Important Announcements
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- Giftcard Raffle for Research Study on UAlbany International Students and Asian/ American Students

Upcoming Events
- Holiday Lights in the Park
- Schenectady Symphony Orchestra Virtual Poinsettia Pops
- Saratoga Victorian Streetscapes

Please Take Our Wintersession Location Survey by December 23rd

In order to best assist international students during this holiday period, ISSS is seeking some basic contact information on where you will be staying and whether or not you plan to travel outside of New York State (NYS) or the U.S. during this time. Please complete this brief location survey by December 23, 2020: https://forms.gle/KYxHpxbRqx7Bwuqz5

ISSS Wintersession Hours and Closures
ISSS will generally maintain normal hours during the wintersession period, with a few exceptions/closures. Please review our holiday operating hours and availability below:

- The ISSS office will have limited availability starting at 12:00pm (noon) on December 24th through January 1st. Zoom advisement will not be available during those dates. Regular hours will resume on January 2nd. Zoom advisement
- ISSS will be closed on Christmas (December 25th) and New Years Day (January 1st).
- Students who hope to have a request processed prior to January 2nd are advised to submit all documentation and related forms for that request no later than Thursday, December 17th. Requests include, but are not limited to: requests for an I-20/DS-2019 extension; practical training requests (CPT, OPT, or STEM OPT); travel signature requests; and any requests for a new I-20/DS-2918. If you do not submit all required documents by December 17th we may not be able to process your request before the office closes for the holiday.
- The ISSS@albany.edu inbox will be monitored on a limited basis between December 28th - December 31st for urgent and unforeseen cases (please see below).
- In case of emergency when the office is closed (i.e. on weekends and holidays) please contact the University Police Department at 518-442-3131. (For example, if you are delayed at an airport because you did not bring sufficient documentation or the officer has questions about your status).
- If you have an urgent and unforeseen request during the closure please email ISSS@albany.edu. Examples of urgent and unforeseen requests may include: lost I-20 while travelling abroad; an urgent need for an I-20 extension that could not be requested prior to the closure due to reasons beyond your control; unforeseen travel emergencies. Because the ISSS@albany.edu inbox will only be monitored on a limited basis during this time-frame we ask that students make every effort to submit any requests possible prior to December 17th so that requests can be efficiently addressed.

We appreciate your cooperation and understanding with the above and wish you all a happy and safe holiday season!

**ISSS Seeking Orientation Assistant Applicants for Spring 2021 Orientation**

ISSS is seeking Orientation Assistants to assist with welcoming our new students by acting as peer mentors, guides, and facilitating events and activities throughout the week. ISSS hosts a New International Student Orientation program every Fall and Spring semester. This program provides a warm and information reception for new international students. A successful applicant must have a friendly, helpful, and understanding attitude toward new students and be able to work with a culturally diverse group of students.

In Spring 2021, the ISSS Orientation will be fully remote. This means that Orientation Assistants would work remotely, primarily over Zoom. However, applicants must be physically present in the U.S. between January 21st-February 1st to qualify for student assistant employment. In order for students to be hired they must also be pre-registered for Spring 2021.

The 8-10 students selected for Orientation Assistant positions for Spring will be paid $11.80 an hour for approximately 10 hours of work. The net amount will be somewhat less after taxes are withheld.
All students may request a reference letter from the Director at the conclusion of the Orientation program.

Applications are due by January 2nd, 2021 at 12:00pm (noon) EST. To apply, click here: https://forms.gle/uHgdVq8L3MFfDZ5LA

**USCIS Lockbox Delays**

This week USCIS sent out this message to stakeholders:
"The USCIS lockbox facilities have received a significant increase in filings in recent weeks. This increase, along with facility capacity restrictions necessary to protect the health and safety of the lockbox workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic, is causing significant delays for processing receipt notices."

To view their full message, click Read More. The full message notes filing online “if this option is available for your form type.” There is not currently an online filing option for post-completion OPT or STEM OPT filings using the I-765.

**6th Annual Study New York Photo Contest**

Take a picture or short video of your favorite thing about studying in New York and enter for a chance to win a $100 Amazon Gift Card!

