

Office of International Students & Scholars

NEWSLETTER

November/December 2023, Vol. 4

What Your I-20 or DS-2019 Says about You

Have you ever taken a moment to flip through the pages of your I-20 or DS-2019? Beyond the essential details like your name and program dates, these documents hold a story—the story of your adventure as an international student. Let's take a look at what your I-20/DS-2019 says about you and the incredible journey you're on.

1. Your Academic Odyssey:

Your I-20/DS-2019 is like a timeline of your academic journey. The program start and end dates reflect the chapter of your life dedicated to learning and growing here at TC.

2. Snapshot of Your Passion:

The "Program of Study" section is a snapshot of the subject you're passionate about, the classes that make you tick, and the professors who guide you along the way.

3. Passport to Cultures: The "Country of Citizenship" reminds you of your roots, the place that shaped you. The travel signature section – proof that you've traveled internationally – is like a passport to the world of multiple cultures.

4. Personal Growth Milestones:

The "Program End Date" marks the end of your time in this degree program. But it's not just an endpoint: it's a milestone in your personal growth journey. Your time abroad is shaping not just your education but also you—stronger, wiser, and more globally aware.

5. Putting it into Practice:

Flip to the "Employment Authorization" section. It's not just about studying; it's about the practicums, the internships, and all of the fieldwork that add layers to your skill set and make your study abroad story richer.

7. Adventure Log: The "Travel Endorsements" page is your

adventure log. Each stamp tells a tale of the places you've explored during your breaks. It's not just travel; it's the memories you've collected along the way.

8. The "Why" Behind the Journey:

Don't forget the "Program Remarks" section. It's a reminder of the purpose behind your journey—the dreams, goals, and aspirations that led you to this international adventure.



The next time you take out your I-20/DS-2019 for a bureaucratic task, pause for a moment. Let it be more than just a piece of paper. Let it be a tangible representation of the incredible story you're weaving—one stamp, one class, one adventure at a time. It's the record of your transformative journey as an international student.

--The OISS Team

Get in the Know

Tips for building community



from OISS:

Eat together! Sharing food is a fantastic way to build relationships across cultures. The TC cafeteria has great selections for us. Spend time enjoying the cuisines and talking to classmates and colleagues!

-- Patricia Gibson,
Director of OISS



1. Step out of your comfort zone: allows you to create new connections and explore new sides of yourself by going to events, joining a club, learning something new.
2. Be yourself: in a city where anything is possible, so are you. Your authenticity will attract the right people to support and be supported by.

--Brian Arenas,
International Student Advisor of OISS



Attend on-campus events; meet fellow TC Community members, make friends, and learn new things!

-- Caylyn Bodger,
Administrative Fellow of OISS



Go to events within your academic department. Not only are the people in your department your future colleague, but also they could become your friends.

