



Summer 5-30-2012

## International Office Supports Students at Home & Abroad

Kristin Fields '12  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news>

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Fields '12, Kristin, "International Office Supports Students at Home & Abroad" (2012).  
*News and Events*. 1926.  
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/1926>

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@iwu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@iwu.edu).

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

*Ongoing Series ...*

▷ [\*Shining Gems of IWU: Assets and Assistance Within Reach\*](#)

## International Office Supports Students at Home & Abroad

May 30 2012

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Tucked away in a corner of Memorial Center, the International Office may seem like a small, quiet space compared to the constant activity of the adjacent DugOut and Coffee Shoppe, where students and faculty alike gather at all hours of the day. However, Stacey Shimizu, director of the International Office, and Reenie Bradley, international student and scholar advisor, will say otherwise. "Things don't stand still here," said Bradley after explaining the myriad list of activities, programs and services the office provides.



New international students mingle at a bowling party.

Comprised of two parts – the study abroad program run by Shimizu and international advising headed by Bradley – the office seeks to provide a source of international education for the University through a wide range of opportunities.

Shimizu, who oversees the efforts of the office as a whole, works extensively with students who are interested in taking their college experience abroad for a semester, or sometimes even a year. With over 300 options to choose from, the task of finding the right country to travel to, as well as the best program to study with, can be overwhelming for students. Through one-on-one advising sessions, however, Shimizu helps narrow their options. Based on the student's needs and interests – ranging from required coursework to financial support to volunteer opportunities and extracurricular activities – she is able to suggest a manageable number of programs to choose from.

Shimizu's advising sessions are only a fraction of the work that is put into the study abroad process, however. Among Shimizu's other responsibilities are setting up the study abroad fair each semester, organizing a thorough and extensive pre-departure meeting for all enrolled study abroad applicants, keeping in contact with students once they have reached their destination, providing returning students with resources, preparing a homecoming reception at President Richard F. Wilson's home and working with international partnerships such as Akhawayn University in Morocco.

Shimizu cooperates with the Admissions Office on Scholar's Day as well, organizing three panels of students who have returned from their time abroad. The returned students, as they are referred to, discuss with admitted students and their parents opportunities the International Office offers for a semester or year abroad.

Some of the student speakers for Scholar's Day may have participated in the IWU London Program, one of two IWU programs Shimizu also helps to organize. Created in 2000, the semester-long experience is built around Illinois Wesleyan's general education program. Each year a faculty member takes a group of students to live in London for the fall semester and teaches them directly, rather than the students attending a university in the city. Courses vary each year, from art history taught directly in London museums, to literature and social sciences. Shimizu believes the program is a good step for students hesitant to study abroad. "It serves as a bridge for students who wouldn't normally study abroad. They get the experience with IWU faculty and students, as well as courses that will transfer easily. There's a comfort factor, but most go on to do more challenging things afterwards," said Shimizu.



International students listen to International Student and Scholar Advisor Reenie Bradley (foreground) during an orientation session.

While Shimizu helps to send students abroad, Bradley works closely with international students arriving each year. For many international students, the process of first coming to the University is done months in advance. Bradley works closely with each student, making sure they correctly obtain a visa. With technology constantly advancing and massive amounts of information now available on the Internet, it can be easy for students to find incorrect information. It is the job of the International Office to provide students with accurate information, particularly in regards to visas. "It's not just getting on a plane and coming here. Getting their visa is a big part of it," she said.

Once international students arrive on campus, they go through International Orientation before participating in the Turning Titan program with all first-year students. During that initial orientation, Bradley helps them acclimate to their new surroundings with activities such as grocery shopping, banking and learning how to use public transportation. As a way of showing what they have learned throughout the week, the students end their orientation by taking a city bus with Bradley and other University staff to a restaurant.

Part of Bradley's responsibilities also involves counseling. Just as many first-year students must learn to become independent adults while living on campus, so must international students, while adjusting to an entirely new environment. "It takes a lot of help and encouragement for some students, but the end result is knowing that it will be a positive, life-changing experience," said Bradley.

When Bradley is not working alongside international students, both she and Shimizu work toward international education for the campus as a whole. International Education Week takes place each fall with a variety of events for students and faculty members, including screenings of international films, lectures by guest professors and culinary events with dishes from countries around the world. Additionally, the east wall of the Memorial Center features a display focused on international topics. This year's presentation was "Open Doors: 60 Years of Student Mobility," which highlighted statistical trends in educational and cultural exchanges. "If we get a few people to stop and talk about what is displayed on the wall and cause them to think, then we've made a difference," said Bradley.

The International Office works to serve the mission of the University. It is the hope of the faculty and staff that, while at Illinois Wesleyan, students develop skills such as problem-solving, effective communication, self-sufficiency and an understanding of what their capabilities are, among other things. "All of these things are embedded some way in our mission. We try to fulfill it in the classroom, but we cannot only do it in the classroom," said Shimizu, who explained why other offices on campus are equally important in helping shape students' experiences. "We play a role in that as well, providing students with an international education opportunity, whether it is here or overseas," she said.

*Contact: Kristin Fields, '12, (309) 556-3181, [univcomm@iwu.edu](mailto:univcomm@iwu.edu)*