security Number (SSN). Be sure to apply for it before April, so that you may complete your forms on time. If you are not eligible for a SSN (you have not been employed in the US), then you will need to file for your ITIN application as part of your tax return. Please see OISS for more details on how to apply.

No income during 2018? You may only need to complete the Form 8843. Glacier Tax Prep software (available in OISS) can assist you with this determination.

You received income during 2018? If you received a scholarship/stipend/paycheck for employment, you may need to complete the Form 8843 and Form 1040NR. Glacier Tax Prep software can assist you with this determination and to complete the forms.

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

What tax documents might you receive?

Depending on your situation, you may receive one of these documents needed to report your taxes.

W-2 form - Rice employees (including student employees) who receive reportable wages will receive a W-2 to be filed with your tax return. W-2s are 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. Your 1042-S form will be available online if you have signed up with Payroll’s FNIS after March 15.

How do you know if you have a tax treaty? Foreign nationals who have tax treaties should learn the terms of their treaties [http://www.irs.gov/publications/p901/ar01.html](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. An ITIN or SSN and additional forms may need to be completed in Payroll in order to receive those benefits.
We know you want it.

You want more experience so you can be more competitive in the job market. Maybe extra income wouldn’t hurt either. But what exactly can you do without risking your F-1 visa status?

On-campus jobs: AVAILABLE NOW!
- Maximum 20 hours per week while classes are in session
- No maximum hours during official school breaks (refer to academic calendar)
- GRAD STUDENTS! This includes any RA/TA position you may have to earn your stipend.
- No OISS authorization required.
- OISS can issue a support letter for Social Security, if you need one.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) - AVAILABLE AFTER COMPLETING 1 ACADEMIC YEAR. Yes, really. We know this is a bummer, but it is a federal regulation that neither OISS nor Rice University control. This type of authorization is only available for off-campus work directly related to your major field of study. For grad students, this type of employment is usually tied to a course or is necessary for thesis/dissertation research. If it is just something that would be a beneficial experience but not actually going toward your degree, I’m afraid it cannot be authorized under CPT. If you need to be off-campus and conduct thesis/dissertation research only, and will not engage in an employer-employee relationship, then there is an additional option available to you – come see me!

Optional Practical Training (OPT) - AVAILABLE UPON GRADUATING.
This is a government-issued work permit card valid for 1 year. Plan ahead since it takes the government about 3+ months to issue it, so you will want to apply before graduation.

While we totally understand that experiential learning is a part of the educational experience at the university level, immigration regulations have not caught up yet. This means, for the most part, that we are confined to narrow avenues in being able to approve off-campus work. You are welcome to schedule an appointment with an advisor anytime to discuss these – and ALL questions are welcome! We are here to guide you on the “do’s and don’ts” of immigration and help you in any way that we can.
How Did Rice’s Owls Spend the Winter Break?

By Agnes Vajtai

The magic of Houston’s winter
Growing up we were so much looking forward to the holidays each year with such excitement, anticipation and certainty that a magic of some sort will about to happen, and despite that we are grownups now the feelings of excitement and anticipation remain the same. It’s been said that the holiday season is the best time of the year because it brings joy, people are cheerful, thankful, and families and friends spend more time together. It is indeed a wonderful time in the OISS as we organize events for the winter break, and look forward to celebrate together with many of our internationals. And, seeing the joy and happiness of those who participated makes us believe that some sort of magic has actually happened. Here are a few highlights, pictures and feedback of this year’s winter events:

Zoo Lights (December 12, 2018). The sparkling lights of the Houston Zoo offered a wonderful time for the 67 students, scholars and families who visited Zoo Lights with us, not to mention the surprise by Santa, a.k.a. Dean Matsuda and the generosity of the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) for paying the admission fee for all.

A Christmas Carol (December 13, 2018). We visited the Alley Theater for the first time to watch A Christmas Carol, and we were also treated with a special backstage tour after the play. It was an exciting evening thanks to the generosity of the actors and theater staff who took us behind the scenes, explained how the equipment work, how to prepare wigs, dresses, and the magic of making theater. “The play was AMAZING! I really enjoyed the backstage tour! It was an awesome experience!” wrote Bhagyashree Bachhav about the event.

