Welcome!

In late 2011, the world’s population broke the seven billion mark. Over four of the seven billion live in Asia. Asian nations like India, China and others are growing, not just in size but also in economic power and international influence. Students from Asia are studying overseas in record numbers, enrolling in universities in the US, UK, Australia and Canada.

Northwestern is no exception: 64% of our international students and more than half of our international scholars come from Asia. We host students and scholars in large numbers from China, India, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, as well as smaller groups from Philippines, Pakistan, Nepal, Vietnam, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Macao, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan!

Our Asian students enroll in a wide range of academic programs, from undergraduate to doctoral. They also join many of our vibrant cultural groups, including the Chinese International Student Association, Cili Pad– Malaysian Students Association, Japan Club, South Asian Student Alliance, and the Indian Grad Student Association. Students from Asia work with others in the undergraduate International Student Association and the Graduate Leadership Council.

The International Office is proud to serve students and scholars from 110 countries, including many in Asia. Read on to learn more about our Asian students and scholars, as well as for updates on our programming and upcoming events.

Best wishes,
The International Office

New leadership at ISA and NU World Cup

Northwestern’s International Student Association (ISA) and NU World Cup recently held elections, and are happy to announce their new leaders. ISA will be led by new President Kuan-Yu Shen, Vice President Akhil Menon, Secretary Anay Dave and Treasurer Michael Ruhl. Rounding out the ISA leadership team are Rintip Nirundonpruk, Maddie Bryen, Chris Yenko, Anandita Puri, Juliette Lim, Lara Saldanha, Rebecca Lai, Santiago Nielsen, Raisa Chowdhury and Bruno Peynetti.

NU World Cup began as a part of ISA, but grew so much that it became its own organization! World Cup 2013 will be lead by Rintip Nirundonpruk (President) and Sean Widjaja (Vice President).

Thanks to the outgoing ISA board, and best of luck to the graduating seniors!
The IO has been very busy this year! Here’s what we’ve been up to...

In November, the International Students Association (ISA) organized the 4th annual International Food and Film Festival. The entire NU community was invited to enjoy a series of artistic and culinary global feasts! The IO also coordinated our annual Host an International program for Thanksgiving, and matched 70 international students, scholars and their families with 25 local host families. Several hosts are current NU students and staff members. Hosts and internationals both reported highly successful evenings: “It was one of the most memorable experiences in my time in the US,” said a Kellogg student, while another student thanked her host for “opening your doors for me … I loved the food and conversation we had. This was the best turkey ever!” A visiting scholar at Feinberg “strongly felt the American spirit of friendship and hospitality.” One host echoed the sentiments of the entire program: “My family and I got just as much from this as our guests. I hope this program continues to grow going forward.”

We ended 2011 in style with holiday parties on both the Evanston and Chicago campuses, toasting our staff and faculty colleagues. NU international students and scholars are fortunate to have so many great allies on our campus!

Our international graduate students kicked off 2012 with our monthly Brown Bag series, hosted in collaboration with the Graduate School and the Searle Center for Teaching Excellence. Recent sessions have included an international teaching assistant panel and the history of Rogers Park, led by Professor Bill Savage.

In February, we organized our Host an International for the Super Bowl, and several students enjoyed the game with local families. To prepare, we also held our annual Super Bowl workshop, led by NU football players Jacob Schmidt and Ricky Weina. A packed house learned all about American football and even got to try on real helmets and shoulder pads!

An international spouse/mom started a new spouse and family social group, which now meets weekly on the Evanston campus. The group recently held its first off-campus outing, enjoying the beautiful spring weather at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

ISA hosted their 4th annual World Cup at the end of March. Over 500 students participated as players, committee members and soccer fans. Despite the freezing cold weather, the event was a huge success!

This spring, we’ve held scholar happy hours in both Evanston and Chicago, learned about American baseball through another graduate student Brown Bag, and hung out with ISA at monthly Food for Thought gatherings.

We’re already hard at work planning International Student Orientation 2012, and look forward to welcoming new students and scholars in the fall!
Student Spotlight– Puspa Pokharel & Arkar Hein

Puspa Pokharel, from Kathmandu, Nepal, is a Master’s student in the LLM-International Human Rights law program. She was drawn to Northwestern Law for its excellent Human Rights law program, where she is now heavily involved in clinical practice, writing legal memos for cases in the International Criminal Court and organizing an upcoming conference. She loves living near the lake and appreciates how safe Chicago is, especially when compared to her hometown. Outside Chicago, Puspa’s favorite US destination has been Florida.

Puspa misses her parents and friends from home the most. “Nepalis have very strong familial ties, and are more traditional and religious than Americans,” she says. Food in the U.S. is also quite different. Puspa admits that life in the US for Asian students can be difficult at first, because “life here in the US is more individualistic, so you might not be so comfortable at first.” However, she promises that “you’ll get accustomed to it, and once you are accustomed, you’ll start falling in love with this place, like I have.”

