

Savannah State University



International Student Handbook



You Can Get Anywhere From Here...
www.savannahstate.edu

International Student Handbook

On behalf of the Savannah State University faculty and staff we wish to extend to you our warmest welcome to the United States and to Savannah, Georgia.

It is the goal of this handbook to assist you as you begin work toward your academic goals and to do our best to make your transition to Savannah State University comfortable and safe. It is our hope that after reading this handbook you will have a general idea of what to expect as you begin your studies at Savannah State University. The staff members in the International Education Center are available to help you with any information, advice or assistance you may need. We are located Gardner Hall and our phone number is 358-4147 or 358-4152. The Center is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

We would like to acknowledge the University of Florida and Georgia Southern University, Armstrong Campus for their kindness and permission to use some sections from their handbooks.

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Savannah State University is a unit of the University System of Georgia- an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution, accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

The American Academic System

Academics

By the time Americans attend college most students have completed 13 years of formal education: six years of elementary school, three years of middle school, and four years of senior high school. Undergraduate college programs generally require four to five years of study, while masters programs involve two additional years of study, and doctoral programs three or more years beyond the master's level. The American academic system, as a whole, is intended to provide a broad education for as many people as possible. Many institutions of higher education require exams for admission evaluation; however there is no screening examination that directs a student into an academic or vocational area at an early age. A high proportion of the population completes secondary school and many students attempt some kind of post-secondary education at the undergraduate level. Within the American society there is disagreement between those who advocate earlier and greater specialization in a field and those who believe in a broader "humanistic" or "Liberal Arts" education. Because of these differences in philosophies, emphasis on requirements may vary from university to university, or from department to department within the same school. The American educational system does produce specialists, people who study a limited range of topics in great depth. Specialization comes later in the U.S. system than it does in most other countries. It is not until the third year of undergraduate work that a student concentrates on the study of his "major" field. There is further specialization in graduate work, especially as students undertake research for their thesis or dissertation.

Leadership and Extracurricular Activities

While American academic institutions encourage the learning of facts, most also advocate the student's personal growth. A variety of activities attract student participation on American campuses, and these extracurricular activities are believed to develop "leadership" qualities in students, which will enrich their lives after they graduate from school.

Savannah State University offers a comprehensive array of organized and informal co-curricular activities including 75 student organizations, leadership workshops, 15 intramural activities, student publications and student internships. Student organizations and leadership workshops increase student involvement in campus governance, help students develop a greater understanding of the link between leadership and co-curricular activities on campus, help students become more purposeful in their academic pursuits, and apply institutional values of honesty, civility and respect for freedom of thought and expression.

SSU offers a full range of recreational activities and facilities for students, faculty and staff including two gymnasiums, a pool, outdoor tennis courts, soccer fields, basketball courts, and a fitness center with state-of-the-art exercise equipment.

Entrance Examinations

Information regarding minimum test scores and requirements for admission to Savannah State University may be found in the Undergraduate Admission section on the college website. Many universities require students to take nationally administered examinations, which permit the school to

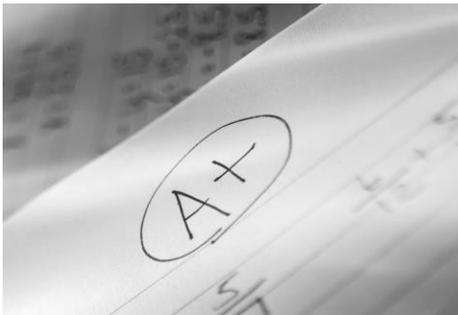
evaluate the student's skills in relation to other students across the country. Some universities require a minimum score on these examinations before they will accept an applicant. International students must also take these examinations before they are considered for admission.

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) measures a student's mastery of the English language. Most universities require international students to take this examination before admission to graduate or undergraduate schools. Many schools also require international students to take the Test of Spoken English (TSE).

Undergraduate admission may depend upon one's score on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Testing Program (ACT). These tests measure verbal and math skills of high school students. High scores on the College Board Achievement Tests (also known as "advanced placement tests" or "APT") in English composition, mathematics, social sciences, and sciences may give an entering student advanced placement in the University. Some schools will approve credits for university-level courses if the student's score is high on these examinations.

The most common test for graduate school admission is the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). This test measures proficiency in English, mathematics, and logic. Professional schools also require entrance examinations. Students who wish to earn a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA) must complete the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT).

The Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton, New Jersey administers the majority of these examinations. Students may write directly to the ETS for registration forms and information. Their address is: Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ, 08541-6151 or you can visit their website at www.ets.org



Evaluation of Performance in School

Credits

The quantity of academic work a student does at the University is measured in "credits." The number of credits a course is worth usually depends on the number of hours per week that it meets. A "three-credit course," for example, will meet three hours weekly for one semester. It might meet for three fifty-minute sessions, as undergraduate classes normally do, or for one three-hour session, the more common pattern for graduate classes. At the end of the semester, the student who has achieved a passing grade in the course has earned "three credits" or "three credit hours." A student must earn a specified number of credits in order to graduate. This number varies for undergraduates and graduates, as well as among departments. Further information about specific requirements for various degrees may be found in the catalogues or through the departments.

The Grading System

The quality of a student's academic work is measured by means of "grades." There are seven grades which are considered "passing" grades for undergraduates at Savannah State University: A, B+, B, C+, C, D+, and D. For undergraduates, the grade which designates "failing" is "F". For graduate students, "passing" grades are more stringent: A, B+, B, C+ and C (although graduate students must maintain a "B" overall grade point average). Grades lower than a C may be considered failing grades in graduate school. The official explanation of grades at Savannah State University may be found in the University catalogues. Each grade carries a designated number of "points" per credit. These point designations and computations may be found in the catalogue under the headings "Grades" and "Averages."

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to demonstrate a high standard of academic honesty in all phases of academic work and college life. Academic dishonesty represents an attack on intellectual integrity without which there can be no true education. In taking tests and examinations, completing homework, laboratory work, and writing papers, students are expected to perform honestly. Consequently, Savannah State has established the following policies for detected acts of academic dishonesty.

1. All cases of detected academic dishonesty will be reported by the faculty to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.
2. Plagiarism or cheating in any academic work will result in a recorded grade of "F" for that work.
3. A second offense during the course of a student's academic career at Savannah State will result in an "F" for the course in which the academic dishonesty has occurred. In addition, students who have committed a second offense of academic dishonesty during their academic career at Savannah State will be placed on academic probation for a minimum of one semester.
4. A third incidence of academic dishonesty during a student's career at Savannah State will result in immediate dismissal from the College.



Savannah State University Teaching Methods

Lectures

The most common method of instruction at the University is the classroom lecture. The lectures are often supplemented by "discussion sections," which are led by professors by reading assignments in textbooks or library books, and by periodic written assignments.

Discussion Sections

In classes that are too large to permit questions and discussion, a "discussion section" is often arranged for students to pose questions to the instructor leading the section. It is very important for students to contribute to the discussion in the classrooms, as this is one aspect in which students are evaluated for grades. In some countries it is "disrespectful" for the student to question or challenge the teacher. In this country, by contrast, questioning or challenging the teacher is viewed as a good sign of interest, attention, and independent thinking. In many classes, your grade will be determined in part by your contribution to class discussion. If you sit in "respectful" silence, the professor may assume that you are not interested in what is being said in the class, or that you do not understand any of the discussion.

Laboratories

Many courses have co-requisite laboratory courses, where the theory learned in a classroom is applied to practical problems. This means you must take the discussion course and the laboratory course. It is recommended that you take the course and lab at the same time. For further information please, check with the department offering the course.

Office hours

If for some reason you do not have the opportunity to raise questions in class, you can visit privately with your professors during their office hours. These are designated times when the professor will be available in his/her office to answer questions. Professors usually announce their office hours during the first few meetings of the course. Some professors will make appointments with students who have a conflict with their office hours.

Term papers

In many courses students are required to write a "term paper" (also called simply a "paper"). A term paper is written based on study or research the student himself/herself has done in the library or laboratory. Teachers normally assign term papers during the early part of the course. Students are expected to work on the paper during the semester and submit it near the end of the semester when it is due. The grade the student receives on the term paper may constitute a significant portion of his/her grade for the course. It is wise to complete term papers in advance of their due date so there is time to ask another person to review the paper and suggest revisions. Many students consult with their professors before writing their papers. The library and bookstores have books that explain the format of term papers, including the use of footnotes and bibliographies. In particular, Kate Turabian's book, *Manual for Writers of Theses and Dissertation* and the *Chicago Manual of Style* are well-known guides to term paper format. Questions about term paper assignments should be discussed with the professor. Professors prefer typewritten papers to handwritten papers.

Libraries

Both in the preparation of the term papers and in doing assignments for classes, students are likely to use the library quite often. It is important, therefore, to learn how the library system works. You will need your student identification card in order to check out materials.

Examinations

Students will take many examinations while they are in school. Nearly every class has a "final examination" at the end of the semester. Most have a "mid-term examination" near the middle of the semester. There may also be additional "tests" or "quizzes" given with greater frequency, perhaps even weekly. All these tests are designed to assure that students are doing the work that is assigned to them,

and to measure how much they are learning. There are two general types of tests, objective and subjective, and these may be administered in a variety of forms.

Objective examinations

An objective examination tests the student's knowledge of particular facts. International students sometimes have difficulty with objective examinations, not because they do not know the material on which the test is based, but because their knowledge of English sometimes is not sophisticated enough to enable them to distinguish subtle differences in meaning. There are five different kinds of questions commonly found on objective examinations. Multiple choice questions require the student to choose from a series of answers, selecting the one (or more) that is most appropriate. True and false questions demand that the student read a statement and indicate whether it is true or false. Matching questions involve pairing the words, statements, or phrases from two columns.

Subjective examinations or "essay questions"

These test items require the student to write an essay in response to a question or statement. This kind of examination tests a student's ability to organize and relate his/her knowledge of a particular subject. You are usually expected to write a long "discussion-style" answer to an essay question. Because the time allotted for each essay question may be short, you must be able to put your thoughts quickly down on the paper.



Keys to Academic Success

Expect to Adjust to a New Environment.

A period of adjustment to a new educational system is often necessary before students are able to perform to the best of their abilities. International students sometimes earn lower grades during their first semester in school in the U.S. than they are used to in their home countries. Then, as they become accustomed to the system, their English and their grades improve.

Select Courses Wisely.

Especially during the first semester, students should not take more courses than necessary. As all international students must be registered full-time, it is important to choose a combination of more-demanding and less-demanding courses rather than only "difficult" ones which require unusually heavy amounts of work. When arranging their course schedules, students should consult not only with their academic advisors, but also with experienced students who are familiar with available courses and teachers. International students may be tempted to register for more courses than necessary in order to earn their degree more quickly. The usual result from taking too many courses may be discouragement, and poor academic performance. Students should be familiar with pass/fail options, as well as the procedure for dropping courses, which may be found in the catalogue. The advisors at the different

departments, as well as at the International Education Center staff, work to help students in difficult academic positions such as these. You have to see an advisor at the International Education Center before you can drop a course or withdraw. Any time you are experiencing academic difficulties, or are having trouble selecting courses, consult with an advisor at International Education Center immediately.