Houston Rockets vs Utah Jazz (December 17, 2018). The holidays’ magic continued with watching an exciting basketball game where high score and a win for the home team called for celebration. “Thank you for OISS organizing us to watch so exciting game. This is my first time watching NBA game on the spot, which is much wonderful than watching on TV. The fan’s enthusiasm infected me deeply, so I cheered with them all the time. Although I hurt my throat, I feel it worthy for happiness. When Rockets got the three-point in the last few seconds, which helps them win the game, I am very excited and proud of them. They are heroes!! I am looking forward to OISS’s organization of watching Rockets’ game in the future. Have a great day.” Qi Zhang

We also met over lunch at Sweet Paris and had a lovely chat while enjoying excellent food. Visited the Fine Arts Museum, and explored the downtown tunnels with a Houston Greeter who introduced us to lots of historical and architectural information while we were walking in and out of buildings, above and below ground. We hope that the multi-faceted programs OISS offered this year helped have a memorable holidays for many internationals who stayed here during the winter break.
How To Make an Appointment with an OISS Advisor

By Marjorie Cerejo

OISS offers many services for our students and scholars. If you would like to speak with an international advisor, you are welcome to book an appointment with one of our highly trained staff members. If you must miss your scheduled appointment or need to change it, please call our office at 713-348-6095.

The fastest way to do book an appointment is to call the office (713-348-6095), but you may also send an email to oiss@rice.edu. When scheduling by email, please include the following information:

⇒ Your full legal name
⇒ Dates you are available
⇒ Times you are available
⇒ Cell phone number where you can be reached in case we need to contact you before the appointment
⇒ If applicable: Preferred OISS advisor (that you have spoken to or met with previously)
⇒ Reason for appointment

During the semesters, we also offer walk-in advising for F-1 students on Wednesdays, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. During these hours, an OISS advisor will be able to meet students without a scheduled appointment. Outside of this time you should not rely on walk-in appointments being available, you should always schedule in advance.

Also, remember that phone appointments are available for students who are currently not on-campus.

Meet with an international advisor if you would like to have more information regarding:

⇒ Student employment (On-campus, off-campus, CPT, OPT). We recommend that you first plan to attend a workshop offered by OISS.
⇒ Maintaining Status on OPT
⇒ Adding or dropping classes
⇒ Health insurance
⇒ Any immigration concerns or issues

Sometimes you will obtain information from friends, family, and various websites. Although this may be convenient, it is possible that the information may not apply to your specific situation. Never hesitate to set up an appointment with an OISS advisor.

Remember that OISS’s website has most of the information you need to know. Please visit https://oiss.rice.edu and check it out!

The OISS front desk is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (M-F) if you wish to drop by and make an appointment in person. The front desk staff can also assist with general questions and most document pick-up and drop-off.

Physical address:
Rice University | 6100 Main St. | Houston, TX 77005

2018 U.S./Mexico Academic Mobility Fair

By Maria Corcuera

This past October, Eduardo Ibarra, Mexican physics Ph.D. student at Rice and I had the opportunity to represent Rice University at the 6th EducationUS Mexico Academic Mobility Fair in Mexico City.

This event organized by USA Mexico and COMEXUS gathered 33 Universities from across the US, with the purpose to increase awareness and share information on academic and exchange opportunities in high education institutes in the US for Mexican students.

It was uplifting to meet so many Mexican students eager to learn more about the programs that we offer and life on our campus. The students who stopped at our booth were interested in our ESL, undergraduate and graduate programs. More than half of the questions that we got were for STEM and business fields, areas that are very strong at Rice.

Representing Rice and talking about all the wonderful things that the University offers, in the country where I grew up and where most of my family and friends live was a very happy and meaningful experience for me.
Meet Scott Pett—International Advisor

Q: What is your role in the OISS?
A: I’m the newest F-visa International Advisor.

Q: Have you ever lived or worked abroad?
A: For two years during college, I lived all over Poland. The country and people there are beautiful! I became fluent in Polish while living there, but it’s been over a decade since I’ve used the language, so I can maybe only read a little bit at this point.

Q: Do you have any advice for international students and scholars?
A: Have fun and study hard.

Also, some dime-store wisdom my dad shares all the time: If you don’t try, you can’t fail; if you don’t fail, you can’t learn; if you don’t learn, you can’t succeed. So, keep trying.

Q: What is one of your favorite places in Houston?
A: If we’re going by how much money I’ve spent since moving here six years ago, my favorite place is Jones Hall, where the Houston Symphony performs.

I’ve seen Ben Folds play there with the orchestra (fantastic). I’ve been to Nat Geo lectures about space exploration (find a way to go for free). My two girls love the family concert series (the conductor is hilarious). Probably my favorite thing to do at Jones is watch movies while the symphony performs the film score. So far, I’ve only seen Home Alone and Psycho, but I’ll be there again in March with my girls for Star Wars.

