

International Student Resource Center & Study Abroad

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Northwestern State University Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

International Student Resource Center & Study Abroad Mission: The International Student Resource Center & Study Abroad assists prospective international students residing overseas, currently in the U.S. on a student visa, as well as any applicant with transcripts from a non-U.S. institution, in their application and enrollment process to NSU.

We promote a welcoming atmosphere through intercultural social interactions and support international students in their transition from their home countries to becoming a student at NSU, and throughout their studies. We serve NSU's international student population through orientations, advising, immigration services, and cultural programming.

The International Student Resource Center & Study Abroad provides opportunities for student mobility as well. We promote Study Abroad opportunities through Bilateral agreements with partner universities around the world and through the ISEP program

The International Student Resource Center & Study Abroad also promotes opportunities to Study Away at colleges and universities throughout the U.S., Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands through the National Student Exchange program.

Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative and qualitative) are collected and returned to the director.
- (2) The director will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes are met.
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the staff.
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with staff as required (show cause).

Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

(5) The director, in consultation with the staff, will determine and propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, service changes.

Service Outcomes:

SO 1:

Increase international students' awareness of employment options (on-campus, CPT, OPT) and the application processes.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) are work authorization options for international students in F-1 visa status. CPT allows students to engage in paid or unpaid off-campus employment directly related to their major while enrolled in a degree program. OPT permits students to work in their field of study for up to 12 months (or longer for certain STEM fields) either during or after completing their degree.

Measure 1.1

Track participation in informational meetings and the number of CPT/OPT inquiries, aiming for 90–100% of international students to be informed about on-campus and off-campus employment options, regulations, and procedures.

Findings: Target was met.

Total international students in 2025–2026: 113

Semester	Informational Meetings Attendance	Total Percentage
Fall 2024	70	
Spring 2025	33	
Summer 2025	7	
Total	110	97% (of 113 students)
Fall 2025	55	
Spring 2026	49	
Summer 2026	9	
Total	113	100% (of 113 students)

Analysis.

In AC 2024–2025, the target was met, with 110 out of 113 international students (97%) receiving information regarding on-campus employment, CPT, and OPT. Student engagement peaked in the fall with 70 students reached, driven by a large incoming class and proactive spring graduates seeking early OPT guidance, which was balanced by 33

Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

students informed in the spring and 7 in the summer through arrival orientations and individual advising appointments. Building on these results, the ISRC further improved its tracking by recording attendance through orientation sign-in sheets and appointment records, ultimately achieving a 100% success rate in AC 2025–2026 by informing all 113 international students.

Based on the analysis of the AD 2024-2025 results, the staff offered mandatory orientation sessions each semester in AC 2025-2026. During the Fall 2025 semester, 30 new international students attended the mandatory arrival orientation and 25 additional students scheduled one-on-one advising meetings, resulting in 55 students being informed in the fall. This total was lower than the 70 students reached in Fall 2024 because a summer 2025 visa issuance pause and an increase in visa denials reduced the incoming cohort to just 30 new students. However, engagement stabilized in Spring 2026 with 49 total students informed, consisting of 6 new students at orientation and 43 continuing students in individual sessions, followed by 9 students informed through one-on-one meetings in Summer 2026. The balanced distribution between Fall 2025 and Spring 2026 highlights a sustained high demand for employment information among both new and continuing students. By consistently integrating work authorization information into arrival orientations, individual meetings, and the ISRC website, the office successfully ensured that every international student at NSU remained fully informed of employment regulations and opportunities within their first semester.

Decision.

In AC 2025-2026, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2025–2026 results, the ISRC will offer separate, focused workshops for CPT and OPT, including comprehensive Social Security Number (SSN) procedures, into AC 2026–2027. These targeted sessions will continue to provide tailored support and a deeper institutional understanding of work authorization regulations. Outreach will remain robust and accessible via mandatory arrival orientations, targeted email campaigns, and one-on-one advising appointments offered both in-person and virtually through Microsoft Teams. By sustaining these proactive procedures, the office will further optimize the availability of regulatory information regarding international student employment options, successfully advancing the unit's continuous cycle of improvement.

