Continuing to make good progress academically, in research, and socially has not been easy during our current global health crisis. But we applaud the Rice international students and scholars who have made great strides, despite the many, many challenges! Here’s a look at how we have moved forward together. Great job!
Advanced Immigration Seminar

U.S. immigration law changes often, and the more one learns, the more options are available.

Topics include various visa categories, immigration updates and changes that affect Rice’s international students, faculty, researchers – and the departments that host them.

Date: Wednesday, February 10, 2021
Time: 4:00 pm – 5:30pm
Who: Kathleen Gasparian
Immigration attorney from Gasparian Spivey Immigration

What: Selected and important immigration topics for Rice international students and scholars
Question & Answer opportunities at end of session, after the presentation.

Zoom details will be emailed on OISS Announce

Please invite any and all in our Rice community that may benefit from this information.
### Map of Fall 2020 Statistics

#### International Students & Scholars by Country/Region - Fall 2020 *

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**Totals:**
- Enrolled non-immigrant degree-seeking students: **1733**
- Graduate international students: **1250**
- Undergraduate international students: **483**
- Exchange & Visiting international students in 2020: **160**
- New degree-seeking international students Fall 2020: **417**
- International scholars (teaching/research) 2019-2020: **875**

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**Did you know?**
- The international students make up **24%** of the degree-seeking Rice student population.
- Rice international students and scholars represent **108** different countries/regions.
- **219** Rice students studied abroad in 2019-2020 (includes credit and non-credit programs).

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*Numbers as of 9/11/2020*

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**UG = Undergraduate degree seeking students**  
**GR = Graduate degree seeking students**  
**S = Scholars**
By Jenny Brydon

If you came to the USA previously on a J visa, it is possible that you are currently subject to the Two-Year Home-Country Physical Presence Requirement. In order to apply for an H1-B, L-1 or PR status you cannot be subject to this rule. It’s not too early to check this as future US visas may be dependent on this information.

**Question 1**
Are you on an F student that was previously on a J visa? Yes —> move on to Question 2. If no, please read the other articles in this wonderful newsletter, this one isn’t for you. :)

**Question 2**
Pull out and dust off your J visa and the DS-2019 that you got signed by the US Embassy/Consulate. Does either say you are subject to the Two-Year Home-Country Physical Presence Requirement, also known as 212(e)? If yes or unsure —> move on to Question 3. If no, you should not have a problem with changing your status BUT I still recommend reading Question 3 just to be safe.

**Question 3**
Who is subject?

*(taken from the Department of State webpage - [https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/exchange.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/exchange.html))*

Two-year Home-country Physical Presence Requirement Conditions - An exchange visitor is subject to the two-year home-country physical presence requirement if the following conditions exist:

- **Government funded exchange program** - The program is financed in whole or in part directly or indirectly by the U.S. government or the government of the exchange visitor's nationality or last residence;
- **Graduate medical education or training** - The exchange visitor entered the United States to receive graduate medical education or training;
- **Specialized knowledge or skill: Skills List** - The exchange visitor is a national or permanent resident of a country which has deemed the field of specialized knowledge or skill necessary to the development of the country, as shown on the Exchange Visitor Skills List. Review the Exchange Visitor Skills List 2009.

Dependents (J-2's) are subject as well.

If unclear, you may want to request an Advisory Opinion (AO) from the US State Department. The State Department will review and determine if you are, in fact, subject to Section 212(e).

**Question 4**
I was subject but I have documentation that I returned to my home country for a period of at least 2 years after my J visa. Does that mean I am good?

Make sure to keep documentation that you have met the two-year requirement home residency requirement in case there are questions.

**Question 5**
I have been back to my home country for an aggregate of 2 years but not at one time since completing my J status, is that an issue?

You do not have to be in your home country for 24 consecutive months to meet the requirement. You can be in your home country for 18 months, leave and then come back to your home country for 6 months. This residence requirement clock starts once your J status is complete.

