

International Student Working Group

Weekly Meetings: Tuesdays @ 11AM EST

(Note: 7/13 meeting moved back to 7/14 11AM)

Info:

- [Zoom Meeting URL](#)
- [WhatsApp Link](#)
- Newsletter sign up link
- [Google Groups \(list-serve\)](#)

Team Leads/Contact:

- gwcinternational@gmail.com
- Zeinab Azarbadegan z.azarb@gmail.com
- Sayantani Mukherjee mukherjee.sayantani@gmail.com
- David Borgonjon (he/his) davidxuborgonjon@gmail.com
- Olga Brudastova obrudastova@gmail.com

About

The international students working group (ISWG) is an open working group under Columbia University's student-workers union, the Graduate Workers of Columbia (GWC-UAW 2110). We fight for the rights of all international students and scholars at Columbia University. The ISWG has been one of the most active and successful sub-committees of the GWC since its inception in 2014.

Overview

We have held regular [tax, visa and immigration, and OPT workshops](#) with immigration lawyers and certified public accountants for international students at Columbia since 2015, services that ordinarily should be provided by the International Students and Scholars Organisation (ISSO) but are not. We also support international students for their right to a fair workplace, such as when we stood behind [Longxi Zhao, a Chemical Engineering PhD Student, who was fired as a TA without any due process](#) and was left with no choice but to return home. We have successfully campaigned to address the disparity between funded research opportunities for domestic citizens and international students. In our very first year we secured [increased summer funding and summer research and language training scholarships for international students in the humanities and social sciences](#). We continue to work on issues that matter to us most; including the removal of international student fees, the [return of misfiled tax monies](#), [attacks on OPT STEM extension](#), as well as xenophobic immigration policies such as the [recent ICE-SEVP guidelines](#), the [Muslim Entry Travel Ban](#) in all its various iterations, discriminatory policies

against Chinese STEM students, and COVID-19 related restrictions and burdens faced by international students.

Currently, we continue updating this [Link Repository](#) with information about Fall 2020.

We have been advocating since 2015 that ISSO improve its communications and availability, and develop legal and financial resources for international students. Additionally, we are pushing Columbia to lobby to protect international students and OPT in particular, and have been organizing emergency information sessions and town halls to respond to the most recent assaults on the international student community. We are part of a nationwide cross-campus alliance of international students groups in graduate student unions called IISWA (facebook.com/iiswalliance). We also collaborate with the Columbia People's Covid Response (CPCR) on issues that affect international students, such as housing justice and tuition refund campaigns (<https://covidresponsecu.com>).

Demands

- Provide immediate legal support to international and immigrant students, for example, by reimbursing legal expenses, providing access to information sessions with lawyers, and establishing an immigration law clinic.
- Declare Columbia a sanctuary campus and do not volunteer student information to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or other law enforcement agencies without a warrant or court order. Train relevant staff to handle requests and visits from immigration and law enforcement in a way that protects international students.
- Improved communications from the ISSO office, including, but not limited to, regular email updates, especially in the immediate aftermath of new Presidential Proclamations related to immigration, and bi-semesterly Town Halls with the ISSO office and immigration attorneys regarding visa and OPT guidelines.
- Regular call-in office hours with ISSO staff, as is already offered to international scholars at Columbia, but not to undergraduate and graduate students.
- A full and transparent update of the advocacy measures ISSO and Office of Government and Community Affairs (GCA) claim to have undertaken on the behalf of international students and scholars at Columbia.
- A university-wide contingency plan for international students and scholars developed in conjunction with and the consultation of a university-wide student committee, including our student workers union. The Provost's International Issues Working Group must be expanded to include, at the very least, the International Students Working Group of the GWC.

- A guarantee that academic and teaching plans for 2020-2021 are designed with the wellbeing, academic progress, and immigration status of international students in mind, and are released in a timely manner.

Ongoing Campaigns, Actions and Events

- [Fighting COVID-related racism](#)
- [International Student Town Hall](#)
- [Speak Out for International Students](#)
- [ICE is targeting International Students -- join us in fighting back](#)
- [ICE-SEVP Immigration Updates](#) - event

Past Campaigns, Actions and Events

Earliest to latest

- [Workshop on International Student Visa and Immigration Issues - Morningside Campus](#)
- [Workshop on International Student Visa and Immigration Issues - Medical Campus](#)
- [Taxes Q&A - Morningside Campus](#)
- [Taxes Q&A, CUMC](#)
- [GWC International Students Town Hall](#)
- [OPT STEM Extension Info Session + Q&A](#)
- [Workshop on International Student Visa and Immigration Issues](#)
- [Emergency Tax Meeting](#)
- [Taxes Q&A](#)
- [Emergency meeting regarding anti Muslim executive order](#)
- [Columbia University Rally Against Anti Muslim Racism](#)
- [OPT CUTS Emergency Meeting](#)
- [International Student Town Hall: Let's Talk Bargaining](#)
- [Oppose the attack on international scholars](#)
- [Int'l Grad Students Social](#)
- [Overstay: Intl Student Worker Potluck](#)
- [哥大工会由你做主:我们邀你畅谈 \(Mandarin-language Town Hall\)](#)

Past Statements and Letters

- [Equal Summer-Funding Opportunities for International Students](#)
- [Columbia: Take Action on International Student Tax Problems](#)
- [Letter to GSAS - Equal Summer Funding](#)

- [Petition to President Bollinger regarding the needs of international students affected by the Executive Order on immigration](#)
- [Coronavirus and Racism on Campus](#) (哥大校内新冠病毒和种族主义)
- [Columbia Must Condemn Xenophobic Policies](#) (哥大应以谴责特朗普排外政策)