Welcome New International Students

by Tony Tambascia, Executive Director and Assistant Dean of Students

On behalf of the entire staff of the Office of International Services (OIS), it is my pleasure to welcome all new students to the University of Southern California! We are delighted that you have chosen to continue your education at USC, and look forward to helping you have a great experience during your stay here.

You are joining an incredibly diverse, vibrant academic community, made up of exceptional students from around the globe and world-class faculty. USC is a truly international university, enrolling more foreign students than any other college in the US – 5,919 in Fall 2008, coming from 115 different countries.

I hope you will take advantage of this diversity and try to meet people of many different nationalities, including Americans. Previous students have told me that one of the most valuable benefits of their USC education was the chance to form friendships that spanned the boundaries of national borders, cultures, and languages and have even led to fruitful professional collaborations.

I also encourage you to consider getting involved in any of the numerous activities and organizations on campus, especially some of the welcome programs that the OIS offers to help you get used to life in LA (see pages 4-5). These educational and cultural events will help you discover all that USC has to offer, and should be a lot of fun too! You should also consider joining the International Students’ Assembly, which serves to promote international students’ concerns and interests (see page 6).

The Fall semester is always a time of excitement and change at USC, but we are especially excited about the construction progress of the new Ronald Tutor Campus Center, next to our offices in the Student Union Building. Scheduled to open in Fall 2010, this facility will create a new hub for all members of the USC community to learn, work, and socialize (see page 3).

Studying at USC means that you are part of Los Angeles, a vibrant, multi-ethnic city that I urge you to explore. With its cutting-edge arts scene, world-class cuisine and lively neighborhoods, set against a beautiful natural backdrop, LA...
Welcome  Continued from page 1

rewards those who take the time to find the many hidden gems it has to offer (see page 10).

Our mission at the Office of International Services is to do everything we can to help international students, scholars, faculty and staff to make the most of their USC experience. As well as helping you understand immigration rules and regulations, our office offers advice and programs on a number of academic, social, and cultural issues to make your time in the US as rewarding as possible. Stop by Student Union 300 any time, or visit www.usc.edu/ois for more information.

We wish you the very best as you embark upon your own personal USC experience!

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**International Connection**

**Publications Editor**
Oliver Riley-Smith

**Editorial Advisor**
Judy Hartwich

**Printer**
Zada Graphics

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Your comments and suggestions are welcome. Please send them to:
Judy Hartwich, OIS, STU 300, MC 0899, email: hartwich@usc.edu.

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**OIS Staff**

Executive Director
Assistant Dean of Students
Tony Tambascia, Ph.D.

Student and Scholar Services
Senior Associate Director
Judy Hartwich, M.S.

Associate Director
Esther Lee, M.S.

International Student Advisors
Becky Peterson, M.A., Sarah Bang, M.A.

Senior Immigration Advisor
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Sevis Coordinator
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Exchange Visitor Program Coordinator
Zach Williams

Immigration Advisors
Scott Turner, Anne Kaufman, M.A.

Information Specialists
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Gwendolyn Crowe

Faculty/Staff Visa Services
Director
Cheryl Gilman

Faculty/Staff Visa Specialists
Iran Carranza, Joan Cerera

Paraprofessional Staff
English Language Program Coordinator
Marisa Olson

Publications Editor
Oliver Riley-Smith

Student Assistant Staff
Omoikhoje “Didi” Ojeomogha, Nick Porrazzo, Ryan Frisinger

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**Office of International Services**

Student Union 300
University Park Campus
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0899, MC 0899
Tel. (213) 740-2666
www.usc.edu/OIS
New Campus Center Will Provide A Trojan Hub

by Oliver Riley-Smith, Publications Editor

By this time next year, student life at USC will change dramatically thanks to the new Ronald Tutor Campus Center. The $120 million center, currently under construction, is due to be finished in summer 2010, and will include a number of university offices, such as the Admission Center, the Alumni Center, and Trojan Hospitality, as well as student work lounges, dining areas, and event spaces. It will, according to its designers, improve the quality of community life for all USC constituents, and function as a ‘living room’ for the Trojan family.

‘This project is about creating a new definition of community that is a reflection of, and an inspiration for, the continued advancement of USC’s academic reputation’, said Jason Cruz, Project Coordinator of the Campus Center.

Students have had a direct say throughout the design process, with representatives on the Campus Center Executive Committee offering input on the building elements and construction. In fact, it was students themselves who ten years ago initiated the process by expressing their desire for a new Campus Center that would serve as a focal point for student life at USC.