Q: Is there anything else that you would like to share with the international community . . .
A: Working at OISS has been one of the most fulfilling experiences I’ve ever had. I meet a dozen brilliant people every day. I have amazing co-workers. And I’m learning new things all the time. So, I want thank the international student population for coming to Rice and teaching me all the time.
Just for Undergrads

New Webpage for Undergrads

A new webpage has been created for international undergrads that lists upcoming programs as well as information for Alumni.

Check it out: https://oiss.rice.edu/events-programs/just-undergraduates

The website includes the first edition of the International Undergraduate Alumni Newsletter. A special thank you to Scott Pett who designed the newsletter, wrote articles and edited it.

Join the I-PREP 2019 Team

WHAT IS I-PREP? I-PREP stands for "International - Preparation and Regulation Education Program", which is the undergraduate orientation program for new international students. It takes place right before O-Week every summer.


WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION? There will be an informational session in January 2019 (exact date and location TBA). This session will be led by I-PREP Student Directors, Noor Elsonbaty and Sofia Ruiz.

HOW DO I APPLY? The I-PREP Application can be found at: https://oiss.rice.edu/iprepadvisor/ Applications are due Monday, February 11th. For more information about I-PREP, visit https://oiss.rice.edu/iprep/

QUESTIONS?
Noor Elsonbaty, I-PREP Student Director, nye1@rice.edu
Sofia Ruiz, I-PREP Student Director, mr53@rice.edu
Jenny Brydon, Sr. Manager, OISS, jbrydon@rice.edu
Are you an undergraduate student interested in an international experience during your Rice degree? Did you know you can participate in an exchange program from right here in Houston, virtually? Are you ready to learn more about the Global Scholars Program?

The pilot Global Scholars Program provides students with the opportunity to take online for-credit courses from international research universities, while enrolled full-time in residence at Rice.

All the universities participating in the Global Scholars Program are world class institutions with committed students, and leading academic staff. Taking part in the program gives students an opportunity to take advantage of course offerings not necessarily available at Rice, while engaging in a cross-cultural experience with your online classmates.

To learn more about the Global Scholars Program, please see http://online.rice.edu/global-scholars-program. We also recommend viewing a recording of the Global Scholars Program information session, given during International Education Week with panelists including: Dr. Caroline Levander (Vice President for Global and Digital Strategy), Dr. Brian Gibson (Senior Associate Dean of Undergraduates) and David Tenney (University Registrar). The recording is available at http://online.rice.edu/global-scholars-program/about.

Rice Fulbright Students Travel to NYC and Boston

Rice is proud of its many students who have received special awards and recognitions. With our Focus of Fulbright outreach efforts, it is great to highlight our Fulbright graduate students, as well.

Hosted by Dean Seiichi Matsuda, Dean of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies at Rice, some of our current Fulbright students were able to meet with Fulbright program sponsors in person. The two delegations traveled to either New York City (to visit IIE) or Boston (to visit LASPAU), where their professional dialogues left meaningful impacts of their countries and impressions of the USA.
New OISS Logo

By Andy Meretoja

In October 2018, OISS hosted another Logo Competition for all current international students and scholars at Rice, with a prize of $350. We received a record number of brilliant and innovative designs, which made things very difficult for the judging panel. In the end, a design by Yixin Zhou, a graduate student from China, was selected as the winner, with the new logo unveiled during International Education Week. Yixin was kind enough to answer a few interview questions, sharing some information about herself and the inspiration behind her design.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and what made you want to participate in the logo competition?

A: I am a graduate student from School of Architecture and currently working on my thesis project. As an international student, I keep a close attention on the news and emails from OISS. When I saw the logo competition, I was excited to participate in the events and have this opportunity to contribute my design experience to the community.

Q: What was the inspiration behind your design?

A: The first idea came to my mind was that the logo should be associated as part of the university as well as a unique identification of OISS. It combines two key elements: an owl and a globe into the “O” character. The welcoming gesture of the owl addresses the characteristic of OISS being friendly, informative, and accessible.

Q: What are you most looking forward to in 2019?

A: In 2019, I will be graduated and starting a new track. I am sure that learning is a continuous process through the rest of my life. With more knowledge and skills, I am looking forward to challenges and the unknown beyond.

For more information about the logo competition, please see [http://oiss.rice.edu/logo-competition](http://oiss.rice.edu/logo-competition).

Traveling Outside of the U.S.??

