Welcome to Spring Semester 2006!
By Linda Duckworth, Ph.D.
Director

Each semester brings an opportunity to create new beginnings. And Spring Semester 2006 is no exception.

This article highlights updates regarding upcoming changes in ISS personnel and services, health insurance procedures, upcoming ISA activities for SP 06, my experience as an ISA practicum supervisor, and the newly revised ISS mission statement.

Changes in ISS Personnel & Services: Dr. Ray Allen will be on sabbatical leave from March 1 to July 31, 2006. During this time period, Martha Staff and I will assume Ray’s advising and SEVIS workload. Therefore, ISS processing times for requests for program extension and optional practical training will be extended from 10 working days (2 weeks) to 15 working days (3 weeks). All other processing times will remain the same. So, please plan accordingly.

The ISS is pleased to welcome our new intern, Natalia from Argentina. Along with our other interns, Yoko (Japan), Anna (Japan), and Farzana (Canada), Natalia helps monitor ISS front desk activity and assists students with their questions and requests for F-1 and J-1 student benefits.

The ISS is also pleased to welcome our two new student assistants, Yoji from Chile and Laura from Peru. Yoji will assist with front desk projects and Laura will assist with IT projects.

And we offer our best wishes to our long-time student assistant, Suping Cheng, as she leaves ISS to venture forth on optional practical training. Suping played an important role in advancing ISS’ IT capabilities, and we will miss her very much.

New Health Insurance Procedures: The UH system-wide Student Health Insurance Committee will select a new student health plan for UH by early May. Cost of the new health plan will be published by mid-July. Because the health insurance cost will not be published prior to early registration for FA 06 due to the actuarial regulations of the State Commission on Health Insurance, continuing students will not have health insurance registration holds and will be able to register for FA 06 beginning April 26, 2006. But, continuing students will still need to document health insurance coverage (UH plan or alternative health insurance) to the ISS before the 1st day of FA 06 classes. More information on health insurance procedures will be announced before the end of SP 06.
My experience as an ISA Practicum Supervisor:

Along with June Naughton, retired director of ISS, I am enjoying co-supervising two ISA members in an ISA Practicum Experience this SP 06 as part of the course EDEA 397: Leadership Development through Peer Mentoring. Part of the course requirements includes weekly reflections from the practicum students, with comments from the supervisors on the students’ practicum experiences.

Although I am not in the practice of taking time for weekly reflection, I am now glad for this weekly ritual. At first, I would receive the weekly observations in a practicum log from one of the students, and I would think – oh my – something else to add to my list of things to do. Now, I look forward to this reflective exercise. Making time to reflect on recent experience of the two ISA practicum students has not only been influential in helping me guide the practicum students through their concerns on leadership and leadership training experiences, but has also been influential in helping me identify room for improvement in how I advise the ISA and how the ISA organization and format can best help student members develop leadership skills. Even though reflection takes up precious time, the benefits make it well worth the effort.

Newly revised ISS Mission Statement: Check out the new & improved ISS mission statement at www.hawaii.edu/issmanoa.

Aloha and Best Wishes for a wonderful Spring 2006 and a Happy New Year!
**Regulatory Updates**
By Martha Staff
Assistant Director

**Tax Resources**
It’s tax time again!

International students in the US must pay income taxes at the federal and state levels, following a set of special rules for “non-residents.” But many countries have negotiated tax treaties with the U.S. so that some or all income is protected from taxation at the federal level. The ISS has posted federal tax resources for 2005 at http://www.hawaii.edu/issmanoa and resources for state taxes will soon follow.

Please note that ALL students and ALL dependents on the F and J student visa are required to file federal form 8843 each year, whether or not they had income. Because of this requirement, the ISS recommends that ALL F and J students and their families review our federal tax resources. Form 8843 and samples of how to complete the form are readily available.

In the past, the ISS has sponsored federal tax workshops, with a presenter from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Unfortunately, this year, the IRS is unable to provide a federal tax workshop.

**US Strategy for Secure Borders and Open Doors**
On January 17, 2006, Secretaries Rice and Chertoff of the U.S. Departments of State and Homeland Security presented a new joint strategy to achieve "Secure Borders and Open Doors." The strategy has three main pillars:

- Use new information technology to make it as easy as possible for foreign visitors to travel to the United States and to do so securely and safely.
- Create travel documents that can protect personal identity and expedite secure travel.
- Conduct smarter screening of travelers, both at consulates abroad and at ports of entry into the United States.

Secretary Rice made the following comments regarding international students:

“We are also renewing America's welcome to students and professors and researchers. At all of our 210 visa processing posts, getting visas into the hands of foreign students is becoming a top priority. In addition, we are actively encouraging students, researchers and scientists to pursue their studies in the United States. In the coming months, our two departments will work together to expand the length of time that foreign students can arrive and live and learn in America. We will now issue student visas up to 120 days before classes begin, as compared to 90 days under current regulations. And we will allow students to enter the country 45 days in advance of their studies, as compared to 30 days at present.”

