

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER



International Services
433 Bolivar Street, Suite 206B
New Orleans, LA 70112-2223
Telephone: (504) 568-4802
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Dear International Visitor:

Welcome to the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center and the City of New Orleans.

This Guide to Daily Living was prepared by International Services to assist you with general questions you may have relative to the services we offer. For questions beyond the scope of this guide, please contact International Services.

New Orleans is a very exciting city, which boasts world famous jazz, a colorful history, various cultures and an endless variety of restaurants.

I wish you a very happy, memorable and safe stay in our city and look forward to meeting you in person. Please remember to call and schedule an appointment upon your arrival on the LSUHSC campus.

Kindest Personal Regards,

LSUHSC International Services

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER GUIDE TO DAILY LIVING was prepared by International Services with the assistance of the following books:

Adviser's Manual of Federal Regulations Affecting Foreign Students and Scholars (NAFSA)

Orientation Handbook (American-Mideast Educational & Training Services, Inc.)

The International Student Handbook (American Immigration Law Foundation)

Staying Safe (Entergy Corporation)

An Immigration Handbook for International Students (David A. M. Ware)

LSUHSC International Services Office Manual (Rose Chatelain)

INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

International Services is located in:

Library, Administration, and Resource Center
433 Bolivar Street, Suite 206B
New Orleans, LA 70112-2223
Telephone: (504) 568-4802
Fax: (504) 568-7632

International Services is responsible for coordinating services for international students, scholars, dental residents, fellows and faculty at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in New Orleans. It provides direct support with immigration, employment, and other personal matters.

International Services also provides assistance in the following areas:

- _ Initial visa documents for entry into the U.S for yourself and all dependents.
- _ Visa documents for an extension of stay
- _ Visa documents for a change of program or educational level
- _ Application for a change of visa status
- _ Visa documents for dependents to join you at LSUHSC
- _ Transfer to another U.S. university
- _ Replacement of lost documents
- _ Practical Training
- _ SEVIS Data Management
- _ Travel
- _ Status Maintenance

The above information is provided as general information only. Please contact International Services for more detailed information.

We can also be found online at our [webpage](#), and on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

SEVIS

ISSUES EFFECTING BOTH F-1 AND J-1 STUDENTS WITH REGARD TO NEW SEVIS (STUDENT AND EXCHANGE VISITOR INFORMATION SYSTEM)

SEVIS Background:

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is an automated process for collecting, maintaining and managing information about international foreign students, exchange visitors and their dependents during their stay in the United States. SEVIS exemplifies our commitment to open doors and secure borders by facilitating the process for millions of welcomed students, while closing loopholes for those wishing to defraud our systems or do us harm. The vast majority of individuals who come to the United States to study are seeking a quality education and a meaningful cultural exchange. However, there are those very few who would like to exploit any gaps in our immigration security system. The Department of Homeland Security is committed to reducing such security vulnerabilities, while fostering the freedoms and openness that are the hallmarks of our country. This is clearly indicated in the mission of the SEVP office: “To balance Homeland Security with facilitating eligible foreign student and exchange visitor participation in America’s outstanding academic and cultural exchange programs.”

SEVIS Fee:

As of September 1, 2004, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) began collecting a congressionally mandated fee to cover the costs for the continued operation of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). This fee will be used to administer and maintain the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), support compliance activities, and establish SEVIS Liaison Officers to provide information and assistance to students and schools.

The payment of I-901 fees will be recorded and tracked in SEVIS, the automated system for collecting, maintaining, and managing information about nonimmigrant student and exchange visitors in the United States.

Who pays the fee and how much is the fee?

For students (F-1) As of October 27, 2008	\$200
For spouses and dependent children (F-2) of students	None
For exchange visitors (J-1) As of October 27, 2008	\$180
For spouses and dependent children (J-2) exchange visitors	None

When do prospective exchange visitors pay the SEVIS fee?

- Applicants who require an entry visa to enter the United States must pay the SEVIS fee before going to the U.S. embassy or consulates for their visa interviews.
- Applicants who are citizens of Canada, Bermuda, the Bahamas, or certain other islands described in 8 CFR 212.1(a) wishing to apply for F-1 or J-1 status at a Port of Entry into the United States must pay the SEVIS fee before entering the country. A U.S. immigration official will inspect your papers either at a preinspection site in Canada or upon entry into the United States. You must have with your proof of citizenship, your admission letter to the university or program you plan to attend, your Certificate of Eligibility (SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019), and proof on financial support that corresponds to the information on your Certificate of Eligibility. A receipt that confirms that the payment of the I-901 fee has been processed should also be hand carried with these other required documents.
- Nonimmigrants currently in the United States who apply for exchange visitor status must pay the fee prior to filing their change of status application.

When must the fee be paid?

The fee must be paid prior to the entry visa interview to ensure that the payment can be deposited and recorded in SEVIS prior to the scheduled visa interview. The interviewing consular officer will confirm that the fee has been paid by accessing SEVIS. To allow for adequate processing time the fee must be paid:

- At least three business days prior to the visa interview date for electronic submissions.
- For regular mail submissions, 15 business days should be allowed before the scheduled visa interview. This time frame allows adequate time for the fee payment to be received at the DHS address listed on the Form I-901, deposited, and recorded in SEVIS.
- Add local mail processing times to these processing times for accuracy.

