

*Heartfelt thanks to Indian Student Representatives **Tripura Alladi** and **Rajgopal Reddy**, along with their ISA friends who coordinated a month of airport shuttles, temporary housing arrangements, shared meals, and other accommodations and entertainments to welcome the spring 2008 international student arrivals.*

Special thanks to the organizers and samosa makers who made Freshers 2008 a success.

*Congratulations to **Mr. Fresher, Karthik Sabavath**, and **Ms. Fresher, Megha Patni**.*

February 2008

ISO International News and Events

89 STUDENTS FROM SAUDI ARABIA, CANADA, PAKISTAN AND INDIA ARRIVE TO WARM WELCOMES AMID ERIE'S WINTERSCAPE

In the opening round of competition for Ms. And Mr. Fresher, an international student tradition introduced to Gannon University by its growing Indian student population, one of the candidates told of fulfilling his dream to see snow. Of course, seeing snow and feeling it steele down through the tops of your collar and boots are two sensations at polar ends of the spectrum. Nevertheless pursuing a dream always leads to adventure in life.

Eighty nine students venturing forth from India, north and south; from Saudi Arabia by way of ESL programs in Minnesota and Michigan; from Pakistan, in search of GE-Transportation; and down from across the Canadian border made their way to Erie

where they launched into the arduous process of seeking shelter from the inclemencies of a new culture, a brisk climate, and for some, a strange language.

Fortunately, Indian Student Representatives Tripura Alladi and Rajgopal Reddy, along with Praveen Kandula and other Indian student community members were standing by at the bus stop, air terminal, and train station to greet the travel-weary and bundle them homeward to warm apartments and a hearty meal. One student, Nasser Al-Sherman of Saudi Arabia, also had the pleasure of a brief homestay with Gannon University hosts, Dr. Steve Frezza and his family.

SMALL RED ENVELOPES; A FIRST SIGN OF SPRING!

New Year's celebrations aren't over for everybody. For Chinese and many other East Asian cultures, the start of the new year comes this February 7th, the Lunar New Year. This Spring Festival is a time to wash away the dust of old and wish luck to friends and family for the year ahead. A popular tradition is the distribution of red envelopes, called "hóng bāo", stuffed with "lucky money" or chocolate coins. During the week of Feb. 11th, Random Acts of Kindness Week, keep your eye out for some lucky red envelopes circulating the Gannon campus.

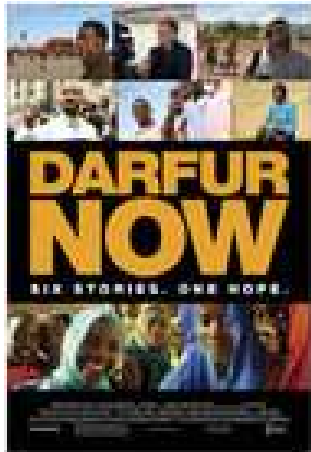


Top 15 Finalists for Mr. and Ms. Fresher



Photo by Shehab Aamir

A BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENT



**Center for Social
Concerns
presents**

Darfur Now

Written and directed by Ted Braun, the film explores the Darfur conflict through the first-hand experiences of Don Cheadle, Hejewa Adam, Pablo Recalde, Ahmed Mohammed Abakar, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, and Adam Sterling.

MONDAY, February 4, 2008

Zurn 104

7:00pm

Free and Open to the Public.

**A brief discussion will follow the film,
facilitated by
Dr. Richard Moodey
Professor,
Sociology and Anthropology**

Co-sponsored by Office of Service Learning, Office of Campus Ministry, Activities Programming Board, Gannon University Sociology Program, Office of the University Chaplain, and the ISO.

CULTURAL ROUNDTABLES

Faculty, staff, students and community members, **bring a brown bag lunch** and join others in exploring the many cultures represented at Gannon University.

NORWEGIAN HEARTS

Wednesday, February 13; 12Noon to 1pm

Zurn 341A

Celebrate Valentine's Day and Random Acts of Kindness Week in a Nordic way. We'll weave small paper baskets between nibbles of sour cream waffles, both of which traditionally take the shape of a heart.