**Question 6**
Where do I find out about the waiver process?

For more on the waiver process, please see the Department of State for information. [https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/exchange/waiver-of-the-exchange-visitor.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/exchange/waiver-of-the-exchange-visitor.html)

**Question 7**
I have questions – where do I go?

OISS has basic information and current J’s should always meet with a J advisor prior to applying for a waiver but for more specific information, we recommend talking with an immigration attorney and following the directions on the DoS website. Also, each semester OISS hosts an Advanced Immigration Webinar for students and scholars with a local immigration firm – that can also be a low-cost option to get at least 1-2 questions answered regarding your case.

Information on visa requirements does fluctuate so always review the most up-to-date information prior to actions on your visa status.
By Cynthia Evans

2020 Tax filing season is approaching fast. Anyone that entered the US for any length of time in 2020 is required to file a tax return regardless if you received any income or not. The deadline for filing your tax forms with the US government is April 15, 2021. Don't panic! OISS will provide some excellent tax preparation resources for you during this process with a Tax Workshop, a series of tax webinars, and the option to purchase a $2 software license to help you file your taxes (coming March!) - all helpful information for non-resident tax filing obligations.

Mark your calendars:

1. **Tax Workshop! All internationals are required to file taxes!**

What: **TAX WORKSHOP**, where we will have experts guide you through the tax filing process and be available for your questions.

When: **Tuesday, February 23; 4:00PM - 5:30PM**

Presenters: Crystal C. Gates (CPA & Tax Partner) and Kelley Lau (CPA & Tax Manager) from Briggs & Veselka Co. ([http://www.bvccpa.com/](http://www.bvccpa.com/))

Join Zoom Meeting [https://riceuniversity.zoom.us/j/95033758300?pwd=UVgzaWZoRXVVMGVIYmlIcnJ2OVBMZz09](https://riceuniversity.zoom.us/j/95033758300?pwd=UVgzaWZoRXVVMGVIYmlIcnJ2OVBMZz09)

Meeting ID: 950 3375 8300 Passcode: Tax

For more information on tax resources, please see oiss.rice.edu/tax.

For previous Tax Workshop presentations, go here: [https://oiss.rice.edu/presentations](https://oiss.rice.edu/presentations)

2. **Sprintax open webinars**

Tuesday, Feb 16th, 3pm EST
Wednesday, Mar 3rd, 12pm EST
Monday, Mar 15th, 2.30pm EST
Monday, Mar 29th, 2pm EST
Tuesday, April 6th, 1pm EST
Tuesday, April 13th, 1pm EST

The informational webinars will cover the same topics on each occasion:

- An overview of tax for nonresident students and scholars
- Who must file a 2020 US tax return
- What income forms students/scholars may receive
- Forms that need to be completed and sent to the IRS
- We cover terms like FICA, ITIN and Form 1098-T
- What happens if students don’t file, or misfile
- State tax returns
- IRS stimulus payments
- Sprintax overview

3. **Sprintax software for purchase** – more details coming in March – see [http://oiss.rice.edu/tax](http://oiss.rice.edu/tax)
In the middle of all the changes brought by 2020, OISS was excited about some traditions. For example International Education Week (IEW), celebrated in November every year. IEW, a joint initiative of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education, promotes the value of internationalization and cross-cultural exchange. At Rice, it provides us with an opportunity to celebrate our fabulous international community.

While some of our IEW traditions, like the Thanksgiving Lunch or the Mini Soccer World Cup, were not possible this year, we still hosted great activities, including some special IEW “My World” tours, a socially distanced luncheon for the presidents of the International Student Clubs, a Mental Health/Wellbeing Session by the wonderful Agnes Ho, and a Mini Photo Competition. For a full list of IEW activities at Rice, please see https://oiss.rice.edu/iew.

