

OISS: June 2020 Newsletter

Hello everyone,

You made it. What a semester it was. Congratulations to all of you for navigating the challenges and for working your way through in the different ways you had to!

And... a special CONGRATULATIONS to the CLASS OF 2020!!

[SEE ATTACHED CONGRATULATIONS VIDEO FROM OUR TEAM!]

-----OISS NEWS-----

Welcome to our new staff members in OISS!!

As many of you may know, the [Office of International Student Services](#) has been in the process of hiring new staff members throughout this spring. It took a little longer than usual due to COVID challenges, but I am so, so happy to welcome our new Assistant Director, Jennifer Dressen and our new Administrative Coordinator, Sachi Tan to the OISS Team!

Jennifer and Sachi both bring their combined experiences of: living and working abroad, language learning, immigration regulations, creating efficient systems and processes, coordinating programming, excellent student support and great energy and ideas! We're excited to have them and looking forward to when many of you are able to meet them in person. Please [CLICK HERE](#) to see the full OISS Team!

We are here for you!

- *. We are still scheduling appointments with advisors through Zoom and we have access to other modes of communication too (WhatsApp, WeChat, KakaoTalk, LINE, Skype)- just ask!
- *. Our hours are Monday- Friday between 8:30am- 4:30pm EST; however, exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis with the understanding that many of you are in different time zones and outside of the U.S. We will work with you to make something work!
- *. OISS Summer Hours- OISS is open in the summer! We will follow up very soon with more information regarding our specific office hours and the drop-in advising times we will begin offering.

-----IMMIGRATION UPDATES-----

1. I-20 Travel Signatures: We have temporarily modified some of our processes regarding the I-20 Travel Signature due to COVID-19. The temporary changes have been guided by the SEVP (Student & Exchange Visitor Program) Broadcast Message 2003-03: New Electronic Form I-20 Issuance Guidance on ICE.gov/COVID19 sent on March 26, 2020. If you needed to leave the United States urgently and were not able to obtain a Travel Signature on page 2 of your I-20, we can scan one for you! While the I-20 usually requires an ORIGINAL signature on the I-20, SEVP has allowed this temporary adjustment.

Note About Travel- *If you are currently in the United States with plans to work or study here in the near future, traveling outside of the U.S. is not recommended.* With the current

travel restrictions in the U.S. and in many other countries, when you might be able to return to the United States is unknown. This is not immigration-specific, but rather related to the global pandemic and the travel restrictions that are country-specific. Many are still not allowing for international travel- the U.S. included. Please contact oiss@risd.edu with any questions specific to your situation.

2. Suspension of Routine Visa Services: This will not apply to many of you, but we want to continue to mention it so you know we are aware. As per the [announcement made by the U.S. Department of State on March 20, 2020](#), routine visa services have been suspended worldwide. RISD OISS is closely monitoring this situation and will continue to do so. If you hear of any changes happening in the consulates or embassies in your country in regards to the visa application process, please let us know. While we are staying up-to-date on everything, you may hear about certain updates faster because of your national news.

Note About Visas- *If you are physically in the United States and your visa will be expiring, you can remain in the U.S. on an expired visa as long as you have a valid I-20 (for students on OPT - this includes you with your OPT cards).*

3. For graduating students: OPT season is still happening! It is best and easiest to apply if you are physically present in the United States; however, while there may be a slight risk, it is possible to apply for OPT from outside of the U.S. Please reach out to OISS directly at oiss@risd.edu if you would like to make an appointment regarding this option. In general, to engage the OPT process, please get [THESE MATERIALS](#) together and email them to oiss@risd.edu with **Subject Heading: OPT Application: LAST NAME, First Name**. Once your materials are confirmed completed, a staff member will make an appointment for you with Kate Sacco or Jennifer Dressen.

Reminder: OPT documents must be received by US Citizenship & Immigration Services within 60 days of your program end date of May 30th, 2020.

Graduating Students: [RISD Alumni Services](#) is a great resource for you as you begin to explore what is next for you as a RISD Graduate. As a first step, sign up for the [RISD Network](#) mentoring program and connect directly with alumni mentors for career advice!

4. Summer Internships (CPT- Curricular Practical Training): If you are thinking about or if you have been offered a summer internship, please follow the process outlined on the [OISS website](#) or visit the [Career Center website](#). The deadline to submit your materials for a summer internship is June 19, 2020!

5. Tax Season. Due to COVID-19, the deadline to file taxes has been extended to: July 15, 2020. There was a Tax Webinar offered by Sprintax on Thursday, April 2nd and there is a recording of the webinar on the [Google Drive](#). There is also general tax information on the [OISS Website](#) and you can always [contact Sprintax](#) as well.

6. Slow Reopening in Social Security Administration (SSA) & RI Department of Motor Vehicles (RI DMV): The Social Security Offices are slowly reopening but may have different procedures. Please visit the [SSA Website](#) for more details. The RI DMV is also slowly

reopening. Please visit the [RI DMV Website](#) for more details. For information of how Rhode Island is moving through the Reopening Process, [CLICK HERE](#).

7. Be Aware of Possible Scams!- IMPORTANT!!! There have recently been many RISD international students who have reported receiving phone calls from people claiming that they are U.S. government or other government officials (including people from outside of the U.S.) that are demanding money or personal information. **DO NOT GIVE THEM ANYTHING!!!** These types of calls are considered Scams and we do not want any of our students to be harmed by them. To learn more about Scams in the United States and about your rights if someone calls you to demand money- please visit the [OISS Website](#).

In general- No U.S. Government Offices will ever call you and demand money by phone! Just hang up!

8. Protesting: If you are (or if you already have) protesting with the Black Lives Matter Movement, we recommend that you visit the [ACLU \(American Civil Liberties Union\) website](#) to get familiar with what your rights are for protesting on a non-immigrant visa in the U.S. Be safe and don't go alone!

9. All Things Immigration: OISS is very closely monitoring everything that is going on with immigration right now... from online courses, to employment, to travel and visas, to DACA and anything else you can think of. We will continue to send you the latest news as we hear things. If you have ANY doubts, please don't hesitate to email us at: oiss@risd.edu. We are in a time of uncertainty and there is a lot of information floating out in the world right now. We want to make sure that you have accurate resources and that you feel as comfortable and as supported as possible as we go through this. We will also continue to update our [FAQs on the OISS Website](#).

-----UPCOMING PROGRAMMING-----

While we are still working through some of the continued challenges of COVID-19... We are also finding ways to engage more discussions around **Black Lives Matter and Racism and Xenophobia towards the Asian-identified community**. We will be working with people at RISD and within the Providence area to offer programs on these very important topics and conversations this summer.

President Somerson's Announcement on June 15, 2020: We know many of you are awaiting the President's announcement for what RISD's plans are for the fall. Once the announcement is made, students will receive additional information and you will have space and time to ask specific questions in the next couple of weeks.

Sincerely,
The Office of International Student Services
Kate Sacco, Director,
Jennifer Dressen, Assistant Director,
Amy Andrea Iglesias, International Student Advisor,
Sachi Tan, Administrative Coordinator,
Amanda Alfano, Temporary Staff (final day: 6/12/20)