YOGA SUN SALUTATION

Thursday, February 28; 12Noon to 1pm

Waldron 219

Wear comfortable clothes and sneakers to greet the sun with a skyward reach and a deep breath.

GANNON UNIVERSITY'S ANNUAL

INTERNATIONAL NIGHT

Saturday, March 29, 2008

**Would you be willing to prepare an international dish? Share your gifts and traditions in performance: a song, dance, dramatic reading? Let us know: 871-7030 or 871-5356.
E-mail: global@gannon.edu**

SEVIS REPORT: EVERY SEMESTER ISO REPORTS THE STATUS OF EACH INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IN "SEVIS" SYSTEM

Most new international students understand that one of the first procedures they must complete after settling into housing and a course schedule is **registration in the "Student and Exchange Visitor Information System," better known by the acronym SEVIS**. Implemented in 2003 and maintained by the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, SEVIS is an electronic recordkeeping/reporting system through which educational institutions update the ICE and other governmental agencies linked to SEVIS on the details of a student's or scholar's (and their dependents') status.

Each semester educational institutions sponsoring international students and their dependents in F and J status must submit updates through SEVIS that include confirmation of full-time enrollment or authorization to reduce a course load; a projected graduation date; a current local, physical address; and any changes to a name, major, or source of funding.

Like to know more? Come to the **Immigration and International Student Issues Roundtable**. Details, page 3.

HOW FAR, HOW HIGH DOES THE WORLD LEAP IN A LEAP YEAR?

America will mark the Leap Year with an extra day in February, but not everyone in the world will make the jump!

Islamic calendars do not include a leap, or intercalary day, whereas the Hebrew calendar adds a shifting period of time to the calendar 7 times every 19 years. Hindu and Chinese calendars add a "month," according to a prescribed and complex set of rules.

Although not all folklorists agree that it is a European tradition of longstanding, rumor has it that women have the right to propose marriage to a man on the leap day. And that the man dare not refuse! Go ahead and take the leap on February 29.

QUALIFYING FOR EMPLOYMENT UNDER CPT

For international students in F-1 status, authorization to work off-campus under Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a possibility only for those who qualify academically. In order to be considered for CPT, first and foremost a student must demonstrate that employment under CPT is "an integral part of an established curriculum" and related to the student's field of study. Further, a student may work under CPT only in the time before a degree program is completed but must be enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year before entering employment under CPT. The only exception to this regulation is for graduate students entering a degree program which requires immediate employment to fulfill the program's academic requirements.

Undergraduates and graduate students in the College of Humanities, Business, and Education should discuss with academic advisors any curricular requirements associated with off-campus employment before seeking CPT authorization. Here at Gannon University, most interna-

tional graduate students in the College of Science, Engineering, and Health Sciences qualify for CPT authorization by first qualifying to join a department's Co-op track.

You must first complete the following steps for the Co-op track:

- 1) Meet your department's academic requirements for the Co-op track option
- 2) Secure offer of employment related to your field of study and present this offer to your academic advisor and/or department chairperson
- 3) Secure permission from your department to participate in the Co-op track
- 4) Register for the Graduate Professional Experience

Once you have completed these steps, you may then request a meeting with the ISO to review the procedure for CPT employment authorization.

ISO MORNING SHUTTLES TO AREA BUSINESSES

ISO is offering shuttle service throughout the Spring Semester to area businesses. The shuttle leaves each Tuesday morning (weather permitting!) from just outside Zurn Hall at the Gannon University Archway. Meet by 9:00am for departure. Return time is approximately 11:00am.

CAREER PLANNING FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

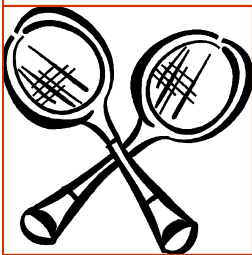
As you search for summer employment or a post-graduate position, keep in mind the many resources available to you through Gannon University's Career Development and Employment Services office, located in Palumbo Hall.

- Job Board (postings include both local, national, and international job opportunities) and Job Locator
- Job Fair Notices
- Resume and Cover Letter Review
- Career Development Bulletin
- Workshops and Interview Prep
- Job Search Library
- Individual Career Counseling and Guidance
- Web Links: <http://www.gannon.edu/depts/cdes/>



Badminton, Anyone?

