Welcome!

Hello from the IO!

As this frigid winter rages on, we hope you are keeping warm! The IO has had an exciting fall and winter! IO staff members are planning to attend (or planning!) several conferences for NAFSA, our professional development association (p. 1). We’ve had several successful student and scholar programs this year (p. 2), with more planned for Spring Quarter. One especially successful program is our Host an International program for Thanksgiving (p. 3). Many members of the NU, Evanston and Chicago communities come together to make our students feel welcomed in the US each November.

This summer, IO staff had the opportunity to travel to China, Korea, Hong Kong and India to meet some of our new students and their parents (p. 4)! We also launched a new group—the Graduate International Student Association (G-ISA) and can’t wait to see what they do next! Read about one of its leaders, who first learned about NU through an unlikely combination of pop culture and science (p. 5).

Enjoy!
The International Office

PS: We would like to introduce you to the newest member of the IO family: Lincoln Walter Seaton Pietrus was born to proud mom/IO Assistant Director Colleen Seaton & her husband J.P. on October 4, 2014!

NAFSA Updates

“NAFSA: Association of International Educators is the world's largest nonprofit association dedicated to international education and exchange. NAFSA's 10,000 members are located at more than 3,500 institutions worldwide, in over 150 countries” (nafsa.org)

The International Office has always been very involved in NAFSA, and this year is no exception!

IO Director Ravi Shankar, a member of the national Leadership Development Committee and IO Associate Director Nick Seamons, NAFSA Region V chair, just returned from the annual Washington Leadership Summit. In the nation’s capital, Ravi and Nick networked with colleagues in the field, planned upcoming NAFSA events and heard from government representatives. NAFSA is preparing for its annual conference in Boston, to be held at the end of May. Over 7,000 people are expected to attend the conference! Keynote speakers at the annual conference will include: author Malcolm Gladwell, activist Shiza Shahid, author and human rights advocate Ishmael Beah and Nobel Peace Prize winner Tawakkol Karman. The conference will also include workshops, poster fairs, networking receptions, Boston excursions and more.

IO Assistant Director Colleen Seaton recently joined the NAFSA Region V team as the Knowledge Community representative for International Student & Scholar Services. She will work to provide information and resources to other international student & scholar advisors in Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. Colleen joins Nick (Chair) and IO Advisor Emlyn Torres (Advocacy Coordinator) on the Region V team. All three are hard at work planning for the Region V conference, to be held in Rosemont, IL this fall. IO staff will also assist in planning social events for the 300+ expected conference attendees. Emlyn will also travel to Washington D.C. for NAFSA’s annual Advocacy Day. She’ll meet with other advocacy leaders in the field, as well as Illinois’ Congress members. Additionally, Emlyn will bring back a greater understanding of where various issues central to NAFSA (including immigration reform and expanding study abroad) stand in Congress.

IO Advisor Debbie Kaltman is the International Scholar Representative for the International Educators of Illinois (IEI), NAFSA’s state-level group. IEI is planning for its annual conference in March, and hopes to draw 150-200 professionals and graduate students from around the state. She will also present a workshop on J-1 Exchange Visitor regulations.

Involvement in NAFSA helps the IO stay current on regulations, trends, and ideas in the field of international education. We are lucky to be leaders in such a vibrant and supportive community!
2014-2015 has been a busy year so far! Visit northwestern.edu/international to see what’s happening next!

**September 2014:**
We welcomed 1200 + new international students to the NU community! Our International Peer Advisors (top left), Graduate Sidekicks (top right), Willie the Wildcat, TGS Dean Dwight McBride and IO staff (bottom left) worked tirelessly on a fantastic week. We partnered with Bed Bath & Beyond (bottom right) to hold an exclusive shopping party for new international students and their families.

**December 2014:** The IO sponsored Graduate Women Across Northwestern’s Dinner with Strangers series, helping students network and enjoy Evanston’s tastiest restaurants!

**February 2014:** Students and scholars braved the cold to ice skate at our own Norris Center Ice Rink & under the Bean at Millennium Park. Many students learned how to ice skate for the first time! (Photo: Sean Su)

**October 2014:** We partnered with ARTica Studios to offer a pumpkin-decorating workshop, and with NU Archives to learn about our university’s great history!
“Host an International: Thanksgiving,” celebrated its 6th anniversary this year! Expanded media coverage included mentions in *North by Northwestern* and *Northwestern News*, and led to record levels of involvement. 170 students attended Thanksgiving dinners at the homes of 35 local families! Many Northwestern faculty and staff hosted students this year, including Medill Dean Brad Hamm and his family. Community members (including many families with children in District 65 schools) continued to provide warm support to our international students. We are so thankful for the continued support of the Northwestern, Evanston and Chicago communities.
IO Travels to Meet New Students!