The 6th Annual Study New York International Student "Why I Love Studying in New York" photography contest is open! Students compete by submitting a photo or short video that illustrates their love for studying in New York. Winners in each category will receive a $100 Amazon Gift Card!

Submissions are due by March 31, 2021.

Go to www.studynewyork.us or to http://facebook.com/studyny for full details and to enter.

**Planning Ahead for 2021: Check Website and UAlbany Email Often for Updates**

As we look ahead to the Spring 2021 term we want to remind students to please continue checking their Albany email accounts and the University website for updates throughout the break.

DHS has not yet issued official, written guidance for Spring 2021. Students should be prepared to make updates to their course schedule or plans should this new guidance require it. ISSS will
continue to inform, support and advise students on any new developments. ISSS will email students when any new guidance is released to further explain how that guidance applies to University at Albany students. If you have questions please don't hesitate to contact us.

Students should also keep themselves informed on University quarantining and testing requirements (these are in addition to any NYS quarantining requirements: https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory). Keep yourself informed by checking your Albany email and the University's COVID-19 website for the latest information: https://www.albany.edu/covid-19

In addition, ISSS maintains a COVID-19 FAQ specifically for international students, which you can find on our website here: https://www.albany.edu/isss/93904.php

**Winter Break Travel Reminders & NYS Quarantine Requirements**

The ISSS office does not recommend international travel at this time due to increased risks which could impact a student's return.

- Unfortunately, the global travel situation can change rapidly and with little notice, including travel restrictions, travel bans, and lack of flight availability
- DHS has not yet released official guidance for Spring 2021, which could impact a student's return if outside the U.S.
- If you will travel please contact ISSS@albany.edu for further details and to review documentation needed to re-enter the U.S.
- Students travelling over break should check their UAlbany email frequently for any immigration or quarantine requirement updates.

Students remaining in the U.S. are cautioned if travelling to any state or country which is on the NYS Governor's high risk list, as they may be required to quarantine for 14 days upon return to New York State. This list includes most countries and states. Please review the NYS website for more information: https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory

We know this upcoming break may be very difficult, particularly for international students who were unable to travel home last summer. Please know that you have the full support of ISSS during this time. If you are facing any challenges (such as housing, stress, or anxiety) please do not hesitate to reach out to us for resources and support.

Please also remember that the Spring term start date is February 1st, 2021.

**Giftcard Raffle for Research Study on UAlbany International Students and Asian/ American Students**

UPDATE: Please note that we are including both East Asian and non-East Asian international students in the interviews/ Qualtrics surveys. Please disregard any text referencing “East Asians only.”
In search of volunteers for a research study on the impact of COVID-19 on international and East Asian American students at the University at Albany (Principal investigator, Professor Angie Y. Chung). The larger study (UAlbany IRB: 20X251) will involve a 20-30 minute phone or online interview, which will qualify you for two raffle entries for one of three $25 giftcards (Amazon, Korean BBQ Chicken, or Doordash). Or alternatively, you may complete the Qualtrics survey in the link below for one raffle entry. We have interviewers who can speak Mandarin, Korean, and Japanese if you prefer. If you are Korean, you will also have the option to participate in a fully paid 2-hour focus group session (York University IRB: e2020-213).

In order to qualify, you must be an East Asian international or Asian American student 18 years of age or older and currently enrolled at the University at Albany, regardless of student status, citizenship, place of birth, or background.

For more information, please contact Professor Angie Y. Chung (aychung@albany.edu).

Qualtrics Survey: https://albany.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6s7pE0fotHH0SPz

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**Upcoming Events**

**Holiday Lights in the Park**

View the beautiful holiday lights in Washington Park, all from the safety of your vehicle! Admission starts at $25 a vehicle. For more information click Read More.

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**Saratoga Victorian Streetscapes**

**Schenectady Symphony Orchestra Virtual Poinsettia Pops**
Take a stroll through downtown Saratoga to see the festive decorations, or view Santa drive through the streets virtually on Facebook!

Poinsettia Pops will feature many of your holiday favorites. You can purchase an electronic “ticket” to Poinsettia Pops and view the stream of the concert at a time convenient for you any time from December 15 – 25, and as many times as you would like.

Tickets are $20 and only available through Proctors Box Office by phone at 518.346.6204 or online.