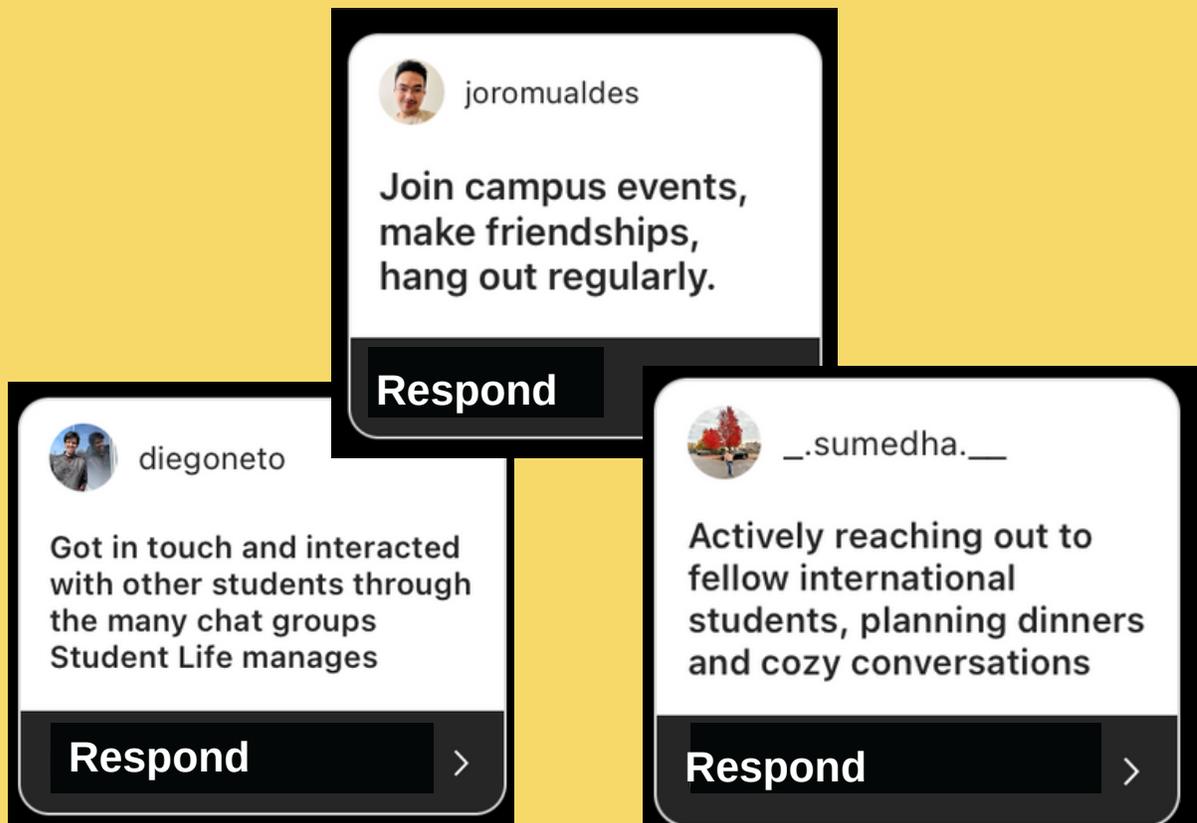
--Allison Payne,
International Student
Coordinator of OISS



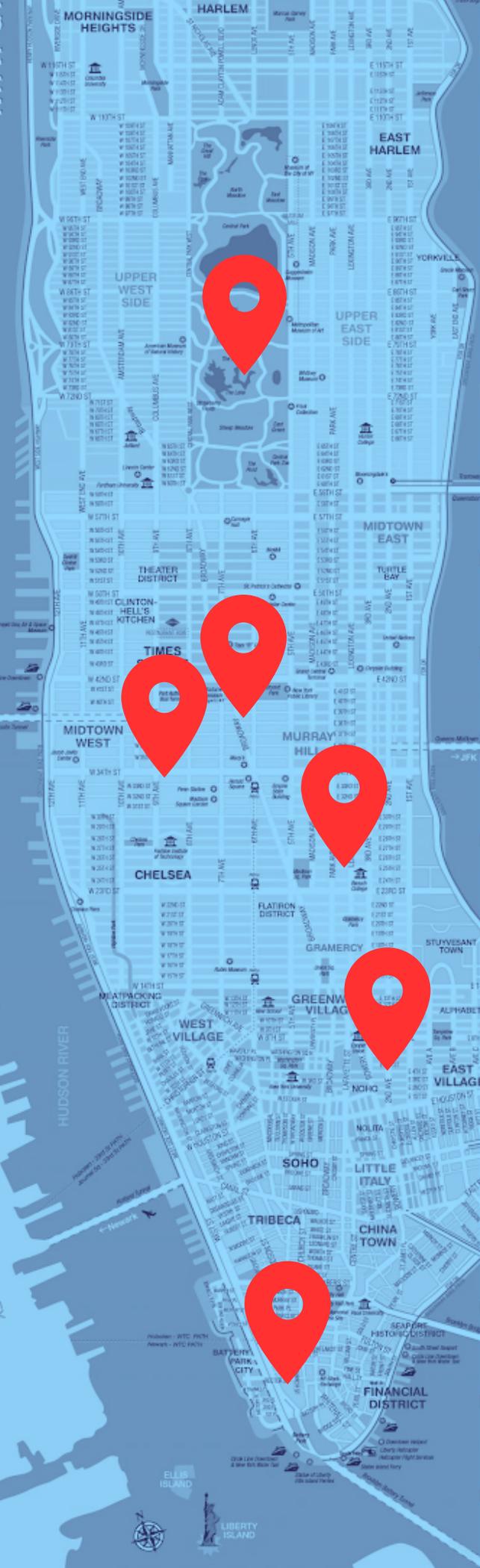
Get in the Know

MORE TIPS about building community

from TC international students:



*follow us on Instagram/Facebook
to be part of the conversation --
@tccuoiss*



Winter Staycation



in NYC

**Not traveling this
winter break?
Here's how to
enjoy NYC during
winter!**



Get in the Know

Winter Staycation in NYC

Not traveling this winter break? Here's how to enjoy the holiday season in NYC! Click on the subheading for more information.