Measure 1.2

Track the number of students who schedule one-on-one advising meetings specifically regarding CPT, OPT, or on-campus employment. The goal is to have at least 50 students utilize personalized advising services throughout the academic year.

Findings: Target was met.

Semester	One-on-One Advising Meetings	OPT Applications	CPT Applications
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Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

Fall 2024	21	8	2
Spring 2025	23	9	2
Summer 2025	7	3	4
Total	51	20	8
Semester	One-on-One Advising Meetings	OPT Applications	CPT Applications
Fall 2025	25	10	6
Spring 2026	43	8	7
Summer 2026	9	2	3
Total	77	20	16

Analysis.

Introduced in AC 2024–2025, this measure successfully tracked steady one-on-one advising trends and critical student concerns, including the federal OPT fee increase to \$470, extended processing delays, semester-based CPT course requirements, and limited on-campus job availability due to reduced institutional budgets. That initial cycle yielded 51 total sessions (21 in Fall, 23 in Spring, 7 in Summer), successfully exceeding the benchmark of 50. Building on this momentum, the target was met again in AC 2025–2026, with the ISRC conducting a total of 77 one-on-one advising meetings and significantly surpassing the goal of 50. The office attributes this substantial volume increase to rapid regulatory shifts in immigration policy and a highly proactive student body seeking legal employment pathways in the United States.

Based on the analysis of the 2024-2025 results, the staff offered one-on-one advising sessions in AC 2025-2026. The AC 2025–2026 advising data reflects distinct seasonal trends tied to graduation timelines and external financial factors. During Fall 2025, 25 students attended individual advising meetings, resulting in 10 OPT applications from graduating seniors and 6 successful CPT placements. Spring 2026 saw advising appointments climb to 43 sessions due to a larger cohort of 20 graduating seniors compared to 12 in the fall; however, because some attendees opted out of post-graduation work, this translated into 8 final OPT applications and 7 CPT approvals. In Summer 2026, 9 students attended advising sessions, yielding 2 late OPT applications from spring graduates and 3 CPT applications for off-campus work. While the summer application count was slightly lower than the previous year due to the financial barrier of required summer tuition for the work permit course, the continuous year-round utilization of individualized advising underscores the critical role of these targeted sessions.

Decision.

In AC 2025-2026, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, in AC 2026-2027, the ISRC will sustain its specialized programming and data collection models into AC 2026–2027 by continuing to offer these separate, standalone workshops for CPT and OPT. These sessions will maintain their dedicated modules on navigating the Social Security Number (SSN) process. These sessions will drive the cycle of

Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

improvement by ensuring that students authorized to work in the United States continue to receive critical, targeted regulatory guidance as part of the office's ongoing service model.

SO 2

Increase awareness of Study Abroad opportunities available to NSU students through ISEP (International Student Exchange Programs), NSE (National Student Exchange), and bilateral agreements.

Measure 2.1

ISRC will ensure at least three students participate in a study abroad or away program per academic year.

Semester	ISEP	NSE	NSU Bilateral Agreements	TOTAL
Fall 2024	1		1	2
Spring 2025			1	1
Summer 2025	1			1
TOTAL 2024-2025	2		2	4
Fall 2025	1		3	4
Spring 2026	1	1		2
Summer 2026	3			3
TOTAL 2025-2026	5	1	3	9

Findings: Target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024–2025, the target was met, with four students participating in study abroad or away programs through ISEP, NSE, and NSU bilateral agreements. Although the ISRC actively promoted these opportunities throughout the academic year, total enrollment experienced stagnant growth, declining from the six participants recorded in the previous cycle. Student feedback gathered during this period indicated that while interest in international and domestic exchange programs remained high, persistent concerns regarding program affordability and major-specific course matching continued to serve as the primary barriers to student participation.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2025 data, in AC 2025-2026, study abroad and study away options were enthusiastically promoted to the NSU student population by staff. AC 2025-2026 participation represented significant institutional growth when compared to the four participating students recorded during the AC 2024–2025 cycle, demonstrating the positive impact of the ISRC's expanded promotional efforts. According to student feedback, participants were able to successfully navigate common barriers

Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

regarding program affordability and course matching; however, they experienced significant challenges adapting to updated federal financial aid regulations. These federal guidelines require study abroad students to enroll strictly in coursework that transfers directly toward their declared major or minor requirements, creating academic hurdles for students wishing to take general electives or facing limited course availability at their host institutions.