Ask for Help Immediately.

If you find that the course load you are taking becomes overwhelming, you should speak to your advisor, professor, or an International Education Center staff member immediately. If a problem is identified early, the chances are greater for a positive resolution of the situation. Students may be directed to tutoring services, assisted in "dropping" a course, or advised in other ways to remedy the situation.

Work Hard from the Beginning.

It is not possible, in the American system of higher education, to wait until the latter part of the semester to begin studying. If you do not begin studying on the first day of classes, you are likely to find yourself behind and may experience academic difficulty.

Talk to Professors.

Professors expect students to ask questions in class or immediately following the class. When students have problems or need advice, they should make an appointment to visit the professor during his/her office hours. If a student is not doing well in class and does not go to see the professor to discuss the situation, the professor is likely to assume that the student is not really interested in the course. Professors may, in fact, have a negative or indifferent evaluation of a student who never raises questions or challenges in class, or who does not visit the professor outside of the class to discuss academic issues.

Understand the Assumptions behind the Educational System.

From past experience in your own educational system, you may have developed certain assumptions about the nature and purpose of education, and about the way your field of interest should be studied. For example, students may have been taught that it is important to be able to memorize large quantities of information that are provided by professors, authors, or other experts. In the American educational system, international students may find that being able to memorize material is less important than being able to analyze and synthesize material from many sources (to read several things and to reconstruct a theory or a system in one's own way) as they develop their own ideas and viewpoints. It is important to realize the differences that exist between the U.S. and other educational systems. New students will need to adjust their thinking if they are going to succeed academically. Whether or not the student personally accepts the values of the educational system here, he/she will find it easier to act in accordance with them while he/she is here.



Know How To Study

The study habits that were appropriate for the educational system in your home country may not be appropriate for the educational system in the US. Students may need to approach their studies in a different way while studying here.

Free Tutorial Assistance

The **University College/Center for Academic Success**, located in room 203 in Whiting Hall offers tutoring in English, math, chemistry, history, economics, Spanish, and accounting. They are open Monday through Saturday. The **ReWrite Connection** or writing center is available in the library to assist students with developing strong writing skills.

Study Skills

Organize your time.

Students have a large amount of work to do and a limited amount of time in which to do it. Schedules permit the student to maximize the efficiency of their performance by planning different sections of the day or week in which to accomplish their tasks. Specific time periods should be devoted to sleeping, eating, enjoying personal activities, attending classes, and studying. Adjust your schedule to allow adequate study time. Reading the course syllabi for each of your courses at the beginning of the semester will enable you to set completion dates for assignments at different times during the semester. The important point is to organize one's time so that all assignments and demands can be accommodated.

Read effectively.

It may not be possible to memorize all the reading materials for the entire semester, or even to study them in depth. In general, students are expected to familiarize themselves with the main points from each reading and to be able to relate what different writers have said regarding the same issue. Learn to draw the main points from a large number of readings.

Here are some suggestions: Skim: contents, the titles of chapters, the headings of various sections of chapters, the "topic sentences" which begin most paragraphs, and the summary paragraphs or sections. This gives the reader an outline of what the author is saying.

Read: Review the material more carefully this time, noting the main points, conclusions, and contentions. It is often easiest to write notes about these main points, following the outline of the reading itself. Question: Rather than passively accepting what the writer has written, ask yourself, "Why is the writer saying this?" "What is the evidence for that?" "Does that agree with what this same writer said earlier, or with what another writer on the same subject said.

Review. Skim the reading again. Look at your notes again. Try to retain in your mind the main points of the readings. If the student finds that he/she is reading slowly or that his/her vocabulary is inadequate, the Rewrite Center and other support services are available. Feel free to consult with International Education Center staff concerning this type of problem.

Derive as much as Possible from Classes.

Since attendance and participation in classes are such important parts of the academic system here, it is worthwhile to gain as much as possible from your classes. Be prepared for class. Read in advance. If you have read the assignments that relate to a class, you will understand the material in the class better. In class, questions relating to the readings may arise. Take notes. Write down the main points which the

professor makes. Many professors will use phrases that will help the student to identify the points they believe are important and that students should therefore listen attentively. After the class, review the notes. Complete the information that you might have left out in class. Mark items that are still unclear. Reviewing the notes after class helps students to remember the material. Ask for help if necessary.

Review

Remain current in your studies. If a student falls behind on reading or assignments, he/she will have difficulty preparing adequately for tests. Schedule time to review. Before the test, review notes from lectures and readings. Anticipate what the professor will ask on the test by recalling the points that were emphasized during the lecture.

Prepare for Tests.

Rest well before the test. Most people perform better on tests if they sleep adequately the night before the exam. "Cramming" for the examination, that is, attempting to study all the material on the night before the examination, usually results in exhaustion during the examination and poor performance. Read test instructions carefully. Know what questions are being asked in the test, and answer only what is being asked. Many students miss points because they do not properly answer the question that was asked. Schedule time accordingly. Notice how much time is available during the test period, how many points are awarded for each question, and evaluate the time involved in answering the different types of questions.

Academic Advisement

Undergraduate students must satisfy general education requirements, as well as the requirements of their upper division colleges before they receive their bachelor's degree. During the first two years of study (freshmen and sophomore), students choose required and elective courses. Because the upper division colleges require their applicants to have successfully completed certain prerequisites before admittance, students should plan their schedules very carefully

Undergraduate Student Academic Regulations

The regulations listed here are not the only regulations with which students must comply, but are also the most commonly misunderstood rules that pose serious consequences for students if not followed. The University catalogues list other regulations of special concern to students and are the official academic regulations of the University.

Professors and Departments

The immediate sources of help for students are the professors and graduate assistants for the particular course. Professors hold office hours during the week, during which times they are available. In addition, graduate assistants and graders hold office hours to help students with problems or questions. If these sources are not adequate, the professor may know of other students who will tutor.



Can I work?

Student Employment

F-1 On-Campus

F-1 students may work at the University without having to obtain permission from INS. You may work on campus up to 20 hours per week as long as the job does not interfere with your ability to continue as a full-time student. You may work up to 40 hours per week during the Summer sessions and semester breaks. You can find information about on-campus employment opportunities by contacting the Career Services office located on the 2nd floor of the King Frazier Student Center. You can also ask about employment opportunities through your department or in the dining areas on campus.

F-1 Off-Campus

In order to work off-campus F-1 students must obtain permission from both the ISS and INS. Off-campus part-time employment is VERY RARELY granted. Off-campus employment, if approved, is limited to 20 hours per week while you are registered, and during the vacation semester you may work up to 40 hours per week if you are not registered. Permission will not be granted during a student's first year in the U.S. For further information please consult with the International Education Center.

F-1 Optional Practical Training

Practical training permission allows the student to obtain employment experience in their field of study to increase their academic experience. You will become eligible for practical training after the first year in F-1 status. F-1 students may be granted permission by INS to undertake full-time employment, "practical training," under 2 sets of circumstances: Optional Practical Training: To be carried out before or after completion of the degree and available for a maximum of 12 months (no extensions allowed.) Please be advised that you need to submit your request 90-120 days before to the date you intend to start working. Practical Training is only endorsed by the International Education Center with your Academic Advisor's consent. Practical Training is given to F-1 students for twelve months.

Curricular Practical Training

Before completion of the degree requirements and only if it is stated in the student's degree requirements that an internship or practicum is needed to finish the degree. There has to be a course available to register for the internship, co-op or practicum. Curricular Practical training is granted per "semester" and cannot exceed twelve months as a total. If it exceeds this time, it counts against Optional Practical Training.

Severe Economic Hardship:

F-1 students are eligible to apply for off-campus employment based on severe economic hardship provided that:

- 1) They are in good standing and carrying a full course of study;

- 2) They can demonstrate unforeseen severe economic hardship;
- 3) Employment opportunities on campus are unavailable or insufficient;
- 4) They have been in F-1 status for one academic year; and
- 5) Acceptance of employment will not interfere with the student's carrying a full course of study.
- 6) Do not begin working until your authorization has been issued by the DHS.
- 7) You will be required to pay a non-refundable fee of \$340 to file.
- 8) Recommendation processed by DHS takes 2 to 4 months to approve an authorization.



Social Security Cards

Once you have received a job offer to work on campus go to the Office of International Education and ask for a letter stating that you are eligible to work and you will need a letter of offer from the Human Resources Department. Complete an on-line application for a social security card at www.socialsecurity.gov/online/ss-5.html

Take the two letters, the application, your passport & visa, your I-94 and I-20 to the social security office located at 430 Mall Boulevard. The office is open Monday through Friday. The telephone number is 912.353.7059. Try to arrive in the morning and be prepared to wait!

Before you leave the social security office ask for a receipt and the person's name taking your application. It takes 30 to 90 days after you apply to receive your card.

Taxes

US Income Taxes

- All F and J visa holders are **required** to file an income tax return each year no later than April 15th.
- All F and J visa holders are **required** to file form 8843.

- If you have income to report, you will file form 1040NR or form 1040NREZ and Georgia state income tax forms.
- Georgia state income tax forms can be found online at www.gatax.org
- All federal tax forms can be found online at www.irs.gov
- Income may be in the form of one or more of the following: covering room and board, on campus jobs, optional practical training, curricular training, assistantships, fellowships or interest earned.
- The US has tax treaties with multiple countries regarding income taxes. Please refer to the IRS Publication 901, U.S. Tax Treaties. You can view this publication online at www.irs.gov
- In order to file you must have a social security number or an ITIN (Taxpayer Identification Number) issued by the IRS. If you do not have a social security number or are ineligible to receive one, you must apply for an ITIN. To apply you must complete Form W-7, available at the IRS website, mail it along with copies of your immigration documents to: Internal Revenue Service, ITIN Unit. The nine digit number that you will be issued is good only for paying taxes and not good for employment or other uses.
- All forms and checks should be mailed to: Internal Revenue Service, Philadelphia, PA 19255.



The Housing Situation in Savannah

The Office of Residential Services and Programs strives to provide a living environment that is not only comfortable, safe and secure, but also conducive to academic and personal growth. Living in a residence hall is much more than a place to sleep, eat and study. Campus living provides a wealth of opportunities for developing lasting friendships, participating in co-curricular social and education activities, and sharing experiences with people from different backgrounds, interests, cultures, academic pursuits and aspirations. Residents often study together, participate in campus intramural sports and athletic teams, attend and participate in a wide variety of programs and activities offered in residence, or become involved in the various forms of student government. Being conveniently located on campus makes it easy to take advantage of many opportunities available right on your own doorsteps.

Some of the benefits of living on campus include:

- Residential living appears to have a positive influence on persistence to graduation. In other words, there is a stronger relationship between living on campus and eventually graduating than is the case for living off campus.

- As a result of structured programs, students living on campus tend to be more involved in various cultural, social, personal, academic, and other co-curricular experiences. This is particularly important in light of our understanding that students who are highly involved in campus programs are more likely to be satisfied with their collegiate experience and to graduate than students who are not involved in such opportunities.
- Students who reside on campus tend to have significantly greater gains in areas of psychosocial development (e.g. intellectual orientation, autonomy, inner-directedness and academic and social self-concepts) than their peers who reside off campus and commute.
- There is evidence that suggests that students living on campus experience greater gains in aesthetic appreciation, cultural understandings, intellectual values and political liberalism than their peers who reside off campus and commute.
- In terms of personal development, students who reside on campus typically are better adjusted, show more initiative, are more trusting, and are less likely to be overly dependent on parents than students who live off campus.

