

Commonwealth
Scholars
Annual Report

2015

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Contents

Social Hours	2
Fall Social Hours Celebrate a School of Culture: Celebrating the Cultures of our Students.....	3
September Social Hour- Mid-Autumn Moon Festival	3
October Social Hour- Oktoberfest	3
November Social Hour- Rangoli for Diwali/ Meet the New Phd Students	4
December Social Hour- X-mas Karaoke Party	6
Spring Social Hours	6
January- Welcome Back	6
February – iFest/TEC Conference.....	7
March.....	7
April- Admitted Students Day	8
Summer Social Hours.....	8
June	8
July	8
Office Tasks.....	9
Outreach.....	9
Social Media	9
Blog Stats and Posts.....	10
Internal Recruitment Events.....	12
Phone Campaign	12
Emails to Prospective Students.....	13
Conferences	13
National Society for Black Engineers- Annual Convention.....	13
ALA Annual Conference	13
Student Organizations.....	13
Diversity Student Organization (DSO)	13
iCCC	13
ASIS&T	14
Professional Language Café	14

Who are the Commonwealth Scholars?

Every year the iSchool writes a grant proposal to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to request diversity-related funds to be used for three things:

- 1) Tuition scholarships to diverse graduate students
- 2) Travel expenses for the recruitment of diverse graduate students
- 3) Graduate assistantships where instead of being teaching assistants, the students hired work on diversity recruitment at the graduate level and facilitate a climate welcoming of diversity for current students.

This assistantship comes from these funds.

Goals

As a Commonwealth Scholar, you are charged with:

- Corresponding on a daily basis with prospective graduate students (with a particular focus on addressing the needs of diverse prospective students) through email, phone, and face-to-face conversation under the supervision of our professional recruitment staff, Brandi, Shabana, and Wes.
- Traveling with our professional recruitment staff to recruitment events, near and far, pertaining to diversity to represent the student perspective at these events.
- Implementing at least three activities per semester pertaining to diversity for current students.

In addition, we are expected to assist in the daily functioning of the office by helping to:

- Staff the front desk and answer registration emails from current students
- Scan and upload transcripts and letters of recommendation into our online application system
- Assist staff on an as-needed basis with other tasks

Social Hours

Social Hour brings students, faculty, and staff together in a fun atmosphere of food, beverages, games and music. Each social hour has a catering/food budget of \$300-\$400, and hosts upwards of 100 individuals, including students, faculty and staff. The Social Hour is the first Friday of each month in the Student Collaboration Space on the 3rd Floor of the Information Sciences Building, or on the Patio, weather permitting.

Social Hour planning seemed to be a great fit as a task for the Commonwealth Scholars. Jourdan and I worked together to create themes, activities, and catering requests. Each month we drew up a catering request, met with Wes Lipschultz (Manager, Student Services) to finalize, then via email we contacted the Event Planning/Catering representative from the Giant Eagle Market District, or whichever vendor we had chosen to cater for that event. We also had two social hours catered by local restaurants, The Pretzel Factory and All India. Outside catering was well received by attendees.

The majority of food orders are placed with Giant Eagle Market unless stated otherwise. For Giant Eagle Market District Shadyside requests, orders should be submitted the week prior to the event via email to eventplanningteamleader.0040@gianteagle.com. A formatted catering request form (excel spreadsheet) can be found in I:\Recruitment GSA\Commonwealth\Social Hour. Beverages are handled by Wes.

Fall Social Hours Celebrate a School of Culture: Celebrating the Cultures of our Students

September Social Hour- Mid-Autumn Moon Festival

Mid-Autumn Moon Festival- Traditionally a Chinese festival (also found in other Asian countries) celebrates a bountiful summer harvest and a full moon. This festival features a unique desert called Moon Cakes. Moon cakes are round, flaky, semi-sweet pastries filled with bean or lotus-seed paste.

- Food was ordered by Wes
- The moon cakes were special ordered from Lotus Food CO. in the Strip District
- Sushi is always a big hit with students and faculty

Quantity	Product	Price	Total servings
1 Large	Deluxe Crudit� Platter	56.99	32
1 Large	Create your own cheese tray - Swiss, Gouda, White Cheddar, Provolone, Brie	69.99	45
2	Roku Tray	119.98	32
1	Kettle Corn Gourmet Popcorn	19.99	20
1	Movie Style Buttered popcorn	18.99	20
1	100+ piece hand-dipped sweets	69.99	55
	Delivery Fee	25.00	
	Total	380.93	
	Serving Total		204

October Social Hour- Oktoberfest

- Philly Pretzel W-9 maintained on file from the previous year.
- Ordered from Giant Eagle Market District Catering, and Philly Pretzel Factory.