Ice Skating in Central Park

Glide into the holiday spirit with a magical ice skating session in Central Park.

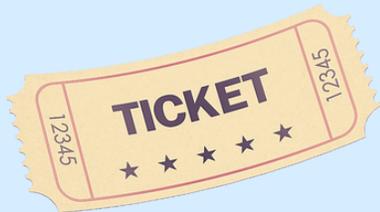


Window Shopping the Holiday Windows on 5th Avenue

Stroll down 5th Avenue and be dazzled by the enchanting holiday window displays.

The tree at Rockefeller

Feel the festive cheer at Rockefeller Center when you see the iconic Christmas tree. Consider going to the lighting ceremony.



Radio City Music Hall Performances

Get in the holiday groove with a classic show like "The Nutcracker" or the high-kicking Rockettes.

Bumper Cars on Ice in Bryant Park

Take a spin on ice like never before with bumper cars at Bryant Park's Winter Village.



Get in the Know

Winter Staycation in NYC



Holiday Train Show at Grand Central

All aboard for the Holiday Train Show at Grand Central Terminal – a miniature wonderland!

Shopping at Union Square Holiday Market



Shop for unique gifts and artisan crafts at the Union Square Holiday Market.



A Cozy Cup of Hot Chocolate at May-ze-Dahr

Warm up your winter with the city's best hot chocolate at Mah-Ze-Dahr.



Christmas Lights in Dyker Heights

Witness Dyker Heights transform into a dazzling winter wonderland with Christmas lights.



Polar Bear Plunge at Coney Island

Brave the cold and watch the daring Polar Bear Plunge at Coney Island – a chilly thrill!

Get Informed

Scan the QR code or click here to submit your results to compete for a small prize! Winners will be announced in the next newsletter.

F-1 Students



J-1 Students



***Thank you for those who took the last quiz!
Please see the next page for answers.***



Get Informed

Check your answers from the last quiz: New Students

1. Do I have to check in? How do I do that?

Answer: Yes, if you are entering TC with an initial or transfer pending I-20. You can do it by submitting the check-in form on [TC-Compass](#).

2. Where can I get my most recent I-94?

Answer: You can find it on the official Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Borders Protection [I-94 website](#).

3. Can I enroll in fewer than 9 credits?

Answer: As an F-1 or J-1 student, you are required to enroll in at least 9 credits per semester unless you are eligible and approved for a Reduced Course Load.

4. Can F-1/J-1 students enroll in online courses?

Answer: Yes, but only one online course OR up to 3 credits of an online course can count towards the full-time enrollment requirement. (See [F-1](#) and [J-1](#))

5. As a new student, am I eligible for employment?

Answer: You may be eligible for employment, depending on the employment category and if you can satisfy the corresponding conditions. (See [F-1](#) and [J-1](#))

Get Informed

Check your answers from the last quiz: Continuing Students

1. Do I have to check in? How do I do that?

Answer: No, the check-in form is only for students entering TC with an initial or transfer pending I-20.

2. I am in my last semester and I have fewer than 9 credits to take. What should I do?

Answer: Apply for Reduced Course Load (F-1 and J-1) on TC-Compass. Consider checking in with the OISS during Advising hours to make sure it doesn't affect your OPT eligibility.

3. Can F-1/J-1 students enroll in online courses?

Answer: Yes, but only one online course OR up to 3 credits of an online course can count towards the full-time enrollment requirement.

4. I am interested in applying for off-campus work authorization such as CPT, OPT, or AT. How should I get started?

Answer: Start by reading through the F-1 Practical Training and J-1 Academic Training guides on the OISS website for an overview of the process and eligibility requirements. Next, sign up for the corresponding employment workshop.

5. How do I obtain a social security number?

Answer: Eligible students should submit an SSN Letter request to OISS, and then bring that letter, along with additional supporting documentation, to the Social Security Administration office to apply in person.