On-Campus Housing Options

The Freshman Living Learning Center is home to 306 freshman students. The rooms are separated into several clusters to create small communities.

Floor Plans

Single room (private)

- **4 Person Cluster**

Double room (shared)

Single in a double room (private)

- **8 Person Cluster**

Double room (shared)

Single room (private)

Single in a double room (private)

Amenities Include:

- Fully furnished rooms
- Desks
- Chest of drawers
- Closets
- Twin size regular beds
- Lobby area with vending machines
- Keyless entry system
- Computer lab
- Catering kitchen
- Laundry facilities (unlimited)
- Laundry Fee included in rent)
- Seminar room
- Recreation room

University Commons provides a great location with a unique apartment and townhome living environment for 705 upper-class students. All units are fully furnished with full kitchens and utilities included in the rent.

Floor Plans

- 1 Bedroom Double, 1 Bathroom Townhome
- 2 Bedroom, 1 Bathroom Townhome
- 3 Bedroom, 2 Bathroom Townhome
- 4 Bedroom, 2 Bathroom

Amenities Include:

- Private bedrooms & private bathrooms available
- Upgraded laundry room
- Fully furnished units
- Full kitchens
 - *Includes: Microwave, Stove, Refrigerator and Kitchen Table
- Paid utilities
- Computer Lab

University Village provides a unique apartment living environment for 516 upper-class and 144 freshman students. All units are fully furnished with full kitchens and utilities included in the rent.

FLOOR PLANS

- 1 Bedroom, 1 Bathroom**
- 2 Bedroom, 2 Bathroom**
- 4 Bedroom, 2 Bathroom**

AMENITIES

- Private bedrooms & private bathrooms available
- Fully furnished units
- Full kitchens
 - *Includes: Microwave, Stove, Refrigerator and Kitchen Table
- Paid utilities
- Computer Lab

Bostic Hall is home to 200 male students and the student population is mixture of ALL classifications.

Bowen-Smith Hall is a co-ed facility (120 females/80 males), where the first, second and third floors are assigned to females and the fourth and fifth floors are assigned to males. The building and floors can only be accessed by keyless entry. Each of these residence halls has a lobby area where students can find comfortable seating, cable TV and vending machines. Students have access to a kitchen where they can use the microwaves to prepare small meals. Each residence hall is equipped with a keyless entry system, a surveillance camera system, laundry rooms and a computer lab. The rooms in the residence halls are furnished with two desks, chairs, chests of drawers, closets and two-twin size (36 x 80) beds.

Wright Hall, Tiger Court, Tiger Place & Camilla Hall are home to students of all levels. The buildings and floors can only be accessed by keyless entry. In addition, each room is equipped with basic cable, wireless Internet access. The rooms in the residence halls are furnished with two desks, chairs, chests of drawers, closets and two-twin size (36 x 80) beds.

All of the residential facilities have available a live-in professional residence hall director (general manager for University Village), community assistant staff and programming initiatives that offer opportunities for the residents to foster their personal learning and development outside of the classroom.



Where and When You Can Eat on Campus

We have three dining options on campus.

- Tiger Dining Hall, King-Frazier Student Center
- Tiger Café, King-Frazier Student Center
- Tiger Express Diner

What You Can Eat

The “all you care to eat” meals in the dining hall are on a 4-week menu cycle. Menus are subject to change as special events occur.

Sunday Brunch!

Sunday brunch is special. Sunday brunch is included as one of the possible meals in any meal plan.

Meal Plans

All resident students at SSU are required to have a meal plan. Freshmen residents must purchase the 20-meal-a-week plan and upperclass students must purchase the 14-meal-a-week plan, but may purchase the 20-meal-a-week plan.



Off Campus Living Options

Things To Keep In Mind When Looking For Accommodations To Rent or Lease In And Around The City Of Savannah.

You are not obliged to rent an apartment if you look at it!

When looking for accommodations, as a prospective tenant remember that you are the customer and you are looking for a place to live that is a good fit for you and your lifestyle. If you do not like the first house or apartment you look at that is fine. All you have to tell the landlord is that you want to look around more. Do not feel pressured to accept an apartment or house that you do not like. It is very important that you see the apartment you are going to rent before you sign any agreements or leases. Get everything in writing before you sign a lease! All expenses of repair, painting, etc. should be written into the lease agreement before you sign it.

Suggested Questions for Landlords:

- How much is the monthly rent?
- How much is the security deposit?
- What is included in the rent? Utilities? If not, what is the average monthly cost of utilities?
- Is it furnished?
- Can I use the kitchen?
- Will I share the room with anybody?
- How many people are sharing the house? Are they all males or females?
- Is smoking permitted?
- How far is it from the house (or apartment) to the bus stop?
- Monthly Lease: Is it renewable automatically?
- Yearly Lease: Is it renewable automatically?
- How much is the deposit?
- Is there any laundry facility available?
- What notice is required to terminate the agreement?
- Parking: Is there a lot? A garage?
- On-Street Parking? Are spaces assigned?
- Is there any additional charge for parking?

Security Deposits and First and Last Months' Rent

A landlord will probably ask you for money before you move into an apartment. This may be in the form of a security deposit and usually includes the first and last months' rent. This can sometimes amount to more than \$1,000 dollars. A "security deposit" is an amount of money that is supposed to guarantee that the tenant will care for the dwelling. If the tenant does not care for the property or clean it before leaving, the landlord has a legal right to keep the security deposit. Otherwise, the landlord must return the security deposit within a month after the tenant leaves. You should have the agreement about the security deposit in writing included in the lease. Landlords will often ask for the sum of the first and last months' rent before the tenant moves into the apartment. This is to protect the landlord in case the tenant leaves early without paying the rent for the agreed upon lease term. Each landlord has particular requirements for deposits. You should ask the landlord about his particular requirements.

Signing a lease

In most cases, the landlord will require the tenant to sign a lease. A lease is a written agreement between a tenant and a landlord that describes the responsibilities of each party. This is a binding legal document that commits the student to a specific period of residency in the unit. Most landlords in Savannah want the tenant to sign a one-year lease. This presents a problem if the student leaves for the summer, because you must find someone to assume responsibility for the lease. If you know that you will not be in Savannah for the entire year, you should not sign a year's lease. Shorter leases are available, or you can "sublease" from someone who has a preset lease.

Utilities

Unless someone is already living in the dwelling, the new tenant must start utility services, such as telephone, electricity, and gas. The tenant may need to assume the cost of water, garbage and pest control (a service where a company exterminates insects on a monthly basis), and may want to pay for cable television connection. Prospective tenants should ask the landlord about which services the landlord will provide and which services the tenant must arrange. This is important because utilities require deposits that may be expensive.

Duration of the Lease

A prospective tenant should not sign a lease for a time period longer than he anticipates needing the housing. Some landlords will agree to leases of 6-, 9-, or 12-month duration with the option of renewing each additional month. The renter should ask whether he/she can "break" the lease (terminate occupancy early) if he/she gives a one or two month notice to the landlord. If not, the renter will be required to pay rent until the end of the period covered by the lease even if he/she moves out and lives elsewhere. Many unpleasant disputes arise between landlords who want to keep their property rented and student renters who, after signing a lease, decide for some reason that they wish to live elsewhere. The lease should specify whether "subleasing" is permitted. "Subleasing" is a lease arrangement whereby another person replaces the initial tenant with responsibility for the lease.

Restrictions

The lease may contain restrictions, such as not permitting animals or children in the dwelling. Ask the landlord about his/her particular requirements. If you do not obey the restrictions on the lease, the landlord can ask you to leave.



Staying Healthy

Many illnesses surface because of a change in environment or an increase of stress. New students who arrive in the United States witness changes in time zone, environment, and diet that may initially cause sleep or digestive problems. Being kind to yourself and allowing yourself adequate sleep and leisure time will avoid many trips to the Health Care Center! As the school year progresses and finals approach, many students drop their normal eating, sleeping, and recreation patterns. While a modification may be in order during stressful times, complete dismissal of these routines may in fact increase stress, decrease performance, or cause illness. The best way to stay healthy is to stay balanced! This permits you to perform your mental and physical best.

University Health Requirements

Health Insurance

Why Purchase Health Insurance? Besides the fact that the University requires it, American health care is private, and therefore extremely expensive. If a person is not able to pay for him/herself and has not purchased insurance, many hospitals and physicians will refuse to treat them. For this reason, Americans purchase health insurance, which covers the bulk of their medical expenses. Savannah State University requires all international students to register for comprehensive health insurance. Students who fail to comply with this rule will not be able to register for classes.

The Harris-McDew Student Health Services are maintained to improve and safeguard the health of students. Services provided include medical assessment and care, information and referrals offered in the framework of a wellness model. All enrolled students that pay the Student Health Fee are eligible to use these services.

A student must present his or her I.D. Card at the Health Center in order to receive treatment.

Students too ill to attend classes must report to the Student Health Center or obtain a private physician's excuse to present to the instructor upon return to classes.

Students that are ill may not be allowed to remain in the residence hall without medical attention.

Any seriously contagious or unusual illness of students should be reported to Health Services immediately.

Location

The Harris-McDew Health Center is located on Jasmine Avenue adjacent to Payne Hall. It includes beds for temporary Services.

Services Available

Assessment and care of minor illnesses.

Medication for minor illnesses.

Preventive Medicine and Wellness Promotion Programs.

Limited care of emergencies by attending personnel.

Limited medications for illnesses treated by other health care providers when the Health Center is closed.

Assistance in emergencies by attending personnel.

STD Testing, Treatment and Counseling.

Minor Surgical Procedures.

Health Screening e.g., Blood Pressure.

Health Education.

Limited diagnostic testing as indicated.

Students may be observed temporarily in the Health Center for illness to severe for out-patient care, but not requiring confinement in a local hospital.

Referrals to private providers for a specialty care.

Information and training materials.

Collaborative Health Testing Clinic

HIV Testing Clinic

Women's Clinic

Student Insurance Information.

Abstinence: Make The Right Choice Program (Georgia CYCC) Children and Youth Council.

MANDATORY HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

The United States Department of State requires that all exchange visitors and their accompanying spouse or dependents be covered by insurance for the full duration of the J-1 Exchange Program. These requirements have been established by the Department of State to protect the exchange visitor and his or her family. Program participants must have sickness and accident insurance for the entire length of participation in the J-1 exchange visitor program.

US. Department of State regulations stipulate that any exchange visitor who willfully fails to maintain the required insurance coverage will be terminated from the program, and the Department of State will be notified. Any exchange visitor who fails to maintain compliance

with insurance requirements is considered “out of status” and is therefore ineligible for extension of stay, employment, or change of status. The DS-2019 form (formerly the IAP-66 form) includes an insurance compliance statement as part of the certification signed by all exchange visitors.

