Having reached the one-year mark in President Barack Obama’s administration, there has been a lot of talk and reflection on his first twelve months in office.

International students and scholars who have been in the US during this period have had conversations both with their American faculty and colleagues, as well as with friends from their home countries. Four students and one scholar spoke with me candidly about their own perspectives on President Obama’s first year in office. They also gave general impressions of the mood in their home countries regarding the current US Administration.

None claim to be experts, and all emphasized that they could not speak for all the citizens of their country — but could only give impressions. In my work with international students over the past decades, I have never ceased to be impressed with the attention and thought that they give to what is going on in the US. You might say that this is to be expected, as these are students who chose to come to the US to study. My observation, though, is that the thought they put into what is happening in the American political process, and the state of affairs in the country is far more intense than what most Americans would expect. I consider this a great compliment and an indication of how important they perceive the relationship between the US and their own countries to be. I thank all who took their time to talk with me.

Daniel Fitzsimmons
Masters in Film and TV Production
United Kingdom

I’m reserved in my thinking about how much of a positive thing Obama’s election will turn out to be. It’s sort of like turning an oil tanker around and the office of President is such a compromised position. I like Obama as a man, but I don’t yet see any big effect – I think it’s going to take longer.

In the UK, what’s happening in the US during Obama’s first year is not at the forefront of everyone’s mind. Even though there is a lot of media attention to his first year in office, for people in the older generations, they’re not paying much heed. The younger people however, understand better how small a world it really is.

What I’ve observed of Americans’ reaction to Obama’s election is that there is a lot of optimism, particularly that the wars in the Middle-East will be over. What surprises me in the US is the extreme polarization of opinions. You are either strongly for or strongly against something.

[Continued on page 3]
International Diners’ Club:
Upcoming Events
by Daniel Lawlor, International Program Assistant

Explore the diversity of Los Angeles by joining the Diners’ Club. Each month, you’ll be able to experience a different cuisine and learn more about a country’s culture and traditions. The Diners’ Club is a great way to discover different customs around the world, as well as a chance to meet both international and domestic students in a casual and friendly setting.

Saturday, March 27th: Ethiopian
Come with us as we explore LA’s vibrant Ethiopian community in Little Ethiopia and dine at an authentic Ethiopian restaurant. Scoop up your delicious spicy food with traditional injera flatbread. There are many vegetarian options available as well!

Saturday, April 17th: French
Often referred to as nouvelle cuisine (new cuisine), the French are famous for their style of light and delicate dishes that emphasize presentation. Developed over centuries, we will explore France’s history and culture through their fabulous food!

Dates are subject to change. For questions, email us at oisdc@usc.edu or go to our Facebook group, “USC Diners’ Club and LA Today 2009-2010”
or someone. You don’t get that kind of polarization in the UK. In part, I blame the media for helping to create that. Some of the media coverage I’ve seen has been outrageous.

Ka Po Chan
Senior, International Relations
Hong Kong, China

I thought his State of the Union address was wonderful, but I also think that so far he has failed in most of his promises. Change is not easy. He is a brilliant guy and his speeches are very persuasive. In his first year of office he visited several Asian countries, which is not usually done. This gives Asian people the idea that America is willing to cooperate with Asia both economically and politically.

However, he did raise the tariff for Chinese imports to the US so that the US debt to China will decrease. Also this makes it easier for the US to gain more Chinese currency. Another issue that Chinese people are focused on is that the US sold $6.4 billion of military equipment to Taiwan. This move could be harmful to the US-China relationship.

Chinese people in general were surprised that an African American could be elected in the US. What they are interested in is Obama’s performance in economic reform in the US as that will affect relations to China. They are more interested in this than in political issues.

Rolf Hoefer
Senior, B.A. Theatre & Business Entrepreneurship
France/Germany

I think Obama is a good speaker but has yet to truly deliver on his promises. He seems like more of a diplomat than a person who delivers. Sarkozy, on the other hand, takes a stand and tries to push his ideas through.

