

## 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 2024-2025

(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 2024–2025:** 113

Semester	Informational Meetings Attendance	Total Percentage
Fall 2023	41	
Spring 2024	25	
Summer 2024	4	
Total	70	68%(of 103 students)
Fall 2024	70	
Spring 2025	33	
Summer 2025	7	
Total	110	97% (of 113 students)

#### Analysis.

In AC 2023-2024, the target was not met. Seventy out of 103 international students (68%) attended informational meetings related to employment opportunities. The highest level of attendance was in fall, at the beginning of the academic year, with attendance trailing off in spring and summer of 2024.

## Assessment Cycle 2024-2025

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the ISRC improved its tracking by recording attendance through orientation sign-in sheets and appointment records. In AC 2024–2025, 110 out of 113 international students (97%) received information about on-campus employment, Curricular Practical Training (CPT), and Optional Practical Training (OPT). During the Fall 2024 semester, 49 new international students attended the mandatory arrival orientation where this information was presented, and 21 additional students scheduled one-on-one advising meetings to discuss employment options, resulting in 70 students being informed in the fall. In Spring 2025, 10 new students attended orientation, and 23 students met individually for employment-related advising, totaling 33 students for that semester. In Summer 2025, 7 students received information through one-on-one meetings. The higher number of meetings in Fall 2024 was due to the larger group of new students that semester, as well as interest from students graduating in Spring 2025 who wanted to learn about OPT early. By integrating employment information into orientations, individual meetings, and the ISRC website, the office ensured nearly all international students were informed about employment regulations and opportunities within their first semester at NSU.

### **Decision.**

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025–2026, the ISRC will introduce separate, focused workshops for CPT and OPT, including Social Security Number (SSN) procedures. These targeted sessions will provide tailored support and deeper understanding of work authorization regulations. Outreach will continue via arrival orientations, email communications, and one-on-one meetings offered both in-person and virtually through Microsoft Teams. These changes will improve the availability of information about international students' employment options, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

### **Measure 1.2 (New in 2024–2025):**

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
Fall 2024	21	8	2
Spring 2025	23	9	2
Summer 2025	7	3	4
Total	51	20	8

## Assessment Cycle 2024-2025

### Analysis.

This new measure was introduced in AC 2024-2025 to capture individualized advising trends more accurately. Data revealed steady use of appointments for employment-related advising through the attendance records maintained by the ISRC, providing valuable insight into peak advising periods and the topics of highest concern. Common inquiries included the increase in the OPT application fee from \$410 to \$470, with students expressing concern over higher costs and longer approval times rising from an average of six weeks to over three months. Some students opted to wait until confirming their graduation eligibility before applying to avoid the risk of losing the application fee. Regarding CPT, several students misunderstood its process, asking whether a one-time application would suffice through graduation. We clarified that CPT is semester-based, must be tied to a corresponding course, and requires a new application each term. Additionally, multiple students expressed concerns about the reduction in the student employment budget, which affected the number of available on-campus job opportunities. Many students reported difficulty finding campus employment positions, particularly during the Spring 2025 semester, and sought alternative options or clarification on eligibility for off-campus work. In total, 21 one-on-one meetings were conducted in Fall 2024, 23 in Spring 2025, and 7 in Summer 2025, addressing a mix of on-campus, CPT, and OPT employment topics. This resulted in a total of 51 one-on-one meetings, exceeding the goal of 50.

### Decision.

In AC 2024-2025, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025-2026, the ISRC will refine data collection by introducing separate workshops for CPT and OPT, including information on obtaining a Social Security Number (SSN), essential for students authorized to work in the U.S. This separation will allow more focused discussions and clearer communication of eligibility and documentation requirements, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

**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 2023		2	2	4
Spring 2024		2		2
Summer 2024				

## Assessment Cycle 2024-2025

<b>TOTAL 2023-2024</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
Fall 2024	1		1	2
Spring 2025			1	1
Summer 2025	1			1
<b>TOTAL 2024-2025</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>

**Findings:** Target was met.

### **Analysis.**

In AC 2023-2024, the target was met. Six students participated in ISEP and NSU bilateral agreements.

