

# International Student Services - UH Manoa Spring 2003 Newsletter

## “ALOHA Updates”

By Dr. Linda Duckworth, Director of International Student Services



**Aloha Students!** We hope that your spring semester is progressing smoothly and that you are enjoying the rest of your spring break. While all of you have been busy with studies and exams, we have been busy with three

initiatives: striving for service improvements in the ISS, implementing SEVIS, and advocating on behalf of international students and their dependents.

**Striving for service improvements** has become a major focus in the ISS. With that goal in mind, we enlisted the help of a student intern, Daniel, to help design and administer an ISS satisfaction survey to the international student community this past fall semester 2002. Results indicated both praise and suggestions for improving ISS services. We received high marks in the areas of office hours; staff friendliness; communication with advisors and during workshops; information received on visas, travel permits, work permits, social activities, and scholarships; information for students received in pre-arrival mailings, in printed hand-outs, and during orientation; and extremely high marks on cross-cultural activities provided by the ISA. Suggestions for improving services were in the areas of the appointment system; staff competence; speed and efficiency; communication via phone and email; filing system; health insurance monitoring; website; and providing information about the campus and visa status.

For your information, the ISS staff meets weekly to discuss issues, receive updates, and obtain training. In this venue, clarification on regulations and

university policies is received and helps insure consistency in advising.

Regarding students' suggestions for improvement, the ISS staff has discussed student concerns and implemented changes. Changes involve more detailed training for all staff and implementing a system to track files as they progress from one station to the next in the ISS. The staff is also currently adapting to SEVIS and Banner (the new UH student information system), resulting in increased processing time for visa documents. The goal of the staff is to level out the steep SEVIS/Banner learning curve that we are currently experiencing. Regarding communication through email and the ISS web site, suggestions for improvement are being taken under consideration.

Please note that the ISS feels that all areas of service to our international student community are deserving of constant monitoring and improvement. And it is our goal to do so.

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**IMPLEMENTING SEVIS** – The University of Hawaii at Manoa met the U.S. federal compliance deadline of January 30, 2003 by becoming authorized to implement SEVIS on that date.

Current regulations extended the SEVIS-compliant deadline to February 15, 2003, which allowed UH Manoa an extra two weeks to become familiar with the new web-based electronic information system.

As the principal designated school official at UH Manoa, I am charged with meeting SEVIS federal compliance deadlines for the campus. This involves updating the administration, training the staff, who will be reporting international student status to SEVIS, and informing the international student community of new SEVIS changes in regulations affecting student status. In regard to keeping our students informed, the ISS moved swiftly to post five separate advisories on the new SEVIS regulations published December 11, 2002 on the ISS web site, with separate notification for each advisory via the ISS list-serve. And on January 31, 2003, the ISS conducted an information session on the ISS role in maintaining SEVIS compliance, new processes for students in regard to SEVIS changes affecting F-1 and J-1 students, and an update on NSEERS, the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System. Our goal is to give timely and accurate regulatory updates to help facilitate students maintaining legal status in the U.S.

In regard to maintaining student status with SEVIS, the ISS is now required to monitor and report student status in a routine and timely manner. We will be communicating with each international student VIA THE EMAIL ADDRESS ON FILE IN THE ISS, if we notice a discrepancy in student status. Also, in order for UH Manoa to meet full SEVIS compliance by August 1, 2003, we will begin communicating with each international student in alphabetical batches to update student status information so that we can create an accurate SEVIS file for each international student enrolled at UH Manoa.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation as we all transition to SEVIS.

**ADVOCACY FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS** – The current Hawaii statute states that all applicants for a driver's license must submit a social security number (SSN). The Social Security Administration (SSA) states that only those international students who can legally work will be issued a SSN, since a SSN is only needed to record wages earned in the U.S. This statute and SSA policy essentially blocks all international students, who cannot or do not wish to work, and all dependents, who cannot work, from being able to legally drive in the state of Hawaii.