How can the fee bill be paid?

The Exchange Visitor may pay the fee:

- Through the Internet at www.FMJfee.com by using a credit card or debit card and completing the online Form I-901 (Fee for Remittance for Certain F, M, and J Nonimmigrant); or
- Through Western Union by providing the unique coupon number obtained at www.fmjfee.com
- Through the mail by submitting a completed Form I-901 and a check or money order drawn on a U.S. bank and payable in U.S. currency.

How will the payment be verified?

The payment will be recorded in the SEVIS system. However, it is recommended that the exchange visitor hand-carry the Internet-generated receipt to the entry visa interview and for arrival at the Port of Entry.

Individuals who pay electronically will be able to print an electronic receipt immediately at the time of payment.

When must the continuing exchange visitors (J-1 nonimmigrants who have begun but not finished a program) pay the SEVIS fee?

Continuing exchange visitors must pay the SEVIS fee before:

- Filing a reinstatement application after a substantive violation; or
- Filing a reinstatement application after they have been out of status between 121 and 269 days; or
- Applying for a change of exchange visitor category.

SEVIS Forms:

SEVIS Form I-20 (F-1 Students Only)

Retain the Form I-20. A photocopy should be kept elsewhere as a back up. This original document enables you to re-enter the U.S. when endorsed by the International Services prior to your departure and there has been no change in your academic program or source of support since it was issued. Unlike the Form I-94, the Form I-20 is not surrendered when you leave the U.S.; it must be presented to a consular official overseas if you need to apply for a new visa and at the port of entry upon your return.

The Form I-20 accumulates a record of all changes in your student status, e.g., transfer of schools, extensions of stay, application for work permission, and practical training.

Previously, the principal F-1 or J-1 was issued a form to include all dependents. New regulations mandate each principal F-1/J-1 and each dependent F-2/J-2 to be in possession of their own form.

You are also required to retain any previous Forms I-20 issued to you, regardless of whether they are still valid. If you lose your Form I-20, or it is damaged in some way, request a new Form I-20 from International Services.

SEVIS Form DS-2019 (formerly IAP-66) (J-1 Exchange Visitors Only)

Retain the form DS-2019. Keep a back up photocopy elsewhere. The document enables you to re-enter the U.S. when endorsed by International Services prior to your departure and there has been no change in your source of support since it was issued. Unlike the Form I-94, the Form DS-2019 is not surrendered when you leave the U.S.; it must be presented to a consular official overseas if you need to apply for a new visa and at the port of entry upon your return. You are also required to retain any previous Forms DS-2019 issued to you, regardless of validity.

Previously, the principal F-1 or J-1 was issued a form to include all dependents. New regulations mandate each principal F-1/J-1 and each dependent F-2/J-2 to be in possession of their own form.

It should be noted that all F-1 and J-1 exchange visitor students will be entered into SEVIS. While most reporting requirements for specific issues remain the same, additional specific regulations may apply to the F-1 and J-1 visa classifications. The majority of foreign students enrolled at the LSUHSC are F-1 students.

If your spouse or children (unmarried children under the age of twenty-one) are to accompany you to the United States, they may obtain their entry visas and admission to the United States on the basis of the separate DS-2019 issued to them. Your faculty sponsor at the LSU Health Sciences Center must assure that any salary or stipends paid to you are sufficient to support the family members, as they will be your responsibility. A Certificate of Insurance signed by you and an insurance representative must be on file with International Services to ensure that you and any accompanying family members have purchased the required health and repatriation insurance.

Upon arrival at the LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans, it is important for you to contact International Services to schedule an appointment for a brief orientation and thorough review of your documents, as well as those of all dependents entering the U.S. This introduction will allow us to answer your questions and immediately file corrections of any errors which occurred during the entry process.

IMPORTANT: Your SEVIS record will be set to *invalid* if no record of entry to the U.S. has been registered or validated within 30 days of the proposed start date. It is important to contact the Responsible Officer should there be a delay in your expected entry to the U.S.

Reporting Requirements of SEVIS - Below are the most prevalent circumstances where the Designated School Official (DSO) must report in SEVIS within 21 days as mandated by regulations. For purposes of identifying the DSO, it is Remy Allen of International Services.

In some cases listed below, consultation and approval by the Dean's Office must be accomplished prior to DSO approval and reporting.

(For F-1 Students)

A Student's Failure to Enroll – Currently, problems arise when a foreign student arrives in the United States and fails to report to his or her school. Individuals who never intended to attend school in the United States could obtain a student visa, enter the country, and then disappear without ever being reported as a “no-show.” Before SEVIS, schools did not have an obligation to report individuals’ failure to actually enroll in the school. Schools often assumed that a student who failed to appear might have chosen to attend a different school and often have not reported a student’s failure to register for classes. **SEVIS Has Resolved This Problem.** Schools will now be notified when a student has entered using his or her I-20 form, thus putting the school on notice that the individual is supposed to be destined for the campus. The school is then required by these regulations – through SEVIS – to advise the USCIS within 30 days of the school’s registration date whether or not the student has registered for classes. SEVIS sends a notification to the designated school officer if he or she forgets to do so.

