



# International Student Programs and Services



Volume 3

## Greetings Global Citizens!

*With* a new comprehensive mission and a dedicated OISPS team of professionals, we were able to offer 38 immigration (10), social (14), cultural (6), and educational (8) events and programs. Embracing student-centered and community-oriented services, we have created and will continue to create a welcoming and supportive, home-away-from-home, educational experience for all our international students and scholars representing 61 countries from all five continents.

Our OPT and CPT workshops and the professional development trainings were well-attended. We will continue to explore ways to attract more faculty and staff to trainings about F-1 and J-1 employment, J-1 supervisor's reporting duties, and effective ways faculty and staff can help international students succeed.

All our events and programs were impressionable, but the Inaugural Thanksgiving Feast, the Inaugural Women in Holy Scriptures interfaith panel, and the 7th Annual International Cultural Festival were definitely among the most memorable. These cultural events that are becoming Lamar University signature programs have truly reflected the desirable university-wide and community collaborations. These collaborations resulted in diverse creative ideas and sponsorships from some amazing colleagues and community stakeholders. The three signature cultural programs were very successful as they were the most attended, the most diverse, and the most inclusive.

As you prepare to travel during the summer break, please remember to always carry with you your passport, health insurance card, and I-20/DS-2019. Also, for emergencies and to continue to be compliant with F-1 and J-1 regulations, keep in mind that:

- ◆ Working off-campus is not allowed at any time without prior authorization;
- ◆ If you are traveling outside the U.S., make sure the second page of your I-20/DS-2019 is endorsed for travel by a DSO/ARO;
- ◆ Keep a list of contacts handy including phone numbers of the embassy of your home country, OISPS (409-880-7635), and Lamar University Police and Public Safety (409-880-7777)

It will be a long sunny break for you, enjoy it.

My team and I sincerely thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve you.

Wishing you safe travels and happy summer!

*Mustapha Jourdini*



**Dr. Mustapha Jourdini**  
*Director*





## Mission Statement

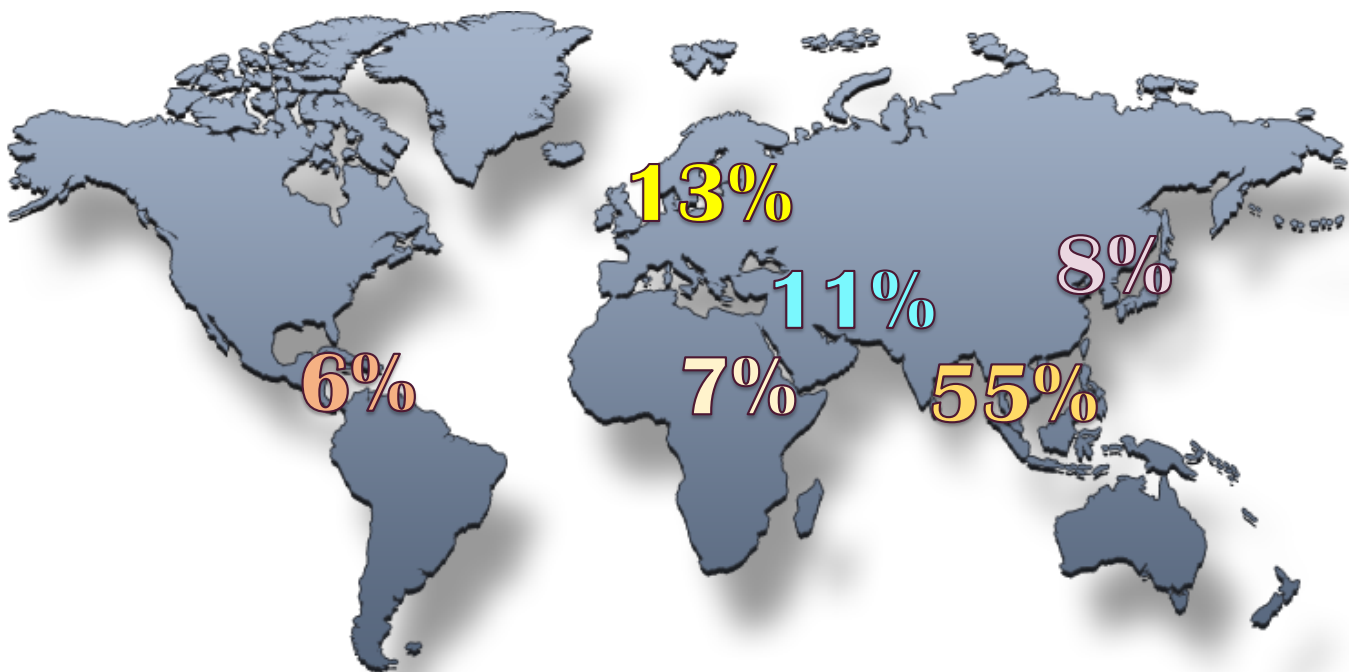
The mission of the Office of International Student Programs and Services is to help students and scholars maintain their visa status while studying at Lamar University. Our objective is to assist international students and scholars with cultural adjustment and other issues they may face as new students to Lamar University and living in the United States. We also encourage students and scholars to take advantage of the many social, cultural, and educational programs and events to meet other international and domestic students, faculty, and staff.