Type of Coverage

Minimum coverage to exchange visitor participants and any accompanying spouse or dependent shall provide medical benefits of at least \$250,000 per accident or illness; repatriation of remains in the amount of \$7,500; expenses associated with medical evacuation to the exchange visitor’s home country in the amount of \$10,000; and a deductible not exceeding \$500 per accident or illness. The insurance policy may include a reasonable waiting period for pre-existing conditions. Furthermore, the policy shall not unreasonably exclude coverage for perils inherent to the activities of the exchange program.

Duration of Coverage

The exchange visitor and his or her accompanying family must have the required insurance coverage for the entire length of the program. Portal-to-portal (door to door) insurance coverage or traveler’s insurance for the interval between departure from one’s home country and arrival in the United States is not required but is suggested.

The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia has contracted with United Health Care to provide student accident and sickness insurance, called the USG Student Health Insurance Program (USG-SHIP), for undergraduate and graduate and international students holding “F” or “J” visa status.

Students, who can demonstrate that they have a qualifying policy through a spouse or employer or other source, may request to waive participation in the USG-Student Health Insurance program. To determine if the policy qualifies students must fill out a request for waiver at online.

Failure to Maintain Coverage

The exchange visitor program sponsor, ***Savannah State University, must terminate participation of any exchange visitor participant and all J-2 accompanying family members who willfully fail to maintain the required insurance coverage.***

Additional information may be found at

http://www.usg.edu/international_education/faculty_administrators/



Transportation

Obtaining a Driver's License

- What documents need to be presented to apply for a driver's license? You need to bring your passport, I-20 or DS-2019, I-94, social security number and two forms of legal documents that print your name and address on them (such as bank statements or water/electricity bills, or a letter from your international student advisor). These two documents are needed in order to prove your residency in Georgia.
- If you do not have a Social Security Card, the Driver's License Office will assign you a control number. If you have your international driver's license, you might also be required to forfeit your original driver's license that was issued in your own country.
- You will be required to take a test to make sure you know how to drive a vehicle safely. The test will ask multiple choice questions, as well as questions asking you to identify common traffic signs you will see on the streets. A test preparation booklet can be picked up for free at your local driver's license bureau. Finally, you will take a driving examination. During this portion of the exam you will be asked to demonstrate your driving skills with a driver's examiner in your vehicle. You can access the driver's manual on-line at www.dds.ga.gov/docs/forms/FullDriversManual.pdf you can stop by their office at 1117 Eisenhower Drive, Savannah Ga or call them at 912-651-3002.

Purchasing a Vehicle

Buying a used car is less expensive than buying a new car. The important thing is to buy a car which is safe and in good working condition. Before buying a used car take it to a mechanic and let them check out the condition of the car. Many places such as muffler, transmission, or brake shops offer free inspections. You can also check the approximate value of a used car through its "blue book" value. You can check these values by calling the loan officer at your bank or online at www.kbb.com. Bookstores are also a good place to look at or purchase a *Kelly Blue Book*. When you buy a car the "certificate of ownership or title" must be transferred to you from the previous owner, and you must register it at the Chatham County Tag Office located on 1145 Eisenhower, Savannah, Ga. To obtain a Georgia license

plate, you will need to bring the following to the county tag office: current registration, title of ownership, driver's license, and proof of insurance.

In the United States, personal vehicles (cars, trucks, vans) are clearly the most convenient method of transportation. However, unless you have an ample supply of money to pay for the vehicle, insurance, driver's license, fuel and repairs, it becomes advisable not to purchase a vehicle. If you do decide to purchase a vehicle you are ready for a real American experience! In the United States, you can buy a vehicle from:

- A new car dealer
- A used car dealer
- A private person
- A government auction

Each situation comes with a different set of circumstances. For whatever reason, used car dealers have a terrible reputation in this country, so use considerable caution! The same applies to new car dealers, who will try to make you pay as much as possible for your vehicle. Most students go to private owners, who unfortunately, are also quite happy to pass along their headache (or lemon) to some unsuspecting student from abroad. If you do decide to go to a dealer, there are laws that protect new car buyers, called "Lemon Laws." The additional advantage of going to a dealer is that you get a warranty with your purchase, whereas you will not usually obtain one with a purchase from a private owner or auction. However, the auctions will, more often than not, provide the best price on a vehicle. **Beware!! Oral agreements such as "I will buy the car back from you in a year." Are worthless! Even written contracts may sometimes be difficult or too time consuming to enforce.**

Suggestions for purchasing a used vehicle

- Take along an experienced friend.
- Do not get talked into buying a more expensive car than you can afford.
- Do not believe everything you hear from a salesperson. They are trying to make a profit.
- Look under the car for signs of leakage. Check the bodywork carefully for signs of an accident. Check for rust, the conditions of the windshield wipers, turn signals, air conditioner and all the lights. If the car looks okay take it for a test drive-not just around the block. Make sure it is insured before you drive it. Be alert for vibrations in the steering that could indicate front end trouble. See how well the car accelerates, and if exhaust is smoky. Smoke and/or little power could indicate that the engine needs an overhaul.
- Test the brakes for signs of pulling to one side. Accelerate rapidly and apply the brakes. Increased stopping distance indicates that the brakes may need replacement. Take the car to a car wash to see if it leaks.
- Before you buy, take the car to a mechanic you trust or to a diagnostic station. Get an opinion on the brakes, clutch, transmission, etc. It may cost you \$25 to \$30 for a check, but it could save you a lot more in repair bills.

- If buying a car from a dealer, get a written guarantee that they will pay in full for all necessary repairs needed within 30 days.
- Always compare other prices around town.

Insurance

To drive a car in Georgia, or anywhere else in the United States, you must have liability automobile insurance. It is illegal to drive without insurance coverage. Insurance can be expensive. In general, younger, inexperienced drivers will pay more than older, experienced drivers, and men will pay more than women.

There are two basic types of insurance for automobiles: liability and collision.

Liability Insurance

If you have an accident, and it is your fault, liability insurance pays for damage to the other cars, and pays for medical expenses for anyone injured. Liability insurance is much less expensive than collision insurance, but if you have an accident and it's your fault, you are responsible for paying your own damages. You must have liability insurance.

Collision Coverage

Collision insurance pays for damage to your car, even if the accident is your own fault. Collision coverage is not required.

Drinking and Driving



Drinking alcohol and driving a car is extremely **dangerous** and **illegal** in the United States. If the police catch you, and you have been drinking, you will be arrested, will have to go to court, and will have to pay a heavy penalty. Additionally, if you have been drinking and you have an accident in which someone is killed, the law considers it a form of murder. It is possible that you could go to prison for up to twenty years if you kill a person while drunk. **DON'T DO IT!**

If you are out with a group of people, make sure that one person doesn't drink any alcohol. We call this person the "designated driver." He/she is responsible for making sure everyone gets home safely.

Parking on Campus

Also be aware that in order to park on campus you need to purchase a parking decal.

- **Resident** - \$60 per year
- **Commuter** - \$60 per year

How do I get a parking decal?

Complete an online application for a parking decal. At the bottom of the application form, there will be an application number. Bring that number with you to the Cashier's office in Hill Hall for payment.

Where can I park?

Depending on your classification (resident, commuter, faculty/staff, or reserved), you will be given a specific decal color. You must park in a parking lot that has that decal color on the sign. If you are a resident student, you must park in the parking lot closest to your residence hall. If you have a reserved space, you may park in any other legal spot on campus that is not another reserved spot.

How is parking enforced?

Parking is enforced by Savannah State University's Departments of Auxiliary Services and Public Safety. Cars found in violation may be ticketed, booted, and/or towed. Parking rules and regulations as well as the **appeals process** are found in the Parking Plan. This plan was created by a committee representing students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

Parking Services and/or Public Safety shall be authorized to boot and/or tow any vehicles illegally parked which Banner records indicate has received more than 10 tickets within the current semester. This is regardless of whether the tickets have been paid.

Parking Services and/or Public Safety shall be authorized to boot and/or tow any vehicles illegally parked at a yellow curb. Parking Services will provide three (3) 30-minute drop/pick-up parking spaces near Kennedy Hall. This is in order to assist resident students to deliver their artwork to Kennedy in their cars if necessary.

University Police

It is the mission of the Savannah State University Police Department to safeguard the lives and property of the Students, Staff, Faculty and Visitors of this Prestigious University. We accomplish our mission by diligently policing to reduce criminal incidence and fear of crime. We strive to enhance public safety while working with our diverse community to improve their on campus quality of life. Our mandate is to do so with respect, professionalism, and excellence while at all times conducting ourselves with the highest ethical standards to maintain public confidence. Our offices are located in:

Hubert Hall
Phone: 912.358-3010
Fax: 912.356.2753
Silent Witness: 912-351-6771

Crime Prevention

The Savannah State University Police Department is led by Chief Barnwell. The police officers have complete powers of arrest. They have officers on duty 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Situations that require the Crime Prevention services outside of normal business hours are handled on an “on-call” basis. The Crime Prevention personnel focus their attention on the following three crime prevention categories: Property Security (both private and public property), Personal Safety, and Training Programs.

It is the responsibility of Crime Prevention personnel to keep themselves informed in trends on Crime Prevention, as well as problems on campus, and prepare material to meet these needs and standards of our customers. This unit provides a variety of Crime Prevention programs designed to educate the University's customers about criminal activity and how to respond if they are victimized.

The Patrol Division is the foundation of the Savannah State University Police Department. This Division consist of 4 (four) shifts, rotating 24 hour a day, 365 days a year. Uniformed officers may patrol in a vehicle, on foot, or on bicycles, depending on their assignments. All officers are responsible for responding to calls for assistance, protecting life and property, writing detailed reports on their findings, and conducting follow-up investigations. The officers are certified through the Peace Officers Standards and Training Council (P.O.S.T), and are trained to be professional and courteous as they perform their duties. As sworn law enforcement officers, they are vested with the powers of arrest and are armed.

Our uniformed patrol officers are the first to respond to emergency calls on campus. They work a 12 (twelve) hour shift commanded by the Deputy Chief / Captain and are immediately supervised by a Corporal, who works in the capacity of the watch supervisor. Each shift consist of 1 Corporal and, at a minimum, 2 (two) officers. While performing patrol functions, the officers aggressively conduct community oriented policing while maintaining high visibility to maximize university presence as a deterrent to crime.

Public Transportation CAT (Chatham Area Transit)

It is cheaper to use public transportation than to own and operate a vehicle. The bus system will take you almost everywhere in the Savannah metropolitan area. Information on schedules and routes can be obtained by called 912-233-5767 or by visiting their website at www.cathacat.org. When you call an operator can tell you the quickest and most convenient route.

Savannah State students can ride any CAT bus free of charge as long as you show your student ID card when you board the bus.



Campus Activities

The campus is the center of various social, athletic, and cultural activities for students. Lectures, films, plays, sports, and concerts take place all year. Most of them are inexpensive or free. Students usually must show their validated fee card for the semester and a picture I.D. in order to use facilities on campus.

Campus Clubs and Organizations

University organizations and clubs exist for nearly every conceivable interest. There are art clubs, sports clubs, religious clubs, and clubs for people who like to sing or act, and many more. Whatever your interests, there are probably people on campus who share them.