Philly Pretzel Food Order

Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Cost
2 Combo Trays	2	\$32.00	\$64.00
1 Full Rivet Tray	1	\$30.00	\$30.00
1 Full Original Tray	1	\$30.00	\$30.00
Delivery Fee	1	\$25.00	\$25.00
		Subtotal	\$149.00

	Tax	0
	Total	\$149.00

Giant Eagle Market District Food Order

Quantity	Product	Price
1 Lg	Traditional Crudités Platter	\$49.99
1 Lg	Strudel Bites	\$35.99
1 Md	Choose-Your-Own Cheese Course: Vermont White Cheddar, French Brie, Salemville® Blue, Aged Provolone, Beemster Red Wax Gouda, Montchevré Goat	\$49.99
1 Lg	Classic Potato	\$41.99
	Delivery charge	\$25.00
	Total	\$202.96

November Social Hour- Rangoli for Diwali/ Meet the New Phd Students

For November’s theme we worked alongside Ankur- Indian Graduate Student Association to create and interactive challenge for social hour. We also introduced the new PhD students to students and staff.

Diwali- One of the biggest festivals in Indian Hindu culture. Also known as the festival light, this festival celebrates light’s triumph over darkness.

Rangoli- patterns on the floor, courtyard or altars. Rangoli is typically created using color powders, flowers, or colored rice. Typically these images are created to welcome Hindu gods and goddesses.

We used non-traditional materials for the Rangoli creations. We purchased a variety of colored sugar sprinkles and various colors of lentils to create the design. Here are some images of students work during the event:



To welcome the new PhD students name tags were created using a list provided by Olena. A personal invitation was sent to all the new PhD students informing them of the event and the small gift. Each student that arrived picked up a name tag as well as an iSchool keychain.

Food

For food we ordered from a local Indian restaurant All India. We ordered samosas and paneer pakora. ANKUR-Indian Graduate Student Association kindly contributed an Indian dessert as well.

*Both the food and the event were very successful and would be worth repeating at a later date.

December Social Hour- X-mas Karaoke Party

December’s theme was inspired by one of our fellow office coworkers. We connected a large roll away TV to Nathan’s laptop and connected a microphone to the TV. Over the event went really well a decent amount of students participated. The only downside was that people didn’t say long because it was finals week. Students could sing whichever song they which allowed for an eclectic mix of song choices. Karaoke was quite a hit with students of all backgrounds and now takes place at almost all of the social hours.

Quantity	Product	Price
1 Large	Chicken Tenders	\$69.99
1 Large	Macaroni & Cheese	\$59.99
1 Large	Pierogies	\$59.99
1 Medium	Traditional Crudité	\$39.99
1 Large	Fruit & Cheese Tray	\$59.99
1 Large	Best Butter-Made Cookies	\$24.99
1 Small	Gingerbread Men Tray	\$11.99
1	Assorted Holiday-Flavored Gob Tray	\$10.99
	Delivery charge	\$25.00
	Total	\$362.92

Spring Social Hours

January- Welcome Back

- The food was well received
- There were complaints of not enough food

Quantity	Product	Price
1 Medium	Choose-Your-Own Cheese Course: White Cheddar, Blue Cheese, Aged Provolone	\$49.99
72 Piece	Wings- Barbeque	\$69.99
72 Piece	Wings- Mild Buffalo	\$69.99
72 Piece	Wings- Garlic Parmesan	\$69.99
1	Hand-Dipped Sweets	\$49.99
1	Traditional Cookie Tray	\$42.99
	Delivery charge	\$25.00
	Total	\$377.9

February – iFest/TEC Conference

The order doubled this month due to iFest.