## Vision

The Office of International Student Programs and Services strives to be the primary resource for non-immigrant regulations for F-1 students, J-1 scholars, and Lamar University.

## Student Demographics



OISPS proudly serve F-1, M-1, and J-1 students and scholars from 61 countries spanning 5 continents, including gainfully employed international alumni.

## Faculty Spotlight

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### Professor Mahmoud Salimi



Assistant Professor: Communications  
Country of Origin: Afghanistan

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**What are the biggest differences you see between the university experience here and in your home country?**

Facilities and access to resources.

**What do you miss the most about your home country?**

The sense of home and community. Individualism is strong in Western societies.

**Can you describe a situation in which you felt it is necessary to be an ambassador for your country? For example, has there been a situation in which you needed to clarify erroneous stereotypes or assumptions about your home culture?**

Generally, people have been nice, but I have faced some situations where people have judged me based on their stereotypes. I was making a film in Berlin in 2004. I needed a hookah for the film. I stepped out of the set to get some lunch from a Turkish food truck. I noticed a hookah in the back of the truck where the Turkish guy was making my lunch ready. I got excited to see the hookah I was looking for. I asked the Turkish guy, "You have a hookah. Can I borrow it?" He looked at the hookah then back at me. With a curious look pointed at me, "Indish?" meaning are you an Indian? With enthusiasm, I responded, "No, Afghan, Afghan." Historically, Afghans and Turks have a good relationship and I was excited to say it with pride. His eyes wide opened and a smirk formed on his face. It seemed that he just discovered something. With excitement, he said, "Hashish, hashish!" He pointed at the hookah asking me to take it. I was baffled. It was like a slap on my face. I just realized that with five thousand years of Afghan history, that is how the world knows me.

In the U.S. I have had several such situations. Some people have strongly reacted when they found out I am from Afghanistan. A middle-age African American woman in Savannah, Georgia with enthusiasm asked where I am from. When I said Afghanistan, she took a step back, turned around and walked away.

I sat next to a white woman on the bus in Savannah, Georgia. When she found I was from Afghanistan, she said, "I hope I don't get kidnaped."

A white female Uber driver in Beaumont said that I hope I don't have to make her wear Burka.

I called a prominent local author to speak about the discovery of oil in Beaumont, Texas since their great grandfather was one of the four men who looked for oil and formed the Gladys Oil and Manufacturing Company. The first question they asked me was, "Are you a Muslim?" I responded, "Yes." The next question was, "Do you practice?" I asked what they meant by that. They said, "Are you like those guys who do crazy stuff in the Middle-East and you hear about it in the news."

In each one of such situations, I had to explain that terrorists do not represent my faith and my people. We share many commonalities with millions of other people in the world with different faiths and beliefs.

## Faculty Spotlight Continued

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### **What is the general perception of the US in your home country? Are those perceptions correct?**

People in my country have two images of the US: Utopia and invasion. For some, it is the ideal world to reach and live. For others, it is BM52 warplanes and M-4 machine guns.

### **What would you name the autobiography of your life?**

Untold, Untitled.

### **Can you tell me about your research and what led you to your field?**

I am working on a feature docudrama about the discovery of oil in Beaumont, Texas in 1901 that boomed the American economy. When I came to Beaumont, I saw a city struggling in poverty and crime while refineries and plants represented wealth. The juxtaposition of wealth and poverty was strong. It made me curious to learn about the city. And then I learned how the two oil booms in 1901 and 1925 changed the US and world economy. But the city is poor and forgotten. I decided to capture the forgotten history in frames and bring it to the screen for generations to remember.