Therefore, as director of ISS at UH Manoa and chair of the Hawaii/Pacific District of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, I recently wrote a letter of testimony on behalf of all international students and their dependents ineligible for a SSN stating that they be allowed to apply for a driver's license. This is the second time there has been a call for written testimony and hopefully the last. We will keep you updated!

## **How to Contact ISS**

In Person: Room 206 of the Queen Lili'uokalani Center for Student Services.

Office Hours: 7:45 am – 4:30 pm.

Phone: 808-956-8613

Facsimile: 808-956-5076

Mail: ISS, University of Hawai'i at Manoa QLCSS 206, 2600 Campus Road Honolulu, HI 96822

Web Site: [www.hawaii.edu/issmanoa/](http://www.hawaii.edu/issmanoa/)

## **How to Subscribe ISS Mailing List**

Important Information Goes to ISS ListProc Members

Send an email message to: [listproc@hawaii.edu](mailto:listproc@hawaii.edu)

And type the following into the body of your message:

**SUBSCRIBE ISS-L FIRST-NAME LAST-NAME**

# Regulatory Roulette

By Martha Staff, Sr. International Student Adviser

## SEVIS Update



Like many other universities with large international student populations, UHM faces many challenges in the implementation of SEVIS, the Student-Exchange Visitor Information System. The good news is that UHM was approved for SEVIS on January 30, 2003. The ISS has four authorized SEVIS users and we are successfully producing visa documents via the new technology for students immediately needing updated documents. The bad news is that at this time we do not have the capability of sending batch data from our student records systems to SEVIS. Until batch is developed by the UH Information Technology unit, we are faced with the inefficiencies of double data entry, first into SEVIS and later into the student records system.

In spite of these major inefficiencies, we are committed to producing new SEVIS I-20s for our continuing students prior to the end of the spring semester. We want these SEVIS I-20s in your hands before you commence your summer travel. Therefore, we will begin our SEVIS document replacement program for all continuing students immediately after spring break. You will receive further information and instructions on how to obtain your new SEVIS I-20 or DS 2019 form by email within the next few days. (Students who have already received a SEVIS document or are in the process of receiving one, are excluded from the replacement program.)

## Department of Homeland Security

The US INS disappeared into history on March 1, 2003, and the functions of that agency were divided into three separate bureaus. The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, or BCIS, has assumed the duties of adjudicating applications for visa benefits, such as employment, and change of

visa status. The Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or BICE, assumes investigations, detention, removal and intelligence functions. It also manages SEVIS! The Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, or BCBP, handles Port of Entry functions such as inspections, border patrol, and the customs service.

Although BCIS continues to use the INS forms, there are some immediate changes affecting those changing from another non-immigrant status to student status. For many years these changes were adjudicated by officers in the Honolulu office. Now, all applications for change of status must be sent to the California Service Center of the BCIS. Processing time is currently 60 days but is expected to be 30 days in the near future.

## Tax Assistance



International students employed in the US are subject to income taxes. Taxes are typically withheld from student paychecks, but the amount withheld is a rough

estimate and usually does not represent the true amount of tax owed. Many students are surprised to learn they may be eligible for a refund of part or all of the taxes withheld from the federal and/or state government. However, in order to receive a refund, and to comply with federal tax law, students must submit a tax form. To assist you, ISS is sponsoring two tax workshops for international students. The FEDERAL tax workshop is scheduled for Tuesday, April 1, 2003, from 3:30-5:00 pm in Spalding auditorium. The STATE tax workshop will be held Monday, April 7, with two sessions offered, from 1:15-2:45 (George Auditorium) or 3:00-4:30 pm (Crawford 105). ISS has also prepared a Tax Resource Binder that can be used at the ISS office.

# Hawajska = Hawai`i

By Ray Allen, International Student Adviser

Anna Hawajska doesn't know how her family got the name, Hawajska, which means "Hawai`i" in Polish, but she does know that since she was a child, she always dreamt of coming to Hawai`i.