Art

Art Club

Players be the Sea Theatrical Group

SSU Dance Ensemble

American Marketing Association

Association of Information Technology Professionals

Delta Sigma Pi Business Fraternity

Iota Phi lambda Business Sorority

National Association of Black Accountants

Phi Beta Lambda Business Fraternity

Society for Advancement of Management

Departmental

Mass Communication Club

Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity

Pre-Law Club

History Club

Governance

Graduate Association of Public Administration

Student Government Association (SGA)

Greek Life

Alpha Kappa Alpha

Alpha Phi Alpha

Delta Sigma Theta

Kappa Alpha Psi

Omega Psi Phi

Pan-Hellenic Council

Phi Beta Sigma

Sigma Gamma Rho

Zeta Phi Beta

Honors

Beta Beta Bet Honor Society

Quiz Bowl Team

Beta Kappa Chi Scientific Honor Society

Mathematics

Mathematicians In Training

Music

Choral Music Society

Delta Phi Omega Band Fraternity

Phi Gamma Pi Band Sorority

Marching Tigers Band

Others

Achievers of Today and Tomorrow

African Student Association

Black Students With A Mission

DC & Beyond

Freshmen Explorer Student Paper

International Student Association

Interracial Communication Project

Ladies of Venus and Elegance (L.O.V.E)

NAACP

Non-Traditional Student Organization

Sisters Striving for Excellence

Recreational/Sports

SSU Cheerleaders

Recreation, Parks & Administration Club

Religion

Greater Impact Campus Ministry

SSU Stuact Ministries

Wesleyan Gospel Choir

Sciences

American Chemical Society

Environmental Science Club

Marine Science Club

National Organization for the Professional
Advancement of Black Chemise & Chemical
Engineers (NOBCCHE)

National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)

Science Student Alliance

Special

Peer Counselors Association / Student Orientation
Leaders

Resident Assistant Association

**For more detailed information please contact the
Center for Student Programs & Organizations at
353-3149 or 356-2277.**





Keeping Up With Student and Exchange Visitor Program Requirements (SEVP)

The department of Homeland Security is divided into three bureaus: US Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and US Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Under the jurisdiction of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) acts to regulate international students and their dependents that attend educational institutions in the United States. SEVP is guided by the regulations and policies set forth by USCIS, and students and their dependents are maintained through the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and must abide by the requirements of the system.

The following is a list of data collected by the SEVIS system:

- Student's full name (as listed in the passport)
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Country of birth
- Country of citizenship
- Issue reason (initial/initial-change of status requested)
- Foreign physical address (may not be a post office box)
- US address (upon availability)
- Education level (associate, bachelor's, master's, etc...)
- Program(s) of study
- Length of study
- Program start and end date
- English proficiency
- Number of months per term
- Expenses
- Dependent Information

Additionally, the following must also be updated in the SEVIS system as changes occur:

- Change of name
- Program of study
- Program end date (extensions or early completion)
- Transfer of schools
- Financial Changes
- Change of Address
- Employment and Training Information
- Dependent Information

Please make two copies of the following documents in case your originals are lost! Keep copies in a separate from your originals:

- Passport (ID Page(s) Only)
- Visa
- I-94 Arrival and Departure Record
- Form I-20 (F-1 students and dependents)
- Form DS-2019 (J-1 students, scholars, and dependents)
- Social Security Card
- Sponsorship letters
- Financial documents
- Health Insurance records
- Immunization records
- Driver's License
- Transcripts

We also strongly recommend that you make copies of any forms/applications before submitting to USCIS.

This section is designed to provide general answers to questions you might have about visa matters. If you have problems or questions, please visit or call the International Education Center at 912.358.4147 or 358.4152.

I-20/DS-2019

The I-20 (F visa) and DS-2019 (J visa) are the documents used to obtain the visa. Your dependents should have been issued an F-2 or J-2 visa.

Passport

Your passport must be kept at all times. Passport renewals may be obtained by contacting your country's consulate or embassy.

Visa

The visa is the document issued by a US consulate or embassy that allows foreign nationals to enter the United States for a specific purpose and period of time. For F visa holders, the visa does not indicate the length of time which the student is allowed to remain in the US. If your visa expires while in the US it is not necessary to renew it as long as you remain in the US. If you leave the country, however, you must renew your visa before you will be permitted re-entry.

Visa for Spouse and Children

The spouse and children of an F-1 visa holder are issued F-2 visas. An F-2 visa holder is not eligible to apply for work permission. J-2 visas are issued to the spouse and children of a J-1 visa holder. Under certain circumstances, a J-2 visa holder may apply for work permission with USCIS.

I-94: Arrival/Departure Record

The form I-94, also called the Arrival/Departure Record, is the small white card attached to your passport at the port of entry to the United States. Many of you will now be able to access your I-94 card online. This form officially determines how long an international student can remain in the US. Please do not detach this card from your passport at any time. Your I-94 card shows your visa status and the date your visa status is valid until in the US. The majority of the time, the I-94 card will be stamped with your visa status (either F-1 or J-1) and D/S, meaning duration of any stay/status, will be written underneath your visa type.

Program Extension/Transfers

Extension of F-1 Stay

If you have not completed your degree by the date on your I-20, but have otherwise been in status, you must file for an extension of your I-20. This procedure is called a "Notification Extension". To apply for this, you must have been maintaining your full-time F-1 status. If you are not sure if you need to have your I-20 extended or not, bring your I-20 with you to the International Education Center. If you know you need to extend your I-20, you must follow these steps: Obtain a letter from your faculty advisor (or department coordinator), on department letterhead stationery, addressed to Savannah State University International Center, including: your new completion date, how many years your program takes, a statement that you have been making satisfactory academic progress towards your degree, the amount and source of your funding during the extension period, any pertinent information explaining any delays in your graduation or other compelling circumstances (such as change of major). Apply at the International Education Center for a new I-20 to be issued. This takes at least 3 working days. If you have been making normal academic progress towards your degree, and you are in valid F-1 status, you are eligible to apply for the Notification Extension. If you have not been in valid F-1 status, you will need to

apply for F-1 Reinstatement.

Transfer Students

Transfer students are those students transferring from another university within the U.S. F-1 or J-1 visa holders require a Savannah State University I-20 to attend this school. You must report to the International Education Center to do the transfer process during the first 15 days of classes. The Center submits the documents to INS, to let them know that you are now attending Savannah State University. [If you are a student who previously attended a U.S. institution and intend to transfer to another U.S. institution after a temporary absence from the U.S, you must have an I-20 from Savannah State University to attend this school.] You must have a valid F-1 or J-1 visa in your passport (if the visa is valid, but it is for the previous school you attended, you are not required to change it to Savannah State University). Do not re-enter the U.S. on the I-20 or IAP-66 issued by your old school. Do not re-enter the U.S. on a tourist visa!

Vacation Travel Outside the United States for F-1 and J-1 Holders

If you plan to travel outside the U.S., you should always consult with the International Education Center first. Always bring your passport and your I-20 with you when making inquiries at the Center about traveling outside the U.S. Your passport and your visa must be valid beyond the date on which you plan to re-enter the U.S. If your visa has expired, and you plan to travel outside the U.S., or, if you have changed your visa status while in the U.S., you will need to obtain a new visa at an American Embassy or Consulate abroad or in your home country before you may re-enter the U.S. It is not possible to revalidate your visa while you are in the U.S. The exception is travel to Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean Islands for 30 days or less. For such trips you will need only your valid passport, your I-94, and your I-20 endorsed by the designated school official (DSO) or responsible officer. If going to Canada, you must contact the Canadian consulate in New York, NY, to determine whether you need a visa to enter to Canada. (1251 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020-1175, (212) 768-2400) Please give the International Education Center staff at least a week to review documents before any trip abroad. A minimum of 3 working days is required for the Center to prepare your documents. During vacation periods, it is especially important to apply for travel documents very early, since most other students are planning to travel also. You should allow enough time to renew your visa in the American Embassy or Consulate in your home country. Never leave your passport, I-20 or IAP-66 form, or I-94 (or any immigration-related documents) in your luggage! Always carry these items on your person when departing the U.S., and upon re-entry. Immigration inspectors have been known to refuse entry into the country if you are not in possession of any one of these documents. Luggage can be lost, sometimes for days, sometimes forever, and you may be severely inconvenienced if you have to miss your plane because you are held up by immigration.

Health Insurance

All international students are required to have health insurance. The fee for mandatory health insurance plan will be posted in your student account. If you already have a policy, you have the option of submitting your policy information to be reviewed for a waiver of the mandatory policy.

Staying in Compliance

Each time you make a change, please contact the International Education Center or the International Services Specialist immediately. Additionally, each semester your record must be updated in SEVIS. Please inform us if you are not returning, planning a vacation leave, or taking a leave of absence. Help us to help you be compliant with immigration regulations.

Address & Name Changes

Students have 10 days to notify the International Education Specialist of a change of address. Additionally, you should also update your address and phone number in your PAWS account. Just because you update your PAWS account does not mean that the International Education Center staff will receive this update you must contact us with this information.

Dropping Below Full-Time Enrollment

A full course of study is 12 credit hours per semester for undergraduates and 9 hours per semester for graduate students. We recommend that you enroll for more than 12 hours each semester in case you do have a problem and need to drop a class. This should help to prevent you from dropping below full-time enrollment and being considered out of status. SSU is obligated to report out of status students in SEVIS. You may only be granted permission to drop below full-time enrollment under certain approved circumstances. If you are a senior and need to drop below a full course load during your last semester at SSU, you must request permission before the registration fee deadline. **You must be granted permission to drop below 12 hours a semester, or 9 hours for graduate students, before you can drop any course(s)!!!**

Change of Major

Each time you change your major in the Registrar's Office and it has been approved and finalized, you must notify the International Services Specialist immediately. Your new major will be entered into SEVIS and you will be issued a new I-20. Your I-20 must reflect your current major.

Duration of Status

Duration of status expires if you take longer than expected to complete a given academic level (e.g., bachelor's, master's, and doctorate.) The amount of time permitted to complete studies at a given level is determined by the date listed on the I-20 issued by SSU. You must pay close attention to the expected completion date noted in item 5 on the I-20 form. If you do not complete your degree with the time period listed on the I-20 Form **you must request a program extension BEFORE your I-20 expires** or you will be considered out of status.

Travel Outside the US

Each time you plan to travel outside the country, you must notify the International Services Specialist at least two weeks prior to your planned departure. You **MUST** have the last page of your I-20 signed in order to be permitted re-entry into the country. Travel signatures are valid for one year and a travel letter will be prepared for you.

Registration

Each semester, SSU must report your information to SEVIS-the number of credit hours you are taking, graduation/completion of studies, address changes, work authorization, change of major, dependents accompanying you, **EVERYTHING!!!** Keep us informed so your data is correct!

School Transfers-----In or Out

To transfer between schools, you must gain acceptance to another school and inform the current school of your intent to transfer. Students will be “released” by their current school and “picked up” by their new school in SEVIS. If you plan to transfer from Savannah State University to another US institution, please notify the International Services Specialist immediately for instructions.

