I-20 SHOULD BE SIGNED FOR TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE U.S. DURING SPRING BREAK

If you are traveling outside the U.S., don’t forget to get your I-20 signed for reentry. Your signature in March will be good through the summer, as well, when you return to the U.S. Remember that if you don’t have your I-20 signed, you can be denied entry into the United States and port of entry officials can put you on the next flight out and send you home. It can be a hassle for everybody involved!

DON’T FORGET SHARON HALE’S RETIREMENT PARTY!

Sharon Hale will be retiring at the end of April after 35 years of service in the field of international student programs. All international students are invited to attend this function and show Sharon the same love she has always given to students in her years of professional work at Texas Tech University and previously at Lubbock Christian University. Come one, come all! Show the Love! 😊

TPEG ACCOUNT HAS BEEN USED UP FOR THIS FISCAL YEAR

The International Texas Public Education Grant (TPEG) account has been used up and there are no more remaining funds. It won’t be until the start of the fiscal year on September 1, 2014 that new funds will hopefully be available. Note: The ISSS will soon have very strict rules on the TPEG. Among other things, it will only be granted one time and we will hold to our policy that there will absolutely be no second award. We have to insure that it is distributed to as many students as possible who find themselves in need. There will be no awards available during the first year of attendance at Texas Tech and students will have to provide much more thorough and complete documentation. Remember that the International TPEG is different from other programs in that it is used for a “sudden and unexpected emergency.” It is not for a chronic financial problem that continues to exist. It is not a scholarship, nor does it waive out-of-state tuition. It allows the student to get his/her head above water, so to speak, so as to find land to swim ashore to. Also, remember that in the final analysis, international students are required under immigration regulations to provide the funds necessary to pay for all of their tuition, fees, and living expenses. This is your responsibility under law.

FORMER TEXAS TECH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ON OPT --- H-1B CAP FILING BEGINS SOON!

The next H-1B work visa filing season begins April 1, 2014 for petitions subject to the visa limitation of the almost 80,000 new cases. Immigration attorneys are saying that there will most certainly be a lottery for the small number of H visas available, as there was last year. In all likelihood, USCIS will permit filing during the first five business days of the month, that is, Tuesday, April 1 through Monday April 7. Students who are working on OPT should consult with a qualified immigration attorney for more information.
REPRESENTATIVES FROM WHITTENBURG LAW FIRM WILL SPEAK ON THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2014

The Whittenburg Law Firm and Attorney Zelda Howell will present an Immigration Seminar at the Texas Tech University International Cultural Center Auditorium on Thursday, March 6, 2014 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. This seminar will concentrate on National Interest Waivers, EB-1A Extraordinary Ability self petitions, a discussion of 212 (e), J-1 Residence Requirements, the VISA Bulletin, and more. Attorneys will be available for Q&A.

URGENT CARE VERSUS THE EMERGENCY ROOM

Often when a family member such as a child gets sick, students may think that they have to go to the hospital emergency room to receive treatment. Well, there are other clinics available: The Larry Combest Community Health and Wellness Center; Sick Children’s Clinic; and Community Health Center of Lubbock where children can receive treatment for free or for very small fees. We would encourage all students to get health insurance for their children. But, for those who don’t have it, these three centers are places where at least your child can get treatment without going to the emergency room. The Larry Combest Community Center is located at 301 E. 40th Street in Lubbock, TX 79404. The Sick Children’s Clinic is located at 1002 Avenue A in Lubbock 79401. The Community Health Center of Lubbock is located at 1318 Broadway in Lubbock, TX 79401.

TAKING SUMMER COURSES AT ANOTHER SCHOOL

You are allowed to attend any institution of higher learning in the U.S. that admits you, during this coming summer vacation time, as long as you return to Texas Tech for the coming Fall 2014 Semester. If you should continue on after the summer term(s) at another school, you would have to transfer out to that institution. Before considering this study option, students should consult with an international student counselor at the OIA. It may be that the international office at such a school will want you to have a Texas Tech ISSS counselor complete an advisor’s report before they allow you to register at their school.