**DOS Extends Initial F Visa Filing Window to 120 Days**
On February 9, 2006 a U.S. Department of State (DOS) cable instructed consular posts regarding the new 120 day visa window: persons applying for initial-entry F-1 and F-2 visas may now be
issued these visas up to 120 days before the program start date listed on their I-20 forms. The new window was immediately effective.

However, extending the current 30-day advance arrival period to 45 days is being delayed to an unknown date.

**DOS Cable on Validity of F Visas After A Break in Study**

On January 17, a DOS cable was released to discuss whether F/M visas continue to be valid after a break in studies longer than five months. Highlights of the cable:

1) A student who is transferring between schools or programs, but who does not begin study at the transfer-in school as required within five months of the date of transferring out of the previous school or within five months of the date of program completion, whichever is applicable, is no longer in valid student status. If such a student applies for reinstatement and is approved, the student's F-1 or M-1 visa (in the passport) remains valid (assuming that the visa has not expired). But, if the student applies for reinstatement and is denied, the F or M visa is considered to be automatically cancelled under INA 222(g). This student not only would need to apply for a new F or M visa, but under INA 222(g) can apply for a visa only at a U.S. consulate in his or her country of citizenship or last permanent residence abroad.

2) If a student takes a break from studies and is outside the United States for more than 5 months, DOS states "that student's F-1 or M-1 visa is subject to cancellation and should not be used, even though it remains valid on its face." To resume study in the United States, the student would have to obtain a new visa.

3) For students who depart the United States for more than five months for activities related to their course of study and are enrolled in field research or study abroad courses, schools should maintain those students in active SEVIS status. DOS opines that, "Since these students continue to maintain their student status while overseas, their F-1 visas are not considered invalid after an absence of more than five months."

Numbers 1 and 2 above provide a new and different perspective on the validity of visas that will be confusing and does not appear to support Secretary Rice’s desire to renew America’s welcome to students and scholars. For example, under the new interpretation, students on authorized Leave of Absence will be impacted. In the past, if a student on Leave of Absence remained outside the U.S. for more than 5 months, but still had a valid visa, that student could re-enter the US with a new I-20 form and use the original and still valid visa. Now, such a student would need to apply for a new student visa in order to enter the US because the unexpired visa would NOT be considered valid after an absence of more than 5 months.

Please check with an ISS adviser if you think you may be negatively impacted by this change.

**Distance Education Restrictions**

The ISS and IT staffs are currently developing new procedures to monitor visa regulations related to distance education. Under the F-1 visa, a student may not count more than 3 credits per term of distance education coursework as part of his or her full-time course load. However, the definition of “distance education” for visa purposes may be different from definitions for other purposes. With respect to F-1 regulations, a “distance education course” is a course that is delivered by web-based or related technologies, and which does
not have any requirement for face-to-face contact on campus. A course that uses some distance education technologies but does have on-campus face-to-face contact requirement would not be defined as distance education with respect to F-1 visa regulations. The ISS plans to run computer reports that will identify students who appear to be over-enrolled in distance education courses. Students identified will be contacted and advised. The ISS will also be expanding distance education information on the ISS website in the near future.

U.S. Senate Resolution Designates 2006 as Year of Study Abroad
On November 10, the Senate unanimously passed a resolution designating 2006 as the “Year of Study Abroad.” The resolution, introduced by Senator Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) and Senator Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), was co-sponsored by a number of other senators, including Daniel Akaka of Hawaii. In addition to designating this theme for the year, the resolution encourages secondary schools, higher education institutions, businesses, and government programs to promote and expand study abroad opportunities. It also encourages Americans to support initiatives to promote and expand study abroad opportunities and to observe the “Year of Study Abroad with appropriate ceremonies, programs, and other activities.
International Athletes at UH Mānoa
By Ray Allen, Ph. D.
International Student Advisor

International students attending the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa make up a significant percentage of the total number of athletes participating in athletic programs, according to Marilyn Moniz-Kaho’ohanohano, Associate Athletics Director. They are a very important part, she continued, of the athletic programs and have a major impact in their respective sports. And, she added, they are academically sound, are top scholars and bring experience, perspective, and maturity to the programs they participate in.

Moniz-Kaho’ohanohano stated that there are currently about sixty eight (68) international athletes, which make up about 14.4 % of the 472 athletes at Mānoa. They come from approximately twenty seven (27) countries and regions, including Columbia, Nigeria, Finland, New Zealand, Italy, Tahiti, Hong Kong, The Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Senegal, Australia, Argentina, South Africa, Serbia-Montenegro, Hungary, China, Czech Republic, Brazil, Japan, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, Israel, Canada, New Caledonia, and the Northern Marianna Islands. Their primary sports are water polo, tennis, basketball, swimming/diving, track & field, golf and volleyball.