Based on the analysis of the results, in AC 2024-2025, the ISRC promoted available programs. A total of four students participated in programs through ISEP and NSU bilateral agreements during AC 2024–2025. Though this figure meets the target, it indicates no growth. According to feedback from students, some who may have otherwise been interested in study abroad programs expressed concerns about affordability and course matching, which suggests ongoing barriers.

### **Decision.**

In AC 2024–2025, the target was met, but the participation in programs was lower than in the previous year. Based on the results in AC 2024-2025, in AC 2025-2026, the ISRC will work closely with Financial Aid and academic advisors to increase awareness of scholarships and course equivalency. These changes will raise participation numbers while maintaining support for diverse program types, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

### **Measure 2.2 (New in 2024–2025):**

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.

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Information Sessions/ Study Abroad Promotional events Attendance</b>
Fall 2024	54
Spring 2025	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>

**Findings:** Target was not met.

## Assessment Cycle 2024-2025

### Analysis.

In AC 2024-2025 a total of 86 students attended study abroad promotional events, information sessions, and advising meetings. Attendance was strongest in the Fall semester. The decrease in Spring was primarily due to a limited number of promotional events and scheduling conflicts that made it difficult for students to attend. Additionally, several students who did participate shared feedback indicating a desire for more program-specific information and access to virtual options for those unable to attend in person. This feedback highlights the need to diversify outreach methods and offer more tailored, accessible opportunities for students interested in study abroad programs.

### Decision.

Based on the analysis of AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025–2026, the ISRC will expand the number of study abroad promotional events. This will ensure a more consistent schedule across both semesters to avoid attendance drops. The office will also pilot virtual information sessions in collaboration with exchange partners to accommodate students who cannot attend in person. Additionally, new program-specific sessions will be introduced based on student feedback, focusing on destinations, majors, and scholarship opportunities. These changes will better meet student interests and increase engagement with study abroad programs, thereby continuing to push the cycle of 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 2023- Spring 2024)	Percentage	Number of Newly Arrived International Students (out of 11)
3.0 or higher	82%	9
Lower than 3.0	18%	2
Cumulative GPA (Fall 2024- Spring 2025)	Percentage	Number of Newly Arrived International Students (out of 30)

## Assessment Cycle 2024-2025

3.0 or higher	85%	26
Lower than 3.0	15%	4

**Findings:** The target was met.

### **Analysis.**

In AC 2023-2024, the target was met. Eighty-two percent of new international students achieved a GPA of 3.0 or higher. This shows that students adapted well to their new academic environment.

Based on the analysis of the 2023-2024 results, in AC 2024-2025 the ISRC provided support initiatives, including arrival orientation sessions, academic advising, and email reminders about campus resources. As a result of these changes, the 85% success rate (26 students) reflects a strong level of academic adjustment. However, continued attention to the 15% (4 students) who earned below a 3.0 GPA is essential to further improve overall student performance and retention.

### **Decision.**

Based on the analysis of AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025–2026, the ISRC will promote academic support resources while implementing a targeted intervention strategy for students showing low academic performance. Any new international student earning a grade of C or lower at the five-week grade report will be required to attend a mandatory meeting, either in person or virtually, to review their academic progress and identify challenges. During these meetings, students will be referred to appropriate campus resources, including tutoring, academic advising, and counseling services. Follow-up meetings will be conducted at the midterm grade period to monitor progress and provide additional support as needed through the end of the semester. As a result of these changes, students will receive more targeted academic support, thereby driving the cycle of improvement forward.

### **Measure 3.2 (New in 2024–2025):**

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.

## Assessment Cycle 2024-2025

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

**Findings:** The target was met.

### Analysis.

In AC 2024–2025, the ISRC improved its academic monitoring by focusing on the midterm grade reporting period, enabling timely identification of students requiring support. Collaboration with the Counseling Center enhanced the support network by addressing broader adaptation challenges, including mental health concerns. Proactive outreach through direct emails ensured students were informed of available campus resources and encouraged to seek assistance, contributing positively to academic outcomes.