From early childhood memories, I was always fascinated by the magic world of movies. I wanted to be in them. When I grew up, I wanted to make them and create that magic world. If you think about it, an idea is a concept that forms in the filmmaker's mind. Beside the filmmaker, no one else can see it. It is the filmmaker who visualizes that idea and turns it into a world that did not have an prior external existence. S/he shares that world with others to experience. It is a fascinating and magical process that involves thought, imagination, emotion, and perception.

### **What advise would you give to someone who is considering finishing their degree or starting for the first time as an adult?**

When you join the professional world, it will weigh you to gauge how much you know. If you weigh less, you will have an uphill to climb. So learn, make mistakes, and gain experience while you are in college because academia is forgiving.

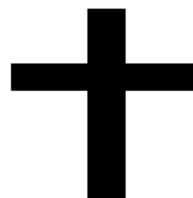
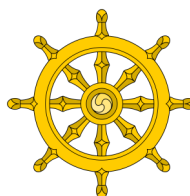
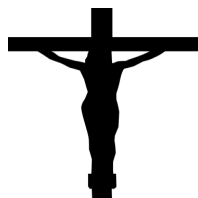
There are lucky people in the world. We may not be one of them to land a CEO job right after school. So work hard and be strategic. In life, many times you will fall and hit the ground hard. You must get up and run. You will fall again. You must get up and run again. You run to the last breath. You have not failed unless you have given up. So make that dream come true.

### **Who has influenced you the most in your life?**

My father has been the role model in my life. He has made a difference in so many lives with his kindness and big heart. He inspired me to be resilient, kind to others, and to never give up.







**INTERFAITH PANEL - Women In Holy Scriptures - March 21st**

In honor of Women's History Month, the Office of International Student Programs and Services hosted an Interfaith Panel which focused on Women in Holy Scriptures. The panel consisted of five speakers who represented the Hindu, Christian, Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish communities. Through an open forum, attendees had the opportunity to ask questions and receive responses from each of the panelists. This signature event was well attended and gave attendees an educational opportunity to examine the portrayal of women throughout history.

Historically, society and religion have been predominantly patriarchal due to political and societal influences, as well as man's interpretation of holy scriptures. As a result, women have experienced inequality as well as opposition. The guest panelists provided unique perspectives and examined the portrayal and key roles of women and their contributions in building communities within their faith.

Mrs. Cynthia Wolf - Temple Emanuel, Ms. Bethany Cox - Sojourn Community Church, and Mrs. Sara Tenini - St. Jude's Parish, shared that women's roles within scripture have provided the opportunity to become pillars of strength as well as teachers within their communities and churches.

Each religion faces hardships and popular misconceptions resulting in the commonality of gender inequality. Mrs. Nadirah Abdul-Hakeem, of the Islamic Society of the Triplex, stated that Quranic teachings ascertain that God sees men and women as spiritual equals.

[Quran 3:195] Their Lord responded to them: "I never fail to reward any worker among you for any work you do, be you male or female, you are equal to one another...."

Dr. Radha J. Lal, a founding member of the India Association of Southeast Texas and the Chinmaya Shripati Hindu Temple, also stated that in Hinduism, women are viewed as equal to men and that God has both male and female aspects.

The United Nations General Assembly recognized that "securing peace and social progress and the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms require the active participation, equality and development of women; and to acknowledge the contribution of women to the strengthening of international peace and security" (1975).

Regardless of their religious background, the prevailing message from the speakers confirmed that even though society has been male dominated, women are provided the opportunity to be equals within their religion, independent in their thoughts and actions, and instrumental in shaping today's society. The panel recognized that women have not only influenced matters and duties within the home but also play a vital role within the evolution of societal traditions and norms. Through the influence of religion and education, women are capable to introduce and revolutionize systemic changes for the benefit of humanity.



## International Poetry Reading - April 2nd

Cosponsored by the Office of International Student Programs and Services and the Mary & John Gray Library, the International Poetry Reading aimed to celebrate the National Poetry Month by exhibiting the rich linguistic and cultural diversity of Lamar University (LU). To support this goal, international and domestic students, faculty, and staff from LU were invited to recite poems in their native tongues- Arabic, English, French, Chinese, Persian, Urdu, and Spanish, among others.