From Yangon, Myanmar, Arkar Hein is a freshman Economics and International Relations Major. He learned about Northwestern through friends and colleagues. Over the course of the next two years, he will be bridging computer science, data mining and social media as he develops algorithms for finding interesting communities in social networks. Since social networks today are so vast, Patwary is working to create algorithms that will aptly scale large amounts of data.

Patwary best likes the opportunity to conduct a wide scope of research here at Northwestern. He misses his family and friends back home. On the whole, however, Patwary describes Northwestern as “a great place to work!”

Scholar spotlight– Mostofa Patwary

Mostofa Patwary is an international scholar and postdoctoral fellow in the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science department from Kurigram, Bangladesh. Patwary heard about Northwestern through friends and colleagues. Over the course of the next two years, he will be bridging computer science, data mining and social media as he develops algorithms for finding interesting communities in social networks. Since social networks today are so vast, Patwary is working to create algorithms that will aptly scale large amounts of data.

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Study Abroad in Asia

Study abroad in Asia continues to grow! Nearly 100 Northwestern undergraduate students studied abroad this year in China, Japan and Korea, plus several dozen more in other Asian nations. Summer programs in China and Korea are especially popular, according to NU’s Study Abroad Office.

Junior Anne Ciccarelli, an Asian Languages and Civilizations major, and junior Killian Coate, a psychology major and Chinese minor, are both currently studying abroad in Beijing, China. Ciccarelli grew up in the San Francisco Bay area, which has a large Asian immigrant population, and was inspired to study the region. Coate went on a short trip to China with his high school Chinese class and was “completely awestruck and also completely fascinated…everything was so different.” He immediately planned to go back.

Coate loves eating 煎饼 (Jiānbǐng) egg pancakes every morning, made fresh by local vendors, as well as the local institution Beijing duck. He also enjoys relaxing in the courtyards of Beijing’s 胡同 (Hútòng), twisting commercial alleys. “When the weather is nice and you can just sit outside in a courtyard in a Hutong and experience all that Beijing has to offer,” reports Coate. Ciccarelli too enjoys exploring Beijing’s many restaurants, sights and sounds.

Both Ciccarelli and Coate advise students interested in studying abroad in Asia to do so. Ciccarelli stresses “how important it is to learn a language. Asian languages are not similar to English in any way (aside from maybe occasional English imported words), and any amount of language study you can get in before you go will help.” Coate also hopes students will be open-minded, and “be ready for things you may not necessarily understand at first.”

Northwestern students like Cicarelli and Coate are ready to take on the world, thanks to their study abroad experiences in China! As Asia’s role on the world stage continues to grow, we expect even more Northwestern students will follow in their footsteps!

Country spotlight—Vietnam

Vietnam is approximately the same size as the state of New Mexico, with a population of 90 million people (New Mexico has only 2 million!) Its official language, Vietnamese, is spoken in the capital Hanoi, as well as in major cities Ho Chi Minh City, Hai-phong, Danang and across the countryside. Vietnam’s most popular religion is Buddhism, and its biggest exports are petroleum, rice, coffee, clothing and fish. The one-party state is controlled by a Communist government, which oversees the country’s 58 provinces and 5 municipalities.

Currently, there are 8 students and 1 scholar from Vietnam at Northwestern. NU undergraduates can study abroad in Vietnam through the School for International Training (SIT) Vietnam program. Weinberg senior Nora Gannon “knew almost absolutely nothing about the country other than that related to the Vietnam War—a topic at the core of my American Studies and History majors”—when she chose the SIT program. She lived in Ho Chi Minh City and calls the experience “central to who I am today. To students interested in studying abroad in Vietnam, I’d say DO IT!”
Every winter, Northwestern’s international students and scholars get to experience firsthand a uniquely American custom: filing income taxes. Yes, internationals working in the U.S. must file a tax return, just like everyone else! However, many receive tax relief, thanks to one of the sixty tax treaties between the US and other nations, which effectively prevent individuals from paying taxes twice.

The International Office and the Office of Human Resources (OHR) have collaborated for several years to help international students and scholars tackle this annual event. Angie Gwinn, Tax Compliance Supervisor in OHR, provides an annual series of workshops designed especially for NU internationals.

Additionally, the IO provides GLACIER Tax Prep, a software package designed for foreign nationals filing U.S. taxes. 1300 Northwestern students and scholars completed 2011 tax returns this year, claiming an average return of $980! A third of these filers were exempt from taxes due to tax treaties between the U.S. and their home countries.

So while all the money in the world can’t prevent you from paying U.S. taxes, an international tax treaty might just save the day!

The International Office (IO) provides professional support and advising services to international students and scholars at Northwestern University regarding their immigration status in the United States. The IO is committed to providing quality advising services and supportive programming to students, scholars, and their dependents in F-1, J-1, and H-1B visa categories, among others. The Community Council for International Students (CCIS), our affiliate community organization, provides numerous programs that further augment the mission of the International Office and the overall integration of our international student population.

Our goal is to help international students, faculty and staff navigate the many complexities associated with life in the U.S. and at Northwestern. We are dedicated to working with academic and service units across campus to ensure our population’s concerns are addressed. We are committed to providing the highest quality of service and the most accurate information, given the ever-changing nature of immigration regulations and university policy.