Quantity	Product	Price
Large	Traditional Crudit� Platter- with Hummus	\$49.99
	Additional Dip- Buffalo Chicken	\$4.00
3 Bags	Tortilla Chips	\$9.00
2	Roku Tray	\$119.98
Large	Create-Your-Own Cheese Course: White Cheddar, Aged Provolone, Blue Cheese, Wax Gouda, and Brie	\$69.99
100 pieces	Hot Sausage Meatballs	\$167.98
80 Tenders	Chicken Tenders- 2 Honey Mustard, 2 Barbecue	\$69.99
1 Full Pan	Pierogies	\$59.99
1 Full Pan	Macaroni & Cheese	\$59.99
1 Half Pan	Carrot Souffl�	\$29.99
1	Gourmet Popcorn- Movie-style Butter	\$18.99
1	Gourmet Popcorn- Kettle Corn	\$19.99
Large	American Classic Variety- Chocolate Chip Cookies and Brownies	\$34.99
Large	Buttercream Cupcakes- Vanilla cake with Vanilla icing- blue and yellow sprinkles or sugars if possible	\$27.99
	Delivery charge	\$25.00
	Total	\$767.86

March

- Wings went really quickly.
- Many missed having the cheese tray

Quantity	Product	Price
72 pcs.	Chicken Wings - Mild Buffalo	\$69.99
72 pcs.	Chicken Wings - Barbecue	\$69.99
1 Full Pan	Macaroni & Cheese	\$59.99
1 Full Pan	Roasted Red Skin Potatoes	\$59.99
1	Gourmet Popcorn - Movie-style Butter	\$18.99
Large	Hand-Dipped Sweets	\$49.99
48 pcs.	Gobs	\$20.99
	Delivery charge	\$25.00
	Total	\$374.93

April- Admitted Students Day

Quantity	Product	Price
1 Medium	Choose-Your-Own Cheese Course: White Cheddar, Blue Cheese, Aged Provolone	\$49.99
2 Large	Chicken Tenders - 1 Barbeque Sauce and 1 Honey Mustard	\$139.98
1 Large	Best Butter-Made Cookies	\$24.99
1	Roku Tray	\$59.99
3	Broccoli Cheddar Quiche	\$32.97
1 Half Pan	Macaroni & Cheese	\$29.99
1 Half Pan	Grilled Veg	\$29.99
1	Hand-Dipped Sweets	\$49.99
1 Whole Pan	Pierogies	\$59.99
1	Movie-style Buttered Popcorn	\$18.99
1 Medium	Traditional Crudit� Platter- with ranch dip	\$39.99
	Delivery charge	\$25.00
	Total	\$561.86

Summer Social Hours

June

Quantity	Product	Price
1 Medium	Specialty Cheese Tray (Pick 3): White Cheddar, Blue Cheese, Aged Provolone	\$49.99
12 Dozen	Chicken Tenders- Ranch Sauce and Buffalo Sauce	\$143.88
1 (Full Pan)	Pierogies	\$59.99
1 Medium	Traditional Cookie Tray	\$42.99
1 (Half Pan)	Macaroni and Cheese	\$29.99
1 (Half Pan)	Grilled Vegetables	\$29.99
	Delivery charge	\$25.00
	Total	\$381.83

July

Quantity	Product	Price
1 Medium	Specialty Cheese Tray (Pick 3): White Cheddar, Blue Cheese, Aged Provolone	\$49.99
12 Dozen	Chicken Tenders- Ranch Sauce and Buffalo Sauce	\$143.88
1 (Full Pan)	Pierogies	\$59.99

1 Medium	Traditional Cookie Tray	\$42.99
1 (Half Pan)	Macaroni and Cheese	\$29.99
1 (Half Pan)	Grilled Vegetables	\$29.99
	Delivery charge	\$25.00
	Total	\$381.83

Office Tasks

Jourdan and I were responsible for handling office tasks including contact with prospective and current students, as well as internal and external requests. On average we each corresponded with approximately 30 students via email and phone, and an additional 4-6 in person. The email correspondences were to a mix of prospective and current students.

During the peak of admission season, all student employees in the office were responsible for processing incoming application materials including transcripts, letters of recommendations, International Graduate Student Supplemental Forms, and Bank Statements. Processing includes Scanning, Forwarding, and Uploading application materials, finding and updating test scores, utilizing the iSchool Student Services Wiki, Hobsons, Webnow, and Peoplesoft.

Student employees also asked periodically to handle registration forms including Permission Code Request Forms, Grade Change Forms and Monitored Withdrawal forms.

Outreach

Social Media

Facebook



Jourdan and I actively co-managing the Commonwealth Scholars Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/cwscholars.ischool.pitt>) and the DSO Facebook page. Jourdan worked diligently early in the semester to connect with new LIS, IS and TELE students. We have also worked to make connections and find out information about the other student groups activities.