Certainly Obama receiving the Nobel Peace Prize makes it harder to perform in issues of conflict. In my studies of finance, with regard to health care reform, what is proposed is insufficient to cure the problems. Neither the crisis in commercial real estate, nor the crisis in the education system are being addressed.

I think French people in general are interested in the whole dilemma in the US. They know that Obama has inherited a bad situation and think that he needs to toughen up somewhat so that he is able to rally the people to support what is needed.

Sergio Meth
Scholar, Loker Institute for Hydrocarbon Research
Brazil

The US was on the verge of an abyss and it was averted. Obama is the right guy at the right moment. If I had been a citizen at the time of the election, I most certainly would have voted for him. I believe his economic approach is correct and I like the way he treats legal matters.

The damage caused by the Bush administration will last many years, however the reputation of the US is back on track. Brazilians in general thought very negatively about the Bush Administration; torture, unjust arrests, invading other countries. Now there is no more finger-pointing. They see Obama as a guy who respects international law. With Obama as president, Americans who travel abroad can once again be proud of who they are.

Neda Kandimirova
PH. D Candidate, Choral Music
Bulgaria

I was 100 percent for Obama winning the election. In Bulgaria the people are unanimously pro-Obama. We think of the US as a great power that has an effect on everybody’s life – but we don’t really know how that works. We see Obama as an agent for change. I think the general attitude in Bulgaria towards Obama’s first year is that we have high hopes, but let’s see. We realize how hard it is to make changes.

In California, although I believe the economy has been more directly impacted in the past year, I don’t hear people discussing issues as much. There is the feeling that California has always been a prosperous state, and always will be. The term ‘laid-back’ is not a criticism, but I do feel there is some jeopardy in this, perhaps because I am from Bulgaria, and Bulgarians are also laid-back. But laid-back can turn into negligence and unwillingness to take responsibility. I think Eastern Europeans in general are less critical of the US than Westerners. Western Europeans have higher expectations, but Eastern Europeans always know it could be worse.
New Expo Line Will Revolutionize USC Commute

by Oliver Riley-Smith, Publications Editor

Later this year, the long-awaited Exposition Light Rail Transit Line (or Expo Line for short) will finally open, linking the USC campus to Downtown LA and, more importantly, the rest of the Metro rail network. The line was originally meant to run from Downtown to Culver City, but ballooning costs and delays have meant that only the eastern part of the line will open this summer, running from to Crenshaw.

The route was designed to ease the congestion on the 10 freeway, running parallel to it along the southern side, offering a ride from eastside to westside in less than thirty minutes. From the university’s point of view, the biggest reason to be excited is the new USC/Expo Park stop, at the southeastern corner of campus, which will link students and staff to the existing Metro Blue Line at Pico, just three stops away. Additional stations at Jefferson/Figueroa St, and Vermont/Exposition Blvd will add access to the east and west sides of campus respectively.

Progress in construction, however, has been fraught with problems – as well as being late and over-budget, concerns have been raised regarding the safety of the line, especially as it passes near high schools and roads near USC where children and students regularly cross. Another complaint was raised that the line is too far south, missing out on most of the wealthier areas of west LA such as Beverley Hills, West Hollywood, and Westwood. The Metro Authorities argue that the line will provide access to the Coliseum, Natural History Museum, and other Exposition Park attractions which will greatly ease the parking conditions around the area.

State of the World Seminar:
When Disaster Strikes:
Who Helps?
Wednesday, March 10
5 to 6:30 pm
Doheny Library, Intellectual Commons
The 28th Annual International Graduation Reception & Awards Ceremony

by Sarah Bang, International Student Advisor

Every spring OIS celebrates the achievements of our graduating international students and also recognizes those students, staff and faculty who demonstrated their passion and commitment in supporting our international student community.