MAINTAIN THE PROPER NUMBER OF HOURS --- DON’T GET CAUGHT SHORT AND BE SORRY!

Remember that all F-1 students, in most situations, are required to be enrolled in at least 9 hours as a graduate student for a semester and a minimum of 12 hours as an undergraduate student. There are exceptions to this rule, most notably graduate students who have completed all their course work and who only have their dissertation or thesis to complete, and students who are in their final semester before completion of program. Remember that if you withdraw from a class prior to the end of a semester and are under enrolled, then it is just as bad as having never even been enrolled to begin with. Don’t get caught in this bind or you will have to apply for reinstatement of your immigration status. It will be a monumental task for you to deal with. If you have any questions about the number of hours that you should be enrolled in, please contact one of the international student counselors at the Office of International Affairs.

SUMMERTIME ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT AT TEXAS TECH FOR 2014

U.S. immigration regulations allow most international students to work more than 20 hours on-campus during the summer vacation and official school breaks, as an example, from just after the end of this current Spring 2014 Semester to just before the start of the upcoming Fall 2014 Semester. However, please understand that Texas Tech University as your employer has the discretion and authority to decide exactly how many hours you can work during the summer and whether you actually will work more than 20 hours on-campus. There may be specific situations where a student cannot work more than 20 (Continued next page…)
hours even during the summer. If you have questions about whether your department will allow you to work more than 20 hours on-campus this summer, please **first** contact your department employment services coordinator (ESC) for further information. Your ESC is the “**go-to**” guy or gal who has information to help you. Students should not need it, but if the ESC does not have all the information for them, then they may be able to get further clarification from an international student counselor at the Office of International Affairs. A related item: You are allowed to work more than 20 hours a week on campus **ONLY** during Spring Break week, if your departmental employer wants you during this time for those few jobs where you are allowed to work longer during the day. Again, check with your ESC.

**ARE YOU TAKING A CARIBBEAN CRUISE IN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS?**

Sometimes Texas Tech international students will take cruises from the U.S. to various ports around the Caribbean island area. In this situation, all such students are required to have a passport with a valid F-1 visa in their possession. One’s I-20 must be signed for reentry into the U.S. If you are on OPT, then you must have a valid EAD card. A student may be required to surrender his/her I-94 card upon departure from the United States, although probably not. All international students should check with the cruise line carrier officials to determine what other requirements may be necessary for travel. This may include the need for a visitor visa for entry into any port on a Caribbean Island. Also, don’t forget to bring your student health insurance card. Please note that the island of Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory and, therefore, no extra visa is required for landing.

**OPT WORKSHOPS WILL BE CONDUCTED ON THURSDAYS AND FRIDAYS**

Brian Ridge will conduct regularly scheduled OPT Workshops on Thursday afternoon from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. and on Friday morning from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. **For students who have class or commitments during these times, he will be glad to conduct private one-on-one sessions with students at specially arranged times.** Students are required to attend one of these workshops and we do take attendance and note it in your record. Do you have a job and are you working during this time? Then ask your supervisor or lab professor for time off so that you can attend. Don’t worry! He won’t bite you! Tell him or her that you will make up the time, if necessary. This is an appropriate thing to do and it is the American way!

**PROVIDE YOUR “R” NUMBER AND SEVIS “N” NUMBER WHEN EMAILING A COUNSELOR**

Please provide your Student ID or “R” number when emailing a counselor so that we can more quickly get to your files and your records and so we won’t have to “piddle around.” Also, include your SEVIS “N” Number (located above the I-20 bar code) along with your complete family/last name. This will save us a lot of time! Thank you!

**TIDBITS AND THINGS**

- Click [here](#) for the TTU 2013-2014 Official Academic Calendar.
- Note: The Office of International Affairs will be open during Spring Break except for March 21, 2014.
- Don’t forget to file your 2013 Federal Income Tax Return. You can file on [CINTAX](#).
- Traveling during Spring Break! Make certain to have all of your immigration documents with you!
- Now is the time to apply for optional practical training. (See page 2 of the [Jan-Feb 2014 Newsletter](#).)