Hello and Happy New Year from the International Office!

Our focus this quarter is on Latin America. In March 2011, U.S. President Barack Obama launched the 100,000 Strong in the Americas initiative, aimed at increasing both the number of American students studying in the region and the number of Latin American students studying in the U.S.

At Northwestern, 10% of our international students and 5% of our scholars come from Latin America—from Argentina, The Bahamas, Belize, Bermuda, Bolivia, Brazil, Barbados, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, El Salvador, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela! The top five countries of origin are Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, and Colombia.

We are also lucky to have so many diverse departments at Northwestern, including the Latina and Latino Studies Program, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, plus clusters within History, Global Health and other departments. Students of all backgrounds can join Alianza (the Latino/Hispanic Student Alliance) or G-SALSA (Graduate Student Association for Latino and Spanish Activities). Additionally, undergraduates can study abroad in 15 different Latin American countries, while graduate students and faculty pursue research across the region.

The IO’s newest staff member is equally enthusiastic about Latin America. Evanston native Chris DeNardo joined us in October as our new Program Assistant. Chris studied in Brazil, speaks Spanish and Portuguese, and practices the Brazilian martial art of capoeira. In addition to his Latin American studies and manning the IO front desk, Chris is our social media expert, and recently launched our Twitter account. Follow along at @NUIntOff!

Best wishes,
The International Office

Assessment at the IO: The International Student Barometer

This fall, Northwestern international students made their opinions count by participating in the International Student Barometer (ISB). The ISB survey, created by the UK-based company I-Graduate, allows international students to give comprehensive feedback to their home institution. According to I-Graduate, the ISB “gives international students a medium to tell you what matters most and what they think of their experience.”

The IO is conducting this assessment to better understand our international student populations, and to improve our services. The survey itself was sent out to students in October and November. We also held ISB Launch pizza parties, as well as Surveys and Snacks drop-in hours on both campuses. We are happy to announce that 900 students responded to the ISB!

In the spring, the IO will receive a package of results: those from our campus alone as well as comparative data drawn from other ISB-participating institutions in the U.S., U.K. and around the world. We look forward to receiving our results, and to making meaningful changes in the upcoming years to better serve our international students.
After a quiet summer, the IO staff have been keeping busy with a full calendar of programming!

We kicked off our orientation season with International Graduate Orientation, where we welcomed over 400 new students! The morning featured a keynote address from Graduate School dean Dwight McBride, workshops, a resource fair and lunch at the Hilton Orrington Hotel. Next we welcomed 200 new undergraduates and their families for International Student Orientation. Our fabulous International Peer Advisors planned an exciting weekend, featuring trips to Chicago and downtown Evanston, campus tours, late night snacks, an NU men’s soccer game and more. For the second year, we also held an International Parent Orientation, where we met over fifty new family members! Finally, we ended orientation season with our Spouse and Family Orientation, featuring local community and campus resources, art projects for kids of all ages and fall snacks.

Our graduate student monthly Brown Bag series started back up in September with a special presentation from University Archivist Kevin Leonard. Leonard spoke to sixty grad students about NU’s storied history. In October, we held a Meet and Eat session for new students. At our November event, Prof. Michael Allen (History) and PhD student DJ Flynn (Political Science) gave their thoughts on the U.S. Elections. Students even voted for president in a mock election, “re-electing” Barack Obama a week before the U.S. electorate. In December, graduate students learned about unique opportunities and programs available through the Center for Civic Engagement. We look forward to more exciting presentations in 2013!

International scholars have been busy too! We held a Scholar Happy Hour in Evanston at the Celtic Knot and in Chicago at Emilio’s Tapas, where dozens of scholars mingled and met new people. We’ve also continued to hold monthly J-1 Scholar Orientations in Evanston and Chicago, where we meet new scholars and answer questions.

Led by IO Program Assistant Cara Lawson, our Spouse and Family Coffee Hours have triumphantly returned. Husbands, wives and children (lots of children!) of our international students and scholars have been meeting weekly to share advice, events and make friends. The group meets on Tuesdays at 10 am at JJ Java (911 Foster Street, Evanston) and all international spouses and their children are welcome. We also held a holiday party for international spouses and families. Everyone enjoyed hot chocolate and apple cider, and decorated gingerbread cookies!

For the fifth year in a row, the IO organized a large Thanksgiving program for students and scholars. Please see page 3 for more on Host an International: Thanksgiving 2012!

The IO took a short programming break for the holidays, but returned to hold a winter International Student Orientation. We look forward to our tax and work authorization workshops and more in 2013!
Twenty five families in the Evanston and Chicago area opened their homes (and kitchens!) to over seventy five eager international students and scholars in the fifth annual Host an International: Thanksgiving exchange. International students and scholars excitedly tasted turkey, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie and other traditional foods for the first time.