This year, the OIS International Graduation Reception and Awards Ceremony will take place at the Radisson Hotel near campus on Friday, April 23 from 4 - 6pm.

OIS will present the following awards: the Academic Achievement Award, Leadership Award, and Faculty and Staff Appreciation Award.

The Academic Achievement Award recognizes undergraduate and graduate international students who graduated in December 2009 or who will graduate in May or August 2010. The eligibility requirements are as follows:

• Undergraduate students must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.50

• Graduate students must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.80

• Students graduating in May or August 2010 will be eligible based on their GPA as of end of fall 2009

The Leadership Award is presented to both international and domestic students who have demonstrated enthusiasm and commitment in serving the international student community as student leaders during the 2009 – 2010 academic year.

The Faculty and Staff Appreciation Award is presented to one faculty and one staff member at USC for their significant contributions to the international student community. These are individuals who have shown extraordinary dedication in supporting and assisting international students.

If you or someone you know is eligible for any of the awards above, please download and fill out the appropriate nomination form on the OIS website, www.usc.edu/ois.

OIS invites all USC students, faculty and staff to join us for this ceremony! We hope that you are able to join us in celebrating the accomplishments of graduating international students as well as recognizing the dedication of those who support our students’ well-being and overall success at USC.

If you have any questions about the event or nomination process, please contact the OIS International Program Assistants at intlgrad@usc.edu or stop by our office in STU 300.

Students from Canada, the United Kingdom, France, the U.S. and Japan will talk about their country’s relief response systems to natural disasters that occur world-wide.

The State of the World Seminars are sponsored by the Office of International Services, Division of Student Affairs
The U.S. Tax Season Is Here
And International Connection has all the information!

Filing deadline is Thursday April 15th
OIS tax information can be found at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/OIS/tax/tax.html

Overview

Most non-nationals are liable for taxation on any income earned in the United States from the beginning of their arrival in the U.S. Income normally includes salary, taxable scholarships/fellowships, income from U.S. mutual funds or U.S. bank accounts, etc.

Taxes for each calendar year (in this case, 2009) are reported in the Spring of the following year and tax forms are typically filed with both the U.S. Government (federal) through the International Revenue Service (IRS) and the U.S. state/s in which income was earned. For example, if you earned income in California (CA) and New York (NY) you would file separate state forms for both CA and NY.

This tax season you have until Thursday, April 15th to file your federal and state forms. Generally, all F-1 and J-1 students and their dependents are considered non-residents (NR) for tax purposes for their first five years in the United States and would file federal form 1040NR (long form) or 1040NR-EZ (short form). Scholars are typically considered NR regarding taxation for their first two years in the United States. H-1B, TN or O-1 status holders who have been in the U.S. for more than 183 days should go to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service site resources (irs.gov) to see if they should file resident rather than non-resident tax forms, specifically Publication 519 (U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens).

ALL non-nationals in F, J, M and Q status and each of their dependents must file federal form 8843, Statement of Non-Residence, each tax season even if no income was earned. You should note that being a resident for tax purposes does not mean resident for immigration purposes.

Received Documents

You will possibly receive in the mail forms to assist you with filling-out your tax forms such as:

- W-2: Statement of income earned amounts from employer/s
- 1042-S: Statement of tax treaty or scholarships/fellowships
- 1099: Statement of income earned on bank accounts/mutual funds, etc.
- 1098T: This form is only used by U.S. citizens and permanent residents for a possible education credit and is not of use to non-nationals.

Please go to the OIS tax section webpage for more detailed descriptions of these forms and their content.

