



CCIS volunteers continue to serve international graduate students, visiting scholars and their families at Stanford University. Read about some of our programs and events!



“Notes at the Top” Annette Isaacson President

CCIS in the Time of COVID-19

Life can certainly change quickly. In early March, we were going out to restaurants, visiting our friends, and going to work. Then we met the coronavirus and life changed drastically. Stanford moved classes online and asked American undergraduates to move out of the dorms and finish the quarter from home; Bechtel International Center closed; Friday Morning Coffee, English Classes and Windows on the West went on hiatus, and CCIS advised EIA and Hospitality partners to “meet” using video conferencing rather than in person, and we had to cancel our Volunteer Appreciation Reception.

Now that we are all “Sheltering in Place,” the pace of our lives has slowed. We’re not driving kids or grandkids to school or practice. We’re working from home, homeschooling our kids or using our time for doing puzzles, playing music, reading, binge watching shows on Netflix, weeding our gardens, grocery shopping for our elderly neighbors, baking our own bread, trying new recipes, going for walks in Gamble Gardens, the Baylands, or Foothills Park.

Even though we are living in isolation, it is important to connect with those we care about. My current EIA partner, Marcello, and I meet weekly on Skype. We are so happy to “see” each other! I have also been so touched by my former EIA partners and Homestay students who have emailed to check in on us. It reminds me of why we all belong to CCIS: “We are resource people who become friends with internationals adjusting to America. In the process, we gain friends from around the world and enrich our lives.”

May we all stay healthy and soon be able to resume our full lives as volunteers. In the meantime, tell your family you love them, and be kind to yourself and to everyone with whom you interact. We will get through this together.

Fondly,
Annette Isaacson
CCIS President

A peek at Windows on the West



The Windows on the West program, which was created by Bob Spears, was developed as a film series “to help all international students, post docs, and visiting scholars to understand Americans, and to adapt to American life and American academic life at Stanford.”

The idea for the series came as a result of his teaching for six weeks at a time in the Republic of Georgia during the years 2005 to 2015. Bob realized that his students, although being well traveled in the former Soviet bloc, “had no idea how different Western Europe and the Americas were.”

While in Georgia he developed a film series to help illustrate what Bob perceived as the differences in thinking about citizenship, personal identity, responsibility and world view. He selected “films with character development and a story that could generate a discussion to follow as the most effective way to understanding.” Because of the great response in Georgia, Bob decided to reframe the program for international students at Bechtel.

To develop a discussion about the complexities of race, Bob has selected “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner” (1967) followed by “Guess Who” (2004) to show how American society has changed socially in the 40 years between the making of the two films. To open a conversation about the importance of developing independence in children, Bob shows “A River Runs Through It.” Differences in higher education in the US as compared to most of the rest of the world are covered in “The Dead Poets Society.” All are chosen to generate an engaging conversation.

Bob further explains “students coming from the far east (China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam) are from societies and education systems that do not allow students to ask questions or participate in class. At Stanford students are measured on their ability to participate in the class discussion, to make a comment and support it with data or make a conclusion from the material presented. “Part of my job is to help them feel comfortable in doing this. They are not being measured by me, so it is easier or less traumatic to learn how to do this in the Windows on the West setting.”

The Fall Quarter is the most important of the series. About 1,000 new international students, post docs and visiting scholars arrive at Stanford during September. Bob states “Many of our new foreign students have never lived away from their families. They are confronted with a strange culture and a different education system. They have a difficult time “reading” Americans. They can feel very much alone.”

Seven of the nine films shown each fall are usually the same because they cover important aspects of American life or American academic life. For the Winter and Spring Quarters the films vary because the program becomes more of a social event as the students become more familiar with Stanford and each other.

