This spring semester of 2014 Bergen Community College did its first Alternative Spring Break, which was one of its kind. A small group of twenty representatives of the college including three advisors, five trip leaders and twelve students went to Ohio to make a big difference for its community. I had the good fortune to be part of this amazing trip during which I gained completely new for me life experience, explore different places, made new friendships, and learn a lot about the poverty in that area.

The trip started with 9 hours long countryside ride with two vans. I know it sounds terrifying but in fact we could not have better beginning. That was the time when we got to know each other and put the foundations of new friendships, because before that we were just group of strangers who were going to another state to try making a difference for the people in need there, during our vacation.

When I am saying trip, I hope you are not imagining just an excursion or party vacation, cause this was not one of those. We went to help people in need. Our schedule was so busy every day. In the mornings we were volunteering, two of the days for Life Care Alliance and the other two for Mid-Ohio Foodbank. But every day our activities were different. We were packaging boxes with food that after that will be sent to the people: a number of meals with number of drinks, fruits and snacks. We were also sorting the already donated food in boxes that go straight to the consumers. My favorite day was the one that we were actually delivering meals to the people, because you have the opportunity to have a direct contact with them. One of the things that surprised me, was that most of the times we stopped in front of big and nice houses. Nobody would have thought that people in them need the service of meals on wheels. In fact, most of the times it is easier to order meals this way instead of going for grocery shopping because they...
are too old, handicapped, and/or enable to do it. We also delivered meals in homes for senior citizens who are completely deaf. It was really fantastic to see the smile on their faces and know how grateful they were.

During the rest of the days we were exploring the area and its most interesting places. The Ohio State University was one of those places. It is so enormous with fifty thousands students. It was an amazing opportunity to see one of those big universities, and it really inspired me to think big.

We also visited German Village where some of us tried turtle soup and enjoyed the unique architecture. Other pleasurable thing was, our day at the Cosi Museum of Science. This is where we enjoyed many funny and mind blowing scientific creations.

Some of the activities we did were: bowling night, team building, cooking night, playing games, and talking in the living room with the people I was with. It made my time unforgettable. There was such diversity of different cultures, religions, and beliefs in our small but cozy house. I think this was the best combination of people at one place for the cause we were there for. Every one of us contributed in heir own way. I believe we really made a difference in Ohio community.
Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Any student that is interested in working off campus needs to attend a workshop (see Workshop Schedule) on OPT.

Electronic I-94

Any student traveling recently should print out their electronic I-94.

Graduating this May 2014?

Any student graduating this may will have a 60 day grace period from the last day of classes (May 13, 2014). The grace period give additional time to transfer to another U.S. institution, apply for the post completion OPT benefit, or return home.

Maintaining Status

Information on how to maintain F-1 student status can be found on the International Student website. There is a video in several language that goes over maintaining status.

Travel Signatures

Any student traveling outside the U.S. and plans to return to Bergen, must obtain a travel signature from the International Counselor. Signatures are valid for one year from the date it was issued. Those traveling during Summer Break should obtain their travel signatures NOW. Bring your I-20 to the ISC and your International Counselor will sign off on it. There is no need to make an appointment.

Academic Reminders

Special Alert: Developmental Math courses have changed and now align with your major. There are now two different math tracks, MAT 040 for liberal arts majors and MAT 048 for science majors.

Thinking about changing your major?

Students are strongly encouraged to make an appointment with their International Counselor to discuss a potential change of major.

ALP Advisement

Are you finishing ALP classes? Are you wondering what classes to take next semester?

Come for advisement:
Wednesday, 4/30, 11:00—2:30 with Professor Murtha in the ELRC, E—156

Library Hours

Extended Hours During Finals:

Beginning today and continuing through Monday, May 12, the Sidney Silverman Library at the main campus will be open until midnight Monday through Thursday. In addition, the library will open three Sundays: April 27, May 4 and May 11 from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. There is no change in hours on Fridays – 7:40 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. and Saturday hours – 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Please check the library's website for a full list of hours.
April/May Workshops

All workshops will be held in C-102 and will run up to an hour. Please be on time.

April
Wednesday, 30th at 11PM—OPT

May
Thursday, 1st at 11AM—Scholarship + Funding Options
Wednesday, 7th at 3PM—OPT
Monday, 12th at 11AM—OPT
Thursday, 15th at 1PM—OPT
Tuesday, 20th at 12PM—OPT
Wednesday, 21st at 10AM—OPT

Any new student that failed to attend a make-up orientation session will need to contact the International Student Center and make an appointment.

International Student Center Update

- Have suggestions on how the ISC can better serve you? Drop a note in the ISC suggestion box. It’s right inside the office. There is no need to write down your name.

- Program evaluations will be mailed out to all currently enrolled F-1 students within the next couple of weeks. If you have any questions about your program evaluation, please visit the office.

- The International Student Center will be open during the Summer term.