Decision.

In AC 2025–2026, the target was met, but a potential decrease in participation is anticipated moving forward due to the restrictive federal financial aid guidelines. Based on the analysis, in AC 2026–2027, the ISRC will drive the cycle of improvement by collaborating closely with the Office of Financial Aid and academic advisors to increase campus-wide awareness of study abroad scholarships, streamline course equivalency processes, and ensure strict compliance with federal regulations. This proactive, cross-departmental approach aims to sustain student interest in international programs while safeguarding their vital financial aid eligibility.

Measure 2.2

Keep records of all NSU students attending study abroad promotional events, information sessions, and one-on-one advising meetings. The goal is to reach at least 100 students attending these events and meetings over the academic year.

Semester	Information Sessions/ Study Abroad Promotional events Attendance
Fall 2024	54
Spring 2025	32
Total	86
Semester	Information Sessions/ Study Abroad Promotional events Attendance
Fall 2025	95
Spring 2026	28
Total	123

Findings: Target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024–2025, the target was not met, with a total of 86 students attending study abroad promotional events, information sessions, and advising meetings. Engagement was strongest during the Fall semester, while the subsequent decline in the Spring was primarily driven by a limited number of scheduled promotional events and pervasive

Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

student scheduling conflicts. Feedback from participants highlighted a distinct desire for more program-specific information and expanded virtual options for those unable to attend in-person sessions. These findings underscore the critical need to diversify outreach methods and provide more tailored, accessible programming to sustain student engagement across semesters.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024–2025 results, the ISRC implemented an expanded calendar of promotional initiatives during the Fall 2025 semester, where student attendance peaked. Participation declined in the Spring due to fewer events and scheduling conflicts, though participant feedback highlighted a strong desire for more program-specific details and the ongoing integration of virtual access options. These insights provided a strategic framework for the ISRC to diversify its outreach methods, offering more tailored and accessible formats to sustain future student interest. As a result of these strategic changes, a total of 123 students engaged with study abroad promotional events, info sessions, and advising meetings during AC 2025–2026, representing a substantial increase over the 86 students reached in AC 2024–2025.

Decision.

In AC 2025–2026, the target was met. Based on the analysis of these results, the ISRC will expand its calendar of study abroad promotional events in AC 2026–2027, focusing heavily on the Spring semester to establish a more consistent year-round schedule and mitigate previous seasonal attendance drops. The office will also sustain its virtual information sessions in collaboration with international exchange partners, ensuring accessible options remain available for students who cannot attend in person. Furthermore, in direct response to student feedback, the ISRC will introduce program-specific sessions tailored to specific destinations, academic majors, and scholarship opportunities. These strategic expansions and continuing initiatives will better align with student interests, maximize campus engagement, and successfully push the unit's cycle of continuous improvement forward.

SO 3.

Measure the level of adaptability of new international student to NSU and the U.S.

Measure 3.1

ISRC will measure the level of adaptability of new international students to NSU and the U.S. using final grade reports. The goal is for 80-90% of new international students to maintain a 3.0 or higher GPA during their first academic year.

Cumulative GPA (Fall 2024- Spring 2025)	Percentage	Number of Newly Arrived International
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Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

		Students (out of 30)
3.0 or higher	85%	26
Lower than 3.0	15%	4
Cumulative GPA (Fall 2025- Spring 2026)	Percentage	Number of Newly Arrived International Students (out of 36)
3.0 or higher	69%	25
Lower than 3.0	31%	11

Findings: The target was not met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024–2025, the target was met, with 85% of new international students achieving a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher, demonstrating strong initial adaptation to their new academic environment.