Several hosts were once international students themselves, and understand the difficulty of being far away from home during the holiday season. Additionally, this year the IO specifically reached out to Evanston elementary and high schools. We are happy to report that several District 65 and 202 families were excited to participate, and introduce their children to different cultures.

We hope even more students, scholars and local families can participate again in 2013!
Victor Shao is a Northwestern senior and the current president of the Associated Student Government.

At the beginning of June, I received a blue, bound booklet in the mail—an American passport. This product of a six-month process allowed me to travel to Israel just weeks later.

Over winter break, I decided to finally fill out the 10-page N-400 form and submit it. Two months later, I was summoned to a regional office for fingerprints.

On May 8th, I found myself waiting on the second floor of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Office with languages abuzz and loud children everywhere. I was pretty relaxed: I looked over the 100-question study guide on the L. For some, however, this process was more difficult as they did not learn these facts in school. In paying an $800 application fee, they could not easily afford to screw up.

I quickly engaged in conversation with a man sitting nearby. Having moved from Mexico in hopes of a better life, he raised a family here with three great children. He asked me, “Do you know if, when you become a citizen, your children also get citizenship?”

I was floored. He simply wanted to secure a future for his children. They were his source of pride and motivation, and he worked hard to get them here. I could only think about how hard my father worked to get us here. He left our family behind in China as he pursued his Master’s here. We joined him soon but it took a long time for things to get better. We moved from state to state several times until we finally settled down in the suburbs of Chicago years later. After some time, my father’s employment qualified him for permanent residency. We received our green cards—they’re only partially green, by the way—and felt a profound sense of relief.

I was finally called into the office and we went through some paperwork. Question period required that I answer six of ten basic questions about America correctly.

“Who is the chief justice of the Supreme Court?”
“John Roberts.”
“Who is the father of our country?”
“George Washington.”

Easy. I soon walked out and I exchanged congratulations with the Mexican father.

On May 22nd, I was one of 137 eager participants gathered in a courtroom at the Dirksen Federal Building. Both my father and close friend sat in the jury stands, watching me navigate this rite of passage.

Aside from a smattering of famous quotes—JFK, Obama, FDR—the most memorable part of the ceremony was the announcing of each country represented. Forty-five countries were counted and we each stood up as ours was called. From the most common (Mexico) to the least (North Korea), we all recognized and appreciated the incredible richness of our gathering. This was truly the melting pot of the United States.

After songs, cheers, the passing out of certificates, and photographs, my journey had ended. But this was merely a stepping-stone into a much larger adventure: my life as an American. Here, people live by the American Dream. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps, work hard, buy a house, and raise a family. For immigrants, there is another layer—the Becoming American Dream. On top of everything else, we also have to secure visa sponsorship, permanent residency, and finally, the vaunted status of citizenship. It feels nice finally belonging to the Home of the Brave.
Student Spotlight: Joao Lovo, Brazil

The International Office advises nearly 3000 students at NU, plus another 500 recent graduates working in the U.S. through the Optional Pracical Training (OPT) and Academic Training (AT) visa benefits. OPT and AT are temporary employment authorizations that allow international students the opportunity to gain practical experience in their fields of study.

Here is one recent graduate’s story:

Joao Lovo is a 2012 graduate of the Northwestern University School of Law’s LLM in Taxation program. Originally from Sao Paolo, Brazil, Lovo was drawn to NU thanks to the program’s excellent global reputation, and the advice of several NU Law alums working in New York City.

Lovo says it was hard to choose a favorite course, since “they all have their pros and cons.” However, he especially benefitted from Property Taxation with Professor David Cameron. Lovo’s best memories of Chicago include “the diversity of cultures… and the food, of course!” He also enjoyed running along Lake Michigan and taking in the beautiful views from his Streeterville apartment.

Currently, Lovo works for a law firm in New York City, and is active in Northwestern Law’s NYC Alumni Club. He has lived in the US since 2009, calling New York City, Silicon Valley and NYC home. Over the last four years, Lovo has been able to travel to many different places in the US, including an exciting recent visit to the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska.

Lovo finds that US culture is more diverse and US legal practice is more international than in Brazil. Also different are “the endless opportunities for everyone to study, work and learn in so many fields in the US.” He advises future international students to try to interact as much as possible with NU’s regionally diverse American student body. American students are “all very different from each other! Take the opportunity to really learn from them,” says Lovo.

About the International Office @ Northwestern University

The International Office
Northwestern University
630 Dartmouth Place
Evanston, IL 60208
Phone: 847.491.5613
Fax: 847.556.6006
E-mail: intoff@northwestern.edu
Web: northwestern.edu/international
Twitter: @NUIntOff

We advise international students, faculty, staff and their families on their immigration and visa statuses for the duration of their studies or employment at Northwestern.

We provide programming to help international students, faculty and staff network, acculturate and integrate into the larger Northwestern community.

We collaborate with administrative and academic units to ensure that international student, faculty and staff concerns are heard in university-wide conversations.