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Letter from the Director

This past year has been exciting and challenging for the Office of International Services. The University of Pittsburgh, long host to international students and scholars from around the world and highly regarded for its internationally focused academic offerings and collaborative efforts with partners from around the world, launched “Embracing the World: A Global Plan for Pitt” in the fall of 2016. This plan affirms the University’s dedication to internationally and globally focused efforts and provides a strong roadmap for intentionally moving these efforts forward.

The 2016-2017 academic year was also declared the Year of Diversity by Provost Patricia E. Beeson, supporting recommendations from a Senate Council task force on diversity and inclusion to make Pitt “a more inclusive campus.” Hundreds of events were held on campus to further the Provost’s goals to “celebrate difference...engage in conversations about difference: about cultural difference, academic difference and political differences.”

In the spring of 2017, the University of Pittsburgh’s received the Senator Paul Simon Award for Comprehensive Internationalization. The award, granted by NAFSA: Association of International Educators, is an important recognition of the University’s success in achieving “overall excellence in internationalization efforts as evidenced in mission, strategies, programs, and results.”

While the University has been an environment where efforts to further multicultural, cross-cultural and intercultural understanding are being celebrated and encouraged, the national political environment during the 2016-2017 academic year created challenges. For those working in the field of international services, immigration issues were a frequent topic of discussion and debate during the 2016 Presidential election campaign. Immigration reform continues to be a stated priority and is often discussed by the new administration. Unfortunately, some of the rhetoric and policy changes are contributing to a perception of the United States as anti-immigrant and unwelcoming, and it is having an impact on people’s decisions to come to the United States for educational and professional pursuits. Those of us working to support international students and scholars are experiencing a period of change and uncertainty that is unprecedented in our careers. These ongoing policy changes continue to impact office operations as well as those we serve.

I am extremely proud of the OIS staff and their continued dedication to supporting the international community at Pitt through these new challenges, and I’m grateful to be part of this team. I am also grateful to work for an institution that clearly values internationalization and the contributions of our international students and scholars to the University. Pitt continues to attract some of the best and brightest from around the world. Throughout the spring, the number of international students receiving and accepting offers of admission to the University remained strong and on track to continue our trend of steady annual growth, even while other institutions have reported decreases. Appointments, invitations, and employment offers also continued to be made and accepted at rates similar or slightly above previous years. I think this is evidence, not just of Pitt’s reputation as a world-class academic institution, but also as a vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive community.
OIS Initiatives

Highlights from the Past Year

Chancellor’s Reception for New International Students: On September 7, 2016, Chancellor Gallagher hosted a welcome reception for new international students. Hundreds of students attended the event, which featured food, music, and the opportunity to mingle with members of the University faculty and administration.

Second Annual OIS Symposium: In 2015, the Office of International Services decided to try an alternative to our regular business meetings with department administrators and advisors. Inspired by similar events on campus, the half-day symposium offered concurrent sessions during multiple time slots, so that attendees could choose the topics most relevant to their work with OIS and the international community at Pitt. The event was a success, and we were pleased to be able to offer the second symposium in October 2016. As this year draws to a close, plans are underway for the third symposium to be held on October 16, 2017.

OIS Workshop included in Diversity and Inclusion Certificate Program (DICP): Last year, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion launched its DICP. OIS’s workshop, Intercultural Competency: Beyond the Basics, offered through the Faculty and Staff Development Program, has been included in the DICP as an elective workshop that will count toward completion of the certificate. We’re thrilled to be contributing to this initiative.

PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

OIS has a strong commitment to be a leader in the field of international services and helping, not only the international community, but also international educators and professionals succeed.