Change of Level/Program at SSU

If you continue at Savannah State University from one educational level to another (bachelor’s to a master’s) you must notify the International Services Specialist. We will issue a new I-20 reflecting your level/program change pending acceptance and financial documentation received, depending on the situation.

Falling Out of Compliance

If you fall out of status and /or do not notify SSU of all changes you may be subject to the following consequences:

- Denial of re-entry into the US
- Inability to move from undergraduate to graduate status
- Denial of request to change visa status
- Possible denial of all future visas applications
- Limit of 5 months to apply for re-instatement
- Deportation or accrued unlawful presence

Reinstatement

You must see the International Services Specialist for information on filing for reinstatement.

J-1 Info (Exchange Visitor)

After completion of their program of study in the US, persons on J-1 visas who have received support from the United States government or whose field of study appears on the 212 E country skills list are required to reside at least two years in their home country before re-entering the United States as a permanent resident or on some other nonimmigrant visa. The DS-2019 form is renewable annually by the sponsor. Persons wishing to temporarily leave the US will need to obtain the Designated School Officials signature. Practical training is available to J-1 students. All J-1 visa holders should visit the International Education Center with questions.

*****NOTE*** Do Not Listen To Your Friends** about immigration/status issues. Always check with the International Services Specialist. Please stay in contact with us to ensure your information is correct and up-to-date.

** Remember: As a nonimmigrant student, you have been granted temporary permission to live and study in the United States. It is your responsibility to follow the regulations outlined by the United States Immigrations and Customs Enforcement. If you have questions notify the International Services Specialist at 912.358.4147 or 358.4152 or keevyj@savannahstate.edu



Culture Shock

Living in a foreign country is very challenging. In the first year, almost everyone experiences “culture shock” to some degree. Culture shock is that feeling of dislocation that affects people who move to a new country. Many people who experience it do not even realize they are suffering from it-all they know is that everything is very difficult in their new home. Culture shock is caused by unfamiliarity with the new country, by not being able to speak the language fluently or understanding the many new idioms, and by not knowing how to behave in an unfamiliar culture. Not only is the language different, but gestures, facial expressions, and traditions are also different. Newcomers can sometimes feel like children because they cannot understand all these new things at once.

People who are experiencing culture shock worry and complain about all aspects of life- the food, the weather, the people, etc...They worry about minor ailments and pains. They often become frustrated and angry over minor problems, and some even refuse to learn the new language. Overall, they feel helpless and homesick, and want to go home to see relatives and to talk to people who “make sense.”

People often do not fully understand culture shock until they return home to their country, when they are surprised to see their own country with new eyes. Although cultural adjustment takes place every time a person moves to another country, with each move the shock usually lessens.

Stages of Cultural Adjustment

There are typically four states of cultural adjustment, though each lasts a different length of time for every person who experiences it. Typically the stages are:

Stage 1: During this stage international students often feel excited. The new country is interesting, the people are friendly and helpful and the future looks promising.

Stage 2: Problems! School, language, shopping-everything is difficult. Things that were simple back home require more effort in the new country. It seems hard to make friends, and at this point, international students may begin to believe that the local people are unfriendly. Homesickness begins, and along with it complaints about the new country. This is Culture Shock.

Stage 3: Recovery- The international student begins to use the language more fluently, so communication between locals becomes easier. Customs and traditions become clearer and slowly the situation passes from impossible to hopeful. Minor misunderstandings, which were stressful in stage 2 now become manageable.

Stage 4: Stability- Eventually international students begin to feel more at home in the new country. Things they do not like about their new country no longer makes them feel so dissatisfied and unhappy. Life has settled down, and they are now able to find humor in the situations in which they find themselves.

Get Used To A New Country Quickly and Comfortably By:

*Exploring- get a sense for the physical environment *Going on campus and Savannah walking tours
*Talking to people in your department *Finding a student to show you around *Going to SSU sponsored events * Finding a friend and doing your own walking tour *Getting a sense of norms for behavior *How do people greet each other *How do they line-up? *How do they seat themselves on a bus? *How do people behave in offices? *How do they behave walking on the street? *Being slow to judge *Watching people's behavior (keep a journal of what you observe) *Observe first and then find a "cultural interpreter" (someone who knows the culture) and ask. Be sure to ask "why" people do what they do. A good place to find cultural information is at the International Education Center and the International Student Organization meetings.

While you are observing a behavior, you might think about what people would do in the same situation in your country. That way, you will learn about your own culture, as well and have a basis of comparison. Try:

- Going to events where you can meet people over time
- Joining student groups like the International Student Association
- Talking to everyone you meet
- Talking to SSU employees
- Visiting with other students
- Going to the beach

Reading local newspapers
Checking out books about American culture
Relaxing, taking it slow, and keeping your sense of humor

Evaluate your expectations. If you find yourself feeling confused or disappointed ask yourself, "What did I expect? Why? Was my expectation really reasonable?"

Keep an open mind. People at Savannah State are acting according to their own set of values, not yours. Do not evaluate their behavior using the standards you would use in your own country. With over 40 nations represented here at Savannah State there will be a similar number of ideas and ways of doing things.

Learn from your experience. Moving to the United States can be the most fascinating and educational experience of your life. You can explore an entirely new way of living and compare it to your own values and attitudes and to broaden your point of view by closely observing your new surroundings.

Visit the International Education Center. We can help you achieve a useful perspective on adjustment and can also help you gain awareness of the many possibilities for experience and growth that adjustment entails. The IEC is a great place to visit because there are always other international students there who have even more experience than you and just might be able to help!

Improve your American English

The better you can express yourself, the easier everything will be. Realize that you as an international student will often be treated as a stereotype. Foreigners anywhere are, at first, treated as representatives of groups to which they are perceived to belong, and not as individuals. On many occasions, you may be referred to as a "foreign student" or "a student from country X." You are thus identified by the country you come from. The ways Americans may respond to you will depend on their own experiences with people from your country. It is important that you realize that their comments do not have anything to do with you personally. Contact students from your home country who have already been here for some time.

Understand Your Status- Realize how the status of your role here compares to the status to which you are accustomed in your home country. Each society attaches different importance to individual roles or positions in the society. In many countries, the role of "university student" or "professor" is given more respect or "status" than it is in America. If this is the case, it can be difficult to adjust to having a lower social status in this country than you are accustomed to having in your own country. It is helpful to recognize that you are not being downgraded as a person, but that you happen to be in a society where less value is attached to being a student than may be the case in your home country. People here may understand little about your culture, and may therefore misunderstand you and your behavior. They may assume that limited English proficiency is a lack of intelligence, rather than understanding that English is not your native language. Here are a few questions that international students might want to think about: How do Americans make friends? How is respect shown? How do family members interact? What is the relationship between males and females in different situations? What are the dating patterns? How do people spend their leisure time? How do they deal with conflicts and disagreements? What do they talk about, when and with whom? How often do they "take turns" during a conversation?

Thinking about Going Home- After first arriving in America, it is natural to spend time thinking about the new country and your reactions to it. However, it is helpful to try to keep in mind that you will be going home after finishing your degree. It is advisable to remember that you will change while you are here. You will learn new ideas, adopt new attitudes, and behave in new ways. At the same time, things will be changing in your home country. Family members, friends, and professional colleagues will have experiences that you will not share, and they also will develop new ideas, attitudes, and ways of behaving. Social, political, and economic situations may change also. This means that when you return home, things will not be as you remembered before you left. You will need to adjust to a "new" culture again. This readjustment will be easier if you prepare yourself before you actually go back home. Try to keep your expectations realistic, try not to pass judgment on people and situations you will encounter after going home.

The next several months spent in Savannah will probably be some the most exciting in your life. For most people the time spent at a university is one of freedom, experimentation and exploration. Once you get into the "real world" the responsibilities you will face will make you long for the easy college life. Yes, it is true that college is not all fun and games. Your chemistry professor will not accept a lab book that is late because you decided to "explore" all the night clubs on River Street. However, if you plan your time carefully and make sure to keep yourself informed of all the activities taking place on campus and in the surrounding community, you will soon find yourself with a huge choice of diverse opportunities just waiting to be sampled. But wait! Not so fast! You wouldn't jump into a swimming pool without seeing how deep it was, would you? Well, in the same way, you shouldn't dive into your experiences here at Savannah State without knowing a little about American society. Even though you may have met two other students from your home country at a meeting, remember that you are still in a new country and it will take a little while for you to understand everything about it.

The next section will help you with that adjustment. It will explain some of the things that are important to Americans and how they view themselves. The great advantage of living in a consumer society is that the consumer has many rights and, in any reputable store, the customer's complaints are always listened to. If you feel that you have been treated badly or been sold unsatisfactory merchandise do not hesitate to complain. As a safeguard against any problems, before buying anything be sure that the store has a return policy. The most basic piece of advice still applies though: always examine the merchandise you are about to buy quite carefully. Take extra care in discount stores and flea markets, since the chance of getting a good bargain must be balanced with the fact that returning unsatisfactory goods is virtually impossible. Although rare, it is not unlikely that someone may deliberately try to sell you goods of poor quality.

American's Concern with Personal Cleanliness

Some visitors to the US may not be aware of the concern for personal cleanliness which Americans have. They may not realize that body odor or strong breath is considered offensive in this culture. This is especially a problem in Savannah due to high degree of humidity. Students who come from countries where high humidity is not an issue may be unaware of this problem. They may therefore consider extreme efforts towards cleanliness wasteful or unnecessary. Not being aware of others' concerns, however, could lead to confrontations or problems with roommates, classmates, or officemates, since they might be embarrassed to tell you what they are thinking. If you suspect that others are avoiding you for this reason, you may want to ask a close friend about it or discuss it with one of the staff in the International Education Center.

Personal Safety Tips:

Practice the Buddy System- Let friends or neighbors know where you are going, when you plan to return, and what routes you will take, and how you can be reached at your destination. Travel with a "buddy" to and from your activities.

Be Careful When Walking- Pay attention to those walking around you. Walk in an alert and confident manner in parking lots and on the street. Learn self defense techniques. Travel in well-lit, highly traveled areas. Avoid taking "short cuts", especially through dense, wooded areas, even during the day. Don't walk too close to bushes, parked cars, alleys, or suspicious-acting people. Don't jog at night or in the early morning when streets are deserted.

Guard Your Belongings- Guard your purse, backpack, or wallet. Don't carry large amounts of cash or other valuable objects. This is especially the case if you are studying in the library. Even if you leave for a moment, take your things with you. If you think someone is following you, switch directions or go across the street. If you're still being followed, go to a public place and ask for help. Trust your instincts. If someone or something makes you uneasy, get out or away.

Have a "Fire Drill"- Have a "fire drill" in your dwelling, in case of an emergency you will know escape routes.

Lock Your Car Doors-

Keep your car doors locked, especially when you are driving. As you approach your car, look around it and in the back seat before entering.

Don't Hitchhike or Pick Up Hitchhikers- Hitchhiking is not only dangerous, in some cases it is illegal. Do not pick up hitchhikers. Do not accept rides from strangers when you are stranded with car trouble. If your car breaks down, raise the hood, and wait in your locked car for a law enforcement officer to arrive. If someone stops to help, ask him or her to call for assistance for you. Don't go with a stranger to call for assistance.