We also hosted another Plant a Tree campaign, which is a new tradition we started in 2019. In celebration of IEW 2020, OISS planted 30 trees through a donation for American Forests, one of the oldest conversation organizations in the U.S. While the Plant a Tree campaign has ended for now, we are still accepting submissions to our Recommended Reading and International Recipes collections. Browsing the submissions received so far can also help you find something new to read or cook in 2021!

OISS congratulates Salma Alhashim, PhD student from Saudi Arabia, for winning the OISS Photo Competition!

Visit https://oiss.rice.edu/photo-competition to learn more about Salma’s winning photo and other submissions.
I Want to Volunteer. Do I Need an Authorization?

By Scott Pett

This is such a good question. And the answer depends on what you mean by “volunteer.”

Students often use the word “volunteer” when they mean “unpaid work.” In terms of visa regulations, there is a crucial difference.

Unpaid off-campus work requires authorization in the form of CPT or OPT (for F-1 students) or Academic Training (for J-1 students).

To determine whether your activity requires authorization, ask yourself:

Is the work related to my major field(s) of study? Could the work help advance my career? Will I be reimbursed in any way? Is it a for-profit or private sector organization?

If the answer to any of these questions is “yes,” you should get an authorization to participate, even though you would not be getting paid.

Volunteering is a specific kind of work, and does not require authorization.

To determine whether you’d be considered a true volunteer, ask yourself:

Am I donating my time and labor for a charitable or humanitarian cause? Am I offering to help for civic reasons, or to assist disadvantaged communities? Is it for a non-profit group that has historically depended on community labor?

If the answer to all of these questions is “yes,” you might not need to get an authorization to participate.

But you should still check with OISS to make sure.

Common examples of volunteering:

Caring for animals at a shelter
Cleaning the park after a hurricane

The line between volunteer work and unpaid work is blurry, and there could be massive consequences for confusing the two, including visa termination.

Consider these three scenarios:

Scenario 1: You’re a Piano Performance major, and are hoping to play for a church congregation in your neighborhood. The work is not paid. You’re doing it out of the kindness of your heart, and to get experience performing in front of others.

This seems like a clear case of volunteerism. But the work is directly related to your field of study. You should apply.

Scenario 2: You’re a Bioengineering major, and are hoping to participate in the Texas Medical Center Volunteer Program. The experience will look great on your Med School applications.

Even though the program has the word “volunteer” in its name, the work is related to your field of study, and you’re benefiting from it in the form of career advancement. You’d likely need to apply for authorization.

Scenario 3: You’re a double major in Computer Science and Art History, and you want to read story books to orphaned children at the local library.

You’re probably okay to participate in this activity without a work authorization. But check with OISS, just in case!

To be safe, always check with an OISS advisor before participating in off-campus work.

You can schedule an appointment by calling 713-348-6095 or emailing oiss@rice.edu.
CPT/OPT Workshops

Office of International Students & Scholars

CPT/OPT Workshops

F-1 VISA STUDENTS:
COME LEARN ABOUT THE WORK AUTHORIZATION PROCESS!

MEETING ID
913 6529 0156

PASSCODE
F1WORK

FRI, JANUARY 29 - 10AM
TUES, FEBRUARY 2 - 11AM
WED, FEBRUARY 17 - 3PM
FRI, MARCH 19 - 9AM
MON, APRIL 12 - 2PM
Organizing winter events in the midst of a pandemic may not seem like the most fruitful time spent, but the staff at OISS wasn’t willing to give this tradition up when there was a chance to support and help connect our international community. Although our enthusiasm and creativity could not erase the loss, sorrow, and worry that 2020 brought for so many, we certainly tried our best to bring some joy during these times.

With thoughtful care poured into planning to keep everyone safe, we not only organized the same number of activities as in previous years, but most of them were brand new, and offered for the first time in the history of OISS’ winter events. The combination of virtual programs, such as the Houston Zoo and Fun Trivia, as well as the in person outings like the IMAX Movie and Bayou Bend Gardens, kept our winter events schedule diverse and colorful.