Initial Entry to the U.S. and Registration - Within days of a student applying for a visa utilizing a school’s form I-20, the school is notified through SEVIS. Upon entry to the U.S., the DHS will report to the DSO through SEVIS of the student’s entry on the school’s form I-20. The school must confirm through SEVIS that the student actually arrived on campus within 30 days of entry, and again upon registration. Should your entry to the U. S. be delayed beyond thirty (30) days from your program start date as listed on your Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 for any reason, please notify the Department and International Services **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE** in order that we may amend your SEVIS Record, and if necessary get new documents to you!!! Should this record not be amended, the SEVIS record will be marked invalid and you and any family members will be unable to enter the U. S. Check in with International Services must also occur within this thirty (30) day time frame.

Semester Start and End Date - Every semester, the DSO must report in SEVIS these dates for each student, verify continued full time enrollment.

Current Name and Address - A student must inform the DSO of any legal changes to his/her name or **any change of address** within **10 days of the change**. The DSO must then report any change through SEVIS within 21 days of notification. Confirmation of address must be reported every semester.

Full Course of Study - Every semester, the DSO must report in SEVIS the number of credits completed. At all times, the student is required to be enrolled for a full course of study, with any deviation for any reason requiring the **PRIOR** approval of the DSO and appropriate reporting in SEVIS.

Reduced Course Load - The DSO may allow a student to engage in less than a full course of study for reasons listed below. Except as **otherwise noted, a reduced course load must consist of at least six semester hours. In order for a student to be authorized to drop below a full course of study, the DSO must report in SEVIS PRIOR** to the student taking the reduction. The DSO must update SEVIS with

the date, reason for authorization, and the start date of the next session. The DSO must also update SEVIS within 21 days of the student's commencement of a full course of study. A student who drops below a full course of study without **PRIOR** approval and reporting in SEVIS by the DSO will be considered out of status.

1. **Academic Difficulties**: The DSO may authorize and report a reduced course load due to a student's initial difficulty with the English language or reading requirements, unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods, or improper course level placement. The student must resume a full course of study at the next available semester, excluding a summer session, in order to maintain student status. **A student previously authorized to drop below a full course of study due to academic difficulties is not eligible for a second authorization due to academic difficulties while pursuing a course of study at that program level.** A student authorized to drop below a full course of study for academic difficulties while pursuing a course of study at a particular program level may still be authorized for a reduced course load due to an illness or medical condition.
2. **Medical Conditions**: The DSO may authorize a reduced course load (or if necessary, no course load) due to a student's temporary illness or medical condition for a period of time not to exceed an aggregate of 12 months while the student is pursuing a course of study at a particular program level. In order to authorize a reduced course load based upon a medical condition, the student must provide medical documentation from a licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy or licensed clinical psychologist to substantiate the illness or medical condition. **The student must provide current medical documentation and the DSO must reauthorize and report the drop below full time for each new semester.** A student previously authorized to drop below a full course of study due to illness or medical condition for an **aggregate of 12 months may not be authorized to reduce his/her course load on subsequent occasions while pursuing a course of study at the same program level.** A student may be authorized to reduce course load for a reason of illness or medical condition on more than one occasion while pursuing a course of study so long as the aggregate period of that authorization does not exceed 12 months *However, this must be done **PRIOR** to the reduced course load otherwise the student will have fallen out of status.*
3. **Leave of Absence** - Any leave of absence for personal reasons which results in non-completion of a semester must be approved by the DSO **PRIOR** to the leave and reported in SEVIS. If the individual will leave the United States and is not expected to return until the next scheduled semester, the department must process an application for a new form I-20 to be issued marked "initial attendance" to coincide with the students expected return. He/she should not enter on a previously issued form I-20.
4. **Completion of Required Course Work** - The DSO must report a reduced course load every semester if a student has completed all course work and is required to enroll less than full time to complete the requirements of the program with regard to thesis/dissertation. Again, **PRIOR** approval and reporting is required.

Substantive Changes (i.e. support amount/source, change in major, transfer etc) in the form of a principal student, will require that the forms of all dependent forms are also changed and reissued.

Change in Educational Level or Major - Students who continues from one educational level to another are considered to be maintaining

status, provided the transition to the new educational level is accomplished according to transfer procedures **PRIOR** to the change and reported in SEVIS and a new form generated for the principal and dependents. Students who wish to change majors must obtain approval from the DSO **PRIOR** to changing majors. New forms must be issued to the student and all dependents. Timely requests should be processed through the Office of the Dean and International Services to insure timely reporting through SEVIS and continued maintenance of status for the student.