Committees

- Assessment and Evaluation Committee
- International Week Committee
- Sexual Assault Task Force
- Staff Association Council

NAFSA Engagement

- Chair of Region VIII
- Treasurer of Region VIII
- Conference Planner Apprentice of Region VIII
- Region VIII Mentors

Professional Development Participation

- Assessment Conference
- Certificate for Organizational and Leadership Ethics
- Diversity and Inclusion Certificate
- Latin@s at Pitt Seminar
- NAFSA Advocacy Day
- NAFSA Annual Conference
- NAFSA Region VIII Conference
- Sunapsis Conference

Conference Presentations

- NAFSA Region VIII: Breaking Into the Field
- NAFSA Region VIII: Customizing Your Orientation
- NAFSA Region VIII: One Person Office Workshop
- NAFSA Region VIII: Pathways to Permanent Residency
- Sunapsis: New Student Pre-Arrival and Orientation

On Demand Trainings and Presentations

- Diversity and Inclusion Certificate Program Facilitator
- Intercultural Development Inventory Group Profile
- Panther Leadership Summit: Jumpstart Your Cultural Competency
- Panther Leadership Summit: Walk a Kilometer in Their Shoes, Developing Your Intercultural Competency
- International Student Journey at Pitt
- Visa 101 Training
OIS Initiatives

Definitions

Incoming Students — Any student who has been accepted to the University of Pittsburgh and the academic school has requested that OIS create or verify immigration documents.

Current Students — Any student enrolled in the Fall 2016 term.

Alumni — Any graduated student participating in practical training as part of the benefits afforded by their immigration status sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh.

Scholars and Employees — Any visiting scholar or university employee who was in a non-immigrant visa status.

Context

Our numbers are from our official Open Doors reports for Students and Scholars with a few exceptions:

- Incoming Student information is based on submitted requests
- Administrative Employee positions are not counted in the Open Doors report

OIS Team Model

In order to provide you the best service, our staff operates in two teams: the Employment Team and the Student Team. The Employment Team works with visiting scholars, J-1 interns, and university employees at all 5 University of Pittsburgh campuses. The Student Team works with incoming and current students as well as graduated students with active SEVIS records.

Team Casework

The type of casework for each team is quite different. The Employment Team requests not only include initial visa sponsorships, but extensions as well. Because many of these requests require compliance with Department of Labor procedures and timelines, they are more time intensive. Employment Team requests are typically processed in 3—30 days. The Student Team requests include employment authorizations and program extensions. These requests are typically processed in 3—7 days.
Welcoming Scholars and Employees

This year we welcomed 641 J-Exchange visitors at the 50 orientations we hosted. J-Scholar Orientations are held every Friday morning and by request for special cohorts. Our largest numbers were oriented in September (106) and July (66). We issued approximately 600 initial documents for scholars and 70 for student interns.

While our overall number of H-1B cases are comparable to the 2015-2016 numbers, we did process an extraordinary number in one month alone - March 2017. It was the month that USCIS announced a suspension of PP on all H-1B petitions effective April 1, 2017. Within days of the announcement, the E-Team alerted all departments of the looming deadline and pledged to process all H-1Bs submitted by the March 15th deadline so that they could be shipped to USCIS before the April 1 deadline. We submitted 39 petitions. That is 21% of all H’s processed in 2016-2017.

Just prior to the H-1B March Madness, OIS had rolled out changes to the J-1 e-forms. After team discussions and feedback from department administrators, we redesigned the e-forms for ease of submission, elimination of duplicating data, and hopefully, facilitating a more efficient process. This year (January), we also implemented a change in the procedures for export control clearance on H-1B applicants. The Export Control office launched MyEC, providing a direct link to an interface that allows for a more automated procedure of determining deemed exports. The electronic process was introduced in January and the paper-based system was eliminated in February.

Also, in 2016-2017, we launched the year with an increase in our cost-recovery fees. OIS service fees had not seen an increase since 2010 for the J documents and since 2015 for H and LPR cases. Then in December 2016, USCIS implemented an increase in fees for several of their forms, including the I-129 (from $325 to $460) and the I-140 (from $580 to $700).

Unfortunately, the fee increase did not result in better service. Beginning in late Fall of 2016, OIS noticed increased processing times for H-1B petitions - some petitions taking as long as 8 months for adjudication. The suspension of Premium Processing did appear to aid in USCIS’s ability to timely process all H-1Bs. The slow down on USCIS adjudications resulted in a challenge for OIS, because H-1B applications cannot be submitted more than 6 months from the desired start dates due to Department of Labor procedures. However, eventually, all petitions were approved without a break in employment authorization.
Cinema in the Park
Experience America
PITT IS IN TOP 20 FOR HOSTING INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARS

For the second year in a row, the University of Pittsburgh ranked in the top 20 of US institutions for the highest number of International Scholars hosted. According to the Open Doors report for 2015-2016 published in November of 2016, Pitt was number 18 with 1,768 scholars. For 2016-2017, we reported 1,812. These numbers include the J-1, H-1B, O-1, TN, E-3 visa statuses.

