Immigration Alert!
Updates & Reminders for International Students

As of January 1, 2003, new F-1 and J-1 regulations go into effect as part of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). This will dramatically change the business processes of the Office of International Programs & Services (OIPS). In order for us to best assist you, it is imperative that you understand and comply with these new regulations and requirements. Please carefully read the following, review our previous "Immigration Alert!" (25 July 2002), and look for future updates on our web page.

⇒ Full-Time Enrollment Reminder:

New immigration rules soon go into effect that will require the Office of International Programs & Services to report to the INS any international student who is not enrolled in a full course of study. As an F-1 student, you must be registered full-time in a degree program (special rules apply to J-1 exchange students). For undergraduates, full-time means a minimum of 12 credits each fall and spring semester. For graduate students, full-time means 9 credits per semester. **If you do not enroll full-time or drop below full-time later in the semester, you will be considered out of status by the INS.** You should always check with the Office of International Programs and Services before dropping below full-time. In some circumstances, a less than full-time load may be acceptable (serious illness, for example), but this must be approved in advance by OIPS. Students are not required to enroll during summer (but are allowed to do so if desired).

⇒ Post-Completion Optional Practical Training:

If you are completing your studies at Pace in the Fall 2002 semester, and are interested in applying for Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT), you must apply immediately! This F-1 benefit allows you to receive 12 months of employment authorization for work in your field of study. **However, new immigration regulations require that you apply for this authorization to the Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS) before the completion of your program of study** (the application grace period of 60 days after completion of studies no longer exists). In order to be eligible, you must also apply before traveling outside the U.S. and must receive the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card from the INS prior to leaving the U.S. The EAD card will be required for reentry to the U.S. while you are pursuing your OPT. Additionally, processing of your application by INS can take 60 to 90 days. Therefore, you should apply as early as possible (up to 90 days prior). Please see the Office of International Programs & Services for details.

⇒ Co-Op Internship Authorization:

If you are currently participating in or plan to begin an internship through the Co-Op program, please make sure that the authorization dates for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) on your Form I-20 are valid. If you will be working during the winter break or the spring semester, please contact the Co-Op Education Office and the Office of International Programs & Services for an extension of your work authorization. **Please note that just one day of work without proper authorization can cause you to violate your immigration status.**
⇒ **Traveling and/or Returning Home:**

*If you are planning to travel to your home country or anywhere outside of the United States during the winter break, you must have a recent signature for reentry on your Form I-20 or Form IAP-66/DS-2019. It is recommended that your form be signed every six (6) months. If you plan to return home permanently, you do not need a signature from OIPS, but you must depart the U.S. within 60 days of completion of studies (unless you have applied for OPT).*

⇒ **Valid Visa for Re-Entering the U.S.:**

If you are planning to travel over the break and the visa in your passport has expired or will soon expire, you will need to get it renewed at the American Embassy or Consulate in your home country. All students (new or returning) who are in need of a visa stamp in their passport should anticipate that the visa issuance process will now require additional paperwork, be more difficult, and take longer than in the past. *In addition, the Office of International Programs & Services will need to enter information from your Form I-20 or Form IAP-66/DS-2019 into a U.S. Department of State website so that a visa can be issued. This is called the Interim Student and Exchange Authentication System (ISEAS) and it will be in effect until SEVIS is fully operational. Therefore, our office must be informed of your travel plans if you will be renewing your visa.* Please be sure to have your Form I-20 or Form IAP-66/DS-2019 signed for travel, plus you will need copies of your registrations for past and future semesters, copies of your financial affidavits / bank statements, and a letter from the Office of International Programs & Services certifying that you are a student and eligible for an F-1 / J-1 visa.

⇒ **Special Registration:**

The INS has issued regulations requiring non-immigrant males in the U.S. from the following countries to appear at the local INS Office for a Special Registration: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan and Syria (Group 1), as well as Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Eritrea, Lebanon, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen (Group 2). *For Group 1, if you are a male born on or before November 15, 1986 in one of these countries and/or are a citizen of one of these countries, you must comply by December 16, 2002. For Group 2, if you are a male born on or before December 2, 1986, in one of these countries and/or are a citizen of one of these countries, you must comply by January 10, 2003. Please see OIPS for detailed information.*

⇒ **Another Course of Study at Pace:**

If you have been admitted to another degree program at Pace, you must follow INS procedures for changing academic programs in order to maintain your F-1 non-immigrant student status. Please bring the new Form I-20 that you will receive from Admissions to the Office of International Programs & Services for processing. *Immigration regulations require that the new Form I-20 for a new program of study be issued and processed within the first 15 days of the semester.*

⇒ **Further Study at Another U.S. School:**

If you have been admitted to another school in the U.S. for further study, you must contact the international office at the new school. *An immigration transfer procedure must be completed within 15 days of the start of the semester in which you begin your new program.*