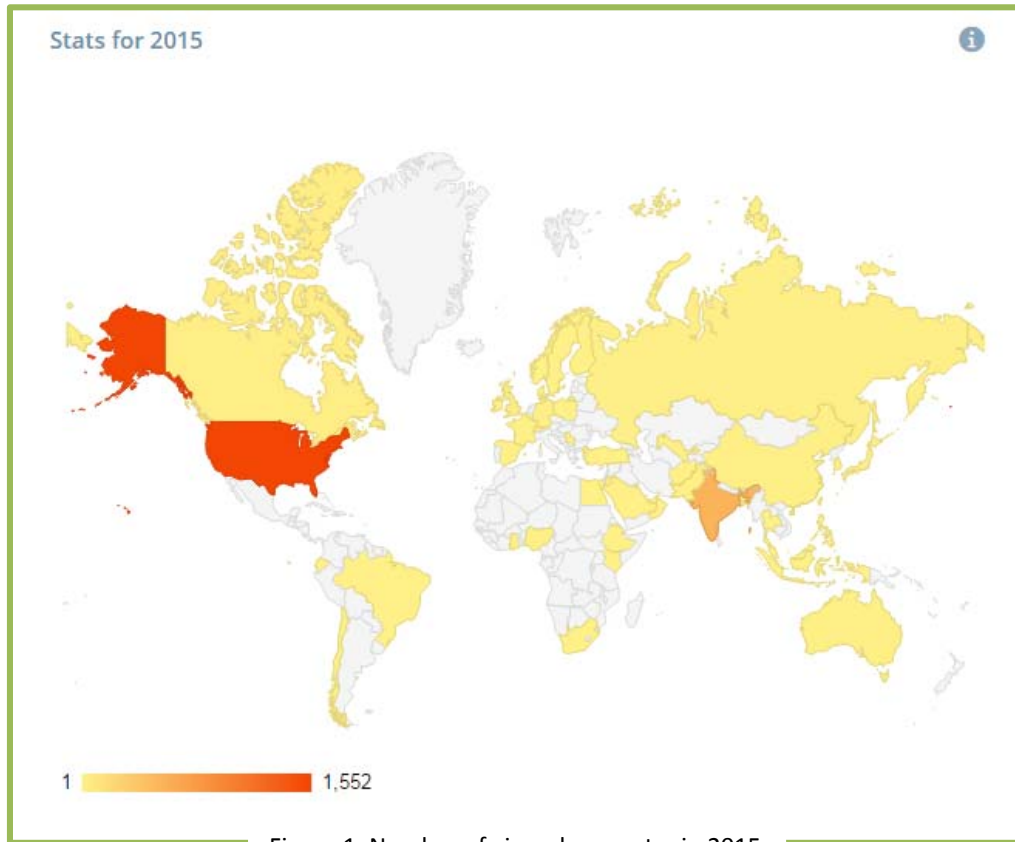
Twitter



Our Twitter (@PittCScholars) has been underutilized. Even though we are not actively using Twitter some of our blog posts have been retweeted using this platform. It may be beneficial to become more active in posting tweets, pictures, and with other Twitter users and conversations.

Blog Stats and Posts

The Commonwealth Scholars blog (<http://pittcscholars.wordpress.com/>) is alive and kicking. The blog was started by Jourdan and Angela (2013-2014 Commonwealth Scholars) as a way to engage students and share their experience in an informal setting. In 2014-2015 the blog received 2,327 views from people in 49 countries around the world.



This year we started three new series on the blog this semester Students of the iSchool, the FAQ Series, and the What to do in Pittsburgh. The posts in these three series have been the most popular this year. The Students of the iSchool series features the most popular post since the blog's creation, Students of the iSchool- Graduate Student Assistant. This post has over 400 views.

Outside of the series Jourdan and I continue to share our thoughts and experiences regarding our respective programs, local event, and conferences.