Filing For Taxes

Federal

OIS provides FREE online software called CINTAX to assist USC non-residents with their federal tax forms. It can be accessed through a portal at the main OIS website (“Taxes”) and will assist you with both filling-out the correct federal forms applicable to you (such as the 1040NR/1040NR-EZ and 8843 forms) and generating them. You will need to have either a Social Security Number (SSN) or Tax ID number (ITIN) in order to file your returns. If you are not eligible for an SSN, CINTAX will assist you with filling-out a request for an ITIN Tax ID number through form W-7. If you have already visited USC University Payroll Services (UPS) to complete an
application for an ITIN for a USC job but have not received the number, contact UPS at payroll@usc.edu for a copy of your signed W-7 to attach to your federal tax forms. If you have received an ITIN separate from USC employment, please use this number on your tax returns.

Once you have completed all steps in CINTAX, you will print your forms to sign and mail to the address provided by CINTAX. We strongly encourage you to make copies of all forms and supporting documents and to mail the originals with a tracking number to document receipt. Please make sure to have all your information forms (W-2, 1042-S, 1099, etc.) before you fill out your tax forms in CINTAX and mail them.

Once your tax forms have been received by the U.S. Government, it is extremely difficult to then file an amended return and CINTAX or OIS would not be able to assist you with this. Of special note is that non-residents are NOT eligible to file their taxes electronically (E-file) but must print and sign hard copies to mail-in.

If you are considered a resident for tax purposes, you will need to file forms 1040, 1040A or 1040-EZ, depending on your particular case and, unfortunately, cannot use CINTAX.

**State**

We offer free State of California workshops to assist non-residents with filling-out their CA tax form (540NR) and state tax booklets are available at the OIS front desk. Please bring to the sessions your completed 1040NR from CINTAX and any W-2’s received. If you are a resident for tax purposes, you would fill out CA 540 or 540-EZ on your own. Please refer to the OIS International Update or OIS website for specific dates they will be offered.

**Possible Income Exceptions**

1. **Tax Treaties**: Some countries are eligible for varying amounts of income exemption from taxation under tax treaties between their home government and the United States.

   If you were paid through USC and were entered into the USC non-national payroll system (GLACIER) in a timely manner, these treaties would have been applied to your status. IRS form 8233 is what you would use to request a tax treaty and IRS Publication 901 lists current U.S. tax treaties.

   CINTAX takes into account tax treaty status and will apply it to your tax calculations. Tax treaties only pertain to federal and not state or local taxes. Please go to irs.gov for further information.

2. **F.I.C.A. Taxes (Social Security & Medicare)**: F-1 and J-1 students are exempt from paying FICA taxes for their first 5 years in the United States and these taxes should not be deducted from paychecks. J-1 scholars and researchers are typically only exempt for 2 years.

   If your employer has mistakenly withheld FICA taxes, you must work with them directly to request a reimbursement. If they will not assist you, you can file IRS forms 843 or 8316 to request reimbursement. Please note that J-2’s with work authorization are not exempt from FICA taxes.

**Important Websites and Resources**

Federal website, Internal Revenue Service: www.irs.gov
- Publication 519 (U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens)
- Publication 901 (U.S. Tax Treaties)
- Form 8233 Request for tax treaty exemption
- Form 843/8316 Incorrect withholding of FICA tax

State of California website: www.ftb.ca.gov
Other state websites: http://www.taxadmin.org/fta/link/forms.html

**Other tax resources**

It is important to know that major tax software packages such as TurboTax and H&R Block TaxCut do not provide forms 1040NR or 1040NR-EZ as part of their software so you would not be able to file for federal taxes with them. You can use the services of a local Certified Public Account (CPA) or work with a tax reporting firm (such as H&R Block) if you have complex tax questions and they will quote you a fee for services based on your particular case.

Please note, the staff of the Office of International Services is not trained or licensed to answer questions concerning your tax situation or offer any tax related advice. USC students and scholars should consult tax professionals for specific tax advice.
Whether it is by bicycle or on skateboard, wheeled transport is the number one choice for students and staff looking to zip across campus as quickly as possible. There are thousands of riders traversing USC every day, but this creates just as many complaints from pedestrians whose safety is being put at risk, and drivers who are struggling to avoid hitting those who choose to ignore the rules of the road.