Concurrent Enrollment - A student may be enrolled in two different service approved schools or programs within the same school at one time as long as the enrollment in both programs amounts to a full course load and is reported in SEVIS **PRIOR** to actual concurrent enrollment. When concurrently enrolled, the school from which the student will earn his/her degree should issue the Form I-20. The DSO from this school is also responsible for all reporting requirements in SEVIS. This would include students/residents/fellows at the LSU School of Dentistry who will also enroll in joint programs with the LSU School of Graduate Studies **or students enrolled in the MD/PhD program.**

Extension of Stay - A student who is maintaining status and making normal progress toward completing his/her educational objective, but who is unable to complete his/her course of study by the program end date on the form I-20, must apply to the DSO for a program extension. The student must demonstrate continually maintained status and those delays are caused by compelling academic or medical reasons, such as changes of major or research topics, unexpected research problems, or documented illnesses. A letter from the faculty sponsor providing justification and approved by the Dean will be required to affect an extension of stay. Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are not acceptable reasons for program extensions. **A DSO may not grant an extension if the student did not apply for the extension prior to the program end date noted on the form I-20. It is required students allow for a minimum of 30 (preferably 60) days prior to current program end date to effect an extension.** A student who is unable to complete the educational program within the time listed on the form I-20 and who did not request a timely extension, is ineligible for program extension is considered out of status. If eligible, the student may apply for reinstatement through the USCIS. Upon granting a program extension, the DSO must update and issue a new form I-20 reflecting the new program end date.

School Transfer - A student must be maintaining status and determined to be eligible for transfer by the DSO. Transfer to or from another Service approved school is affected by following notification procedures outlined by the DSO. However, students are not permitted to remain in the U.S. when transferring between schools or programs unless the student will begin classes **within 5 months** of completion of previous program. If ineligible for transfer, the student may depart the U.S. and return as an initial entry in a new F-1 status. Contact International Services for appropriate procedures to follow in a timely fashion.

Employment - Employment pursuant to a graduate assistantship is reported initially on form I-20 and need not be repeated **unless added following initiation of studies.** Employment pursuant to an assistantship and other on campus employment (student worker) is limited to 20 hours per week. An individual appointed as a graduate assistant and receiving a stipend is appointed at 50% effort and is not eligible for additional on campus employment. **All on campus employment must be approved by the DSO.**

- **Optional Practical Training (OPT)** - A student may apply for employment limited to one year for practical training directly related to his/her major area of study following graduation (post completion OPT) through the DSO and SEVIS. The student is eligible for OPT only if they have been enrolled for one full academic year and is maintaining status. **OPT must be requested and received by USCIS prior to the end of the student's 60 day grace period.** Normal processing for OPT through SEVIS and USCIS usually takes 80 to 90 days. It is highly recommended students apply timely. The student may not begin OPT employment until the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) has been received and not before the date indicated on the EAD. OPT employment may take place at any location as long as it relates to the student's field of study. The student remains in F-1 status under the control of the institution which issued the form I-20 and the DSO of that school is responsible for continued reporting requirements through SEVIS. Students interested in OPT should contact International Services for information and application.
- Should a student have completed all required course work, with the exception of thesis/dissertation defense, he/she may be eligible for pre and post completion OPT. The student is required to apply through the DSO in the same manner as post completion OPT.
- **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)** - A student may be authorized by the DSO through SEVIS to participate in CPT which is an integral part of an established curriculum and that required by all other students in the program. The student may not begin CPT until approval by the DSO and SEVIS reporting has been accomplished. A student taking 12 months of full time CPT is ineligible for OPT.
- **Severe Economic Hardship** - The student must obtain a recommendation from the DSO who must complete certification in SEVIS. Please refer any interested and qualifying student to International Services for application.

Completion of Studies and Departure - A student who has completed a course of study and any authorized practical training following completion of studies will be allowed an additional 60 day period to prepare for departure from the U.S. or to transfer. During this time he is ineligible to work. The DSO must report in SEVIS any early graduation prior to the program end date listed on the form I-20.

Withdrawal - A student authorized by the DSO to withdraw from classes will be allowed only a 15 day period for departure from the U.S. However, a student who fails to maintain a full course of study without the **PRIOR** approval and reporting of the DSO or otherwise fails to maintain status is **NOT** eligible for any additional period for departure is considered out of status.

Disciplinary Action - The DSO must report in SEVIS any disciplinary action taken by the school against the student as a result of being convicted of a crime

Termination - DSO must report termination date and reason.

F-2 Dependents - May not engage in full time study or pursue a degree in F-2 status. Should an F-2 dependent wish to be enrolled full time, it will be necessary for them to file a change in status to F-1 or J-1. J-2 dependents at this time may continue to study full time.

Reinstatement - The USCIS may consider reinstating a student who has not maintained status who files an application with a recommendation by the DSO through SEVIS if the student:

1. Has not been out of status for more than 5 months at the time of filing the request;
2. Does not have a record of repeated or willful violations of USCIS regulations;
3. Is currently pursuing a full course of study;
4. Had not engaged in unauthorized employment;
5. Is not deportable;
6. Establishes to the satisfaction of the USCIS by a detailed showing that the violation of status resulted from circumstances beyond the student's control (serious injury, natural disaster, closure of the institution, oversight on the part of the DSO)
7. The violation relates to a reduction in the student's course load that would have been within a DSO's power to authorize and that failure to approve reinstatement would result in extreme hardship to the student.

The DSO is required to report in SEVIS approval of reinstatement as authorized by the USCIS immediately upon reinstatement. A student who has fallen out of status may continue to attend school provided they file for reinstatement through the DSO. However the student is ineligible to receive normal student benefits (stipend, on campus employment, etc) until a reinstatement has been approved by the USCIS.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLYING FOR AN F-1 ENTRY VISA

If you are seeking admission into the United States in F-1 status for the purpose of beginning a full course of study, you must have in your possession the SEVIS Form I-20 issued by the school which you plan to attend and signed by the Designated School Official. Unless you are entry visa and passport exempt, **after paying the appropriate SEVIS fee**, you will apply at the United States consulate or Embassy having jurisdiction over your place of residence. Although you have met all the requirements for admission to a school, it is the consular official who makes the final decision as to whether you will be granted an F-1 student entry visa.

