INTERNATIONAL LINE NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2014

WELCOME NEW STUDENTS!

The staff at the Office of International Affairs would like to welcome all new and transfer international students to Texas Tech University for the start of the Fall 2014 Semester. And, we would like to “Welcome Back!” all of our current students. The following is information for your benefit which we repeat to students from time to time and which will help you to be successful during your stay at Texas Tech. However, some of it is new information. Please read it carefully!

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR “R” NUMBER AND SEVIS “N” NUMBER

We are asking all students to include their student ID “R” number and their SEVIS “N” number in their email messages, especially when they are dealing with immigration issues. Under no situation should you ever give this office a social security number.

NEW CHANGES IN APPLYING FOR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

The International Student and Scholar Services section will begin phasing in new directions for applying for OPT. First of all, there will no longer be any OPT Workshops. Students can get information about processing for OPT online at our website. They will then initiate an application request with their assigned counselor and then after a review of their record, a new I-20 for OPT will be created for the student. The student will then submit the remaining part of the application on the day that he/she comes for the appointment. Afterwards the student will be given a USCIS address label and will mail in the application on his/her own which will include the student using his/her home address. The student subsequently will manage his or her account and will be able to oversee and go online at the USCIS website to review what is happening. Upon receipt of the EAD card, the student must mail a copy of it to his/her counselor at the OIA.

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LIKEWISE THERE WILL BE MORE OVERSIGHT OF CPT

We are in the process of revising our policies regarding the administering of curricular practical training. In the future there will be more diligence in making certain that the benefit is used correctly as it was intended and is not misused or abused. We expect to have more carefully defined policies regarding CPT that are within the spirit and the letter of the law and regulations.
STUDENTS MAY BEGIN PROCESSING FORM I-539 ON USCIS ELIS

Texas Tech international students are encouraged to use the USCIS Electronic Immigration System (ELIS) when applying for a change of status primarily to F-1 status. Many non-student visa holders can apply for a change of status from F-2 to F-1 and H to F-1 among different scenarios. It is easy to create an account and then to upload your documents. But, it will be important to provide sufficient and appropriate supporting documentation and evidence when submitting the application. Students need to carefully read the information before they get started on any I-539 application. It should be an easy thing to do. Students are encouraged to make an appointment regarding COS or to email an international student counselor about the process and especially what other information that might be used to keep the student from getting a Request for Evidence (RFE) from the USCIS. Finally, at this time there is no plan to utilize ELIS for the I-765 for OPT applications, although eventually we will.

CHANGING THE ISSS WEBSITE TO BE MORE USER FRIENDLY

We are also in the process of updating our website to make it more user-friendly and much more helpful to the international student. Making an appointment and seeing an international student counselor will require exact timing and coordination so that students show up for their appointments, because there will be less time for counselors to see students. We are going to try and update and improve our site so that better and more complete information is available to our students; thus, students won't have to email a counselor for more information. This will be a work in progress that will take time for us to make improvements and to complete. International students should not hesitate to give us their opinions for a better information ISSS website. We welcome your comments!

EMPLOYMENT AS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

Employment on-campus is restricted to 20 hours for all F-1 students. There may be exceptions to this rule, most notably for summer vacation hours and authorized practical training. Any questions on work authorization should be directed to an international student counselor at the Office of International Affairs. J-1 students and scholars should contact Phillip Gill. Sponsored students should contact Stephanie Cloninger. While not trying to be patronizing in any way, we should warn students that on-campus work can take away quality time that is needed for study and it can be very tiring. We encourage international students to think carefully before choosing to work on-campus. Be sure to properly balance the number of hours needed for work with time needed for study. Click here online for a list of TTU jobs. (See Page 6, LOOKING FOR A JOB ON CAMPUS)

CARRY YOUR DOCUMENTS WITH YOU WHEN TRAVELING IN THE U.S.

Everybody! We are very serious about this. If you are stopped by law enforcement authorities anywhere in the U.S. and you do not have your immigration documents on your person when requested, you can be detained until confirmation of your status. Whether traveling on long-distance travel or just a short trip out of town, have your immigration documents available for inspection. You must have an unexpired passport, along with an I-20 and a Form I-94. If you do not have an I-94, go to www.cbp.gov/I94 and complete the form online, then download and print it out.

Bottom Line Good Advice for all international students! Always have your immigration documents in your possession when you travel in the United States. However, if you travel outside of the U.S., make certain that your I-20 is endorsed at the bottom of Page 3 by an international student counselor for reentry. Be certain that the end date on your I-20 (Item #5) has not passed!
SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED FOR 2014-2015

Please go to the ISSS website where you can find a list of scholarships that the Office of International Affairs is involved in. You can also go to many editions of the International Line Newsletter to see what scholarships and tuition waivers are available. Also, check out www.scholarships.ttu.edu.