The new center will integrate with the existing Student Union facility and the bookstore to create a central space where students can learn, work, and socialize in a ‘spiritual and symbolic hub’.

The centerpiece of the area will be the International Plaza, a central Italianate courtyard bordered by a sweeping Romanesque colonnade, which has been designed to match the style of USC’s other historic buildings. The 2nd and 4th floor of the Campus Center will have open walkways that look onto the plaza, to give the building a greater sense of connectivity.

The first floor will include a large food court with indoor and outdoor dining, complete with wi-fi access, while the building itself will house a number of student affairs offices, as well as KSCR radio station.

“The building will create a new definition of community”
Jason Cruz, Project Coordinator

The building is the brainchild of downtown LA-based architects AC Martin Partners, who are also designed the modernist Our Lady Queen of Angels Catholic Church in Newport Beach and the new Engineering building at Cal Poly University, San Luis Obispo.

Photos courtesy of AC Martin Partners
OIS Programs Help Students Ease Into LA Life

by Sarah Bang, Becky Peterson, Zach Williams, Judy Hartwich, & Esther Lee, OIS Staff Members

In order to help students acclimatise to the overwhelming metropolis that is Los Angeles, OIS has designed a series of programs to introduce you to some of the exciting opportunities available to you during your stay here. These events are fun and informative ways to learn about US culture and lifestyle, while also meeting fellow international and domestic students.

LA Today

This program offers the chance to experience the diverse activities that Los Angeles and Southern California has to offer. The OIS International Program Assistants (IPAs) plan excursions to popular local cultural festivities, sporting events, parks, beaches, museums and more.

Past events have included skiing at Big Bear Mountain, experiencing Halloween through the Queen Mary in Long Beach, visiting the Getty Museum, and exploring Catalina Island. About 2-3 trips are planned for each semester in the fall and spring, so keep an eye out for upcoming LA Today events on the OIS website, www.usc.edu/ois.

Thanksgiving Match-Up

This program provides the opportunity to celebrate the Thanksgiving Day holiday with an American host family in the LA area. Volunteering families invite students into their homes for a Thanksgiving feast to share their holiday celebration. It is a wonderful opportunity for everyone involved to learn more about each others’ cultures and develop new friendships.

More details along with application materials for students and host family participants will be available on the OIS website beginning in October. This year, Thanksgiving Day is Thursday, November 26th so if you’re interested in participating, mark your calendars and plan ahead!

International Diners’ Club

Each school year, OIS International Program Assistants lead small groups of USC students and scholars to local restaurants and evening locales to sample the incredible diversity of food within Los Angeles. The intent of Diners’ Club is international education and social enjoyment while experiencing an array of cuisine. Last year’s events included Persian, German, American BBQ and the cuisine of Spain. Cost is typically $15 - $20 and 3 to 4 outings are planned each semester.

Email: oisdcc@usc.edu
State of the World Seminars

This engaging program presents panel discussions addressing current issues of global political, social and economic importance. The panel is composed of students, scholars and alumni from those areas of the world under discussion and is moderated by a USC faculty member with expertise on the issue/geographical area being discussed. It takes place once per semester.

To suggest a topic for a State of the World Seminar contact hartwich@usc.edu.

J1 Scholar Events

J-1 Scholar Meet and Greet

This monthly event allows both new and current J-1 scholars to meet each another and get acquainted. We provide refreshments and learn more about where our scholars come from, what your research is about and what you like to do when you can escape from the laboratory or library. OIS staff members are available to answer questions for our new scholars, but we’ve found our current scholars are the best resource to help new J-1’s settle into USC and Los Angeles.

J-1 Scholar Reception

The annual J-1 Scholar Reception is held each October and brings together the entire J-1 community. All of our J-1 scholars, J-2 dependents, USC faculty sponsors and department administrators are invited for an evening of hors d’oeuvres and wine. This semi-formal event allows us to recognize the J-1 scholar community and show our appreciation for their contribution to university life.

To find out some more about the hidden gems of Los Angeles, turn to page 10.

For information on the English Language Program, which offers English classes to spouses and family members of students and scholars, please turn to page 11.
More than 20 nationality/cultural groups are represented in ISA – one of the largest student-run assemblies at USC, which is housed under the USG Program Board. Its purpose is to express and promote international students’ concerns while providing intercultural educational experiences for the campus, as a whole.

ISA sponsors many events on campus along with collaborative programming with other student groups and organizations. Its two largest events are the International Food Fest, featuring ethnic cuisines from different ISA nationality clubs, and International Night, offering an exciting evening of cultural entertainment from around the world.