As the applicant, you must sign the certification in item 11 on page 1 of the Form I-20 issued to you, as well as any Form I-20 issued to any dependent, attesting that you understand and will abide by the various conditions stipulated by F-1 status. The consular official may or may not require a personal interview. You should, however, be prepared to present proof of English-language proficiency and verification of financial support to establish that all the requirements for non-immigrant student status are met. Although it is infrequent, some students are required to deposit a determined amount of money as security which will not be returned until the student departs from the United States after completing the specific educational objective. You must also be able to demonstrate that you have residence in your country to which you plan to return upon the completion of your program.

We estimate that in addition to tuition charges, special fees, books and health insurance, you should be prepared to pay approximately \$23,772 in living expenses each year. In addition, you will need at least \$3,500 for each dependent. This would include housing, food, clothing, local travel, recreation, toiletries and other miscellaneous expenses. You are strongly advised to bring personal funds of \$1,500 in the form of travelers' checks with you to cover expenses during transit and the first few days in the U.S. This will be helpful also in the event that transfers of dollars from your home country to your U.S. bank account or the initial payments of stipends promised by your graduate school are delayed.

When the consular official is satisfied that you have met all the requirements, an entry visa will be issued. Prospective students from certain countries may experience delays, particularly if applying in a world country (other than your home country), while security checks are completed.

When the entry visa application is approved, an entry visa stamp/page is placed in your passport, noting the period of time for which it is valid, the number of entries allowed and the school named on the Form I-20. The Form I-20 is returned for your use in applying for admission to the United States.

Upon arrival at the United States port of entry, present your passport (or travel document), entry visa, evidence of financial support, and Form I-20 to the immigration official.

When you are admitted to the United States, the immigration officer may issue an I-94 card (arrival/departure record) or generate an electronic I-94 record, which shows the date and place of admission, your status as an F-1 student, and a special 11-digit admission number. This 11-digit number assigned to you will be used in tracking all future arrivals and departures, programs of study, transfers to different schools, practical training and other events relevant to your F-1 status. At this time, the official retains the Form I-20 to you.

As an F-1 student, you will be admitted to the United States for “duration of status”, meaning the period required to complete the program(s) of study plus any authorized period of post-completion of studies practical training with sixty additional days to prepare for departure from the United States. “D/S” will be indicated on the I-94.

If your spouse or unmarried children (under the age of twenty-one) wish to accompany you to the United States, they may obtain their visas and admission to the U.S. on the basis of a SEVIS Form I-20 issued in their name. Using calculations from our Student Financial Aid Office, we have established that **each dependent** will increase your living expenses by an additional \$3,500. Therefore, your program coordinator at LSU Health Sciences Center will be asked to evaluate and assure that your responsibility for them will not interfere with your studies and that your financial support is sufficient to support the family member(s) or other arrangements have been made to provide for their expenses. We emphasize the importance of sufficient financial support for the entire period of your program of study for you and your accompanying dependents because dependents in F-2 status may not accept employment or engage in business under any circumstances. Likewise, the consular officer and the immigration officer at the port of entry must be satisfied that they have sufficient funds.

If the dependents follow at a later date, you should request assistance from the Designated School Official to be advised of the procedure and documents required for them.

If the immigration officer is not satisfied that the I-20 is properly completed but considers the F-1 visa to be valid, he may grant admission for a temporary period of 30 days with the issuance of Form 515 instructing you to submit the I-20 and I-94 to the Immigration Officer where you plan to study or work. An I-515A indicates a SEVIS related problem with admission. An I-515A should be returned to Washington, D.C. address on form. Regulation I-515's (Non-SEVIS related admissions problems) are still processed at District Offices. **Should this occur, please notify International Services immediately upon arrival on campus.**

Upon arrival at LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans, it is important that you contact International Services to schedule and appointment for and orientation and a thorough review of your documents. The office telephone number is (504)568-4802. This introduction will allow us to answer any questions you may have and immediately correct any errors which occurred during the entry process.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLYING FOR A J-1 ENTRY VISA

If you are seeking admission into the United States in J-1 status, you must apply at the United States Consulate or Embassy having jurisdiction over your place of residence. You must present to the consular officer a valid passport and a Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status, referred to as a DS-2019 and SEVIS fee receipt. Sign the bottom of the form for the J-1 Principal. The J-1 must also sign the bottom of the DS-2019 for each dependent under the age of 21. It is recommended upon making application for J-1 and J-2 visas, you are prepared to provide copies of marriage certificates and birth certificates with appropriate English translations. The consular officer may request additional documents to establish your honest intentions in applying for a non-immigrant visa, proof of adequate financial support and proof of a residence abroad that you do not plan to abandon.

