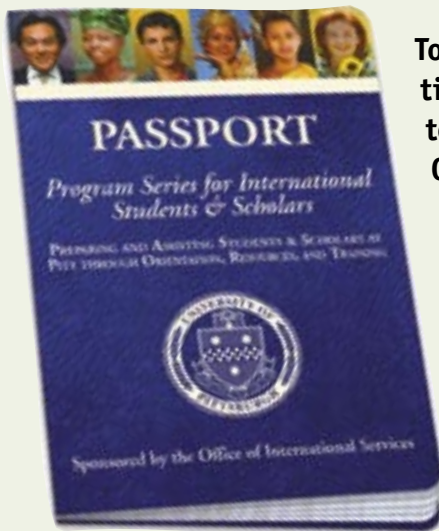


BY PATRICIA LOMANDO WHITE

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New PASSPORTs for International Students, Scholars:

Orientation Program a Guide to Life in United States



To help ease the transition for international students and scholars coming to Pitt, David Clubb, director of the Office of International Services (OIS), devised an innovative plan called PASSPORT, an ongoing program designed to orient students and scholars to the University and the American way of life. The acronym stands for Preparing and Assisting Students and Scholars at Pitt through Orientation, Resources, and Training.

Concerned that international students and scholars need more than just an initial orientation, Clubb; Jamie Rayman, OIS assistant director for programming; and Mayumi Terano, a diversity fellow and graduate student assistant in OIS, developed the ongoing series of support programs.

"We really do view our role as integrally connected to the academic mission of the University in terms of bringing these students and scholars here and making sure they succeed," said Clubb.

Capitalizing on the travel theme, new students and scholars will be given a "passport" describing the six sessions in the series. The sessions will discuss living in Pittsburgh, U.S. Immigration laws, health care, social and cultural programming, cultural adjustment, and academic success.

Participants receive "visa" stamps upon completing a session. Internationals are encouraged to complete at least four of the six sessions in order to receive a certificate of completion and become eligible for a prize at the end of the academic term. The full series will be offered during both the fall and spring terms.

"It will be the first time in the United States for a lot of the students and scholars, so it's important to have programs that are professionally done, and also important that our office is welcoming, because ours are the first faces that they see when they get to the United States and the University," said Clubb.



Although there is no requirement prescribing the order in which to take the sessions, OIS recommends that the session on Cultural Adjustment precede the session on Academic Success.

According to Rayman, "People need to be able to navigate socially before they can consider some of the more sophisticated skills needed to navigate their academic or professional careers in the United States."

In addition to her work at OIS, Terano, who is from Japan and has been in the United States for three years, is a graduate student in Pitt's School of Education. She wrote the PASSPORT curricula and thinks the Academic Success session will be of particular interest to internationals.

"Students [and scholars] really appreciate knowing how to develop a professional career if they are staying in the United States," said Terano, who agreed that the program would have been helpful to her. "The expectations of U.S. universities are different from those of schools in other cultures." ●

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