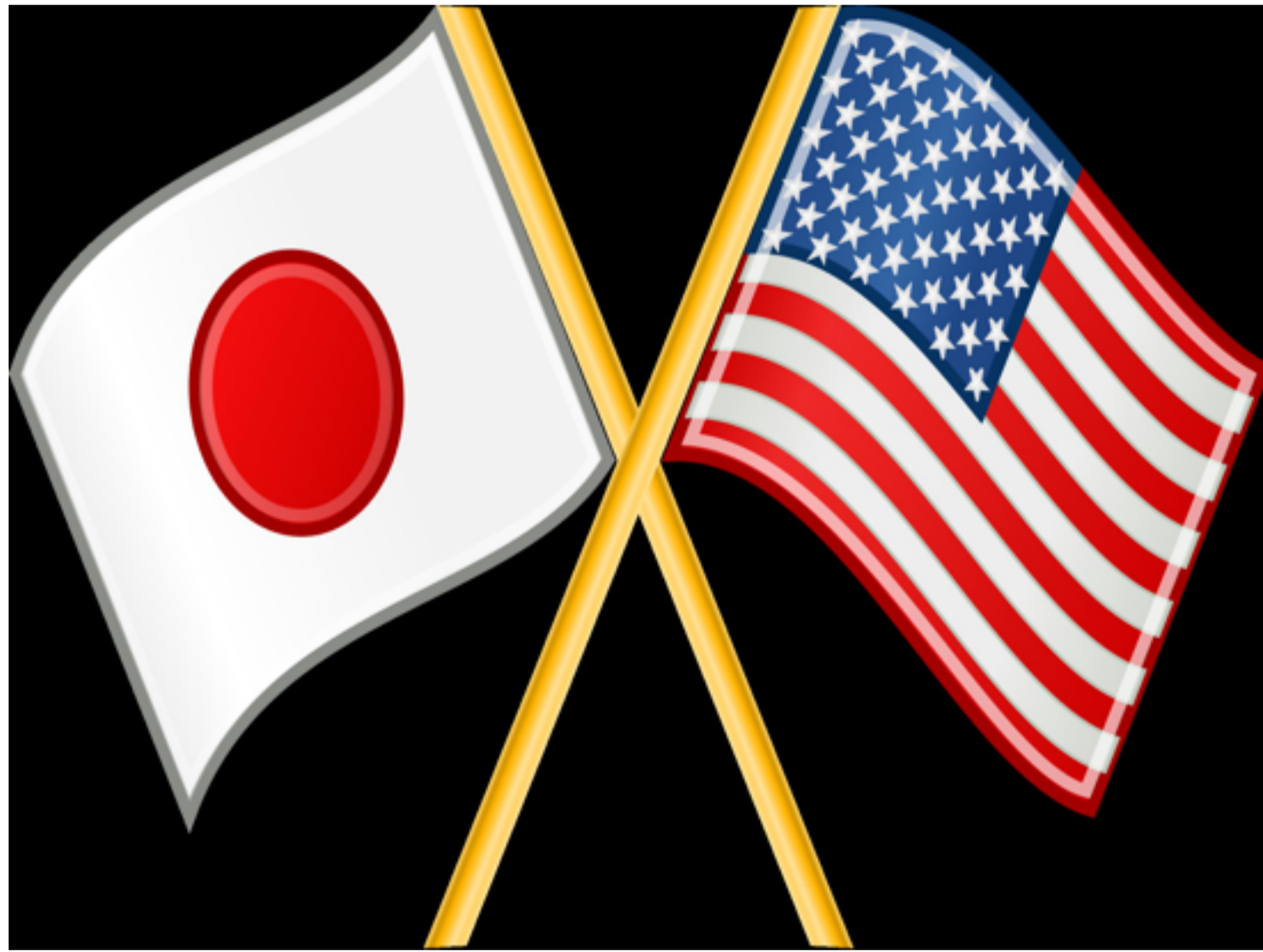
What are the big “hits”? Bob says “The Green Book,” “The Imitation Game,” “Some Like it Hot,” “A River Runs Through It,” and “The Dead Poets Society” are all very popular. What didn’t work? “Singing in the Rain” was a big flop.

Bob encourages internationals and their families to come to Windows on the West by feeding them dinner at 6 pm on Friday with an introduction and film to follow at 6:30 pm. Almost all international graduate students are living in apartments and must provide their own meals so the Windows on the West is a chance to eat well and “chill out.”

Management of the dinners has taken on a life of its own. Corliss Hartge and Tooran Oshikoji select the menu and oversee international spouses in the preparation and presentation of the meal. International students often have no extra time, however, their spouses often do. It has become a social event for them and helps them become part of the Stanford community.

CCIS members are encouraged to join the group on Friday evenings during the academic year. Bob feels that it is important that his voice not be the only American opinion in the room. Dinner is served for the first forty people attending at 6:00 pm.

Note: The WOW program has been discontinued because of the COVID-19 situation. Bob is hoping the program can resume in the fall.



Small Kindnesses Remembered

A former volunteer for the Friday Morning Coffee, Linda Beavers, recently advised the CCIS board of a wonderful chance encounter. In January, Linda was attending the Verde Xchange conference in Los Angeles with her daughter Robyn and husband Alex. (The annual conference brings together green tech entrepreneurs, energy and water companies, advanced vehicle manufacturers, soft and hardware developers, and public policymakers to learn about markets for renewables, sustainable practice, and finance.)

During a cocktail hour they began speaking with Akira Chiba, the Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles, who was the host of the evening event. Mr. Chiba mentioned that he had been a Visiting Scholar at Stanford. Linda told Mr. Chiba of her involvement at Bechtel International Center and CCIS. He replied that his wife had enjoyed spending time at the Bechtel International Center.

Linda states “It is nice to know that the Bechtel Center and CCIS have such an international presence in the memories of many people who have benefited. I am so thrilled to have been a part of this.” Linda served as a volunteer from 2003 to 2015.

A new look for our newsletter

As the newsletter editor, I hope you will enjoy learning more about what’s happening at CCIS. Your feedback is welcome—send an email to notes@ccisstanfordu.org.

Pamela Baird

JOIN THE CCIS BOARD!

The Board is soliciting new members for openings starting in June.

Contact Annette Isaacson at president@ccisstanfordu.org if you want to know more about the open Board positions.

CCIS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
CCIS Notes is published by

[The Community Committee for International Students at Stanford University.](http://TheCommunityCommitteeForInternationalStudentsatStanfordUniversity.org)

For more information contact:
info@ccisstanfordu.org
memberservices@ccisstanfordu.org