Scholars and Employees

Welcoming Scholars and Employees (continued)
In addition to J and H initial status documents requests, the E-team also prepared thirty-one I-140 petitions for employment-based permanent residency applications. The majority of these were EB1B, Outstanding Researcher or Professor category.

We granted 340 J-1 program extensions and the team processed 50 H-1B departure notifications. A majority of these departure notifications were due to the employee being granted LPR and no longer requiring visa sponsorship. Statistics show a significant jump in this number compared to past years. This increase can be attributed to improved processes and communication between OIS, HR, and the employing departments - a trend we are confident will continue.

PITT IS IN TOP 20 FOR HOSTING INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARS

Experience America
J-1 program sponsors have a regulatory requirement to ensure that all J-1 researchers and student interns are involved in cross-cultural programs where they can learn about the United States. OIS has worked to comply with this regulation by facilitating the Experience America program.

The 2016/17 Academic Year was filled with a variety of programming hosted by the employment team to provide various opportunities for scholars and their families to participate in typical American society activities or to attend lunch sessions providing guidance on life and culture in the US.

With 11 events scattered throughout the year, we hosted 925 scholars and their families. The official “kick-off" was a Tailgating themed-picnic on the Posvar Patio which included lunch, a mini-lesson in throwing a football and opportunities to play typical picnic games. We sponsored five off-campus trips that took participants to a Riverhounds soccer match, Trax Farms, Tanger Outlets, Boyce Park for snow tubing and PNC Park for a Pirates game. We hosted five Lunch & Learn sessions where attendees learned about everything from the US Presidential election process to preparing for winter in Pittsburgh to tips on navigating the health care system.

Programming Requirements
As background, an important regulatory basis for the focus on cross-cultural activities is 22 CFR 62.8(d), which states that Sponsors shall:

(1) Offer or make available to exchange visitors a variety or appropriate cross-cultural activities. The extent and types of the cross-cultural activities shall be determined by the needs and interests of the particular category of exchange visitor. Sponsors will be responsible to determine the appropriate type and number of cross-cultural programs for their exchange visitors. The Department of State encourages sponsors to give their exchange visitors the broadest exposure to American society, culture and institutions; and

(2) Encourage exchange visitors to voluntarily participate in activities which are for the purpose of sharing the language, culture, or history of their home country with Americans, provided such activities do not delay the completion of the exchange visitors’ programs.

The regulations at 22 CFR 62.2 define Cross-cultural activity as "an activity designed to promote exposure and interchange between exchange visitors and Americans so as to increase their understanding of each other’s society, culture, and institutions."
Orientation

OIS holds separate orientation programs for graduate and undergraduate students. The goals of International Undergraduate Orientation are to make sure students know what resources are available to them as new students at Pitt, and to get them ready for the overall First Year Experience orientation that immediately follows. The Division of Student Affairs them folds them into all First Year Experience events and makes sure that they are connecting with the Pitt community.

International Graduate Student Orientation is a day-long event with a morning general session, lunch, and afternoon conference-style sessions. All students hear the same information before lunch, but can choose what information is most relevant to them in the afternoon.

OIS co-hosts with the Office of the Provost a Gateway Clipper Cruise for new international graduate students. Faculty members from each school are invited to spend time getting to know the students and share tips about how they can get the most out of their time in the classroom.

Pre-Arrival Checklist

OIS communicates with incoming students almost immediately after they have sent their admission deposits. The Pre-Arrival checklist was created to serve as a central place where students can find information as well as send required information to OIS, as needed. The Pre-Arrival Checklist is designed as a set of ‘tabs’, each with ‘to-do items’ and important information. This keeps incoming students engaged with OIS in the months prior to the start of class. The checklist enables OIS to collect everything we need in order to issue an immigration document, and then complete the check-in process upon a student’s arrival in the US. We no longer need to collect paper copies of documents; the students learn very early on how to interface with the checklist, and are able to upload copies of necessary documents that we OIS can register their record.