If the consular officer approves the entry visa application, an entry visa stamp/page is issued into the passport noting the period of validity of the visa and the number of entries for which the entry visa is valid. The consular officer will also note on the DS-2019 whether, in his or her judgment, you are subject to the two-year home country physical presence requirement. This subjectivity includes those exchange-visitors whose (1) exchange programs are financed by their home government or by the U.S. government, (2) skills have been determined by the Department of State to be in short supply in their home country, and (3) exchange programs involve graduate medical education or clinical training.

Upon arrival at the United States port of entry, present your passport, entry visa and all retained copies of the DS-2019 to the immigration officer. If, after a review of your documents, you are found to be admissible to the United States, the immigration officer will issue a paper Form I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record), or generate an electronic I-94 record which shows the date and place of admission, immigration classification and should be marked D/S. D/S stands for duration of status and refers to the program period listed at item 3 on Form DS-2019. The USCIS= definition of J-1 duration of status is the period specified on Form DS-2019 plus a period of 30 days for the purpose of travel.

If the immigration officer is not satisfied that the DS-2019 is properly completed but considers the J-1 entry visa to be valid, he may grant admission for a temporary period of 30 days with the issuance of Form 515 instructing you to submit the DS-2019 and I-94 to the Immigration Officer where you plan to study or work. An I-515A indicates a SEVIS related problem with admission. An I-515A should be returned to Washington, D.C. address on form. Regulation I-515's (Non-SEVIS related admissions problems) are still processed at District Offices. **Should this occur, please notify International Services immediately upon arrival on campus.**

10 POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN APPLYING FOR A NONIMMIGRANT VISA

1. **TIES TO YOUR HOME COUNTRY.** Under United States law, all applicants for nonimmigrant visas, such as student visas, are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not. You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. “Ties” to your home country are the things that bind you to your town, homeland, or current place of residence: job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, investments, etc. If you are a prospective undergraduate, the interviewing office may ask about your specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other relationships, educational objectives, grades long-range plans and career prospects in your home country. Each person’s situation is different, of course, and there is no magic explanation of single document, certificate, or letter which can guarantee visa issuance. If you have applied for the United States Green Card Lottery, you may be asked if you are intending to immigrate. A simple answer would be that you applied for the lottery since it was available but not with a specific intent to immigrate. If you overstayed your authorized stay in the United States previously, be prepared to explain what happened clearly and concisely, with documentation if available.
2. **ENGLISH.** Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. Our suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview, but do NOT prepare speeches! If you are coming to the United States solely to study intensive English, be prepared to explain how English will be useful for you and your home country.
3. **SPEAK FOR YOURSELF.** Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular office wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.
4. **KNOW THE PROGRAM AND HOW IT FITS YOUR CAREER PLANS.** If you are not able to articulate the reasons you will study in a particular program in the United States, you may not succeed in convincing the consular office that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to immigrate. You should also be able to explain how studying in the United States relates to your future professional career when you return home.
5. **BE BRIEF.** Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impressions they form during the first minute of the interview. Consequently, what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers to the officer’s questions short and to the point.
6. **ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION.** It should be immediately clear to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. Remember that you will have 2 – 3 minutes of interview time, if you’re lucky.

7. **NOT ALL COUNTRIES ARE EQUAL.** Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the United States as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after they study in the United States.
8. **EMPLOYMENT.** Your main purpose in coming to the United States should be to study/train, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. While many students do work off-campus during their studies, such employment is incidental to their main purposes of completing their United States education. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program. If your spouse is also applying for an accompanying F-2 visa, be aware that F-2 dependents cannot, under any circumstances, be employed in the United States. If asked, be prepared to address what your spouse intends to do with his or her time while in the United States. Attending school part-time is a permitted activity.
9. **DEPENDENTS REMAINING AT HOME.** If your spouse and children are remaining behind in your country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be an especially tricky area if you are the primary source of income for your family. If the consular officer gains the impression that your family will need you to remit money from the United States in order to support themselves, your student visa application will almost certainly be denied. If your family does decide to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at the same post where you applied for your visa.
10. **MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE.** Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied a student visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and try to get the reason you were denied in writing.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN) OR INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (ITIN)

Because many international visitors are unfamiliar with the U.S. tax system, they may not realize that a Social Security Number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) assigned in the past continues to be valid and they do not need to apply for a new number.

There are numerous reasons for an international visitor to require a Social Security Number. Some of those are:

- _ To obtain a Driver's License (if not eligible for Social Security Number, provide letter from Social Security Office which states ineligible)

- _ To gain employment

- _ To open a bank account

However, not everyone is eligible for a SSN. If ineligible for a SSN, they may apply for an ITIN. Because of the restrictions and guidelines surrounding the ITIN application process, more information is available on the IRS [website](#).

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Passport

Your passport is your basic travel document, a formal permit from your government to travel abroad and return to your country. It is also your primary form of identification outside your home country. Your passport must remain valid at all times, and when possible, for 6 months beyond approved stay. It can be renewed at your consulate or embassy. If you lose your passport, you must apply for a new one through your consulate or embassy.

Addresses and telephone numbers of New Orleans consulates and embassies are available in the local telephone directory.

Entry Visa

A entry visa is issued and placed in your passport by an American Consulate or Embassy outside the United States. The entry visa authorizes you to enter -but not to remain in- the United States, and indicates your designated status, e.g. F-1, F-2, J-1, J-2, H-1B, H-4, TN, O-1, O-3 etc. The entry visa has an expiration date and may be valid for one, two, or multiple entries.