Don't Leave Valuables Sitting Out In Your Car- Keep valuables out of plain view in your car. It is best not to keep valuable items in your car at all, even if in your trunk. Burglars can break into a car or its trunk in minutes.

Be Careful On The Bus- If you ride the bus, use well lit, busy bus stops. Sit near the driver, and don't doze off or fail to pay attention. If someone harasses you, say loudly "leave me alone". Watch who gets off the bus with you, if you feel uneasy, go to a public place to ask for help.

Campus Safety- Savannah State University campus is a secure place. Doors to residence halls are kept locked. The Housing Office maintains residence hall security from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. for security and crisis situations. Information desks are set up in residence halls. To enable the University to maintain campus security, students must do their part. Follow the above personal and home safety tips. Go to the campus police and get brochures on safety measures. Use good sense, and report suspicious or criminal activity. It is far better to have the police investigate what may turn out to be a non-threatening matter, than to allow a crime to be committed or to become a victim of a crime.

Money, Money, Money

Money Management- Most foreign students, like many American students, live on limited budgets. It is important to manage money wisely in order to insure that it lasts as long as possible. Because it takes time for newcomers to adjust to the value of the dollar and to estimate daily living expenses, these students should be cautious about spending money. Here are some hints about managing money:

Budget carefully

If you pay all bills at the beginning of the month, you will know how much remains for other expenses. Set aside the amount of money for rent, utilities, food, and other monthly expenses.

Keep accurate records

Keeping track of expenditures by category (for example, for books, recreation, and food) can pinpoint areas of heavy spending which might help you budget your money more wisely.

Transportation

An apartment close to campus may save hundreds of dollars annually on car expenses. Cars are very expensive to maintain and park. You can rent a car for special occasions.

Credit

Although credit is a convenience for purchasing large items, it is easy to overextend oneself financially with it. Some credit card companies charge 18-21% interest per year, which may total to hundreds of extra dollars annually over the worth of items purchased. You should evaluate whether you need expensive items before you purchase them on credit. Buy Used: Weekend garage and yard sales are advertised in newspapers daily, and are good places to purchase appliances for reasonable prices. You can bargain for a lower price at these sales.

Meals

Although dining out is pleasant and convenient, this can double your food bill. By making bagged lunches at home for school and eating at home you can save money.

Take Advantage of Sales and Coupons

By watching the newspaper for sales of items a student needs, he/she can save up to 50% on these items. The Sunday newspaper is a great source for collecting coupons and seeing what is on sale at area stores. By shopping sales and using manufacturer's coupons you can save money on items.

Shopping

American currency is based on the decimal system, where 100 cents are equal to one dollar, \$1.00. Currency is issued in the forms of bills and coins. Coins are metal and are either silver or copper-colored. They come in six different sizes: 1 cent, a penny, is made of copper; 5 cents, a nickel, is silver colored, and larger than a penny; 10 cents, a dime, is the smallest silver coin; 25 cent, a quarter, is silver-colored and larger than a nickel; 50 cents, a half-dollar or 50-cent piece, is silver and larger than a quarter, but not common; 100 cents, silver dollar, comes in two forms: the Susan B. Anthony silver dollar, which is the size of a quarter, and the older silver dollar, which is the largest coin (both are rarely seen in circulation). Bills are paper money. All U.S. paper money bills are the same size and the same green color. Denominations include \$1 (commonly called a dollar), \$2 (not commonly in circulation), \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100, and larger amounts. Paper money for these larger amounts is not usually seen in public circulation.

Banks' Banking Services

Because it is not wise or practical for people to carry large amounts of money with them or keep it in their homes, the money is usually deposited in a bank. In Savannah, there are several banks that offer checking and savings account services, as well as other services such as wire transfers and dollar exchange, which are important for international students.

Automatic Teller Machines (or ATM's)

Most banks in Savannah have an automated teller service. This automatic teller is a computerized device through which bank customers can make deposits or withdrawals at any time of the day, any day of the week. There are two ATM's located on the Savannah State campus one in the police station inside Harris Hall and the other in the King Frazier Student Center.

Savings Accounts

Money which is not used for routine living expenses is normally kept in a savings account. Savings accounts earn relatively low interest rates. You may usually withdraw any amount from a regular savings account (also called a "passbook account") whenever it is necessary.

Checking Accounts

Banks offer different types of checking accounts. Some banks charge a fee for each check written, while others will not charge per check if the customer maintains a minimum balance of \$500. Select a bank whose checking account policies and services best meet your needs. You must pay to have personalized checks made, which have your name, address, phone number and account information on them. The bank sends a monthly statement of checks that you have written, so that you have a record of these checks. It is important to be sure that the record of the amount remaining in the account coincides with the bank's record. The statement will also reflect amounts subtracted from the account by the bank for service charges or for the printing of personalized checks. If you use an automatic teller card to withdraw or deposit cash, these transactions will also appear on the monthly statement. Be sure to enter the transactions when they are made so that you will have an accurate record of your account balance. You are penalized for checks that are written for an amount that is greater than the amount of money you have in your account. Checks such as these are called "returned checks," "bounced checks," or "overdrafts," and your bank and the place you wrote the check will charge you a penalty fee, plus you will have to pay the returned check amount in cash. Some stores may revoke your check-cashing privileges for writing returned checks. Writing a check for which you know you do not have funds is called a "bad check", and is illegal. You can be arrested for writing a bad check.

Reminders When Writing a Check:

- Write the check at the cash register only when you are ready to pay for your purchase.
- Always record in the check register: the date, the check number, the amount, and the person or business to whom you are writing the check. Compare this record with the monthly statement the bank sends you.
- When depositing a check or cash in the bank, use a deposit slip. Deposit slips are located at the back of your checkbook, or the bank can give you a blank deposit slip. If you want to mail a check for deposit, sign your name on the back of the check exactly as it appears on the front of the check. Add the words "For Deposit Only" on the back of the check, as well as your account number, so that no one else can cash the check if they find it.
- If you have a bank card to use at an automatic teller machine, do not print your code number or your personal identification or access code on your card or in your checkbook. If your wallet or purse is stolen or lost, someone else can easily use this information to take money out of your account.

How to Cash a Check Written to You

When someone writes you a check, you must sign your name on the back of the check exactly as it is written to you, only when you are ready to cash or deposit the check! This is called "endorsing" the check. You can sign your bank signature below, if it is different from the first signature. Many banks ask you to write your bank account number on the back of the check, and may ask you to show proof of identification. Caution: The bank will normally "hold" the check until it "clears." This means that the bank will not allow you to use the money until they are certain that the funds exist. This "hold" can take between one week and one month, which can cause problems for students who bring all their money in the form of one check. Be certain that you have enough cash with you to pay for routine expenses while a large check is clearing. Writing a check is written proof of a purchase, and can be the equivalent of a receipt. (If you may have to return a purchase, however, you should save the receipt, as many stores will not accept merchandise for exchange or refund without the receipt.)

Cash

Cash is the easiest way to pay for purchases, but because it can be stolen so easily, most people carry only small amounts of cash with them. People who need cash withdraw it from the bank. Some supermarkets will also cash checks if you hold a check-cashing card for that store. It is important to always obtain a receipt for large purchases when you pay in cash. Unlike paying with checks or credit cards, if you pay with cash, you receive no receipt unless you ask for it.

Traveler's Checks

If someone is traveling outside of Savannah, their personal checks will often not be honored by businesses in other cities. Traveler's checks are a safe alternative to carrying cash. These may be purchased at banks for a small charge, and can be used at restaurants, stores, and hotels around the world. Traveler's checks can also be replaced if they are lost. It is important to keep the numbers of your checks in a safe place so that you may refer to them in case the checks are lost or stolen. The most popular Traveler's check companies are American Express and Citicorp. The checks require two signatures made at different times in order for them to be valid. The first signature is made when you purchase the check; the second signature is made when you wish to use the check. The second signature, made at the time of purchase, demonstrates that the check belongs to the person who originally signed the check.

Wire Transfers

Wire transfers are immediate transfers of funds from one bank to another. Because banks communicate by telephone or telegram, the funds can often be received the day after a wire transfer is requested. The person who sends a wire transfer must know the name, address, and number of the bank to which he/she is sending the money. He/she must indicate the name of the recipient of the money. When the recipient claims the funds, he/she must show picture identifications, such as a driver's license or a passport, in order to receive the money. The recipient may pay \$20 or more for the cost of the service. Wire transfers must be made in U.S. currency. Banks may hold wire transfer funds from two days to a week.



Notable Characteristics of Americans

The American society is one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world. Even with this diversity, it is possible, in general, to describe attitudes and practices that are common among Americans. The following remarks are only generalizations. Individuals who are exceptions to any or all of them do exist.

Individualism

Most Americans see themselves as separate individuals, and only secondly as representatives of a family, community, or other group. They dislike being dependent on other people. Americans are taught that "all men are created equal." While they may violate the principle in some aspects of life, in other aspects they adhere to it. They treat each other in very informal ways, even in the presence of great differences of age or social standing. From the point of view of people from other cultures, this type of behavior may reflect lack of respect. From the point of view of Americans, it shows a healthy lack of concern for social ritual.

Limited Friendships

People from other cultures may view friendships among Americans as superficial. Because they are taught to be self-reliant and live in a highly mobile society, Americans tend to avoid deep involvement with many other people. Furthermore, Americans tend to "compartmentalize" their friendships, having their "friends at work," "friends at school," a "tennis friend," and so on. This is sometimes viewed by foreigners as an "inability to be friends." Here it is seen as a normal way to retain personal happiness in a mobile, ever-changing society.

Time consciousness

Americans place considerable value on punctuality. They tend to organize their activities by means of schedules. As a result they may seem to be in a hurry, always running from one thing to the next, and not able to relax and enjoy themselves. Foreign observers sometimes see this as being "ruled by the clock." In this country it is a way of assuring that things get done.

Materialism

"Success" in American society is often measured by the amount of money, status, or the quantity of material goods a person is able to accumulate. Some cultures see this as lack of appreciation for the spiritual or human things in life.

Conversations with Americans

Another way of describing differences between people from diverse cultural backgrounds, besides comparing their values, is comparing their styles of communication. When people with different communication styles interact, they often misjudge or misunderstand each other. It is helpful if you as

an international student know something about the communication style of Americans and the ways it differs from your own communication style. With that knowledge, you will be better able to understand what is happening when dealing with local people, and will know some of the ways in which the latter are likely to misunderstand or misjudge you. Generalizations (subject to exceptions) are made about the ways Americans communicate. In casual conversation (what they call "small talk"), Americans prefer to talk about the weather, jobs, sports, people they both know, classes, or past experiences, especially ones they have in common. Some Americans do not discuss politics or religion, at least not with people they do not know well, because politics and religion are considered controversial topics. Students at universities, however, discuss these subjects often. Sex, bodily functions, and perceived personal inadequacies are considered to be very personal topics, and are likely to be discussed only between people who know each other very well. Many misjudgments and misunderstandings can arise from interactions between people who have different communication styles. Here are some examples: Foreign visitors in the U.S. might think that they hear little but "small talk" among Americans. They may arrive at the conclusion that Americans are not intellectually capable of anything more than small talk about subjects such as the weather, sports, teachers or their own social lives. Many people who regard argument as a favored form of interaction reach the conclusion that Americans are intellectually inferior. Americans may be alarmed by vigorous arguing, with raised voices and use of gestures. They may expect violence, or at least long-lasting anger, to follow from loud disagreements. They may perceive as anger what you consider normal communication. Embarrassment or unease almost always results when someone raises a discussion topic that the other person thinks is inappropriate for the particular setting or relationship.