The International Student Organization invites you to participate in a scorching round robin tournament of racket and shuttlecock.



Still game?

Sign up in the ISO. Dates will be announced soon.



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORIENTATION SPRING SEMESTER 2008

FEBRUARY 2008

OPT Sessions

1; 7; 26

All graduating in May and August must attend in order to seek OPT.

SSN Application Sessions

5; 11

All first-time SSN applicants should plan to attend one of these sessions.

Culture and Conversation Brown Bags

13; 28

See page 2 for details.

Faculty and Staff Immigration Information Brown Bag

19

See page 5 for details.

Tax Information Session

20

See page 5 for details.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1 OPT 3pm Zurn 104	2
3	4	5 SSN Aps 9-11am Zurn 341 MARDI GRAS	6 ASH WEDNESDAY	7 OPT 7pm Zurn 104	8	9
10	11 SSN Aps 10am-12pm Zurn 341	12	13 Culture & Conversation 12Noon Zurn 341A	14 VALENTINE'S DAY	15 ISO Meeting 1pm Zurn 341B	16
17	18	19 Faculty/Staff Immig. Sess. 12Noon Zurn 341A	20 Tax Info Sess. 5pm Zurn 104	21	22	23
24	25 ISA Coffee-Hour Zurn 341 4pm	26 OPT 3pm Zurn 104	27 Inter. Night Meeting 12Noon	28 Culture and Conversation 12Noon Waldron 219	29	

Take Home the Tastes and Colors of Mexico!

Students who will participate in the CSC's Alternative Service Trips over Spring Break will be holding a series of lunchtime fundraisers in the Waldron Student Center during National Catholic College Week, February 18-22, 2008.

Students going to El Paso, Texas and Mexico will offer Mexican treats for sale and the chance to win a basketful of Mexican foods and cultural goods.

International Student Association COFFEE HOUR

February 25



Join us for an afternoon of refreshments and cultural explorations!

4pm; Zurn 341

International Night Organizational Meeting

February 27

All who are interested in performing, preparing food, or serving on committees, please come to this planning meeting!

12 Noon: Zurn 104

IMMIGRATION 701: AN UPPER-LEVEL DISCUSSION ON THE OPT-HI-B "CAP GAP"

What is OPT? Optional Practical Training (or "OPT") is a special feature of the F-1 student visa status, which allows qualified students to gain practical employment experience in their field of study. Pre-graduation OPT can be used for a co-op internship after the 1st academic year (part-time during the year; full-time during breaks). Post-graduation OPT can be full-time for up to 12 months. To maintain lawful status, a student's F-1 visa status is extended until the end of post-graduation OPT.

What is HI-B? While there are several visa categories for foreign workers in the U.S., the H-1 non-immigrant temporary workers visa is the most common. Each year, many international Gannon graduates are sponsored for this visa status (specifically HI-B) by the employers who hire them

during OPT. For first time applicants under the "HI-B visa cap" the effective deadline is to apply April 1st for an October 1st start date. The Department of State "caps" the number of HI-B visas issued each year at 65,000 for professionals with a Bachelor's or equivalent and 20,000 for those with a Master's or above.

What's the concern? (See timeline below) May graduates who do not have their degree by April 1st or who do not have a sponsor must apply the following year on April 1st. This pushes back their HI-B start date to October 1st after the sum-

mer when their OPT (F-1 status) expires. The concern is the gap that remains between the end of F-1 status and the start of H-1 (gap in red below).

So, what's the solution?

There are several that should be considered with the sponsoring employer's attorney:

- 1.) Apply for a B-2 visitor's visa (or Canadians, TN)
- 2.) Pursue a new academic program under F-1
- 3.) Travel abroad on a vacation or assignment

And there are many more! So tell your students & friends not to worry! Just speak to their employer.



IMMIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ISSUES

A Presentation for Gannon University Faculty and Staff

TAX RETURN PREPARATION INFORMATION SESSION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

A Review of Forms and Resources

Tuesday, February 19

12Noon-1pm

(Please bring your own lunch! Beverages on the house!)