For more information:
Email: isa@usc.edu
Website: www-scf.usc.edu/~isa/index.php
Facebook: International Students’ Assembly

Current ISA student groups and emails:
- Africa SC: africasc@usc.edu
- Armenian Students’ Association: marslani@usc.edu
- Asha USC: gowrappa@usc.edu
- Association of Indian Students: india@usc.edu
- Association of Indonesian Students: asis@usc.edu
- Association of Malaysian Students: mohdmuhi@usc.edu
- Caribbean Students’ Association: usccsa@usc.edu
- Chinese Students’ Association (undergrad): csa@usc.edu
- Chinese Students’ & Scholars’ (grad): usccssa@usc.edu
- Comp Science Grad Organization: csgo@pollux.usc.edu
- European Student Association: euroclub@usc.edu
- Hong Kong Students’ Association: hksa@usc.edu
- Iranian Graduate Students’ Association: igsa@usc.edu
- Japanese Students’ Association: uscjja@usc.edu
- Korean International Students’ Association: kisa@usc.edu
- Lebanese Club: lebanon@usc.edu
- Singapore Students’ Association: ssa@usc.edu
- TESOL and TEFL Society: tesol@usc.edu
- Thai Students’ Association: thaiclub@usc.edu
- Turkish Students’ Association: turksa@usc.edu
- Vietnamese International Students’: uscvisa@gmail.com

Twenty years ago in the International Conection
by Oliver Riley-Smith, Publications Editor

Tianamen and its aftermath were a focal point for student and academic seminars and activities during the summer of 1989. Below is an article which appeared in the Fall 1989 issue of the International Connection - then called the International Student News.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT NEWS

Events in China Mobilize Campus

Summer 1989 proved to be anything but calm for the large number of students and scholars from the People’s Republic of China in the U.S. With events escalating to an alarming degree back home, in early June the USC Chinese Students and Scholars Association set up an information center in the International Students’ Assembly Office. The center was staffed around the clock in order to obtain information on events in China and to seek ways of establishing contact with individuals in China. A computer network, China.net, was set up to disseminate information expeditiously. Students expressed their viewpoints in a number of ways, including participating in organized demonstrations in the L.A. area. On August 12th, an estimated 1,500 people attended a forum at Bovard Auditorium where Wuer Kaixi, a student leader in the forefront of the Beijing protest movement, appeared.

OISS sponsored two events over the summer in response to the events in China. The first was a panel discussion about the situation in China, with three USC professors and two USC Chinese students expressing their insights and projections for the future of the current political and social system in China. The second event was a workshop in response to the growing number of changes with regard to Chinese students and their immigration status in the U.S. Addressing not only the immigration related issues, attention was also given to the psychological status of students who are dealing with issues of separation from family and friends and the uncertainty of the current situation back home. A presentation by Mr. Kumar of OISS included handouts outlining up-to-date information on pending bills in Congress that could affect the status of students and scholars from the People’s Republic of China. Copies of these handouts may be obtained in STU 300.
Maintaining Your International Student Status at USC

by Sarah Bang, International Student Advisor

All international students who are in F-1 and J-1 visa status must follow a set of immigration regulations as outlined by the U.S. government in order to maintain their international student status. The following set of rules and regulations is an introduction to properly maintaining international student status at USC.

Full Course of Study
International students must be registered for a full course of study during fall and spring semesters:
• Undergraduate students – 12 units
• Masters graduate students – 8 units
• Ph.D. graduate students and graduate students with a graduate/teaching/research assistantship - 6 units

Only 3 units or 1 online course per semester is applicable to the full-time enrollment total. Students who plan to audit a course must remember that audit units are not applicable to the full-time enrollment total.

On- and Off-Campus Employment
On-campus employment is limited to 20 hours a week when school is in session during fall and spring semesters and 40 hours a week during University vacations and summer vacation. Freshmen should note that they are not authorized to begin on-campus employment until their second semester at USC.
In order for international students to work off-campus, they must obtain the proper work authorization through OIS and/or the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS). For F-1 students, off-campus work authorization options are: Curricular Practical Training (CPT), Optional Practical Training (OPT), and Off-Campus Employment based on Economic Hardship. J-1 students‘ off-campus work authorization is Academic Training (AT). Please review the OIS website to learn more on work authorization options.

Maintaining Valid Immigration Documents
I-20/DS-2019: International students must be aware of the expiration date on their I-20/DS-2019. If it is not possible to complete their academic program by that date, students must request a program extension before the expiration date on the I-20/DS-2019. Students who do not file a program extension in a timely manner will be considered out of status.
Passport: Students should keep their passport valid at all times. If the passport will expire soon, students must renew it through the embassy or consulate of their home country.