Due to the increasing public safety issues, and the number of students breaking both university and state laws regarding bike usage, the USC Traffic Safety Task Force (TSTF) has been formed to combat the problems.

These problems stretch farther than the mild annoyance of nearly being run over by a bicyclist. Amy Johnson, a member of the TSTF from the Vice President of Student Affairs’ Office, says that the ‘major problems caused by wheeled transport on campus include congestion, safety concerns, and a deterioration of our ‘park-like’ campus’.

On campus, the proliferation of bikes at peak hours has lead to more injuries, especially since the bikes are being left anywhere because there aren’t enough bike racks. Off campus, it is a disregard for traffic signs and rules which is leading to more accidents. In 2009, the USC Department of Public Safety (DPS) dealt with 41 bike-related collisions on and around campus, with plenty more most probably going unreported.

Some of the most common reasons for bicycling accidents, according to DPS, include riding on the wrong side of the road, making unsafe left turns, emerging rapidly from driveways and sidewalks into traffic, and bicyclists riding without reflectors or lights at night. Cyclists perhaps don’t realize that they must abide by both state and university laws when riding around campus.

- When moving slower than traffic, stay near the right edge of the road
- Keep at least one hand on the handlebars at all times
- Give proper hand signals when turning or stopping (left turn = left arm straight out pointing left; right turn = left arm pointed straight up or right arm pointing right; stop = left arm pointed straight down)
- Never leave your bicycle blocking a sidewalk
- Headphones covering both ears may not be worn while operating a bicycle.
- Riders under 18 years of age must have a properly fitted helmet
- Night riders must be equipped with a light, visible from 300 ft, and reflectors
- It is against the law to ride under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

In addition to state laws, USC requires that all bikes are licensed (with a state license) and registered with DPS. Bikes can only be parked in designated areas or racks, and a public safety officer can issue a citation, relocate, or impound.
pound a bike which is improperly parked, has been reported stolen, or is clearly abandoned or inoperable.

**USC rules include:**

- All bicycles and skateboards must be walked in and around all construction areas at all times for the continued safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.

- Bicycles may not be operated at a speed that exceeds the university speed limit for vehicles (15 miles per hour on streets and 5 miles per hour on Trousdale Parkway and Childs Way malls).

- Bicycles may be operated on the streets and pedestrian malls on campus; however, bicycles are to be walked on sidewalks in designated areas delineated by signage.

- Bicycles must always yield to pedestrians anywhere on the pedestrian malls. Bicycles must be walked in crosswalks.

Given that most students don’t know the rules, let alone obey them, one of the TSTF’s primary objectives is to enforce the safety rules effectively.

Bike safety classes have been one suggestion, while encouraging pedestrian behavior towards bikers is also on the agenda. Other issues they are considering, according to Johnson, include ‘planning of streets, pedestrian safety on campus, effective coordination of alternate transport, and special events coordination’.

Some of the solutions include making no-biking zones in designated areas of the campus, such as around the new campus center, decreasing the number of bikes by discouraging freshmen from bringing them, and building a perimeter bike path around the campus.

Johnson also mentions some of the more innovative ideas the TSTF is considering, including building ‘bike parking’ lots and instituting a bike loan or rental program, similar to the zip car model which is currently established on campus.

Whatever the task force decides upon, the responsibility ultimately lies with the riders and pedestrians of USC to follow the rules and show consideration to others, small efforts that, as a whole, will make USC a safer, happier place to work and study.

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**Write for International Connection!**

Yes, that’s right, IC Magazine is searching for talented new writers to join our hard-hitting, diverse writing team. We are looking for writers of all ages and backgrounds to contribute to our issues next semester.

Our mission is to cover a wide range of topics that could appeal to international students at USC - politics, international relations, local campus issues, as well as features on the arts, culture, sports, travel, and anything that relates to Los Angeles life.