F-1 and J-1 visa holders (and any F-2 and J-2 dependents) verify the following prior to travel:

1. Passport, valid at least 6 months past the date of (re)entry into the U.S.
2. Recent travel endorsement on the I-20 or DS-2019 (endorsement should be from the current semester)
3. Valid visa stamp
4. If traveling while on F-1 OPT or the STEM OPT extension, review your documentation to make sure it includes the following:
   - I-20 showing OPT is approved on pg. 2 and updated with current employer information if possible. Please note that travel signatures are only valid for 6 months while on OPT.
   - Original EAD
   - Letter from your employer, if applicable

Procedure for Requesting Travel Endorsement

To request for a travel endorsement on your I-20 or DS-2019, please visit OISS with your most recent I-20 / DS-2019 and your passport. Please allow one business day for processing. Prior to summer and winter breaks, OISS will offer specific times when you can get your I-20 / DS-2019 signed for travel while you wait. These times are listed on our [Events Calendar](http://events.calendar). Please note that outside of these times, the standard one day processing time applies. If you are requesting a travel signature from abroad, please send request to [oiss@rice.edu](mailto:oiss@rice.edu) along with a prepaid shipping label so the I-20 can be mailed to you.
REAP International Program

By Elmira Ganiyeva

As we notice, all influencers who change people’s lives and make a difference in the world have a set of features like knowledge and competence in what they say and do, proper skills, ability and experience. We all know they did not get all this in one day; it is a result of constant learning, training and growth. Volunteering is a great place for this as you learn a lot while being engaged in it. Even if you are a freshman, it is never too early to start sharing your experience at Rice with young and smart people in your home country, inspiring them to become better versions of themselves, thus making a difference in their lives. Rice is a better place every day because of the talented and enthusiastic students from every corner of the world, like you. So, be the volunteering ambassador for Rice by participating in the REAP International Program.

REAP International (Rice Experiences Advertised to Prospects – Internationally) is a program designed to increase Rice’s visibility on a broad-based scale to prospective international students through Rice students’ experiences. Each currently enrolled, degree-seeking international student on a non-immigrant visa at Rice can participate in this program.

Here is a few of our ambassadors sharing their REAP International experience.

Joanne Zhou, Sophomore, Brown College

When I was in high school, I loved to go to different universities’ info sessions and learn more about a school. That’s why REAP is a very rewarding program for me where I became the one hosting an info session. I’m glad that students can learn about my school and its unique campus culture. Since I’m introducing Rice from a student’s point of view, the prospective students can have a more comprehensive understanding of Rice especially in terms of its college and social life, which is difficult to know by just looking at the online data and information. Last but not least, I’m very grateful that REAP gave me this chance to reconnect with my high school fellows and to make an impact. One student attending my info session actually became really interested in Rice and she came all the way to Houston this summer to visit the campus!

Nishant Verma, Senior, Brown College

Giving a REAP talk is always a great source of joy. It provides a wonderful opportunity to reflect on my time at Rice, what I have learnt, and the many opportunities I have been able to take advantage of. All this while sharing with High School students the value of a higher education and the value of a higher education abroad. While this might be my last REAP talk through the Rice program, I intend to continue such sharings in my home country as an alumn. 

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REAP International Program continued

**William Su, Junior, Jones College**
REAP was an interesting and positive experience for me. I presented back at my high school to the junior class (rising seniors), which had around 90 people. It was interesting because I remember when I was in high school, I also had to sit through many of these mandatory college talks. The main difference now, however, is that a lot of the talks I sat through were presented by adults that actually work at those universities. REAP allows young college students like me to be able to share our own college experiences and in a way promote Rice as a university. I think having a college student speak was much more exciting for the students listening too because I knew almost all of them personally and was able to speak from a student’s perspective. During and after the presentation, they asked many questions regarding Rice specifically and about my study abroad experience. It was almost less of a presentation and more of a guided discussion. I definitely recommend all International Students to try out REAP when they go back home and would love to participate in REAP again in the future.

**Sangheon Han, Ph.D. Student, Department of Bioengineering**
REAP gave me an opportunity to use my leadership to inspire younger students. I visited two schools: Songpa middle school and University of Seoul. I had about ~50 students in total and none of them has been in U.S. I introduced Rice University including Texas in general and shared my experience studying in US for the last 7 years. They seemed to be amazed while watching a video about Rice tour (size, diversity, nice buildings). For middle school students, I addressed the life as a Rice Undergrad and a variety of majors available at Rice. For college students, I shared my graduate school experience at Rice. Even after my presentation, a couple of students contacted me through email regarding studying at Rice and the way to prepare studying in U.S. I knew nothing about studying in US at that age until I went to college where I fortunately joined in a study-abroad program in US. I hope they are truly inspired by my talk and consider this option at some points in their life.