It is not necessary to renew your entry visa to remain in the United States, but if you travel abroad, you must apply for a new entry visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate outside the United States if the one previously issued has expired. Certain non-immigrants may be eligible to travel to Canada, Mexico or any of the islands adjacent to North America except Cuba for less than 30 days without being required to obtain an entry visa prior to reentry. As these regulations change, please check with International Services to see if you qualify based on your home country.

The duration of an entry visa stamp has no bearing on one's authorization to remain in the United States. Permission to remain is designated on the Form I-94 as described on the following pages.

Form I-94-Arrival/Departure Record

If you entered the U.S. before April 30, 2013: Your I-94 is a small white piece of cardboard which was stamped and stapled into your passport when you came through the immigration inspection at the airport or at the border. **This card is very important:** the stamp on it will tell you which immigration status you hold and when that status expires. There is also a number at the top of the form; this is your I-94 Number, or Admission Number, which the DHS uses to keep track of your entry into and departure from the U.S. Therefore, it is very important that you keep the I-94 card securely stapled into your passport, because you will need to turn it in when you leave the U.S. in order

to prove that you did indeed depart the country. If you lose your I-94, you must ask for a replacement from USCIS. The filing fee to request a replacement I-94 is \$330! More information about replacing your I-94 can be found [here](#).

If you entered the U.S. after April 30, 2013 BY LAND: Your I-94 is a small white piece of cardboard which was stamped and stapled into your passport when you came through the immigration inspection at the border, unless you entered under the [Visa Waiver Program](#). This card is very important: the stamp on it will tell you which immigration status you hold and when that status expires. There is also a number at the top of the form; this is your I-94 Number, or Admission Number, which the DHS uses to keep track of your entry into and departure from the U.S. Therefore, it is very important that you keep the I-94 card securely stapled into your passport, because you will need to turn it in when you leave the U.S. in order to prove that you did indeed depart the country. If you lose your I-94, you must ask for a replacement from USCIS. The filing fee to request a replacement I-94 is \$330! More information about replacing your I-94 can be found [here](#).

If you entered the U.S. after April 30, 2013 BY SEA OR AIR: Depending on which port of entry you used and the CBP schedule found [here](#), your I-94 may be electronic and a hard copy must be printed from the [CBP website](#) OR a paper I-94 (see above). Your passport should also have been stamped to reflect your status and period of admission when you came through the immigration inspection at the airport or at the port. **The I-94 document is very important:** it will tell you which immigration status you hold and when that status expires. There is also a number at the top of the form; this is your I-94 Number, or Admission Number, which the DHS uses to keep track of your entry into and departure from the U.S. You are not required to apply for a replacement I-94, you may simply re-print the form from the CBP website as long as you do so **before** departing the U.S. following that admission. Once you depart the U.S., your I-94 history is removed from the CBP website, and you must request a replacement using [Form I-102](#).

If you entered the U.S. after April 30, 2013 BY SEA OR AIR AND went through secondary inspection: Your I-94 is a small white piece of cardboard which was stamped and stapled into your passport when you came through the immigration inspection at the airport or at the port. **This card is very important:** the stamp on it will tell you which immigration status you hold and when that status expires. There is also a number at the top of the form; this is your I-94 Number, or Admission Number, which the DHS uses to keep track of your entry into and departure from the U.S. Therefore, it is very important that you keep the I-94 card securely stapled into your passport, because you will need to turn it in when you leave the U.S. in order to prove that you did indeed depart the country. If you lose your I-94, you must ask for a replacement from USCIS. The filing fee to request a replacement I-94 is \$330! More information about replacing your I-94 can be found [here](#).

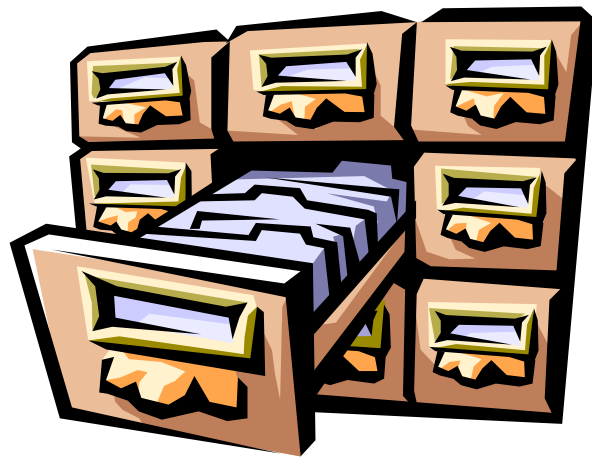
If you entered the U.S. after May 21, 2013 BY SEA OR AIR: Your I-94 is electronic, a hard copy must be printed from the [CBP website](#). Your passport should also have been stamped to reflect your status and period of admission when you came through the immigration inspection at the airport or at the border. The I-94 document is very important: it will tell you which immigration status you hold and when that status expires. There is also a number at the top of the form; this is your I-94 Number, or Admission Number, which the DHS uses to keep track of your entry into and departure from the U.S. You are not required to apply for a replacement I-94, you may simply re-print the form from the CBP website as long as you do so **before** departing the U.S. following that admission. Once you depart the U.S., your I-94 history is removed from the CBP website and you must request a replacement using [Form I-102](#).