Send us one sample of journalistic writing (no longer than 500 words) and a list of some specific topics you would like to write about to rileysmi@usc.edu. Deadline: April 15th.

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You too could be a glamorous writer like this fellow!
As students living during the aftermath of a splendid financial meltdown, we’ve had to cut back a bit. Our pockets have become increasingly pinched, and there is a growing aversion among Trojans towards dropping a wad on a fancy meal at a restaurant. Instead, a home cooking trend is appearing, with more and more Angelinos nowadays preferring to eat their own culinary creations to shelling out for a take-out or heavily taxed and tipped meal.

With the abundance of diverse ethnic markets, fresh produce, and local seafood, there is no reason not to take advantage of our perfect cookery climate, strap on the apron, and rustle up some home-crafted masterpieces. For those of you who aren’t so confident in the kitchen, here are some of the better and more exciting cookery courses available in our fair city of chefs. The best part of all that hard work – you get to eat your tasty creations at the end!

**Hipcooks**

http://hipcooks.com/
East location: 642 Moulton Ave Unit E21, LA 90031
Tel: 323.222.3663
West location: 2833 S Robertson Blvd, LA 90034
Tel: 310.841.2738

Based in their trendy, modern kitchen-come-dining rooms in both East and West LA, Hipcooks caters to the 21st century urban chef on the go.

With fun courses ranging from the Romantic Dinner for Two (incl. pumpkin, garlic and sage risotto and ginger-raspberry brulee), to The Surprise Guest (with roasted honey pear salad and pistachio-crusted swordfish – the ultimate secret weapon for the uninvited!), you are sure to have some zingy and original new dishes in your arsenal by the time you finish.

Promising to ‘feed the minds, imaginations, and tummies of Hip Angelinos’, Hipcooks believes that the best cooks are those who think outside of the cookbook and get creative with cooking. Other courses include cocktail party recipes, Japanese, Mexican, Moroccan and French cuisine, and with classes costing only $55, it is guaranteed to make you a cooler cook!
Eatz
http://www.eatzla.com/
Location: 1032 N. Spaulding Ave,
West Hollywood 90046
Tel: 310.824.3586

Eatz seductively invites you to ‘Come awaken your inner chef’. What exactly this entails is a fun and intimate dinner party environment, which teaches you how to cook a full five course meal and includes wine and cocktails.

With classes taught by ex-lawyer and full time culinary entertainer Niki and numbers kept to no more than 14, you are sure to pick up a myriad of new skills. As a taster, their Valentines dishes included seared scallops with sun dried tomato sauce, cinnamon-chocolate mousse with port cherries, and berry champagne cocktails. If that can’t get you interested, I suggest you go to McDonalds and don’t come back. Prices start at $85 per class.

California Sushi Academy
http://www.sushi-academy.com/
Location: 11310 Nebraska Ave. #1, LA 90025
Tel: Tel: 310 231-4499

Everybody loves sushi! How could you not? It’s so easy to eat, and LA is abundant with great sushi restaurants. Well, it turns out their chefs are exceedingly good at teaching you the art of sushi.

CSA’s overarching mentality is to teach you a greater understanding and appreciation of Japanese culture through the culinary experience, so you’ll learn more than just how to cut a mean California roll., and it is an art.

Although their comprehensive five day sushi chef course is a little pricey, their one day basic course covers all the local favorites, including rainbow rolls and spicy tuna rolls, an clocks in at just $80 a class. If you think you’re a bit of a whizz with the knife, then the advanced course is available for just five dollars more, and includes fish cutting practice, nigiri lessons, and special rolls. Roll up.

Best of the Rest:
www.sporkfoods.com - Paradise for vegans and veggies!
www.chezcherie.com - Chic foody goodness in La Canada
www.newschoolofcooking.com - big Culver City institution
Zach Williams always observes the rules of the road at USC! See page 8 for more.