**Adithya Kumar Pediredla, PhD student, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering**
REAP gave me a unique opportunity to be a Rice ambassador and hone my communication and networking skills. Thanks to the program, I was able to share my knowledge and experience on the academic culture at the US in general and Rice in particular to the prospective undergraduate students from India. Talking about infrastructure at Rice made me better appreciate the excellent facilities at Rice, which I typically take for granted. A couple of hours of the vacation time to improve your skills and on top of that, the honorarium by OISS is a steal :). I strongly recommend all the international students to participate in this program and increase the visibility of Rice University.
5 Fun Things to Do in Houston on a Budget
by Irene Mendez

**Have a Picnic and See a Show**
https://www.milleroutdoortheatre.com/
Miller Outdoor Theatre is an outdoor stage that puts different type of live productions from March through November all for free! It is walking distance from Rice in the Museum District, and all you need is to just pack up a picnic and bring a blanket or lawn chair to enjoy shows from the lawn; however, if you prefer covered seating, you have to prepare beforehand and obtain tickets from the box office during designated times.

**Check Out a Bat Act**
http://www.houstontx.gov/parks/batpage.html
The Waugh Bridge in Montrose is home to a whole bunch of Mexican free-tailed bats. Although some of them didn’t make it through Hurricane Harvey, the colony still remains today. Around sunset you can catch their creepy yet fascinating bat act in the viewing platform, for free!

**Explore a Secret Underground Cistern**
https://buffalobayou.org/visit/destination/the-cistern/
The Buffalo Bayou Cistern is one of the coolest, hidden gems of our city. It was a former drinking water reservoir built in 1926 for the City of Houston that has been re-imagined as a public space for our city. It has 200 concrete columns soaring 25-feet and 87,500-square-feet of open space, which is a great space for art installations! Although entrance isn’t free, the costs are quite affordable. Historical tours cost $5 ($10 for the art installation) and you can sign up for 5 meditation sessions on Sundays from 10 to 11am.

**Visit the Menil**
https://www.menil.org/
The Menil Collection is a wonderful museum that is always free, as their main mission is making art accessible to everyone. It is very close to the Rice campus, and it houses both a permanent collection as well as special exhibitions year round. You could take in some beautiful art and enjoy the lovely grounds surrounding the museum.

**Explore Houston’s Murals and Graffiti Art**
https://carrieberst.com/comprehensive-guide-houstons-colorful-walls/
Houston has an amazing street art collection. You can’t throw a rock around town without hitting some form of commissioned street art. The website listed above has created a comprehensive guide to Houston’s colorful walls. All of these wonderful murals are free to the public, and this website actually gives you the best tips on parking and lighting for pictures. So if you’re interested in upping your Instagram game, grab your friends and your phone, and go check out some of these murals around Houston.
RICE WORLD

OISS Advertisements

INTERNATIONAL LADIES NETWORK

Please join the OISS staff members for networking, food and fun activities with other International ladies. The luncheons will take place on the first Wednesday of the month in the GSA Lounge, RMC basement, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Pizza will be provided.

DATES FOR 2018—2019

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<th>Fall 2018</th>
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<tr>
<td>October 3, 2018</td>
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<td>November 7, 2018</td>
<td>March 6, 2019</td>
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<tr>
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For more information, please see http://oiss.rice.edu/International-ladies.

All activities are subject to change, stay tuned to the OISS-Announce listserv.
You can subscribe at https://mailman.rice.edu/mailman/listinfo/oiss-announce.

EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM TRAINING FOR ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS

TRAINING ON J-1 AND J-2 VISAS
10:30 - 11:30 A.M.

JANUARY 16, 2019
FEBRUARY 20, 2019
MARCH 20, 2019
APRIL 17, 2019

Office of International Students and Scholars
Lovett Hall, Entrance A, Second Floor
RSVP - mec3@rice.edu

OISS DEPENDENTS ORIENTATION

OISS will be hosting an orientation session for F-1 and J-1 dependents who have just arrived to the United States.

Every 1st Monday of the month @ 10:30 a.m.
Dec. 3, 2018
Jan. 7, 2019
Feb. 4, 2019
Mar. 4, 2019

OISS OFFICE
LOVETT HALL, ENTRANCE A, SECOND FLOOR
RSVP - mec3@rice.edu