



FINDING ANSWERS TO YOUR MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS: A GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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PREPARING TO COME TO THE UNITED STATES

Finances

If you are expecting to receive funds from outside the U.S. during your studies, be sure you know what procedures are necessary for the transfer of funds before you leave home. Delays in the arrival of funds from abroad have caused much hardship and inconvenience to students in the past.

When you arrive, you should have enough funds with you to cover your expenses for the first semester, approximately \$21,000 for tuition and initial expenses. Do not bring large amounts of cash. The safest and most convenient way to bring your funds with you is by travelers' checks in U.S. dollars. The small fee you pay is well worth the protection such checks provide against theft or loss. When you arrive in the U.S., you should have in hand at least \$1,200 in U.S. currency and travelers' checks. At least \$100 of this amount should be in small currency and change because you will need this to pay for help with luggage and taxis.

Medical Arrangements

The health insurance policy at Washington University does not cover the cost of eye examinations, eyeglasses, or dental work. These services are expensive in the U.S. You are advised to have this work completed prior to leaving your country.

Student Health Services (SHS)

The University SHS office is available to all students for diagnosis and treatment of illness. New students are required to complete the Medical History Form as well as all immunization requirements.

Medical Insurance

The cost of medical treatment and hospitalization in the U.S. is extremely high. Washington University therefore, has a mandatory Health Service Fee that includes medical insurance. This fee is about \$700 per year. Students are automatically billed for this fee and covered by this medical insurance program. A full description of the health care coverage is outlined on the Student Health Services' website: <http://shs.wustl.edu>. International Students are billed an additional \$25 in order to provide them with some prescription coverage and other benefits.

Spouses and dependents are **strongly** urged to purchase medical insurance coverage due to the high cost of medical treatment. This is available through the SHS.

Baggage Shipment / Mail

Plan to have your baggage arrive as close to your arrival date as possible. All baggage shipping charges must be prepaid at the point of origin. For shipping information, consult transport companies in your home country. Books may be sent through the international mail at a special rate.

Climate

The climate in St. Louis is moderate, with some periods of cold and snow in the winter and many hot, humid days in the summer. Temperatures average -7 to 4° C in the winter and between 29 and 35° C in the summer. They rarely fall below -15° C or climb above 40° C.

Clothing

Dress on campus is informal and varied. Most men wear sport shirts or sweaters with trousers or blue jeans. Women wear shirts or sweaters with trousers, blue jeans, skirts, or dresses. In the summer months, light clothing is worn. For the winter months, students will need heavy coats, gloves, hats, and warm boots. Clothing in the U.S. may be expensive so it is advisable to bring as much clothing as possible with you. It is also recommended to bring clothing that is easy to care for (machine washable and dry-able). If you traditionally wear national dress typical of your country, such clothing will be suitable for any formal or semiformal functions you may wish to attend.

Cultural Exchange

Americans are interested in learning more about your country. There are many opportunities for you to share your culture with people in the St. Louis community. Therefore, if available, you are encouraged to bring clothing typical of your country, any musical instrument you play, pictures of your country and people, and artifacts that are unique to your culture. Recordings of music from your country are also well received.

ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES

Port Of Entry

Customs Declaration

On board your plane you will be given a form on which you should list all items in your possession requiring duty.

At the point of entry, your baggage will be inspected and any necessary duties must be paid. Household and personal effects owned at least one year prior to entry into the U.S. may be imported free of charge. Microscopes and other medical, dental and scientific instruments may be imported free if you can prove they are essential for your professional studies and work. There is no duty on typewriters brought in for personal use. Articles brought into the United States as gifts are taxable if the total value exceeds \$100.

Immigration Inspection

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) officer will check your passport and issue you a Form I-94 (a small, white card). This is your arrival/departure record.

On your I-94, the date of your arrival will be stamped and the notation about when your permission to stay in the U.S. will expire will be written. The I-94 should be kept in your passport at all times. A valid U.S. entry visa is necessary only when you enter the U.S. and may expire while you are in this country without jeopardizing your immigration status. Only after you leave the U.S. and wish

to reenter the country will it be essential for you to obtain a new entry visa in your passport if yours has expired.