Driven by these results, the ISRC sustained its targeted support initiatives into AC 2025–2026, including comprehensive arrival orientation sessions, proactive academic advising, and consistent email outreach highlighting available campus resources. Despite these efforts, the office did not meet its established benchmark for the cycle, with only 69% of new international students maintaining a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. A deeper analysis of the data revealed that out of the 36 total new international students, 11 fell below the 3.0 threshold. Notably, 10 of those 11 struggling individuals were student-athletes. In response to this specific trend, the ISRC initiated direct outreach to the Assistant Athletic Director for Student-Athlete Development to investigate the unique challenges impacting these student-athletes during their first academic year at NSU and to establish collaborative intervention strategies.

Decision.

In AC 2025–2026, the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2025–2026 results, the ISRC will implement a structured academic intervention strategy in AC 2026–2027. Any incoming international student earning a grade of C or lower at the five-week grade report will be required to attend a mandatory meeting, in person or virtually, to assess academic challenges and receive targeted referrals to campus tutoring, advising, and counseling services. The ISRC will conduct follow-up meetings at midterms to monitor progress and provide sustained support through the end of the semester. Additionally, since international student-athletes faced the greatest academic hurdles during the previous cycle, the ISRC will establish a formalized, collaborative partnership with the Assistant Athletic Director for Student-Athlete Development. This targeted cross-

Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

departmental approach will ensure proactive care for the student-athlete population, optimizing academic outcomes and driving the unit's cycle of continuous improvement forward.

Measure 3.2

Track academic alerts and referrals for new international students at the midterm grade period. The goal is to identify and intervene with 100% of students earning a C or lower by informing them about campus resources such as tutoring, academic advising, or counseling services.

Semester	Percentage of Students with C or Lower Informed	Number of Newly Arrived International Students with C or Lower Grade during Midterm Grade Period (out of 30)
Fall 2024	100%	10
Spring 2025	100%	14
Semester	Percentage of Students with C or Lower Informed	Number of Newly Arrived International Students with C or Lower Grade during Midterm Grade Period (out of 36)
Fall 2025	100%	13
Spring 2026	100%	20

Findings: The target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024–2025, the target was successfully met, with the ISRC monitoring 100% of newly arrived international students who received a grade of C or lower during the midterm period.

This target was met again in AC 2025–2026, as the ISRC enhanced its academic monitoring framework by tracking both the five-week and midterm grading periods to enable the timely identification of students requiring support. A strategic collaboration with the Counseling Center further strengthened this network by addressing broader adaptation hurdles, including mental health concerns. Combined with proactive email outreach that systematically connected students with vital campus resources, these coordinated efforts provided critical, early-stage intervention to help students improve their educational outcomes.

Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

Decision.

The target was met in AC 2025–2026. Based on the analysis of these results, the ISRC will continue to enhance its early intervention efforts in AC 2026–2027 by permanently incorporating the five-week grade report as an additional academic checkpoint alongside midterm and final grade reviews. This sustained, three-point monitoring system will provide a comprehensive and proactive framework to track student progress and address academic concerns in a timely manner. Lastly, the ISRC will request for this cycle semester reports from campus academic support offices to monitor the utilization rates of new international students. This cross-referenced data will help assess referral effectiveness and determine the explicit impact of these resources on first-year academic success, ensuring students are appropriately connected to support services while driving the unit's cycle of continuous improvement forward.

Comprehensive Summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results. *Provided are all the things done in AC 2025-2026 to seek improvement based on the analysis of AC 2024-2025 assessment results.*

SO1

Increase international students' awareness of employment options (on-campus, CPT, OPT)

- (1.1) In AC 2025-2026, 100% of international students (113 out of 113) were informed about employment options through arrival orientation sessions, one-on-one advising meetings, and online resources. The ISRC maintained rigorous tracking through orientation sign-in sheets and appointment records, while successfully integrating employment information across multiple formats. This multi-channelled approach ensured wide access and timely dissemination of regulatory work authorization data to the entire international student population.
- (1.2) In AC 2025–2026, a total of 77 one-on-one advising meetings were conducted to address student inquiries regarding CPT, OPT, and on-campus employment. During these sessions, the ISRC addressed frequent and pressing student concerns, including extended OPT processing times, semester-specific CPT application requirements, and institutional budget cuts that limited on-campus employment opportunities. The data collected from these interactions successfully identified peak advising periods and shifting student priorities, providing valuable insights that will be used to tailor the content and timing of future employment advising initiatives.