It was in softball, however, from 1994 to 1995, that one international student, Brooke Wilkins from Australia, made the greatest impact in UHM sports. Her play, in Moniz-Kaho’ohanohano’s view, was significant in getting the women’s softball stadium built. Brooke, she stated, was an “impact pitcher,” who helped UH Mānoa’s softball team become one of the top 10 teams in the country. Brooke later became an Olympian for her country in 2000.

The future for international students in UHM sports programs is bright, stated Miniz-Kaho’ohanohano. They will continue to be recruited in order for UHM to have a diverse athletic program and to remain competitive in all sports. In this regard, she added, the number of international athletes may actually grow in the years ahead.

International Athlete Enjoys Hawaiian Waters

Lisa Van Raalte, an eighteen year old with a Dutch name – her father is from Holland, loves the water in Hawai‘i, especially since she plays on the UH Mānoa’s women’s water polo team as a center forward. A major in Kinesiology and Leisure Science (KLS), Lisa came to UH Mānoa this semester as an international student from New Zealand. Before this semester, however, she came to Hawai‘i as a participant in a water polo tournament in 1994. It was at that time she was recruited for the water polo team, of which she is now an integral part.

Lisa’s professional goals are to obtain a bachelor’s degree in KLS, to go into professional water polo, and then, when her athletic career is over, to become a personal trainer, masseuse, and/or a nutritionist.

Lisa finds Hawai‘i relaxed, friendly, helpful, and different than the mainland, which she says is stressful with a “fast living” lifestyle. A major goal for her while here as an international student at UH Mānoa is to learn how to surf. Asked what her favorite food in the islands is, she replied “a chicken patty with gravy and rice.”

Surfing and a chicken patty with rice - not bad choices for a young international athlete from New Zealand who loves Hawai‘i and the lifestyle she is experiencing here.
ISS Office Procedures
By Danita Dumadag-Hugh, Secretary

Processing Your Documents
We hope your Spring Break goes safely and smoothly as you plan to travel abroad. To ensure this, we would like to give you a heads up on what to expect prior to traveling outside the U.S. and other services you might need at ISS. Currently, the International Student Services has undergone slight changes to prepare and process your documents in a timely manner. Below are helpful reminders before submitting your requests and the number of days for each service.

Traveling:
- Bring your I-20 for travel signature.
- Complete the ISS Travel Notification.
- If you are planning to be enrolled at UHM while abroad, complete the ISS Certification of Academic Status form before leaving U.S.
- If you plan to be on Leave of Absence, see Leave of Absence instructions.
- PROCESSING TIME: 3 work days.

Obtaining Social Security
Social Security Administration (SSA) now requires all F-1 students, who apply for a social security number, to first obtain a specific job offer and then a certification of student status from ISS. To obtain this certification from ISS, do the following:
- Obtain a letter of employment on employer letterhead stationery with original signatures of employer. Submit to ISS.
- Use the On or Off Campus employment Verification templates used by F-1 students to apply for a Social Security Number on ISS website at the following: http://www.hawaii.edu/issmanoa/sevis_social_security.htm.
- PROCESSING TIME: 3 work days.

Reduced Course Load of I-20
- Submit ISS Reduced Course Load form completed by student and department advisor.
- Submit unofficial transcript.
- Pickup new 3rd page of I-20.
- PROCESSING TIME: 10 work days.

Submit Program Extension form completed by student and department advisor.
- Submit verification of funding for extending I-20 and unofficial transcript.
- Pickup new I-20.
- PROCESSING TIME: 15 work days

Leaves of Absence/Complete Withdrawal
- It is very important that you make an appointment with an ISS Advisor.
- Bring forms/documents to your ISS appointment.
- Forms will only be signed at the time of appointment.
- PROCESSING TIME: 15 work days

OPT: PROCESSING TIME: 15 work Days. OPT photos will be taken after OPT workshops. $5 (please have correct change).
- CPT: PROCESSING TIME: 10 Work Days
- On Campus Authorization: On the Spot. (Bring Passport)
- Economic Hardship: 15 work Days.

CERTIFICATION LETTERS
- Passport/Invitation/Certification Letters:
- Visa Renewal letter no longer needed.
- PROCESSING TIME: 10 work Days.

Other Processings
- Canadian Loans: 10 work days
- Transfer Out: 10 work days
- Reinstatement
- Change of Status
- J-1 Academic Training
- Suspension/Dismissals
- Leave of Absence
- Complete Withdrawal

Helpful Reminder: Bring your Email from ISS to help service you better.
ISA activities for SP 06:

* The annual ISA Fundraiser was a huge success! 200 boxes of Krispy Kreme doughnuts were mostly pre-sold and distributed to hungry faculty, staff, and students on 02/24/06. Thanks to all who assisted. Way to go ISA!
* The whale-watching excursion for Saturday, 02/25/06 was SOLD OUT!
* “International Night 2006: A Mixed Plate Under the Rainbow” is right around the corner! It will be held on Friday evening, March 17, 2006 in the UH Manoa Campus Center Ballroom. The cultural performances, displays, and games are free. Bring your friends & family! Hope to see you there!
* Beach Camping is coming up in April! More details to follow soon from ISA.