

The International Student Network

Diverse Voices, Shared Experiences: A Monthly Newsletter from OIP

Thanksgiving Lunch with President Sapp

On Wednesday, November 27th, a number of us gathered for a heartwarming Thanksgiving lunch hosted by President Sapp and her family. Held in the welcoming spirit of the holiday, the event provided a space for students staying on campus during the break to come together for food, fun, and connection. President Sapp, joined by her family, greeted attendees warmly and shared in the festive atmosphere. Students enjoyed a delicious feast (and leftovers!), lively conversation, and fun puzzles! If you missed lunch this year, know that it is an annual tradition, and we'll look forward to seeing you there next year!



Kat Ortiz shared that “Thanksgiving lunch with the president was such a fun experience! We enjoyed delicious food, spent time with friends, and had the opportunity to meet new people. It was a great way to celebrate community and gratitude together!”

Health Insurance for next semester

Don't forget that action is required related to your health insurance for the Spring semester. If you want to purchase **International Student Insurance (ISI)** instead of the school's BCBS health insurance, you are required to submit a waiver request in your **insurance portal** - doing so will save you from being charged for the BCBS policy next semester. And for your ISI policy to be approved for a waiver, the policy must begin on or before January 1, 2025. Additional information about health insurance requirements is available on **Health Services' website**.

Winter Break on Campus

Who's staying on campus for the break? Please remember that the residence halls close over winter break (between 24 hours after your last exam until January 5th), but there is an option to stay at The Oaks for students who need a place to stay for some or all of the break. If you will be staying on campus, please let Jennifer know - we'll make sure Res Life has you on their list, make a WhatsApp group of friends who will also be around, and send out some resources!

Travel Reminders

If you are preparing for international travel over winter break, please take this opportunity to review your documents and plans. The following is needed for reentry to the US (*please also make sure to check the entry requirements for wherever you are travelling to*):

- **Passport** valid for *at least* 6 months into the future from your reentry date
- Unexpired **F-1 visa**
- **I-20 signed for travel** (signature on page 2 not more than 1 year old from your planned return date)
- Also helpful to have with you: proof of funding and proof of full-time enrollment for the Spring semester

In case you encounter any difficulties or trouble during your travel, please have with you OIP's phone number (919-760-2307) or in the event that an emergency occurs after hours or during the holiday period when Meredith offices are closed (December 19, reopening January 2), please contact Campus Police (919-760-8888) and they can reach an OIP staff member.

More details about returning after international travel are available on the **OIP website**. If you need a travel signature or would like to talk about your plans, contact Jennifer!

A big CONGRATULATIONS to our amazing December grads:

Javi Brito, Chile, Math BS, Ruth Getaneh, Bio BS
Khadejra Golding, Jamaica, MA Teaching,
Jueili Patil, India, MA Teaching,
Ashrafal Limon, Bangladesh, MBA

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Preparing for a new U.S. President

As we look to the Spring semester, we want to acknowledge that the change coming in the US' presidential administration can have a unique impact on the experience of international students. With any change at the federal level, we often see some changes in policies, legislation, regulations, etc., including those that relate to immigration status and visa matters. It is too soon to know what changes may come with the next administration (the new President will be sworn in on January 20), but know that OIP will be steadfast in staying on top of any developments that impact international students. In the meantime, please consider the following recommendations:

- **Continue checking your Meredith email account.** We will provide any relevant updates to our community via school email.
- For anyone traveling, make sure you are **back on campus by the start of the Spring semester (January 8)**. This will ensure you do not get delayed by any possible Executive Orders by the new administration that could impact travel or visa processing.
- Related, do you have **family members** planning to visit in the Spring or for graduation? If they need to apply for a **visa** to visit, encourage them to do so **as soon as possible**. Changes in the federal administration can also impact staffing levels at Consulates abroad, which could delay visa processing.
- **Approach social media postings and hearsay about possible government actions with caution.** While these can certainly be helpful resources, know too that they sometimes can lead to unnecessary stress. We know from past experience that not everything discussed during an election comes to fruition. Furthermore, while some changes can come quickly through Executive Order, many others take time as they go through the required, formal procedures. If or when changes are official that impact international students, OIP will send out an email update. We have experience with these transitions and are here to support you.

- **Save the date** for an immigration attorney meeting. On **Thursday, February 6**, Will Hummel of **Garfinkel Immigration Law Firm** will be on campus to meet individually with international students who'd like to talk about future visa options or questions. He will also be able to speak to any developments that may be relevant at that time. More details will be shared in January, but for now, please save the date for this free resource.

If you have questions or concerns you would like to discuss, please don't hesitate to reach out! We have experience with these transitions and are ready to provide support.

Global Leadership Conference



On October 26th, over 75 students gathered at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte for the 2024 Global Leadership and International Engagement Student Conference. The event brought together students from across North Carolina to explore global leadership and cultural exchange.

OIP sponsored a group from Meredith to attend, including Jacey Perez Conde, Itzel Alvarez Chavez, Christian Getaneh, Rothmila Tajrian, Yadira Martinez-Reyes, and Daniela Mon Montanez Alvarez. The conference provided a unique opportunity to connect with peers from diverse international backgrounds and hear firsthand experiences about studying abroad and working across cultures.

A highlight of the day was a service project where students created "reverse swag bags" for local primary school students from immigrant families.