SO2

Increase awareness of Study Abroad opportunities.

- (2.1) In AC 2025-2026, The ISRC met its target with nine students participating in study abroad programs through ISEP, NSE and bilateral agreements. However, participant feedback identified critical, ongoing deterrents to study abroad enrollment, including restrictive federal regulations regarding program funding,

Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

general affordability concerns, and complex course equivalency challenges. These findings highlight key systemic barriers that the unit must address to sustain future enrollment growth.

- (2.2) In AC 2025–2026, the ISRC recorded 123 total attendees at study abroad promotional events and advising sessions, with student participation peaking during the Fall 2025 semester. A subsequent decline in the spring was primarily attributed to a more limited calendar of events and pervasive student scheduling conflicts. Additionally, participant feedback gathered during this cycle indicated a strong preference for the continued offering of program-specific information sessions, as well as sustained access to virtual options to better accommodate students unable to attend in person.

SO3

Measure adaptability and academic success of new international students.

- (3.1) In AC 2025–2026, 69% of new international students (25 out of 36) maintained a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher during their first academic year. Consequently, the unit did not meet its established target, despite the implementation of the ISRC support initiatives such as arrival orientation sessions, targeted academic advising, and regular communication regarding available campus academic resources.
- (3.2) In AC 2025-2026, The ISRC identified and intervened with 100% of new international students earning a C or lower at midterm (13 in Fall, 20 in Spring). Students were systematically informed of available campus resources and referred to targeted tutoring, academic advising, and counseling services. Furthermore, a continued partnership with the Counseling Center provided critical support for broader adjustment issues, while proactive outreach through direct emails and structured meetings ensured timely, early-stage intervention throughout the academic year.

Plan of Action moving forward. *The following reflects changes that will be implemented in AC 2026-2027, based on the analysis of the results observed in AC 2025-2026.*

SO1

Increase international students' awareness of employment options (on-campus, CPT, OPT)

- (1.1) In AC 2026-2027, the ISRC will continue to offer separate, specialized workshops for CPT and OPT, permanently integrating comprehensive updates on Social Security Number (SSN) procedures and on-campus employment options.

Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

- (1.2) In AC 2026–2027, the ISRC will continue its robust outreach efforts through arrival orientation sessions, one-on-one advising, targeted email communications, and virtual options via Microsoft Teams.

SO2

Increase awareness of Study Abroad opportunities.

- (2.1) In AC 2026–2027, the ISRC will strengthen its collaboration with academic advisors and the Office of Financial Aid to expand campus awareness of study abroad scholarships and federal funding regulations.
- (2.2) In AC 2026–2027, the ISRC will expand its calendar of study abroad promotional events, establishing a consistent year-round schedule across semesters to eliminate previous seasonal participation drops. The office will sustain its virtual information sessions in direct coordination with international exchange partners while continuing to deliver targeted, program-specific sessions tailored to student interests, academic majors, geographic destinations, and specialized funding opportunities.

SO3

Measure adaptability and academic success of new international students.

- (3.1) In AC 2026–2027, the ISRC will enhance its early intervention framework by permanently incorporating the five-week progress report as an additional academic checkpoint alongside midterm and final grading reviews. Under this structured strategy, any incoming international student demonstrating low academic performance at the five-week or midterm marks will be required to attend an academic progress meeting, either in person or via Microsoft Teams, to receive targeted resource referrals. Furthermore, the office will establish a formalized partnership with the Assistant Athletic Director for Student-Athlete Development to investigate unique first-year challenges and deploy joint intervention strategies tailored specifically to international student-athletes.
- (3.2) In AC 2026–2027, the ISRC will begin requesting comprehensive semester reports from campus academic support units to track the exact utilization rates of tutoring, advising, and counseling services among new international students. Because this tracking mechanism was not implemented during the AC 2025–2026 cycle, these new data pipelines will allow the office to critically assess the long-term effectiveness of its referrals and accurately measure the impact of campus resources on first-year academic success.