ZURN 341A

Join faculty and staff for a presentation that will introduce you to key issues in interacting and supporting international students during their studies at Gannon.

We'll review:

- F-1 and J-1 student immigration responsibilities and benefits
- International perspectives on academic issues, such as cheating and plagiarism, pedagogical methods, classroom participation
- Social adjustment challenges
- Resources for building cultural awareness and meeting international student needs

Wednesday, February 20

5pm

ZURN 104

ISO will present:

- A brief overview of tax forms
- A set of resources that international students may use to prepare and file federal, state, and city tax returns.

Although ISO staff is not trained to advise on tax laws or to prepare individual returns, this session will review a number of reliable resources which will allow students to prepare their own federal and state tax returns in order to meet the April 15, 2008 filing deadline.

NOTE: The ISO **cannot** and **will not** advise individual students on their tax returns. Students with questions or concerns may need to contact a qualified tax professional. The ISO can help students find a tax professional if desired.

WELCOMING NEW INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TO GANNON

Continued from Page 1

The new arrivals powered their way through days of academic advising, paperwork shuffling, and 12 hours of orientation sessions that plunged them headlong through immigration responsibilities and benefits onto discussions of where they might find the right spices—in the City of Erie—for stirring up a savory curry.

Then it was time to celebrate! Senior international students planned an evening of merriments with Freshers 2008 where new students were encouraged to

introduce themselves and strut their talents. There were singers, dancers, instrumentalists, and one young man who acted out a good joke. And there was food, too, if not just like mother's home cooking, prepared and presented with great affection, nevertheless: hummus and pita, baklava, and trays of samosas made by a crack team of samosa-makers.

Gannon University welcomes these new students, thanks the welcoming party members, and looks forward to the years ahead of learning, building, and wonder!



Photo by Shehab Aamir

International Student Office

Mailing Address:

109 University Square, Box 3748
Erie, PA 16541-0001

Location:

341B Zurn Science Hall

Tel: 814-871-7030/871-5356

Fax: 814-871-5323

E-mail: global@gannon.edu

Web: www.gannon.edu/depts/ISO

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OFFICE MISSION

The International Student Office (ISO), in keeping with the overarching mission of Gannon University and in collaboration with campus and community departments and agencies, strives to foster an environment in which international students and their families might thrive intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, physically, professionally, and socially. ISO staff seeks to serve the international community through counseling, advocacy, immigration advising, and cultural

IMMIGRATION REMINDERS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT UPDATES

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING SESSIONS

If you plan to graduate in May or August 2008 and hope to qualify for Optional Practical Training at the conclusion of your studies, **you must attend** an Optional Practical Training (OPT) Session in order to begin the application process. All sessions will be held in Zurn, Room 104, on the following dates and times:

February 1, Thursday, 3pm

February 7, Thursday, 7pm

February 26, Monday, 3pm

SOCIAL SECURITY APPLICATION SESSIONS

A staff member of the local Social Security Administration will facilitate 2 Social Security number information and application sessions in February for new international students. Please pick up a Social Security number application packet from the ISO, if you have not done so, and secure your on-campus supervisor's signature on the Employer Letter before coming to a session. We will complete the other forms during the session. All session in Zurn, Room 341:

February 5, Tuesday, 9-11am

February 11, Monday, 10am-12pm

SPRING SEMESTER 2008 SEVIS REGISTRATION

ALL international students, whether new or continuing studies at Gannon University, must bring to the ISO a Spring Semester 2008 Course Schedule. In addition, all students must confirm a local, physical address. Continuing students should also indicate at this time whether there are any changes to information stated in the student status form (major, graduation date, name, etc.).

REPORTING ADDRESS CHANGES

Students must report address changes within 10 days of a move. Submit changes, please, by completing the orange Address Change form available outside the ISO.

CARRYING YOUR IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS

Federal Border Patrol officials recently reminded us that all international visa holders are required by law to carry their immigration documents with them at all times. This is especially important to remember whenever traveling. F and J students, as well as family members should carry passport, i-94, and I-20 or DS-2019. Border Patrol officials have warned that Pennsylvania licenses, and Ids, nor student ID cards will accepted as a substitute.