Perhaps the two most popular events were the Bayou Bend Gardens and the Houston Zoo. The tour to the 14-acre, beautiful Bayou Bend Gardens, in Houston’s historic River Oaks neighborhood was an enchanting location for us to explore. Also, the Houston Zoo allowed us to meet different animals such as Beroni, an 8 year-old, 300-pound Malaysian tiger. Through Beroni, we learned more about big cats and their habits – in particular how they love swimming and bonding with their keepers. We also met Rainbo, who is an ambassador parrot that demonstrated some extraordinary skills, such as laughing at “dad jokes”. Finally, we met Nelson, the newest member of the Asian elephant herds, born during the pandemic and weighing almost 1000 pounds. He stole everyone’s heart and showed that he is a true Texan, not only by birth, but also by being named after Willie Nelson.

Although the epidemic presented us challenges this year, the activities were adjusted just a bit by the OISS, yet they still allowed us to find joy and connections throughout our winter events. Perhaps when asked the question of what you remember the most of 2020, the answer may be the “OISS’ Winter Events”.
THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & SCHOLARS PRESENTS

VIRTUAL ENGLISH & CULTURE CLASSES FOR SPRING 2021

ADVANCED/INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH CONVERSATION
(WITH CATHERINE SPAIN)
WEDNESDAYS, 1:00 - 2:00 P.M. OR 2:00 - 3:00 P.M., FEBRUARY 3 - APRIL 28

GRAMMAR & PRONUNCIATION
(WITH CHRIS SNELLER & NONA ZEILER)
THURSDAYS, 12:00 - 1:00 P.M., FEBRUARY 4 - MARCH 11

IDIOMS & SLANG
(WITH JAMES BARTLETT & CAMI JONES)
FRIDAYS, 3:00 - 4:00 P.M., FEBRUARY 5 - APRIL 30

SIGN-UP INFORMATION AT
OISS.RICE.EDU/ENGLISH-CLASS
What a challenging year 2020 had been. We faced a widespread pandemic, social unrest, economic uncertainty, travel bans, school closures, quarantines and so much more. Despite such a year, Brasil@Rice continued promoting and expanding its connections thanks to the diligence of our staff and partners.

We began the year by receiving a top comprehensive internationalization award, Andrew Heiskell award, as a result of Rice’s ongoing academic Brazilian initiatives.

Short after receiving the award, Brasil@Rice hosted a brief luncheon to announce the activities for the new year inviting and celebrating those who were engaged with collaborations with Brazil.

Even with the challenges of the pandemic, hosting live events was one of the biggest challenges. We went on with our well-known Café & Bate-Papo and moved it online. Some of the events were a contest of pictures, short videos, live concert and happy hours. To our surprise we had many Brazilian students and scholars attending our zoom events as we tried to make it welcoming, fun and informal.

About Brasil@Rice: Since its founding in 2012, Brasil@Rice has served as a hub for meaningful connections between Brazil and the university. Brasil@Rice builds bridges in its communities by focusing on social activities as much as academic and professional partnerships. Many of its projects also draw upon multiple departments on Rice’s campus, giving Brasil@Rice the opportunity to promote interdisciplinary approaches and internationalization simultaneously. Aided by its close relationship with the Brazilian consulate in Houston, Brasil@Rice has served as a model at Rice for advancing research and creating enduring, productive relationships.
Brasil@Rice grew in our outreach and impact with the Brazil – both here at Rice and in Brazil. On September 4, we hosted the Brazilian Minister of Science, Technology & Innovation, Marcos Pontes, on-campus, and expanded our visibility with Brazil in the education and commerce sectors. During the visit the Minister reiterated the importance of collaboration between Brazilian and American institutions and emphasized areas of interest.

Follow-up online meetings with the Brazilian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation took place a few weeks after the Minister’s visit to Rice.