Guidelines for Interacting with Americans

Men usually shake hands with each other the first time they meet. Men usually do not shake hands with women unless the woman extends her hand first. Women do not usually shake hands with each other. A university setting is usually very informal. Students who meet one another will normally not shake hands at all. A student could shake hands with a professor or staff person if introduced, but not usually with a fellow student.

American Names

American names generally have three parts: the first (or given) name, the middle name or initial, and the last (family) name. In most cases, the first name appears first, then the middle name or initial (if used), and finally the last name. First names are used in the U.S. more frequently than elsewhere. People may call each other by their first names immediately after they have met. When deciding whether to call people by their first name or not, the following general rules apply: Address people of your approximate age and status by first name. This would apply to fellow students and neighbors. If the other person is clearly older than you, you should use Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms. and the last name. For example, you would address Marlon Brando as "Mr. Brando." If the older person asks you to use his or her first name, do so. The older person will probably address you by your first name from the beginning. "Ms." (pronounced "Mizz") is increasingly used for both unmarried and married females. If a student is not certain whether or not a woman is married, "Miss" or "Ms." is the appropriate term to use. If the other person has a title such as "Ambassador," "Doctor," or "Dean," use that title and the last name. For example, you would address Senator Edward Kennedy as "Senator Kennedy." Any faculty member can be addressed as "Doctor," whether he holds the rank of assistant professor, associate professor or full professor. Again, the other person might ask you to address him by his first name, and you should abide

by that wish. Americans do not use a title followed by a first name. For example, you would not address Elizabeth Taylor as "Miss Elizabeth" but as "Miss Taylor" or, if she asked you to, as "Elizabeth." If you are in doubt about what to call a person, ask the person, "What name shall I call you?" Americans will sometimes be confused about what to call you. If you see that person does not know what to call you, tell him, "You can call me _____." Sometimes it is helpful to pronounce your name syllable by syllable. Americans' ready use of first names may make it appear to you that they are oblivious to differences in age and social status, but they are not. There are subtle differences in vocabulary and manner, depending upon the relationship between the people involved. For example, an American is less likely to use slang or obscenities when speaking to a person who is older, whose social standing is higher, and/or whom he does not know well.

Ritual greetings

When two people are first introduced, the dialogue normally goes something like: "How do you do?" "Fine, thank you. How are you?" "Fine, thanks." After the first meeting, there are two kinds of greetings. The more formal is "Good Morning," "Good afternoon," or "Good Evening." The less formal is simply "Hello" or just "Hi." You may simply say "Good Morning," "Hi," or whatever is said to you, in response. Any of these greetings may be followed by "How are you?" To this one should answer "Fine, thank you," whether you are fine or not! These ritual greetings are much shorter than those to which people from many other countries are accustomed. People from countries where ritual greetings are more elaborate may have a negative reaction to the American custom, thinking that it reflects coolness and lack of concern for other people. This is not the case! The American casual parting remark "See you later," means "goodbye," and does not mean that the person saying it has a specific intention to see you later.

Visiting Americans

You will probably have opportunities to visit an American home. The invitation may come from your major professor or through someone you have met in a class, or elsewhere. The following paragraphs give a general idea of the behavior that is appropriate in such situations. Your prospective host will phone you, speak to you in person, or send you a written invitation. An arrangement made by telephone is expected to be kept, even if it is made far in advance of the actual event. A written invitation will include the date, time, place, and a description of the occasion. If at the bottom of the invitation it says, "R.S.V.P." ("Repondez-vous s'il vous plait"), you should notify the host whether or not you plan to be present. If it says "Regrets Only," you should notify the host only if you do not plan to be present. It is polite to notify your hostess of any last minute change of plans, and of any dietary restrictions you have. In the United States you should never say that you accept an invitation unless you truly intend to do so. If you do not know what clothing could be appropriate to wear for the occasion, simply ask: "What should I wear?" If you are not sure, ask the host or hostess to describe the type of outfit appropriate. Sometimes "casual" dress can mean a different style of dress to different people. The time of day also can determine what is considered appropriate dress.

Punctuality

Punctuality is usually essential, especially if you have been invited for a meal or for a cocktail party. You may be thought inconsiderate and impolite if you do not arrive at the appointed hour. Again, it is a very good idea to notify your hostess if you will be more than 15 minutes late. Upon arrival, you may find that there is a cocktail hour before dinner. During this period hors-d'oeuvres (small appetizers, usually with crackers) and cocktails are served. You will usually be asked what type of drink you would prefer, alcoholic or non-alcoholic. If you would prefer a non-alcoholic beverage and none is offered, it is

acceptable to ask your host for one. It is considered polite to say, "No, thank you" if you do not want something being offered. At the dinner table, if there is any question of proper manners, simply follow the example of your hostess. If you have any dietary restrictions, you should inform your hostess of them at the time you accept the invitation, not when you arrive. If you wish to bring a gift, a bouquet of flowers or a box of candy is always appropriate. Always bring a small gift when you are invited as a houseguest for an extended visit, like a weekend. Unless a special party has been planned, it is polite to leave your host's home from one to two hours after dinner is completed. If it is very late when you finish dinner, leave within an hour. If you are asked to stay longer, feel free to do so. It is considered good manners to write a thank-you note or call your host or hostess after each occasion. Many Americans consider thank-you notes too formal. They prefer to call on the telephone to thank the host for the invitation. Whether calling or writing your host or hostess, you should do so within 24-48 hours after the party. These informal visits are for the pleasure of both the guests and the hosts. If the host or hostess is preparing the meal, it is polite to ask if you can help with any preparations. Guests should offer their help in cleaning up after dinner. Your host or hostess will tell you whether he/she needs extra help or not. Always abide by his/her wishes.

Gifts

In different societies there are different customs concerning the giving of gifts. Sometimes a person will give a gift when the other person does not expect to receive one. Here are some general ideas about gift giving customs in the U.S. Knowing them can help avoid awkward situations. To whom are gifts given? As a rule, gifts are given to relatives and close friends. They are sometimes given to people with whom one has a casual but friendly type of relationship, such as a host or hostess. Gifts are not usually given to teachers or others who hold an official position. The offering of gifts in these situations is sometimes interpreted as an effort, possibly improper, to gain favorable treatment from that person. Cards, rather than gifts, are given to acquaintances who are not close friends. This is especially true at Christmas, when it is common for people to send a card to most of their acquaintances and business or school colleagues. What gifts are appropriate? Generally, an effort is made to select a gift that the giver knows or supposes is one the recipient needs, wants or would enjoy. It is not expected that people on limited budgets will spend large amounts on gifts. Expensive gifts may be expected only when the people involved have a very close relationship with each other. How are gifts acknowledged? If a gift is opened in the presence of the giver (as is often done), a verbal expression of thanks is appropriate. If a gift is opened in the absence of a giver, a thank-you note should be sent. The note should make specific mention of the particular gift that has been sent.

Time schedules

It is appropriate to contact individuals or businesses at certain accepted times. Below are general guidelines:

- Individuals and families. In general, you may telephone individuals or families between 9:00am and 9:00pm. Students generally keep later hours. It is not appropriate to contact people during meal times. Americans eat breakfast shortly after arising, a small meal or sandwich called "lunch" at or near noon, and large meal called "dinner" or "supper" sometime between 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. The meal schedule may vary on Sundays, when all meals may be taken later and the large meal may be in the afternoon rather than in the evening.
- Business hours. University business hours are usually 8:00 a. m. to 5:00 p. m., Monday through Friday. Most offices at the University remain open during the lunch hour. Most city businesses open at 9:00 a. m. Closing hours vary; some businesses close at 5:00 p. m. or 5:30 p. m. Establishments in the malls will open at 10:00 a. m. and close at 9:00 p. m. Most businesses may

open for shorter hours on weekends. Some stores are open 24 hours, and are advertised this way. All businesses should have their hours posted on their storefronts.

Tipping

Tips, or service charges, are not added to the bill in most U.S. hotels or restaurants. Nevertheless, tips are often expected and needed by employees. Tips are given for some services rendered, such as a shoeshine. It is customary to tip the waiter or waitress in a restaurant at least 10 per cent of the amount of the check, and from 15 to 20 percent if you receive good service. You do not have to tip in self-service cafeterias, but it is customary to leave a small tip if a server assists you. You do not tip in "fast food" establishments. In a hotel, the bellboy who assists you to your room with your luggage expects at least one dollar for his services. Taxi drivers expect a tip of 10 to 15 per cent of the fare. Hairdressers customarily get a tip of 10 to 15 percent of the total bill. Generally, if others tip, you should too. Self-service businesses generally do not have tipping.

Student Responsibilities for Compliance with F-1 Laws and Regulations

On January 1, 2003 the US federal government implemented new regulations that govern how international students must maintain visa status while pursuing a degree. The guidelines below are for maintaining status while in the US. **Failure to follow these guidelines could result in your F-1 status being terminated.** Although there are people on campus who can help you maintain your visa status it is the expectation of the US government that the student is responsible for complying with visa regulations. Because we do not want you to lose your F-1 status, please do not hesitate to ask questions, and always report changes or problems immediately.

Maintain an unexpired passport and I-20 at all times. Report any errors or approaching expiration dates to the International Services Specialist.

Enroll full-time (12 or more hours for undergraduate; 9 or more for graduate) each semester.

Certain medical and academic circumstances may allow you to drop below full-time for brief periods of time with prior approval. See your International Services Specialist to discuss your eligibility for a Reduced Course Load (RCL) BEFORE withdrawing from courses.

Make normal progress towards completing the course of study. Complete studies before the program end date on the I-20 or apply for extension through your International Services Specialist BEFORE it expires.

Report a change of address to the International Services Specialist within 10 days of the change. Failure to do so could result in termination of your status beyond the control of SSU.

Do not commit a crime. Certain criminal activity could result in suspension, expulsion, termination of your visa status, or deportation.

Do not work illegally. Working off campus without permission from the US government is illegal and can result in the loss of visa status and /or deportation. Working more hours than you are authorized to work is also a violation of your visa.

Enroll in no more than 3 hours of online /distance education per 12 credit hours each semester.

Have a valid travel signature on your I-20 before leaving the US if you plan to return.

Notify the International Education Center of any changes in information: financial, academic, dependent, transfers, employment, change in degree program, graduation etc...

Comply with all US tax laws. Meet with International Service Specialist for more information.

Students may take authorized break during the summer term. Taking an unauthorized break during fall or spring semesters will result in termination. You should meet with the International Service Specialist if you require a leave of absence during the fall or spring BEFORE leaving or withdrawing from classes.

I have read and understand the regulations above. I know that failure to comply with the above regulations can result in the loss of my visa status. I understand that maintaining my visa status is solely my responsibility.

Signature:

Date

