



DIVISION OF GLOBAL DIVERSITY,  
INCLUSION & INTERCULTURAL AFFAIRS  
**LAMAR UNIVERSITY**  
Office of International Student Programs & Services

**November  
December  
2018**



**Volume 2**

# International Student Programs and Services

## Greetings Global Citizens!

**WOW!** I'm amazed by and thankful for the so many social, cultural, and educational events and programs OISPS team has offered in Fall 2018. Indeed, OISPS means business when it comes to serving our international students, scholars, alumni, and Lamar University. We have fully embraced a student-centered, excellent customer service philosophy to create a nurturing and supportive home-away-from-home educational experience for all our international students and scholars representing 62 countries from five continents. We can only hope that you have noticed the big difference in communication and speed in delivering all OISPS services!

As you prepare to travel during the break, kindly 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; and
- 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's a long break for you, enjoy it!

Take naps, have long aimless walks, preferably in safe and well-lit public places, call your parents, siblings, and friends from back home, read inspiring success stories that may help you become happier and more productive, practice mindfulness by reflecting on all the wonderful things you already have to become more grateful and thus happier, share meals and good jokes, practice breathing and meditation to relax, play safe games you enjoy, surround yourself with happy and positive people, and, above all, be kind and smile a lot, life is too short!

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

Wishing you safe travels, happy holidays, and a very prosperous 2019!

Very best wishes,

Dr. Mustapha Jourdini



**Dr. Mustapha Jourdini**  
*Director*





## Mission Statement

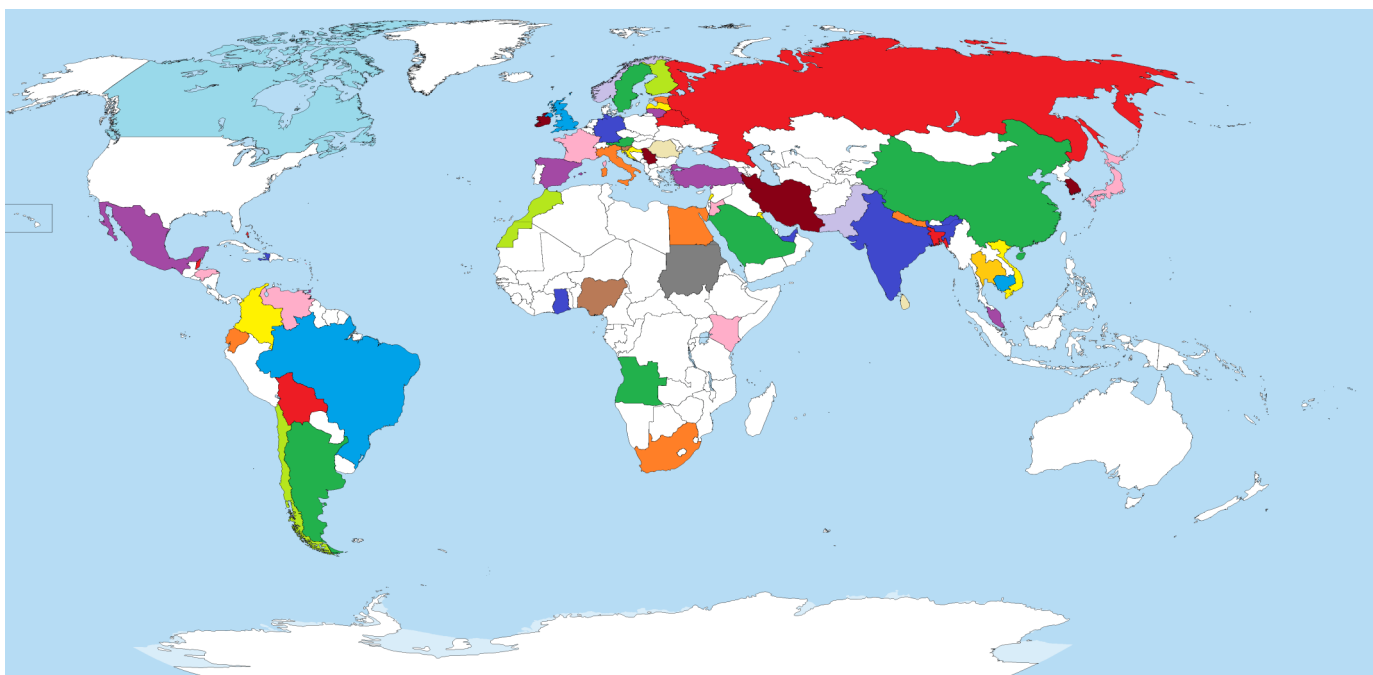
The mission of the Office of International Student Programs and Services is to help students and scholars maintain their visa status while studying at Lamar University. Our objective is to assist international students and scholars with cultural adjustment and other issues they may face as new students 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 serves 1,497 F-1 and J-1 students and scholars from 62 countries spanning 5 continents, including gainfully employed international alumni.