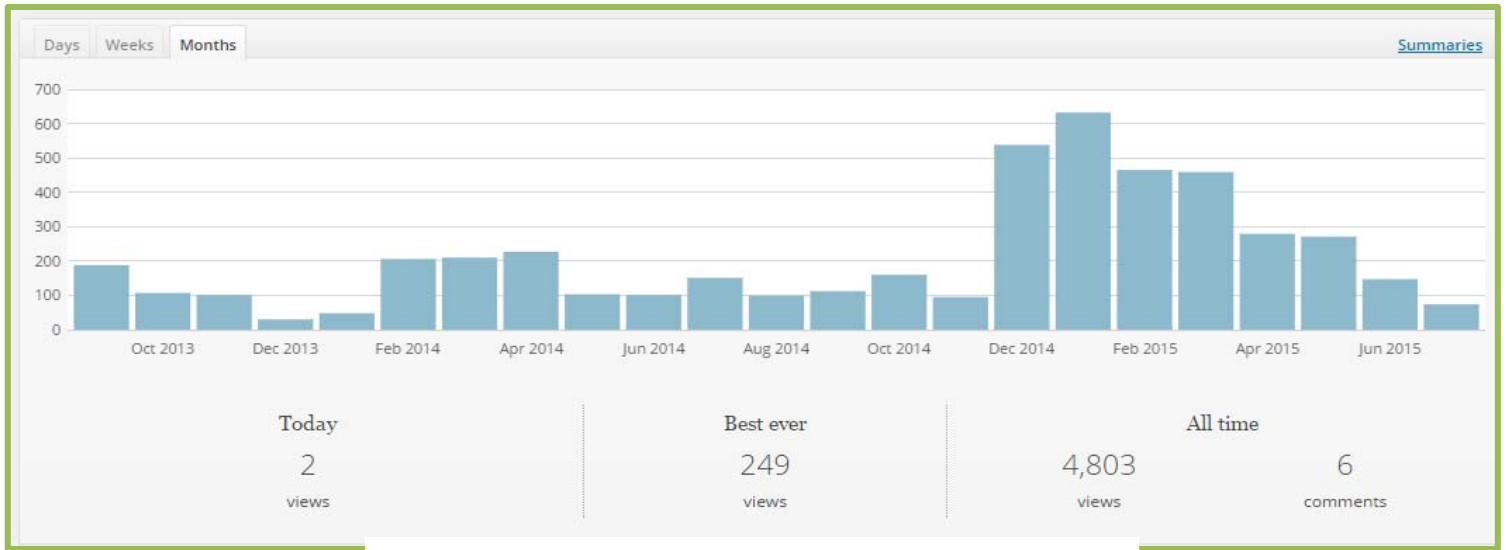


Figure 2. Number of views per month since the creation of the blog

Stats for 2015		
Title		Views
Home page / Archives	View	951
Students of the iSchool - Graduate Student Assistant	View	426
What To Do in Pittsburgh Spring 2015	View	170
Students of the iSchool: i3 Scholar/MSIS Program	View	91
What To Do in Pittsburgh- Summer 2015	View	77
FAQs Series: What Jobs Can I Get? (before and after IS/Tele program)	View	73
FAQs Series: Where Can I Live? When Should I Start Looking?	View	65
About Us	View	56
FAQs Series: What Funding Can I Get for School? (MSIS/MST)	View	54
Graduate School Slump- There will be bad days	View	43
Day One of iFest 2014 - TEC Conference	View	34
Students of the iSchool: Scholarship for Service (SFS), MSIS/MPIA dual deg	View	21

Figure 3. Most popular blog posts by view

Internal Recruitment Events

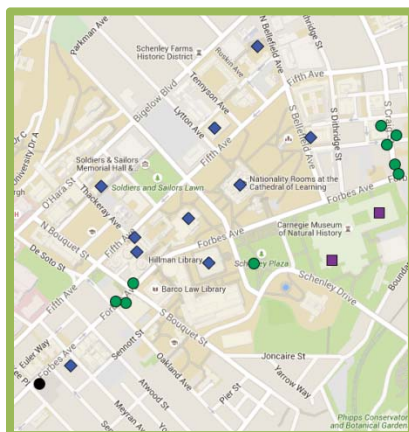
Marketplaces

Jourdan and I have attended twelve Marketplaces over the fall, spring and summer terms. At the Marketplaces we sit at the School of Information Sciences table and meet with current and prospective undergraduate students who are considering studying information science.

Information Sessions

Information Sessions invite students interested in all of the iSchools programs to come and learn more about the school. We attended more at least six information sessions in the last year and we were able to meet prospective students from all over the country. We generally discussed topics such as moving to Pittsburgh, why we select Pitt, and our general student experiences. Information sessions are a great way to really interact and get to know prospective or incoming student in a more intimate setting.