Readers from all over the world passionately recited their favorite poems while others listened to their eloquence and inspirational messages. The participants not only read poems but connected listeners by providing backstories- details such as the author, the purpose of the poem, and what the poem meant to the reader personally. Attendees stepped away from their routines and into a world filled with beautiful words with impactful meanings. For instance, Dr. Catalina Castellón, a professor of Spanish and Director of Modern Languages, read “Sonatina” by Nicaraguan poet Ruben Dario. She introduced the poem stating that “it is, on the surface, about a princess who’s sad, but when readers look deeper, they will find that it represents poetry itself.”



Readers and listeners alike had an enjoyable and immersive three-hour experience at the International Poetry Reading program. Fizzah Khan, who recited Gaye Baras Ki Eid Ka Din by Parveen Shakir, said, “I really enjoyed listening and learning about the unique and diverse poems that were read at the event.” The combination of languages, sounds, meanings, and connections made April 2nd, 2019 a day to remember.

*International Poetry Reading*

**APRIL 2, 2019**  
MARY & JOHN GRAY LIBRARY  
11 AM-2 PM

LAMAR UNIVERSITY  
Office of International Student Programs & Services

In celebration of  
National Poetry Month,  
the Office of International Student Programs & Services and  
the Mary & John Gray Library  
welcome you to  
the International Poetry Reading.

**11:00am**  
Welcome – Dr. Mustapha Jourdini  
Director, Office of International Student Programs & Services

**11:05am**  
Remarks & Reading – Dr. Arne Almquist  
Dean, Mary & John Gray Library

**11:15am – 12:00pm**  
Readings

**12:00pm – 12:15pm**  
Refreshments/Break  
Refreshments provided by Dr. Arne Almquist

**12:15pm – 2:00pm**  
Readings

 <i>English</i>	 <i>Arabic &amp; French</i>	 <i>Persian</i>	 <i>Spanish</i>	
 <i>Urdu</i>	 <i>English</i>	 <i>English</i>	 <i>English</i>	 <i>Chinese</i>
 <i>Spanish</i>	 <i>English</i>	 <i>English</i>	 <i>French</i>	 <i>English</i>
 <i>English</i>	 <i>English</i>	 <i>English</i>	 <i>Spanish</i>	 <i>Spanish</i>



# 7th Annual International Cultural Festival



*The* 7th Annual International Culture Festival took place at Lamar University on Saturday, April 13, 2019. The purpose of the festival was to establish, maintain, and celebrate global diversity and international connections at Lamar University (LU) and the Beaumont community.

Over 500 attendees enjoyed this amazing and colorful annual celebration that concluded with 6 different delicious global cuisines (Indian/Pakistani, Chinese, Vietnamese, American, Mexican, Middle Eastern).

International and domestic students, scholars, faculty and staff at LU as well as the Beaumont community came together to experience a variety of cultural exhibits, dances, songs, and a fashion show from all over the globe in one central location - The Montagne Center – and showcased their unity and strength through Diversity and Inclusion. Special guest speakers included the Honorable Consul General Li Qiangmin of the People’s Republic of China, City of Beaumont Mayor Becky Ames, Associate Provost Dr. Brenda Nichols, and Vice President for Global Diversity, Inclusion, and Intercultural Affairs, Dr. John O. Bello-Ogunu Sr.

The Office of International Student Programs and Services (OISPS) is extremely grateful to our sponsors and contributors that made this special day a great success.

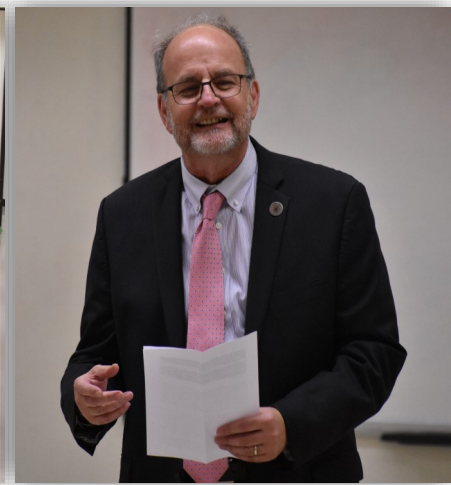
All of us at OISPS very much look forward to the 8th International Cultural Festival on April 18th, 2020.