In Summer 2014, the IO partnered with the Office of Alumni Relations & Development and the Northwestern Alumni Association to offer in-country orientations (“NU In”) to incoming international students.

This was the first time the IO offered orientation sessions and sent staff members to students’ home countries. We held sessions in Seoul, Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore. These cities were selected because they are the most popular hometowns of our international students. IO Director Ravi Shankar traveled to India, while IO Associate Director Nick Seamons and Assistant Director Colleen Seaton traveled to China, Korea and Hong Kong. Prior to 2014, in-country orientations were planned by the International Office and run by international students traveling home for the summer.

In each city, NU In orientation sessions were offered in two parts: one for incoming undergraduates and their parents and one for incoming graduate students. Over 500 students and their parents attended sessions! Students represented all six undergraduate schools and a wide variety of graduate programs.

IO staff focused NU In sessions on a few key ideas: acculturation, academic culture in the US, culture shock, and the student visa process. Additionally, we presented on campus resources, weather in Evanston/Chicago, what to pack and Northwestern traditions. We also invited local NU alumni to share their experiences. Alumni also provided advice and sought to alleviate student concerns. The NU Alumni Club even planned receptions after some of our events!

NU In feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. 99% indicated they felt more prepared to attend Northwestern University after attending! One student said “the fact that the university is reaching out to students by traveling such long distances is overwhelming.” International students felt far better prepared for arrival on-campus and academic life at NU after meeting with NU alumni and staff. The IO will continue to evaluate the NU In program and its participants throughout the academic year.

IO staff also enjoyed traveling to the home countries of many of our students, and had the opportunity to explore local sights, sounds and foods! We enjoyed meeting our new students and their families, and welcoming them into the Northwestern community.

We are pleased to announce that we have received funding to hold NU In sessions again in 2015. We look forward to meeting more students, parents and alumni around the world!
Student Spotlight: Binbin Luo, China

The International Office at Northwestern University advises nearly 3500 students from over 100 countries. Here is one student’s story:

Binbin Luo is a graduate international student from Wenzhou, China, a city in the southeastern area of Zhejiang province. She first heard about Northwestern thanks to an unlikely combination of science and pop culture: an undergraduate professor assigned a research paper written by NU faculty, and she had seen the 2006 film The Devil Wears Prada, which features a fictional NU alum as its main character.

Luo is a fourth-year PhD student in Chemical Engineering. Her favorite class thus far has been Fluid Mechanics, which she describes as a “hard-core Chemical Engineering class.” In this seminal course, Luo studied how chemical engineers learn and how to tackle practical problems. Fluid Mechanics was well-constructed and organized, says Luo, and gave her the impression that her department is very committed to teaching.

Beyond her studies, Luo is taking advantage of the many opportunities available to NU students. She played with the Northwestern Table Tennis Club, is an Event Coordinator for the newly-formed Graduate International Student Association and is a two year member of the Graduate Sidekicks, the IO’s group of orientation peer leaders. Luo attended Graduate International Student Orientation during her first year and found the current student panel to be “incredibly informative and helpful.” She volunteered to be on a student panel herself the next year and joined the inaugural cohort of Sidekicks in 2013 because “I thought I should give back.” She finds it “refreshing” to reflect on her own culture and in learning new perspectives. “It’s not every day and everywhere that one can work in such an international setting,” says Luo, noting that it’s “an important skill as the world is becoming more and more interconnected.” Luo advises international students to “make the most of your time at NU - make new friends and have fun.”

Outside of Chicago, Luo has been fortunate to travel to many other U.S. cities in the last three years. Chicago is her favorite, followed by Boston. She finds Evanston to be intimate and friendly, but likes the proximity to Chicago so she doesn’t miss any “city fun.” For Luo, the best part about living in the U.S. is the “melting pot” of immigrants: “you can have a taste of different cultures, food, and customs” all in one place. Of course, she misses her family and different foods from China, but is adjusting well and is only bothered now by the time zone differences!

We asked Binbin to tell us something interesting about her hometown of Wenzhou, China. She says: “Wenzhou is located in a mountainous area and so it's been sort of separated from the neighboring area for most of its history. The local dialect became so distinct from Mandarin that when my family travels to other parts of China and talks among ourselves, the locals ask if we are Korean or Japanese!”

About the International Office @ Northwestern University

The mission of the International Office is to enrich the academic and cultural experience of Northwestern’s international students, visitors, employees, and families.

The IO advises and supports the university’s international community; educates and collaborates with campus partners; and liaises with relevant government agencies.

We advocate on behalf of our populations to promote global educational exchange in support of the university’s strategic plan.

The IO aspires to increase the visibility of international students, employees, visitors and families to enrich the broader campus community.