## Faculty Spotlight

**Dr. Stefan Andrei**



Department Chair: Computer Science  
Country of Origin: Romania



### Why did you choose to work for Lamar University?

I picked Lamar University because it was among the few universities advertising with a sentence, "international candidates are welcome to apply." Also, the position of Assistant Professor advertised in Communications of the ACM was about my research interest: real-time embedded systems and software engineering. The third reason is that Dr. Osborne, Professor and Department Chair of the Computer Science Department invited me here and convinced me to call Beaumont our new home.

### What do you most like about Lamar University?

What I like the most at Lamar University is the enthusiasm that students, faculty and staff members have. For example, at the time when I joined Lamar in 2007, I was told that the university is teaching oriented. I witnessed in January 2011 that Lamar was classified as a Research Higher Education Institution and I am very proud of that. Another thing I like about Lamar are the SACS accreditation efforts done by everyone involved, starting with students, and engaging all faculty and staff across the board. Our department is ABET-accredited and it takes an extra effort from our faculty and staff to do the data assessment and analysis. The last thing, but not least, is that Lamar is very open for diversity, by having a wide range of students coming from more than 60 countries to study, publish papers, and make presentations mentored by Lamar faculty. This represents an important advantage compared to other higher education institutions.

### What expectation of American culture did you have prior to arriving? Are there any differences between what you expected prior to arriving compared to what you have experienced once you arrived?

I realized that privacy is a very important part of American life. I think this is partly true because the cities are larger and there's less interaction between neighbors...unless a storm hits the neighborhood. Another important feature of the American culture is diversity. For example, Lamar has students, faculty, and staff coming from more than 60 countries. Cultural diversity is important because Lamar community provides a level of understanding about each other in order to facilitate collaboration and cooperation. I also observe that greeting a person without knowing him/her in advance is quite common in Beaumont. I view this custom as a very pleasant way to interact with other people.

### What differences are there between the American educational system and the Romanian?

Since 2007, the degree plans of Romanian Universities have 180 credit hours for a period of three years, according to the "Bologna process" – as required by the European Union. That implies that students have an average of 24 hours per week compared to a maximum of 17 hours per week in the U.S. While the undergraduate courses are normally taught in Romanian, the master's and PhD level courses may be taught in English, assuming that there are international students enrolled in them. Another difference is that the Romanian degree plans contain mainly courses in the main discipline. For example, courses in C.S. degrees are about Computer Science topics – with very few necessary Mathematics courses – but a university C.S. degree plan has no courses in general education.

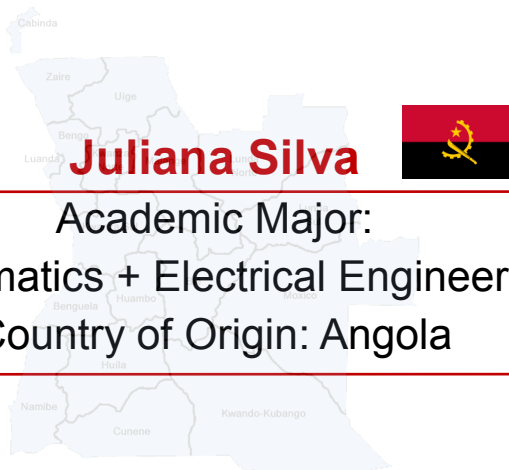
### What do you miss most about being away from home?

Prior to coming here, we did not use the word "organic" when doing groceries because the food in Romania used to be all organic – though I am not so sure about the supermarkets these days. In addition, I remember the daily food market with fresh items. While a car is essential in the U.S., I remember that due to the shorter distance from home to work, I almost always walked to work in Romania.

### What is your favorite quote/phrase in Romanian? What is the English translation?

One of my favorite quotes is "**Sănătate**" which means "stay healthy." We say it when we have an occasional drink with family or friends, as well as a way to say "goodbye" when we conclude a conversation.

## Student Spotlight



**Juliana Silva**

Academic Major:  
Mathematics + Electrical Engineering  
Country of Origin: Angola



### Why did you choose Lamar University?

There are a lot of opportunities for international students at Lamar University. Students can do undergraduate research and get scholarships easily. I also had friends who encouraged me to join LU.