TPEG APPLICATIONS

Please remember that all students who apply for a TPEG must sign in and see Tracy Tindle, the Texas Tech University Community Affairs Advisor, at the time of submission of the TPEG application. You can get all the sympathy that you want from other counselors, but it is useless for you, unless you finally bring the application to Tracy. We have a procedure for reviewing the application and it starts in Tracy’s office and not in someone else’s. For your information, all TPEG applications are reviewed at the end of the month on Thursdays by a select committee. We also want to emphasize that the TPEG is not for chronic financial mismanagement. Students with serious personal financial management problems may be required to seek counseling from the TTU “Red to Black” Office prior to any decision being made regarding their case. NOTE: Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center Students are not eligible for this particular TPEG.

RIDING YOUR BIKE ON CAMPUS

Please remember that when riding your bicycle on campus, to be sure to obey all traffic rules! You are allowed to ride your bike on most campus sidewalks but the university police department can cite you if you ride recklessly and endanger pedestrians! Finally, when you ride your bicycle during hours of darkness, you must use a light and reflector so that motorists can see you. Make certain that you stop at all “STOP” signs at all intersections and junctions. Texas Tech has been named a Bicycle Friendly University!

BUY OLD FURNITURE AT “GARAGE SALES”

You can often purchase old furniture and household goods by looking in the classified section of the local newspapers for places where garage sales are going on. The warm weather seasons are often a typical time for garage sales around the Lubbock area. Also, go to http://www.freecycle.com for goods that may be useful in your home. In all of these situations, the purchaser is required to provide transportation for the pick-up of the item that is purchased. You can also check with Mission Lubbock, 1711 Upland Ave., Lubbock, TX 79416; Phone: 806-687-8452. Mission Lubbock asks that you take no more than you need, so they may help others who may be having difficult times.

DON’T WANT TO GET SICK? WASH YOUR HANDS! WE’RE SERIOUS!

We are not trying to be condescending or prudish, but just helpful. It stands to reason that if you will just wash your hands using warm water and soap that you will significantly reduce the chances of catching a cold or a bad case of the flu and other respiratory infections. A word to the wise and for those who don’t want to get sick!
SHARON HALE RETIRES AND LEAVES THE ISSS

For those of you who have been asleep or completely involved in other activities, we wanted to inform you that Sharon Hale retired last April. All of you have lost a devoted and gracious lady who gave so much to international students. You can read her story and find out what she is doing from our website.

GOOD NEIGHBOR SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION FOR TTU WESTERN HEMISPHERE STUDENTS

Deadline for submission of the GNS application for the 2015-2016 academic year will be 5:00 p.m., Friday, February 27, 2015. Information and applications forms for the 2015-2016 academic year will be made available at this site in January of 2015 once this office has received the official notification and information from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in Austin, Texas at that time. Information will most likely be available to western hemisphere international student applicants about the third of week of January 2015. Notice: This scholarship program is constantly under review and could be discontinued at any time. You are strongly urged not to rely on this award as a means to finance your studies. Deadline for submission of the 2014-2015 application has already passed.

30-DAY RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT FOR DRIVER'S LICENSE

Newly arrived international students must prove that their residence and domicile is in Texas and that they have lived here at least 30 days before they can apply for a Texas driver license with the Department of Public Safety. When applying they must show lawful presence in the U.S. However, a student with a valid driver license from another state is eligible to apply for a Texas driver license immediately after surrendering his or her previous license at the DPS.

OFFICE HOURS AT THE OIA

Remember that when necessary international students will need to make an appointment to see an international student counselor. Walk-in consultations are available only Monday through Thursday afternoons from 1:00 to 2:45 p.m. (not on Fridays) and will be limited to ten minutes. All other times, a student must make an appointment to see a counselor for OPT, CPT, Change of Status, Reinstatement, or Dependent Document issues. To make an appointment, a student should email a request to a counselor along with the student’s name, “R” Number, SEVIS “N” Number, contact phone number, and topic. Contact the ISSS counselor who deals with students whose last names begin with the letter of your last name. (See Special Alert “F-1 Students to be Assigned to Individual Counselors”)

F-2 DEPENDENTS MUST APPLY FOR “COS” TO STUDY AS AN F-1

An F-2 dependent spouse who wants to study at Texas Tech University or at another academic institution must make an application in a timely manner for “change of status” to F-1 at the appropriate college or university international office. One cannot begin a program and register for classes until he or she is approved for change of status. Applicants who are admitted to TTU should apply at least 3-4 months prior to the start of the intended academic term. F-2 dependent high school students should apply immediately after graduation from high school for the following fall academic semester.