Change of Local Address
Students who change their local address must report the change to OIS within 10 days of moving by submitting the change of local address form on the OIS website: www.usc.edu/ois.

Grace Periods
International students have a set of grace period regulations that are specific to their visa status. F-1 students who complete an academic program or OPT have a 60-day grace period and J-1 students who complete an academic program or AT have a 30-day grace period in which they are permitted to do one of the following:
1. Begin a new program of study at USC
2. Transfer to another institution
3. Apply for a change of immigration status
4. Depart the U.S. before the end of the grace period

Students who have received prior authorization to withdraw from classes have 15 days to depart the U.S. after the withdrawal date. Students who withdraw from classes without prior authorization are not eligible for a grace period.

Because these regulations can be quite complex and confusing at times, international students should always seek clarification and advice from OIS advisors with regard to any questions related to their immigration status.

OIS counselors and advisors are available to assist students through individual appointments. If you would like to make an appointment, please call OIS at (213) 740-2666.
California’s Got Issues

by Oliver Riley-Smith, Publications Editor

Although the Golden State is known around the world as a land of natural beauty, stunning weather, technical innovation, and the home of the entertainment industry, things haven’t been so sunny for the state recently. Here is a beginner’s guide to some of the burning issues in California right now, and the key players in the political game.

The Economy

In 2007, the CIA’s World Factbook said that if California were an independent state, it would have the tenth largest economy in the world. At the beginning of 2008, however, the governor declared a fiscal emergency, citing out of control spending as the main reason.

There were many factors for California’s perilous state of affairs. One was the credit crunch, especially the effect it had on the income of the state’s wealthiest residents, who were no longer contributing so much through taxes. Another was the low residential property tax rate that was guaranteed by a proposition in 1978, capping the amount of tax that could be charged on a home. As property prices grew throughout the US, the California government lost out on a lot of revenue.

Illegal immigration allegedly costs the state $10.5 billion a year in education, health care, and incarceration costs. It is estimated that there are 2.7 million illegal immigrants in California, and activists recently have been pushing for an end to public benefits for illegal residents. Opposition, however, argues that immigrants pay taxes and provide low-cost labor, and that these anti-immigration movements are driven by racism and xenophobia.

Governor Schwarzenegger has a lot on his hands Source: LA Times

Governor Schwarzenegger said in June ‘California’s day of reckoning is here. Our wallet is empty, our bank is closed, our credit is dried up.’ With this declaration of fiscal Armageddon, in July the state began issuing $53 million worth of IOUs for the first time in twenty years to vendors and residents waiting for income tax returns. By the end of July the state government had drawn up a budget to close the $26.3 billion deficit through cuts in services, borrowing cash, and accounting maneuvers. It remains to be seen how these initiatives will play out, but California remains in a fragile economic state.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

The man steering the ship is of course Governor Schwarzenegger, who was elected in 2003. Vowing to take on Democratic state politicians, the Governor started strongly, but soon faced opposition from powerful state unions, who defeated a number of ballot measures he proposed. Going against Republican advice, Governor Schwarzenegger hired a Democrat as his chief of staff, and won the 2006 gubernatorial elections with 56% of the vote. Since then, criticism has escalated, and his term of office ends in 2010, but there are rumors that he may run for the US Senate next.
Another figure who has been in the political limelight is Los Angeles mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. Recently elected for a second term, the East L.A. native and UCLA graduate was the first Latino mayor since 1872, taking office in July 2005.

Transportation was one of his major concerns, with his most eye-catching proposal being the ‘Subway to the Sea’, an extension of the Purple Line subway from Wilshire Boulevard to Santa Monica. He also increased funding for road repair by 30%, and the Bureau of Street Services claims to have filled in one million potholes in LA in three years.

Determined to clean up the city’s crime record, in 2009 Villaraigosa expanded the LAPD to its largest force in history, and as a result the crime rate has dropped to its lowest level since 1956. He also pledged to make LA the greenest city in America, and raised the amount of energy that the city generates from renewable sources from 2% to 10% while in office. Setting aside a passage of land around the LA River to create a ‘clean-technology corridor’, he invited international companies to relocate to the area.

California Fact Box

- Population: 37 million, largest of the states.
- Size: 163,696 sq miles, 3rd largest of the states.
- State Motto: ‘Eureka’, meaning ‘I have found it!’ in Greek, alluding to the gold rush that took place.