**“We live in an increasingly diverse, interconnected and interdependent global village. Lamar University students will be better equipped when all of us provide them with rigorous academic training and meaningful co-curricular programming to set them up for success in the real world.”**

*~ Dr. Mustapha Jourdini, Director of Office of International Student Programs & Services*

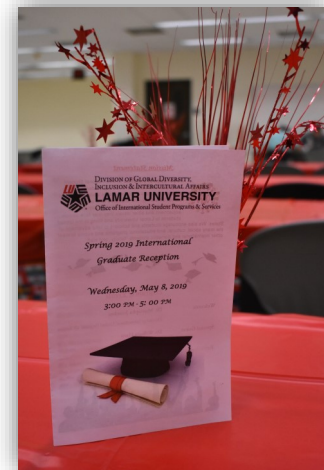
## CONGRATUATIONS Spring/Summer 2019 INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES!



*The* Office of International Student Programs & Services (OISPS) held the Spring and Summer 2019 International Graduation Reception on May 8th on the 6th floor of the Mary & John Gray Library. Graduating students, guests of honor, and Lamar University faculty & staff enjoyed celebrating student academic accomplishments with food and camaraderie. OISPS is delighted to congratulate and recognize all our International Graduates for their dedication, perseverance, and success!

Ninety-eight international students participated in the Spring 2019 commencement ceremonies on May 17-18. The graduates represented twenty-four countries from around the world. Of the seventeen educational programs represented, eighteen students received a bachelor's degree, seventy-six a master's degree, and four a doctoral degree.

Dr. William Harn, Dean of Graduate Studies, spoke of the importance of our graduates stating, "In terms of your knowledge of the state of the art in your discipline, you're a 2019 model. That has value in the workplace." We are confident that armed with the sound education and hands-on training they received at Lamar University, our graduates will continue to



be successful in their future careers. In his closing, Dr. Harn gave this encouraging statement to our graduates, "If you are able to carry out work that is the product of sustained focus, you will have an advantage over the vast majority of your peers. Moreover, you will have given the best of yourself."

Congratulations to our international graduates for their well-deserved success and best wishes with future endeavors!

We look forward to continuing to serve our graduates while they are on OPT and/or STEM.





# HOLI CELEBRATION - February 28th

**Festival of Colors**

**Festival of Spring**

**Festival of Love**



## Workshops & Training

Division of Global Diversity, International Student Programs & Services  
**LAMAR UNIVERSITY**  
Office of International Student Programs & Services

### OPT WORKSHOPS

September 18, 2019 @ 10AM  
September 20, 2019 @ 10AM  
September 25, 2019 @ 2PM  
September 27, 2019 @ 2PM

**OISPS Lounge (Wimberly 117)**

Workshops will cover how to important dates and deadlines, application materials, what you will need to do to maintain your F-1 status, a discussion of the requirements, and other essential information related to OPT.

**OPT Timeline**

PHONE: 409-880-7635 EMAIL: INTERNATIONAL@LAMAR.EDU  
This event is hosted by the Office of International Student Programs & Services

Division of Global Diversity, International Student Programs & Services  
**LAMAR UNIVERSITY**  
Office of International Student Programs & Services

### CPT WORKSHOPS

September 18, 2019 @ 2PM  
September 20, 2019 @ 2PM  
September 25, 2019 @ 10AM  
September 27, 2019 @ 10AM

**OISPS Lounge (Wimberly 117)**

Workshops will cover how to obtain CPT authorization, important dates and deadlines, application materials, and what you will need to do to maintain your F-1 status. Students will have the opportunity to ask questions at the end of the session. All international students are strongly encouraged to come.

PHONE: 409-880-7635 EMAIL: INTERNATIONAL@LAMAR.EDU  
This event is hosted by the Office of International Student Programs & Services

Division of Global Diversity, International Student Programs & Services  
**LAMAR UNIVERSITY**  
Office of International Student Programs & Services

Please join us to learn about the opportunities and responsibilities for hosting a J-1 Research Scholar at a Lamar University academic department!

### J-1 WORKSHOP FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

October 01, 2019  
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM  
LANDES AUDITORIUM

PHONE: 409-880-7635 EMAIL: INTERNATIONAL@LAMAR.EDU  
This event is hosted by the Office of International Student Programs & Services

Division of Global Diversity, International Student Programs & Services  
**LAMAR UNIVERSITY**  
Office of International Student Programs & Services

Please join us to learn about the supervisor and employer responsibilities when employing international students before and after graduation!