Get Social

Time to get out and socialize. Here's what's happening in NYC/Columbia/TC in February and March! Click the event title and host site for more info.

31st Annual African Diaspora International Film Festival

Nov 24 - Dec 10

Established in 1993, the African Diaspora International Film Festival (ADIFF) is a Harlem based minority-led not-for profit international film festival that presents, interprets and educates about films that explore the human experience of people of color all over the world in order to inspire imaginations, disrupt stereotypes and help transform attitudes that perpetuate injustice.

Leaf Your Worries Behind

Nov 29 | 12-4pm | 152 Horace Mann

With stress peaking around this time of year, Student Support & Advocacy invites you to come and 'leaf' your worries behind at our relaxation space. Stop by at any time during our event to decompress - you can color, journal, take a nap, and/or grab some free light refreshments. And before you leave, you can 'leaf' a worry behind on our tree!

Student Senate Mix & Mingle

Nov 30 | 7:30 - 9:30pm | 179 Grace Dodge

Come meet your student representatives, hear about what we're doing in the Student Senate, and join us for games and food

Dance Movement & Art-Making

Dec 1 | 5:30-8:30pm | 447 Macy Studio

The NAEA Student Org. & TC Hub of Dancers will collaborate on an event at Macy's Studio 447 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. During the event, participants will have the opportunity to dance to different genres of music while expressing their emotions on canvas. Light refreshments will be provided.

Skin Care 101

Dec 1 | 5-7pm | 369 Grace Dodge

Join SLAs Monira and Randal for an evening of skin care. Students will learn the proper order of applying skin care products for maximum efficacy. This event will include skincare product raffle giveaways. Free food will also be distributed on a first-come-first-serve basis.

Perspectives on Peacebuilding

Dec 6 | 3:15-4:45pm | 179 Grace Dodge

The Peace Education Network (PEN) and TC Vets extends a warm invitation to those interested in participating in a discourse on different perspectives in peacebuilding. Separate presentations and group discussions will be held by the PEN and TC Vets organizers. Dr. Coleman will be present to speak on conflict resolution as it pertains to peacebuilding.

Bollywood & Chill

Dec 8 | 5:30-7:30pm | 369 Grace Dodge

Come join GSLD for a night of bollywood music, desi moves and enjoy some chill time!

All-Student Event Holiday Lights in Film

Dec 8 | 5:30-7:30pm | Meet at Zankel Hall

Join SLAs Randal and Ruiyan for a holiday lights window outing! Students will experience the holiday festivities through an evening neighborhood walk in Brooklyn. Disposable fuji film cameras will be provided on a first-come-first-serve basis.

United Nations: Private Tour, Briefing, & Virtual Reality Experience

Dec 14 | 10am - 2pm | \$50
Hosted by [One to World](#)

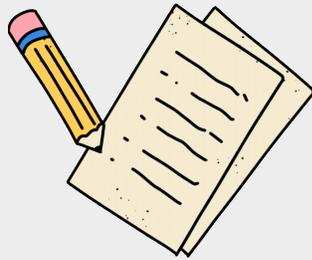
Join One to World for a day at the United Nations! Not only will you participate in an hour-long guided tour of this renowned institution, but you will also have the unique opportunity to attend a private briefing led by a UN Peacekeeping Communications Officer with field experience primarily in Africa.

Want to learn about more things to do?

You might want to consider checking out what's new with TC's [Graduate Student Life & Development](#) office (GSLD), [One to World](#), and your [academic department](#). When attending events in the NYC area, always exercise caution: pay attention to your surroundings, meet people in crowded, public places only, and be wary about giving out personal information.

Get Involved

If you have any thoughts or suggestions about what you'd like to see in this newsletter, we're all ears. Just send us an email at tcintl@tc.columbia.edu.



Nominate a classmate to Get Famous!

Know an international or internationally-minded classmate/student with an inspiring story, a great attitude, and a passion for learning and helping the world? Scan the QR code to nominate them:



Help us pick a name!

Do you have any ideas for what we should call this newsletter? Email them to tcintl@tc.columbia.edu. To show our appreciation, the winner will get a prize!

Penny for your thoughts?

What's on your mind? Share your thoughts on being a TC student by [taking our survey](#).