If you are on an F-1 visa you will be given a Form I-20. This form is very important and should be kept with you at all times while you are in the U.S. because it validates your F-1 status. It is your record of your stay and all transactions related to your F-1 student status including transfer of schools, permission to work, extension of stay and practical training. If you misplace this form you can expect delays in the processing of the above-mentioned procedures.

J-1 students will receive a form DS-2019, which is the record of your stay in the U.S. It validates your J-1 status and should be kept with you at all times while you are in the country.

Arrival in St. Louis

Trip from the Airport

Lambert-St. Louis International Airport is about ten miles from campus. There are three ways to get to campus: (1) you can request to be met upon arrival through the OISS with the enclosed ARRIVAL FORM or online at:

<http://oisshome.wustl.edu/students/new/ArrivalForm.asp>
(2) You can take a taxi for \$30 to \$45. The rate for taxi tips is 15% of fare plus \$1 per bag. (3) You can use the MetroLink, the St. Louis commuter rail system, which is also available from the airport. The MetroLink recently opened two new stations in the Fall of 2006 that service the Washington University campus. However, we do not recommend using MetroLink when you first arrive because it is difficult to use if you have a lot of luggage.

Temporary Housing

Those who are unable to move into permanent housing upon arrival may obtain special rates at the following hotels:

- ❖ **Cheshire Lodge**; located at 6303 Clayton Rd; St. Louis, MO 63117, (314) 647-7300 or toll free (800) 325-7378.
- ❖ **Clayton on the Park**; located at 8025 Bonhomme Ave; St. Louis, MO 63105, (314) 290-1500 or toll free (800) 323-7500.

Be sure to mention your affiliation with Washington University to obtain their lower rates. Please note that some hotels are expensive and students are advised to avoid lengthy hotel stays. See the included Temporary Housing Info sheet for more details.

REPORTING TO THE OISS

New regulations require international students to report to the OISS as soon as possible - it should be the first place you visit upon your arrival in St. Louis. Please bring your passport, I-20, entry visa and I-94 card when you check in. You will be given a *Welcome Folder*, which contains a restaurant guide, maps, shuttle schedules and information about orientation, registration, immigration regulations and more.

The OISS staff has the knowledge and experience to assist you with many of your questions/concerns and can provide information on USCIS regulations, initial and continuing orientation activities and social and educational activities.

HOUSING

On-Campus Housing

New undergraduate students will receive information directly from the Office of Residential Life. <http://restech.wustl.edu/~housing>.

Graduate students will need to make off-campus housing arrangements, as on-campus housing is only available to undergraduate students.

Off-Campus Housing

It is recommended that you read the information about housing on our website at: <http://oisshome.wustl.edu/students/new/offcampushousing.html>.

Finding off-campus housing can be a challenging and at the same time an interesting task. There are many resources, which can significantly help you if they are properly used. While the individual student is responsible for securing permanent housing, assistance is available from the OISS and the Apartment Referral Service.

Apartment Referral Service

The Apartment Referral Service (ARS) is an on-campus office that solicits a variety of housing options available in St. Louis and the surrounding area. The ARS has lists of housing in private homes; room and board situations; one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments; and houses for rent. Lists of available housing units cannot be mailed ahead of time because some units are rented daily. Therefore, students looking for off-campus housing should arrive in St. Louis early enough to find housing, at least two weeks before orientation. For more information, contact the ARS by phone (314) 935-5092, e-mail ars@wustl.edu or online at <http://www.ars.wustl.edu>.

Initial Housing Costs

There are many useful tips and hints on how and where to look for off-campus housing. If you are concerned about costs, here are some hints:

- 1) Housing costs vary according to the type of housing, location, and furnishings.
- 2) Students may wish to share apartments to reduce costs.
- 3) Furnishing an apartment or room can be costly. Many graduating students will be selling their furniture, so look for announcements around the campus.
- 4) Furnished apartments are more expensive and very hard to find.
- 5) Landlords will most probably require that tenants sign

a lease (contract), usually for a minimum of one year or nine months. A lease is a legal document; failure to comply with its terms may lead to court action. So read it carefully before signing.

- 6) Most rent prices do not include utility costs, which can vary from \$50 to \$150 per month.

EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION

Students on F-1 visas are not permitted to work off campus during their first academic year. After that time, an F-1 student who demonstrates that he/she has experienced an "unforeseen change in economic circumstances" that has arisen after the date of his/her arrival in the U.S. can apply for employment authorization from the USCIS. Evidence of this change in the student's economic circumstances must be submitted. Permission to work is *rarely* granted. A J-1 student who can demonstrate an unforeseen change in economic circumstances that has arisen after enrolling at the University may apply for employment authorization from the J-1 sponsor.