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BRINGING F-2 DEPENDENTS TO THE UNITED STATES

Bringing your dependent family member to the United States is a major undertaking which requires thoughtful review, appropriate financial resources, and preparation of certain documents. It is not to be made as a demand, but to be considered in the most serious way. Students should make an appointment and consult with an international student counselor at the OIA for information.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS DURING THE SUMMER HEAT

International students are always reminded that it can get very hot in Lubbock, Texas in the late summer season and during the early autumn months. We recommend that some of you consider using a sun block if you are in the sun for more than 30 minutes a day. Also, wear some kind of hat or cover on your head. Finally, don’t forget to carry drinking water in your backpack.

BE COOL! DON’T GET A JOB OFFER LETTER AND NOT WORK!

It is important for all new international students to understand that you do not have to have a social security number, if you do not have a job on campus. The fact is that you don’t need a social security number to register for classes, pay for your tuition and fees, get a bank account, get an apartment, or get a driver’s license. New students who apply for employment on campus and who are offered a job will receive a letter from that hiring office that allows them to apply for a social security number, provided that they are certified by the OIA with a corresponding letter as having registered on SEVIS. But, here’s the thing: You really are expected to work at that position when you get the letter. **It is not right applying for a job just to get a letter so you can apply for a social security card, and then not showing up for work at that location.** This is not fair! All sentimentality aside, it’s not Texan! When you get that letter of offer of employment at an office, you have a duty to report for the job and at least try to work for the rest of the semester. The hiring department depends upon you and expects you to report for work. By not doing so, you may breed frustration and resentment on the part of the hiring department to the point where they will simply no longer want to hire international students. Remember that if you don’t have a social security card, a department does not have to hire you anyway! Don’t mess it up for those other international students who desperately need jobs, just so you can get your own social security card. That’s not cool! (Note: This article was first printed in the Fall 2010 New Student International Line Newsletter.)

IMMIGRATION RESPONSIBILITY STILL BELONGS TO THE STUDENT

Everybody, it is the student’s responsibility to maintain his or her proper immigration status. Under the SEVIS system, being out of status **just for one day** could result in it being extremely difficult for the student to be reinstated. SEVIS regulations are such that there is little room for flexibility and maneuverability. Inadvertence, oversight, neglect, or willful failure on the part of the student is no reason to allow reinstatement. These days the Department of Homeland Security is really emphasizing enforcement of the rules. For students who have questions about their immigration status, they should contact an international student counselor at the Office of International Affairs. New and transfer students should definitely attend the Immigration Session at their respective orientation sessions for graduate students at the student union, and undergraduate students at the ICC Auditorium.
LOOKING FOR A JOB ON CAMPUS

1. Am I eligible for employment as an F-1 student?
   - Students with an F-1 visa status are eligible for on-campus employment at TTU.
   - International students may work up to 20 hours per week during the Fall and Spring semesters.
   - They may work full-time (40 hours per week), at the university's discretion during the December holiday break and during the summer.
   - Hourly wage rates average $7.25 – $8.25.

2. How would I go about finding job openings at Texas Tech?
   - Using the TechJobs resource at https://jobs.texastech.edu/ is a helpful way to view student job positions available throughout the Texas Tech campus.
   - Also, check TechAnnounce on your e-raider account daily.
   - Your department may also know of opportunities for student employment. Some student jobs are never advertised, so let your friends and acquaintances know that you are looking for employment.
   - Tutoring jobs on campus are often available at the
     ✓ Techniques Center http://www.depts.ttu.edu/techniques/
     ✓ The Learning Center http://www.depts.ttu.edu/passcntr/PLC/.

UPDATE AND KEEP YOUR ADDRESS ON FILE WITH THE ISSS

Please remember to keep us informed via email, fax, or in person of any change of residential address while a student at Texas Tech. You will also need to inform our office whenever you are on curricular practical training participating in an internship and working during the summer at a location outside of the Lubbock area. This is a requirement under U.S. immigration law. Please contact an international student counselor at the ISSS.

SO WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO SEVIS II?

Well! --- From all of you old-time students, we still get questions about SEVIS II and when it's going to happen. The answer is that it is not! There are all sorts of reasons as to why there is no SEVIS II system as such, but basically, it is that some of the slow morphing changes that are going on now with the regular SEVIS system have already been made on an ad hoc “piece-meal” basis and taken from what was to be SEVIS II and incorporated into the regular SEVIS anyway. Also, the Department of Homeland Security probably wanted the entry of any information done only by the DSO, and thus, they did not want the student so involved in things and to have their own SEVIS accounts where they could enter online. We are still waiting on new Federal regulations regarding the administration of student programs. The main thing to remember is that in the final analysis, it is still your responsibly to watch your status as stated in the article at the bottom of Page 5.