### Decision.

In AC 2024-2025, the target was met. Based on analysis of AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025–2026, the ISRC will enhance early intervention efforts by formally incorporating the five-week grade report as an additional academic checkpoint, alongside midterm and final grade reviews. This three-point monitoring system will provide a more comprehensive and proactive approach to track student progress and address academic concerns in a timely manner. Additionally, the ISRC will request semester reports from campus academic support offices to track the number of new international students utilizing their services. This data will help assess the effectiveness of referrals and determine whether students found these resources beneficial in supporting their academic success during the first year. As a result of these changes, the ISRC will ensure that new international students are appropriately referred to and utilizing available support services, thereby driving the cycle of improvement forward.

**Comprehensive Summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results.** *Provided are all the things done in AC 2024-2025 to seek improvement based on the analysis of AC 2034-2024 assessment results.*

SO1

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



## Assessment Cycle 2024-2025

- (1.1) In AC 2024-2025, 97% of international students (110 out of 113) were informed about employment options through arrival orientation sessions, one-on-one advising meetings, and online resources. The ISRC improved tracking through orientation sign-in sheets and appointment records and integrated employment information in multiple formats to ensure wide access and timely dissemination.
- (1.2) In AC 2024-2025, a total of 51 one-on-one advising meetings were conducted addressing CPT, OPT, and on-campus employment inquiries. The ISRC addressed frequent concerns including OPT fee increases, extended processing times, CPT semester-based application requirements, and on-campus employment limitations due to budget cuts. Data collected identified peak advising periods and student priorities, helping tailor future advising content.

### SO2

#### Increase awareness of Study Abroad opportunities.

- (2.1) In AC 2024-2025, The ISRC met its target with four students participating in study abroad programs through ISEP and bilateral agreements. However, barriers such as program affordability and course equivalency challenges were identified as ongoing deterrents, based on participant feedback.
- (2.2) In AC 2024-2025, The ISRC recorded 86 attendees at Study Abroad promotional events and advising sessions, with the strongest attendance in Fall 2024. A decline in Spring was attributed to fewer promotional events and student scheduling conflicts. Additionally, student feedback indicated a preference for program-specific information sessions and access to virtual options for those unable to attend in person.

### SO3

#### Measure adaptability and academic success of new international students.

- (3.1) In AC 2024-2025, 85% of new international students (26 out of 30) maintained a GPA of 3.0 or higher in their first academic year, exceeding the target. This success was supported by ISRC initiatives such as orientation sessions, academic advising, and regular communication about academic resources.
- (3.2) In AC 2024-2025, The ISRC identified and intervened with 100% of new international students earning a C or lower at midterm (10 in Fall, 14 in Spring). Students were informed of campus resources and referred to tutoring, academic advising, and counseling services. The ISRC's partnership with the Counseling Center provided additional support for broader adjustment issues, and proactive outreach through direct emails and meetings ensured timely intervention.

## Assessment Cycle 2024-2025

**Plan of Action moving forward.** *The following reflects changes that will be implemented in AC 2025-2026, based on the analysis of the results observed in AC 2024-2025.*

### SO1

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

- (1.1) In AC 2025-2026, the ISRC will Implement separate workshops for CPT and OPT including SSN information.
- (1.2) In AC 2025-2026, the ISRC will outreach through arrival orientations, one-on-one advising, email communications, and virtual options via Microsoft Teams.

### SO2

Increase awareness of Study Abroad opportunities.

- (2.1) In AC 2025-2026, the ISRC will strengthen collaboration with advisors and Financial Aid to raise awareness of study abroad scholarships and assist students in resolving course equivalency challenges.
- (2.2) In AC 2025-2026, the ISRC will expand the number of Study Abroad promotional events, ensuring a consistent schedule across semesters to prevent participation drops, and will pilot virtual Study Abroad sessions with exchange partners. Additionally, the ISRC will Introduce program-specific sessions tailored to student interests, including sessions focused on destinations, majors, and funding opportunities.

### SO3

Measure adaptability and academic success of new international students.

- (3.1) In AC 2025-2026, the ISRC will enhance early intervention strategies by formally incorporating the five-week grade report as an additional academic checkpoint alongside midterm and final grades and will require mandatory academic progress meetings (in-person or virtual) for students showing low academic performance at the five-week and midterm grade reports.
- (3.2) In AC 2025-2026, the ISRC will request semester reports from campus academic support offices to track the number of new international students utilizing tutoring, advising, and counseling services, and using this data to assess the effectiveness of interventions.