### What do you most like about Lamar University?

I love the fact that professors and students can maintain a respectful professional relationship. I actually know my professors here, and that's almost impossible in larger universities because of how big the classes tend to be.

### What expectation of American culture did you have prior to arriving? Are there any differences between what you expected prior to arriving compared to what you have experienced once you arrived?

There were many! One of the differences was how I thought Texas would be versus how it actually is. I imagined Texas had a very "country" feel. I didn't expect to find it to be so modernized and urban. Another difference is how private and personal Americans are. I've found that Americans like to have their space. I also was pleasantly surprised to see the diversity here at Lamar.

### What differences are there between the American educational system and the Angolan?

The calendar in Angola is completely different. Angolans study for three months and then take a break for two weeks and that rotates all year long. There is much less emphasis on seasons there because it is always the same weather. Another difference is that math is done completely by hand in Angola; students don't use calculators. Also, there is no core curriculum for degrees in Angola. Students just take classes focused on their specialty; and getting a degree might only take 3 years instead of the typical four or more in the United States.

### What do you miss most about being away from home?

The food! It's possible to find African food here, but not Angolan. I miss the tropical fruits- some of which can only be found there. I also miss the general environment.

### What is your favorite quote/phrase in your native language? What is the English translation?

**"Camarão que dorme a onda leva"** The shrimp that sleeps is taken by the waves. This means that everyone should be active in life. Don't be passive and lazy; be proactive and driven in your life!

### Is there anything else you would like to add?

I just want to emphasize how truly amazing the opportunities at Lamar University are. I've added so much to my resume since I came here. I'm so glad I could make a difference and I want others to know that they too can make a difference!



## Halloween Social Event

### GAMES - PRIZES - FOOD



Halloween is a night filled with costumes, fun, and candy that happens just once a year on October 31st. This celebration gives people the opportunity to be something else, attend celebration, and go trick-or-treating among other things. The first annual OISPS Halloween Mixer involved domestic and international students along with our staff. We enjoyed learning about Halloween and the different traditions of other countries. We played bingo and had prizes to give away to all of our winners. OISPS provided snacks and refreshments for guests to enjoy during our get-to-know-you time. A good number of domestic and international students took advantage & made new friends while learning about cultures.



### \*\*\*GIVEAWAY WINNERS!!!\*\*\*

**Alekhya Duddukuri**

**Andrea Figueroa**

**Ankit Chachad**

**Chandra Lekha Kolli**

**Fei Gao**

**Jianyuan Ni**

**Kyle Edwards**

**Luzia Moba**

**Nara Almeida**

**Prashant Ghimire**

**Pratishtha Pradhan**

**Rashmina Upreti**

**Sanjita Sharma**



## International Education Week

### November 14th - 18th

OISPS successfully hosted the 2018 Annual International Education Week (IEW) with a variety of events to celebrate the benefits of international education and academic exchange programs worldwide. The week kicked off with the OISPS Open House where our team had the opportunity to share about our different services that we offer as well as how OISPS can collaborate with other university departments to ensure we provide a welcoming environment that is not only conducive to cultural adjustment but optimal for academic success.

The week continued with two exclusive presentations on November 15th covering “Effective Ways to Help International Students Succeed” and “The Benefits of Studying Abroad”.



### INTERFAITH PANEL - Knowledge Across Religions

OISPS wrapped up IEW 2018 with an Interfaith Panel on the topic of “Knowledge Across Religions”. Six experts were invited to speak about their religious perspectives on knowledge and its impact on our daily life. Panelists included Rabbi Mathew Michaels (Jewish), Bhante Basnagoda Rahula (Buddhist), Dr. K.C.K. Reddy (Hindu), Father Thomas Phelan (Catholic), Pastor Josh Jean (Protestant), and Imam Taha Khan (Muslim). The event combined subjects of world history, comparative religions, and culture and diversity. The objective was to enhance religious literacy and promote mutual respect among humanity. Seventy seven participants attended the event, which was followed by challenging and intellectually stimulating questions.

**OISPS is planning a second Interfaith Panel on March 21, 2019 on the topic of “Women in Holy Scriptures”.**



© Sierra Davis



## INTERFAITH PANEL



## Women In Holy Scriptures

The interfaith panel will examine the portrayal of women and their contributions in building communities.

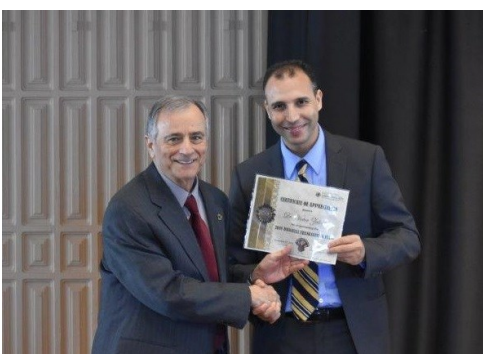
March 21, 2019 4:00 to 6:00 P.M.