Admitted Students Day



Alongside our fellow student workers and classmates we participated in Admitted Students day. Jourdan and I spoke about our experiences in our programs and networked with all the new students who attended. I also organized a tour route and lead a brief tour of Pitt's campus. This tour can be found on the SIS inquiry Google Drive under Prospect Walking Tour.

Phone Campaign

This year we launched a phone campaign for all domestic admitted students. Over two weeks we called 116 students who were accepted to the MLIS program and the MSIS programs in order to answer any questions they might have. The campaign would have been more successful if we called all the students closer to the time they were offered admission or called only students who had accepted the offer. Many of the students had already accepted or declined the offer by the time we called. Most of the students who had accepted the offer or were waiting on financial aid were happy to speak to someone and with better timing the campaign could be more successful.

Another suggestion would be to offer a possible information session for international students or online students virtually because it may difficult for them to get the opportunity to talk to current student face to face.

The script and list of possible questions can be found at I:/Fifth Floor Student Employees /Phone Campaign.

Emails to Prospective Students

Jourdan and I create individual email accounts (Shayla.ischool.pitt@gmail.com and Jourdan.ischool.pitt@gmail.com) to contact prospective students. We each drafted an email inviting students to speak with us and the emails were sent to the students based on program. These emails were well received by the student and we spent several weeks corresponding and answering questions. I spoke with about 20 LIS prospective students and Jourdan spoke with around 30-35 MSIS and TELE students.

We also shared the joint Commonwealth email (cwscholars.ischool.pitt@gmail.com).

Conferences

National Society for Black Engineers- Annual Convention



NSBE 41st Annual Convention

Jourdan and Enrollment Manager, Shabana Reza attended NSBE in Anaheim, California. They represented the Pitt iSchool at the Career Fair/Graduate School Fair. Jourdan's experience is documented in a blog post.

ALA Annual Conference



American Library Association Annual Conference

I attended the ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco, California. I attended several sessions about the diversity issues, spoke to individuals about the program at Pitt and networked with Pitt alumni.

Student Organizations

Diversity Student Organization (DSO)

Jourdan and I were elected to the executive board for the Diversity Student Organization. Jourdan was elected President and I was elected Vice President. We contributed to the organization of monthly meeting and represented DSO, as well as our other student organizations, at Admitted Students Day. This year we also worked with other DSO member to become more engaged with activities at the iSchool. Jourdan, a fellow DSO member and I wrote a proposal for the iSchools conference that focused on creating diverse educational experiences. Jourdan and two DSO members participated in the iFest TechShop game design challenge. Our main event this year was (iCCC).

iCCC

At iCCC, panelists will provide multiple perspectives on growing the iSchool and building a sustainable academic, professional, and alumni network. This event will offer an opportunity for

students, faculty, and administrative leaders to discuss three essential C's to the iSchool: curricula, career, and community.

- iCCC Panel Event was held in the open space of the Student Collaboration Center, 3rd Fl., IS Bldg.
- Appropriate timing is key for this event. This year iCCC fell on Good Friday and some of the faculty members were unable to attend. Overall we had about 30-40 students attend and the event was quite successful.
- The panelists were,
 - Dean Ron Larsen
 - Dr. Amelia Acker, Assistant Professor
 - Dr. Peter Brusilovsky , IS Chair and Professor
 - Dr. Konstantinos Pelechris, Assistant Professor
 - Leona Mitchell, Visiting Professor of Practice
 - Moderator: Wes Lipschultz
- Invitations were sent a month prior to event.
- Provided catered food from Giant Eagle Market District.
- Overall structure:
 - Introduction
 - Panel discussion
 - Panel/audience discussion

ASIS&T

Jourdan was elected as President of ASIS&T. I became a general member/volunteer for the Professional Language Conversation Cafe series.

Professional Language Café

The initial idea for the Professional Language Café came from a MLIS member of ASIS&T who was an international student. She felt that she and her friends could benefit from a place to learn professional style English for job interviews, resumes and cover letter.

In the spring of 2015 we launched PLC as a biweekly session that would bring in a speaker who was a specialist in resumes, cover letter and interviews. The students that attended responded very well (we even had students from outside of the iSchool attend). At our first session 20 people showed up and this number remained steady throughout the programs duration.