One item on the Pre-Arrival Checklist is a questionnaire that assesses students’ expectations and concerns about starting at Pitt. Some quotes from the Fall 2017 cohort are included at right.

What are you most excited about regarding your future in Pittsburgh and at the University of Pittsburgh?

“Living without my parents and taking care of myself. Managing almost every aspect of my life while pursuing my studies is just too good. I am sure I will remember every moment of my time in Pittsburgh.”

“A world class education from one of the best universities and the opportunity to meet and work with brilliant people from across the world. With the knowledge gained I wish to do something meaningful to help people and make a difference.”

“I am excited about discovering new places, meeting new people and being exposed to different situations. I hope that through these experiences I will be able to challenge my self and grow into a more independent, resilient and open-minded human being.”

“What I am most excited about is the research environment in the University of Pittsburgh, which will enable me both to improve myself as a PhD student and to interact with great mathematicians in the same field I wish to study.”

“I am really excited about living in a city with so much history and culture and studying in one of the best universities in America. I am also looking forward to enjoying the beautiful campus of the university and meet some amazing people.”

“I am excited because I can take various kinds of courses which I cannot take in home institution. Also, I am planning to join student activities and make new foreign friends and hang around big and small places in Pittsburgh. Moreover, if I have extra time, I want to participate some internship program so that I can experience American companies.”
Pre-Departure Events

In June 2017, OIS staff travelled with 11 current Pitt students to Beijing and Shanghai to greet incoming undergraduate students as part of the Pitt to You program, which is a collaboration between multiple offices on campus. Current students delivered a workshop to incoming students about what to expect at Pitt and in Pittsburgh. All of the students then spent several days visiting cultural and historical sites, giving current students an opportunity to learn about China, and allowing incoming students to bond with their fellow classmates.

Additionally, OIS staff was able to meet with incoming graduate students in Beijing and Shanghai. Graduate students learned about travel to the US, housing and neighborhoods, transportation, health and safety, and what to expect during the first few days of the semester. In a focus group held shortly after the start of the Fall 2017 term, OIS learned that getting this type of practical information in-person and ahead of travel is extremely useful to students so that they know about resources, and start to feel connected to Pitt.

100% of Participants

- agree or strongly agree that the program helped them to build stronger relationships with current Pitt students and other incoming students
- felt that their ambassador helped them feel more connected to Pitt and reduced concerns about coming to Pitt

of Participants
Outreach

In an effort to reach more students in a strategic way, Immigration Specialists have spent time in individual academic departments to meet with students. The topic of employment is of particular interest to students – both internships and post-graduate employment, and so OIS staff have held numerous workshops and information sessions in the various schools so students can learn about their options and next steps. The advantage of delivering the information in this way is that the messages can be tailored to the specific groups, depending on their field of study and degree level. For example, talking to a group of PhD candidates about options after graduation will be different than talking with undergraduate Engineering students about what’s needed to authorize a Co-Op experience.

Relationships

In addition to fostering better relationships with students, OIS staff have spent a significant amount of time working to establish and maintain good working relationships with department staff and faculty. When staff and faculty understand more about what is required or restricted based on immigration status, it’s easier for them to discuss options with their students. More conversations with departments also has led to an increased understanding of the specifics for individual programs, which can lead to better advising. This increased understanding not only helps the academic advisors to best serve their students, but the Immigration Specialists also have a more detailed picture of the academic programs and options to advise on immigration issues.
Current Students

Appointments

International students can choose from two types of appointments in OIS. For quick questions and travel signatures, OIS offers Walk-In Hours most Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 1:00 – 4:00 pm. For questions that may require additional time, students can schedule an appointment with their specific Immigration Specialist. Appointments are scheduled online, and students can usually be seen within 2-3 days, if not sooner. Emergency appointments are always available, in the event that a student needs to be seen immediately.