- 45% of the state’s surface area is covered by forests
- Richest area: Belvedere, Marin County - $113,595 average yearly income.
- Poorest area: Tobin, Plumas County - $2,584 average yearly income.
- Death Valley is the hottest, driest place in the US. Summer temperatures can reach more than 115°F.
- California produces over 17 million gallons of wine each year.
- There are approximately 500,000 detectable seismic tremors in California annually.

The state seal, bearing the ‘Eureka’ motto
Alternative Los Angeles

by Oliver Riley-Smith, Publications Editor

So you’ve just arrived in L.A., and you’ve already seen the sights – you’ve taken your photo with the Hollywood sign, hung out with Batman outside Mann’s Chinese Theatre, and slogged your way to the beach, but still don’t feel satisfied. The truth is that most people who pass through the city fail to see the breathtaking myriad of underground, crazy, creative goings-on that make this city so exciting. A little digging and this wonderful world of unique and often free fun opens up to you. Here are a few ideas to get you started – happy hunting!

Cinespia:
What better way to watch classic movies than under the stars, munching on a picnic, surrounded by dead film stars? If you like your cinema a little spooky, then head to Cinespia at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery, where for $10 you can enjoy a cult film screening with the huge crowd snuggled on blankets and sipping wine, all within shrieking distance of the graves of Hollywood immortals such as Rudolph Valentino and USC film-school founder Douglas Fairbanks. BYO libations and food for this magical event, which runs until the end of Sept.
Website: http://www.cinespia.org/

Downtown Art Walk:
If LA is the hot, young upstart in the modern art world, then this is it’s beating heart. Once a month, every second Thursday afternoon and evening, the showrooms of downtown LA’s Gallery Row fling open their doors and welcome a herd of lively, art-hungry kerb-crawlers. The area between 3rd and 7th on Main St and Spring St is positively bursting with energy as upwards of 6000 people take to the streets for a free night of cutting-edge art exhibits and sidewalk socializing. The next Artwalk is on Thursday, September 10, from 12-9pm.
Website: http://www.downtownartwalk.com/

Skylight Late Night:
Located in hip Los Feliz, this charming, treasure trove of a bookstore holds regular evening events, always free, including book readings, author talks, and ‘literary salons’ – that’s discussions over nibbles and wine for you and me. Topics range from the sublime to the ridiculous, with future subjects including ‘The American Coffee Shop Waitress’ and ‘Moods, Masochism and Murder’.
Located at 1818 Vermont Ave (just south of Franklin).
Website: http://www.skylightbooks.com

Exposition Park Farmers Market:
You may already have marvelled at the palatial supermarkets and their endless aisles, but if you want a true Californian food shopping experience you must head to a farmers market. We have one right on our doorstep, in front of the Natural History Museum in Exposition Park (just south of USC), which takes place every Saturday from 11am-4pm. All manner of fresh-grown goodies and tasty treats are on offer, including a variety of international speciality shops. This may be the perfect place to find that odd-shaped cauliflower you’ve always wanted!
Website: http://expoparkfm.blogspot.com/
The English Language Program

by Esther Lee, Associate Director

The English Language Program (ELP) offered by the Office of International Services provides English language instruction to spouses of international students, scholars, and spouses of scholars. This program is held weekly Mondays through Thursdays from 9:30am to 11:45am, and offers three levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced.

At the beginners level, students learn basic grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. In the intermediate level, where students are more verbal but have difficulty expressing their thoughts coherently, they learn proper pronunciation through listening to CDs and group discussions. In the advanced level, students are challenged with reading materials to increase their comprehension ability. They also learn idioms and discuss common issues faced by international students, such as immigration problems, laws, and car insurance.

Each month, the program offers students the opportunity to explore L.A. or other cultures through a potluck event. Students have the opportunity to visit the Natural History Museum, downtown L.A., Chinatown, and many other educational places.

The ELP is taught by experienced teachers and it provides a safe and friendly environment for spouses and family members of international students to learn and improve their English as well as make friends in the community. Each year, there are many students enrolled, from countries including China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Poland, France, Brazil, Iran, and Turkey.

Information for Fall 2009

Program Dates: August 31, 2009 to December 3, 2009

Registration Dates:

August 25, 2009,
Time: 10:00am
Location: University Religious Center (URC) room 108

August 27, 2009,
Time: 9:30am
Location: University Religious Center (URC) room 108

The registration will take about 1 hour as all new students will need to take an English Proficiency Test to be placed in a class.

Registration after these dates will be every Wednesday at 12:00 noon in URC 108. Interviews will be conducted in-person to determine class placement. New students will be admitted to the program until November 9, 2009.

Information about the ELP can be found at www.usc.edu/ois. Questions should be directed to uscelp@gmail.com.
Welcome from all the staff at OIS