### F-1 WORKSHOP FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

October 08, 2019  
3:00 PM - 4:00 PM  
LANDES AUDITORIUM

PHONE: 409-880-7635 EMAIL: INTERNATIONAL@LAMAR.EDU  
This event is hosted by the Office of International Student Programs & Services



## Upcoming Events

**Halloween Mixer**  
A SPOOKTACULAR EVENT!  
October 31st OISPS Lounge 3:00 PM  
Hosted by the Office of International Student Programs & Services

Mary & John Gray Library (8th Floor)  
**Thanksgiving Feast**  
"Join us to celebrate this timeless American Holiday"  
11/14/2019  
Starts at 11 Am Free Food Tradition

coffee tea  
WITH THE OISPS DIRECTOR  
September 12      October 10  
September 26      October 24  
November 07  
Wimberly 117 - Multicultural Lounge - 10AM

The Director and OISPS Team are excited to host biweekly Coffee/Tea Hour for International Students and Scholars to meet, greet, and informally discuss student concerns and accomplishments.

## International Education Week - November 18th - 22nd

**INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK 2019**

**November 18, 2019**  
Effective Ways to Help International Students Succeed  
Landes Auditorium  
3:00 – 4:00 PM

**November 19, 2019**  
OISPS Open House  
Wimberly 117 - Multicultural Lounge  
9:00 – 12:00 AM

**November 20, 2019**  
Interfaith Panel  
The Status of "The Other" In World Religions  
Landes Auditorium  
5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Hosted by The Office of International Student Programs and Services  
Email: [International@lamar.edu](mailto:International@lamar.edu)  
Phone: 409-880-7635

Effective Ways to Help International Students Succeed  
Monday, November 18 3:00PM  
Dr. Mustapha Jourdini  
Fall 2019

The success or failure of most international students and scholars rests with faculty and staff who teach and provide support services!  
Join us to learn about the challenges international students encounter in the U.S. and how we can together help them adapt and excel at Lamar University.

Lamar University  
International Education Week  
Lamar.edu/InternationalInternational@lamar.edu  
409-880-7635





# GLOBAL GOODWILL AMBASSADORS:

BUILDING CONNECTIONS AROUND THE WORLD

CLOSING THE GAP



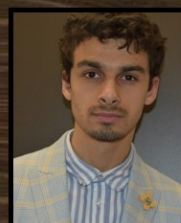
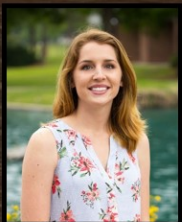
*The* Global Goodwill Ambassadors Program (GGAP) is designed to assist new international students and scholars to adjust to the educational system and life in the U.S. and at Lamar University. Through their active engagement, the ambassadors will learn about other cultures, practice other languages, and make life-long international friends.

GGAP plays a vital role in developing and executing social, cultural, and educational programs.

To become a volunteer Global Goodwill Ambassador, please contact the Director of OISPS, Dr. Mustapha Jourdini, at [mjourdini@lamar.edu](mailto:mjourdini@lamar.edu) for more information and to schedule an interview.



## Global Goodwill Ambassadors



**Make A Difference - Get Involved!**





**OISPS Team**

Dr. Mustapha Jourdini, Director  
 Margo Hymer, Assistant Director  
 Joshua Kai, Coordinator  
 Tracy Bourgeois, Sr. Specialist  
 David Frederick, Administrative Assistant

**Student Workers**

Prashant Ghimire  
 Sierra Davis  
 Diego Castilleja

**Get Involved**

Lamar University is home to over 200 student organizations. Below is a listing of student affinity groups that represents the diverse population of students at Lamar. <https://www.lamar.edu/international/current-students/student-affinity-groups.html>

**Stay in Touch**

OISPS provides numerous activities throughout the year to promote intercultural and cross-cultural experiences for domestic and international students. Visit our Orgsync page to get involved: <https://orgsync.com/163582/chapter>

**Connect With Us**

Do you have comments or concerns that you'd like to share with OISPS? Please submit your feedback at <https://www.lamar.edu/forms/international/oisps-feedback.html>

**[www.lamar.edu/international](http://www.lamar.edu/international)**

[www.lamar.edu/international](http://www.lamar.edu/international)

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