Surprisingly 2020 was successful in a sense of what was accomplished together when all the parts collaborated. Cooperation was a key factor for Brasil@Rice to thrive this past year. Let’s continue our partnership and grow our imprint in a way that both countries benefit and thrive in the years to come.

The Consulate General of Brazil in Houston and Brasil@Rice office hosted and presented the II Brazilian Education Fair. It was a week with virtual lectures aimed at Brazilian students and researchers interested in entering North American universities. The lectures were held between October 19 - 23 and were broadcasted on the YouTube channel of the Consulate General of Brazil in Houston. The presentations will permanently remain on the Brazilian Consulate YouTube channel.
OISS Pandemic Survival Tips

What do I do when the pandemic wants to stop me in my tracks?

#1 I text and call people in my support network, especially friends and family.
#2 I take 3-4 short walks a day, even just to check the mail. I always feel lighter and a little more in control when I get back.
Scott Pett

#1 I like to take my dogs out on long walks - it’s nice to get outdoors and be active while at the same time doing something that was routine before the pandemic.
#2 I’ve picked up new hobbies that bring me happiness that I can turn to when I’m feeling stressed out or down - I’m teaching myself to play the ukulele and am restoring my childhood dollhouse.
#3 I have weekly zoom meetings set up to regularly touch base with my family and friends.
Irene Mendez

#1 Talk to my mom in Brazil every day.
#2 Having my son with me and loving him!
#3 Having a family zoom meeting once a month.
Marjorie Cerejo

#1 Take a break to go for a walk or focus on something positive and/or funny. Cute animal videos always cheer me up!
#2 Try to complete some smaller, easier tasks. Being able to check something off a to-do list feels good, even if I’m only accomplishing “small” things.
#3 Snuggle breaks with my cat are essential for my mental health! :) 
Andy Meretoja

#1 Remind myself that it will pass
#2 Do something that makes me happy (listen to music, talk to family & friends, go for a walk, read)
#3 Dream and plan for time we can safely travel again
Anonymous

#1 Try to find a way to support someone else who is struggling (everyone has challenges these days!)
#2 Try to finish something that is pending and then remember that the small things can add up to bigger things.
#3 Pursue hope.
Adria Baker
OISS Event for International Dependents

WILDFLOWERS OF TEXAS

OISS Event for International Dependents

MARCH 19, 2021
9:00 - 10:00 AM

For more information contact Maria Corcuera at mec3@rice.edu
Given the current state of challenges brought by the global pandemic, and how well the internationals at Rice are persevering through it all, we offer you these quotes on “Perseverance” by famous people who know what it means to move forward and succeed in hard times.

“The path from dreams to success does exist. May you have the vision to find it, the courage to get on to it, and the perseverance to follow it.” - Kalpana Chawla, Astronaut, engineer, flew in the NASA Space Shuttle Columbia

“Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love what you are doing or learning to do.” - Pele, Famous Brazilian athlete

“Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something and that this thing must be attained.” - Marie Curie, Polish/French physicist, chemist who pioneered radioactivity research

“Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance.” - Samuel Johnson, English writer and playwright, biographer

“Perseverance is failing 19 times and succeeding the 20th.” Julie Andrews, Actress, singer, dancer, author

“I don’t think that there is any quality so essential to success of any kind as the quality of perseverance. It overcomes almost everything, even nature.” John D. Rockefeller, business magnate, philanthropist

“Perseverance is the hard work that you do after you get tired of the hard work you already did.” Newt Gingrich, U.S. politician, writer

“Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races one after the other.” Walter Elliot, Scottish politician, university rector

“Perseverance, secret of all triumphs.” Victor Hugo, French poet, novelist

“Permanence, perseverance and persistence in spite of all obstacles, discouragement and impossibilities. It is this, that in all things distinguishes the strong soul from the weak.” - Thomas Carlyle, British historian, satirical writer, mathematician, philosopher, teacher