Top Reasons for Walk-In Visits

1. Travel Questions — 851 visits
2. OPT Review/Questions — 535 visits
3. CPT Employment Questions — 99 visits
4. Visa/Passport Questions — 62 visits
5. Driver’s License/SSN Questions — 43 visits

The number of travel questions asked by students during Walk-in Hours was 13x greater this spring than last year following the executive order on immigration and travel restrictions.

Portfolios

Sara Jones
- Graduate School of Public Health

Kate Madeano
- School of Computing and Information
- School of Education
- School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
- School of Medicine
- School of Pharmacy

Shannon O’Reilly
- Graduate School of Public and International Affairs
- School of Dental Medicine
- School of Law
- School of Nursing
- School of Social Work
- Swanson School of Engineering

Richard Sherman
- College of Business Administration
- College of General Studies
- Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences
- Katz Graduate School of Business
- All Exchange Students
Alumni

International students in both F-1 and J-1 visa statuses are eligible to apply for practical training employment after completing their academic programs. J-1 students are eligible for up to 18 months of Academic Training (AT). All F-1 students are eligible for 12 months of Optional Practical Training (OPT) and students with a degree in a STEM field are able to apply for a 24 month STEM OPT extension. There are hundreds of alumni who continue to work with OIS for 3 years after they have graduated from their programs at Pitt.

OPT Reporting Requirements

The OPT benefits come with specific reporting requirements for the alumni and OIS. During the 12 month OPT period, alumni need to report their employment information, including an explanation of how the position relates to their field of study, within 10 days of their start date. OIS is responsible for collecting all the information and reporting it through the Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

The STEM OPT extension application includes the Form I-983 Training Plan which needs to be completed by the alumni and their employer. Form I-983 also requires alumni and their employer to complete 12 month and 24 month/final evaluations. All alumni participating in the OPT STEM extension must also confirm their personal and employment information with OIS every 6 months of their employment authorization. There are also additional reporting requirements if an alumni changes employers during their STEM OPT extension.

Because there are a number of unique reporting requirements at different times during the OPT period, OIS works with alumni to send them reminders to help the alumni maintain compliance with the OPT regulations. In addition, OIS continues to advise alumni about their immigration status throughout their OPT employment and changes to OPT regulations. The reporting requirements themselves have changed a great deal in the past year.

The reporting requirements added this year include: mandatory reporting during initial OPT, completing the Form I-983 Training Plan, and completing the Form I-983 12 month/24 month/final evaluations.

Growing Population

While F-1 and J-1 alumni have always been eligible for practical training benefits, the STEM OPT extension was created in 2008, the number of alumni taking advantage of these opportunities has risen significantly in the last five years. At the University of Pittsburgh, the number of practical training participants has grown from 166 in 2013 to 954 in 2017. This increase in alumni population that OIS serves, as well as the addition of more reporting requirements in the past year, means that the scope of OIS alumni casework and advising have also expanded at commiserate rate.

Alumni Engagement

Every time an alumni reports employment information to OIS, they are encouraged to participate in the Pitt Alumni Association. In order to help foster a connection with the students and the Alumni Association, OIS invites the Alumni Association to present at our new student orientations. OIS had also featured information about the Alumni Association in the Global Perspective newsletter.

As our alumni population continues to grow, OIS strives to develop new partnerships across campus to enhance our international alumni experience across the region, the country, and the world.
General Statistics

Total Populations

- Incoming Students: 1377
- Current Students: 3064
- Alumni on Practical Training: 954
- Scholars and Employees: 1834

Population by Citizenship

Our international community includes people from 122 different countries.

TOP COUNTRIES

1. China — 3100
2. India — 695
3. South Korea — 182
4. Japan — 142
5. Saudi Arabia — 141
6. Taiwan — 139
7. Canada — 110
8. Iran — 84
9. Brazil — 83
10. Germany — 82

Our international community includes people from 122 different countries.
General Statistics

Growth in All Populations

Growth in Student Populations

Growth in Casework by Populations

*Please note that changes to reporting requirements for Alumni on Practical Training led OIS to start tracking the casework in 2015. Prior to 2015, reporting requirements were met, but not counted as casework.
### General Statistics

#### School Affiliations

**Health Sciences**
- School of Dental Medicine
- School of Medicine
- School of Nursing
- School of Pharmacy
- Graduate School of Public Health
- School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