F-1 students may work on campus upon arrival without USCIS approval. J-1 students may work on campus with written authorization from the J-1 sponsor.

F-1 and J-1 students are not permitted to work more than twenty hours a week while school is in session. Furthermore, the number of on-campus jobs is extremely limited; therefore, students are advised not to consider either on- or off-campus employment as a significant source of income to pay for tuition or living expenses.

Spouses and dependents of F-1 students (F-2 visa holders) are not allowed to accept paid employment of any kind even on the university campus. J-2 dependents are eligible to apply for employment authorization but such authorization will be granted by the USCIS only if they can prove that the income from employment will not be used to support the J-1 principal.

AUTOMOBILE OWNERSHIP AND INSURANCE

Although used automobiles may be purchased relatively inexpensively in the U.S.; there are many factors that internationals should consider before making such purchases.

1. They should be aware of the high cost of maintenance that such vehicles may require.
2. They must be certain that they satisfy all State of Missouri requirements for driving automobiles. They must be at least 18 years of age and pass all necessary requirements to qualify for a Missouri driver's license. International drivers' licenses are not valid in Missouri.
3. They are required to purchase and maintain at all times adequate automobile insurance; the cost of this insurance can be high.

Additional information about automobile ownership and insurance is available at the OISS.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

English Language Instruction

Experience has shown that language proficiency is essential for the successful completion of university programs, especially those that require highly developed skills in oral and written English. Some students will be required by their departments to take an English proficiency test upon arrival. Based on the results, placement in the appropriate English Language Programs (ELP) course may be recommended. Further information about the courses is available on the ELP website <http://artsci.wustl.edu/~esl/>.

Speak English With Us

OISS sponsors Speak English with Us -- a group of community volunteers who assist Washington University students interested in improving their conversational English skills. There is no cost for the program, and conversation sessions are structured by each student and volunteer. Sessions are usually one hour per week, at a time and place mutually agreed upon by the volunteer and student. Applications for Speak English With Us, the Host Family Program and Be Our Dinner Guest Program can be found on the OISS website under the 'Community' link.

Host Family Program

Many Washington University international students have become acquainted with Americans and their culture through the Host Family Program. Students are matched with individuals or families who have expressed an interest in learning about foreign students and their home countries. Although host families do not provide living accommodations, they do invite international students to their homes periodically for an evening or weekend, as well as for other social occasions during the year.

Be Our Guest Dinner Program

Through the Be Our Guest Dinner Program, you are invited to the home of one of the members of the Women's Society of Washington University (WSWU) for an informal meal. We hope this will serve as a casual introduction to an American family's life off campus. Your hosts provide not only hospitality, but also transportation if needed.

International Women's Club

Two international wives' groups, open to wives of Washington University international students, hold weekly meetings during the academic year. One group is predominately oriented toward social activities; the other group offers English and craft classes as well as social activities. For additional information, contact: Pat Sarantites (314) 862-6615

Washington University Spouses and Partners Association (WUSPA)

This is a support network for the spouses and partners of Washington University and Danforth Center students, scholars, and affiliates. The group helps ease the

transition to life in St. Louis by providing useful information and social activities. For more information, you can visit their website at <http://wuspa.wustl.edu> or contact: Toshiko Imai at (314) 872-2904 toshikoimai@earthlink.net or Himasha Handunge at (314) 862-4809 himasha81@yahoo.com.

Other International Activities

There is a free lunch provided for international students on most Tuesdays during the academic year at the OISS. This program is a unique opportunity for students to meet others from around the world.

* All OISS programs are free.

HOW TO CONTACT THE OISS

Regular office hours:

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Monday through Friday

Mailing Address: Office for International Students and Scholars
Campus Box 1083
Washington University in St. Louis
One Brookings Drive
St. Louis, Missouri 63130-4899

Street Address: Office for International Students and Scholars
6470 Forsyth Boulevard
Clayton, Missouri 63105

Telephone: (314) 935-5910
FAX: (314) 935-4075
E-mail: oiss@wustl.edu
Website: <http://oisshome.wustl.edu>