Born in Przemysl (pronounced "Shamish"), a city of 70,000 in southeast Poland, Anna, as a child, often heard the phrase, "You will go to Honolulu," which is another way in her country of telling someone, "You can't do it." Being so far away and from such a different culture, this saying appeared to be her future. Yet, she never gave up her dream. Seeing a newspaper ad for a nanny in Hawai`i, she applied for the position, was hired by a local family, and, two years ago, finally set foot in the islands from which her family name derives. Her dream became a reality – a reality that she now lives everyday as in international student at the University of Hawai`i.

As a student, Anna's two major interests are languages and art (she has a Bachelor's degree in German from Sklodowska University of Lublin in Poland). Having completed her job as a nanny, she is now a graduate assistant with the Languages and Literatures of Europe and the Americas Department, where she is also studying for a Masters degree in German. In addition, Anna is enrolled in art courses in the Art Department. Using both skills, Anna hopes to work in international programs in the future within the areas of education and/or tourism.

Anna's experience with international programs began with an international program called "Twin Towns" when she was still in Poland. A Polish-German program, "Twin Towns" brought together cities and towns from different countries for inter-cultural exchanges. When Anna was involved, her town of Przemysl was the "twin town" of Paderborn, which is located in Germany. Its purpose, states Anna, was to provide cross-cultural

experiences for average citizens, experiences that break down barriers and form bonds between people of very different and diverse backgrounds and cultures.



It's from this experience that Anna's interest in international and inter-cultural programs began. Now, she believes that international programs involving travel, exploration, and discovery can help people from anywhere on the planet see the world globally and, as such, make them peace-makers --individuals that, according to Anna, carry peace with them where ever they go.

This is Anna's new dream, one that many may say is an impossibility in today's world. But Anna has heard this before. "You will go to Honolulu," she was told when dreaming of Hawai`i while a young girl in Przemysl. Now, Honolulu is not only where she lives, but, says Anna, where she calls home.



## **MyUH is Coming!!**

Important Registration News for Fall  
and Summer 2003

For more information, log on to:  
[www.hawaii.edu/myuh/](http://www.hawaii.edu/myuh/)

# International Student Programs for Spring 2003 at UH Manoa

By Aki Minami, ISS Graduate Assistant

## International Night 2003: “Cultural Surfing Beyond Boundaries”

On January 31, 2003, International Student Association (ISA) held its 4th “International Night” attracting over 300 people, making it a very successful celebration. International Night is one of the ISA’s highlight events, showcasing cultural exhibits, talents and entertainment from all over the world. ISA members contributed great effort in planning for the event since summer 2002. It featured cultural displays, music, song, dances, costumes and performances from all over the world: Argentina, China, Columbia, Egypt, France, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Okinawa, Taiwan, Vietnam and the US.



## ISA Upcoming Activities

- ◆ Coconut Island Tour  
Saturday, April 12  
The tour will visit Coconut Island, located off Kane'ohe bay. The island is also UH’s marine research center, so you will have a chance to see marine animals; including sharks! There will be a picnic and swimming after the tour. Don’t forget to bring your swimsuit and snorkeling equipment!
  
- ◆ Make A Difference Day  
Saturday, April 26  
Make A Difference Day activity will provide an opportunity to explore local Hawaiian culture and its community.

Seats are limited for both activities. Don’t forget to sign up ASAP!

## H1-B Visa Workshop: How to work in the US?

Wednesday, April 23: 3:00 pm-5:00 pm  
Location: Bilger 150

Are you hoping to find a job in the US? All international students interested in leaning about working visa after practical training or academic training are invited to attend this workshop. An immigration attorney from a local law firm will provide an informational overview on the eligibility requirements, application process, and timeline needed for obtaining an H1-B temporary working visa. Q&A session will be followed. Don’t miss this valuable opportunity! More information about the workshop, please check our e-mail for more information.

Be sure to give us your e-mail address so that you can be notified of upcoming activities and events. For more information, call ISS office 956-8613 or send e-mail to:  
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