**Provost’s Area**
- College of Business Administration
- College of General Studies
- Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences
- Exchange Programs
- Graduate School of Public & International Affairs
- Katz Graduate School of Business
- School of Computing and Information
- School of Education
- School of Law
- School of Social Work
- Swanson School of Engineering
- Other

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**Legend**
- **Incoming Students**
- **Current Students**
- **Alumni on Practical Training**
- **Scholars and Employees**
Due to the nature of the admissions cycle, the Incoming Students casework is assessed on a calendar year rather than a fiscal year. The admission offices submit the New Admit, Award Letter, and Late Exception Requests to OIS. OIS then contacts the admitted student to submit the Biographical, Financial, Dependent, Passport, and Transfer information to either receive an immigration document from OIS or have their current immigration status verified. In order to complete the immigration check-in and Orientation requirements, the incoming students must submit their Address, I-94 Record, and Visa Stamp.
OPT reporting was captured in one e-form (OPT Report Participation) prior to January 19, 2017. On January 19th, the form was divided into 4 specific forms for different reporting needs: Post-Completion Report Employment, Request New I-20, STEM Every 6 Months Reporting, and STEM Changes to Employment.
Scholars and Employees

Total Populations

- Faculty: 218
- Post Doc: 383
- Staff: 316
- Visiting Scholar: 917

Population by Citizenship

- China — 888
- India — 169
- Japan — 62
- Italy — 60
- Canada — 50
- South Korea — 50
- Germany — 49
- Brazil — 42
- France — 35
- Taiwan — 32

Our scholars and employees include representatives from 84 different countries.
## School Affiliations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>School Affiliation</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Post Doc</th>
<th>Staff</th>
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<td><strong>Provost’s Office Sub-Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td>383</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>917</td>
<td>1834</td>
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Incoming Students

Populations by Degree Level

- Undergraduate: 214
- Masters: 597
- Doctoral: 208
- Professional: 20
- Non-Degree: 86

Our incoming students include representatives from 67 different countries.

Population by Citizenship

TOP 10 COUNTRIES
1. China — 621
2. India — 156
3. South Korea — 42
4. Saudi Arabia — 39
5. Germany — 26
6. Taiwan — 24
7. France — 18
8. Canada — 16
9. Iran — 16
10. Japan — 15

Our incoming students include representatives from 67 different countries.
Current Students

**Populations by Degree Level**

- **Undergraduate**: 482 (Continuing: 202, New: 280)
- **Masters**: 524 (Continuing: 516, New: 8)
- **Doctoral**: 857 (Continuing: 191, New: 666)
- **Professional**: 29 (Continuing: 28, New: 1)
- **Non-Degree**: 68 (Continuing: 68, New: 0)

**Population by Citizenship**

1. China — 1661
2. India — 318
3. Saudi Arabia — 133
4. South Korea — 115
5. Japan — 79
6. Taiwan — 77
7. Canada — 54
8. Iran — 53
9. Turkey — 39
10. Brazil — 33

Our current students include representatives from 101 different countries.
## Current Students

### School Affiliations

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<th>School Affiliation</th>
<th>Bachelors</th>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
<th>Prof/Other</th>
<th>Non-Degree</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</table>
Alumni on Practical Training

**Populations by Degree Level**

- Undergraduate: 64%
- Masters: 26.6%
- Doctoral: <1%
- Professional: 8.5%

**Population by Citizenship**

1. **China** — 551
2. **India** — 208
3. **Taiwan** — 30
4. **South Korea** — 17
5. **Iran** — 12
6. **Nigeria** — 10
7. **Brazil** — 8
8. **Saudi Arabia** — 7
9. **Turkey** — 6
10. **Canada** — 6

**Our current alumni include representatives from 63 different countries.**
## OIS Staff Directory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genevieve Cook</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sara Jones</td>
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<td>Debra Prvanovic</td>
<td>Assistant Director, Employment Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claire Mokry</td>
<td>Immigration Specialist, Employment Team</td>
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<td>Jean Wenner</td>
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**OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES**

University Center for International Studies  
University of Pittsburgh