**LANDES AUDITORIUM  
(GALLOWAY BUSINESS)**





## Thanksgiving Feast - November 21st



On November 21, 2018, the Office of International Student Programs and Services held the Inaugural Thanksgiving Feast. 125 Students and guests had the opportunity to enjoy and participate in a traditional American Thanksgiving Dinner. This wonderful gathering allowed us

the opportunity to give thanks and show our appreciation for the International community at Lamar University. With the assistance of generous co-sponsors (**Dr. James Marquart, Dr. Victor Zaloom, and Mr. Craig Ness**), the event was very successful as we hosted over 100 F-1 and J-1 students/scholars.





## CONGRATUATIONS FALL 2018 INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES!



OISPS held the International Graduation Reception on December 5, 2018. Graduating students, guests of honor, and Lamar University faculty & staff enjoyed celebrating the happy occasion. OISPS is delighted to congratulate and recognize all our Fall 2018 International Graduates for their dedication, perseverance, and accomplishments!

Seventy-three international students participated in this year's commencement ceremonies scheduled on December 14-15, 2018. The graduates represent nineteen countries from around the world. Of the twenty-four educational programs represented, seven of the students will be receiving a bachelor's degree, fifty-four students will receive a master's degree, and twelve students will receive doctoral degrees.

Thank you to the Offices of Alumni Affairs and Financial Aid for the gifts that were presented to the graduates. 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. Congratulations on your well-deserved success and best wishes for your next adventure!



## Unclear about the CPT and OPT process?

### OPT Workshops

February 25, 2019 @ 10AM

February 26, 2019 @ 2PM

February 27, 2019 @ 10AM

### CPT Workshops

February 25, 2019 @ 2PM

February 27, 2019 @ 2PM



Issued to lawful permanent resident (lawful immigrant) non-citizens. The status is indefinite. This card is commonly referred to as a "green card."

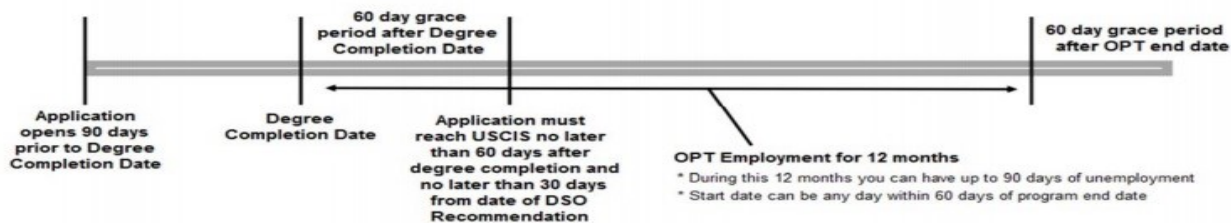
Issued to non-citizens that are not permanent residents but have been granted permission to be employed in the United States for a specific period of time or who are authorized to work incident to their immigration status.

I-94's are issued by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), or Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Foreign passports are issued by foreign countries. CBP scans the foreign passport number when the alien enters the United States.

Source: GAO analysis of USCIS documents; Department of Homeland Security (photos). | GAO-17-204

Our PDSO will be hosting 2 Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and 3 Optional Practical Training (OPT) Workshops. These sessions will be held in the OISPS International Lounge in Wimberly Building, Room 117 and are open to all international students and scholars.

### OPT Timeline



## Coffee/Tea Hour



**10AM - 11AM**

**February 07, 2019  
March 19, 2019**

**April 25, 2019**

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



## Global Ambassadors Program

The Office of International Student Programs & Services (OISPS) has launched a **Global Ambassadors Program** consisting of international and domestic students interested to serve both students and scholars through diverse social, cultural, educational, and recreational events and programs held on and off campus.

The Global Ambassadors Program 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, domestic students will, in turn, learn about other cultures, practice other languages, and make life-long international friends.



Global Ambassadors will play a vital role in developing the social, cultural, and educational programs.

To become a volunteer Global 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.

### Current Global Ambassadors:

**Tanya Nagra - Andrea Figueroa - Prashant Ghimire - Samira Ahmed**



## Make A Difference - Get Involved!



# 7th Annual International Cultural Festival April 13, 2019



## OISPS Team

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

## Student Workers

Ramya Kannan  
Sierra Davis

## 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](https://www.lamar.edu/international)

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