GENERAL INFORMATION

If you have any petition filed with USCIS, check with International Services before leaving the U.S. to ascertain whether your departure will affect your pending application and/or whether the filing of the application might impair your right to re-enter in your current status or some other status.

Maintaining Status

Like all nations, the United States has laws governing foreign nationals residing within its borders. It is the responsibility of the visitor to remain in status; however, International Services is available to provide advice when required. You may be confused by the many forms, numbers, and deadlines, but if you understand and meet the essential requirements, you will maintain your legal status in the United States.



STAYING SAFE IN NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans is a city known for its culture, entertainment and cuisine. However, like many U.S. cities, it can be dangerous. The best way to avoid any dangerous situations is to use common sense. Do not carry a lot of cash, pay attention to your surroundings, and do not leave your personal items unattended or unlocked. If you are the victim of a crime, call 911 as soon as you can get to a phone.

Emergency Telephone Numbers

Dialing 911 on your telephone will connect you to emergency services. You do not need to put money in a pay phone to dial 911. The emergency number on the LSUHSC campus is (504) 568-8999. If you have a non-emergency, you should call the local or campus police. Local emergency numbers are listed in the first section of the local telephone directory. You should memorize your emergency numbers or keep them near your phone. It is also a good idea to be aware of the location of the nearest hospital and how to get there.

Safety Tips

Home

Always keep your doors and windows locked. Install window locks or stops on windows, especially when on the first floor. It is a good idea to keep a light or radio on while you are away as this gives the impression that someone is home.

Car

When parking your car at night, choose a well-lit area. If the area does not appear safe, do not park there. Always lock your doors and never leave valuables on the car seats (it is safest to lock them in the trunk). Make sure you know where you are going before you leave the house. Keep a map and flashlight in your glove compartment.

Walking

It is not a good idea to walk alone, especially at night. As a courtesy, you can be escorted to your car while on the LSUHSC campus by dialing (504) 568-8999. When crossing the street, look both ways for traffic. Many streets in the United States can be dangerous for pedestrians. If you choose to walk to a location, be aware of your surroundings. Pickpockets (people who try to steal your purse, wallet or other personal belongings) work in a variety of surroundings, especially large crowds.

Some issues to be aware of:

- ***Domestic Violence*** is a learned pattern of behaviors used by one person in a relationship to control the other person. The partners may be married or not married, gay or lesbian, living together, separated or dating. Examples of domestic violence are emotional

abuse, isolation from family or friends, actual or threatened physical harm, sexual assault, stalking or intimidation. There are hotlines and temporary shelters to provide some support.

Domestic Abuse is illegal in the United States. To get immediate assistance, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233. Getting help will not affect your status.

— **Identity Theft** - This is one of the fastest growing crimes in America. It may occur if someone obtains your personal information, such as, your name, Social Security number, and address and then proceeds to “pretend” to be you. Thieves will often use your personal information to open credit cards, bank accounts, loans, initiate cell phone service, or even try to get a job in your name. Tips to keep in mind to protect yourself from identity theft include:

- Don't give your credit card number or Social Security number over the phone in public places or if you are called and asked for that information from an unknown source.
- Only carry necessary credit cards and make sure the back of the cards are signed.
- Tear up receipts or bank statements before putting them in the trash.
- Don't carry your Social Security Card with you unless necessary
- If you think you might be a victim of identity theft, visit www.identity-theft-help.us for more information.

— **“Public Charge”** - Living in the United States can cause financial difficulties. The United States has some programs to help with financial difficulties; however, most funds are reserved for United States citizens and permanent residents. “Public charge” is a term that is applied to immigrants who have become dependent on the government for funds.

— **School-Age Children** - Once settled you will need to find out the policies and locations of schools in your area. It is law in the United States that children between the ages of 5 and 16 attend school. Your children can attend public schools or private schools for a fee. The public school your child attends is dependent upon the district in which you live. In order to register your child for school you will need several documents, such as: birth certificate, immunization records, transcripts and records from previous schools attended. The school year usually begins in August and ends in May. A list of public schools can be found in your local telephone directory or by visiting <http://www.jpss.k12.la.us/district/home.aspx> for Jefferson Parish (Metairie, Kenner, etc.) K-12 schools, <http://www.nops.k12.la.us> for Orleans Parish (New Orleans, Algiers, etc) K-12 schools or <http://www.stpsb.org/schools.php> for St. Tammany Parish (Mandeville, Covington, etc.) K-12 Schools.

— **Child Care** - If both parents are working; you may need to find suitable childcare. The LSUHSC does not offer childcare on campus at this time. When searching for suitable childcare, you may be able to obtain references from other parents. There is also a listing of childcare facilities in the telephone directory. All childcare facilities in the United States must be licensed by the state, so it is wise to check credentials and visit the facility before enrolling your child. You can find a list of licensed facilities in your parish by going to: <https://webapps.dss.state.la.us/carefacility/index>.

DAILY LIVING

Moving

One of the first decisions to be made when you arrive in the United States is where to live. There are many different types of living quarters to choose from.

On Campus Housing- If an F-1 Student, living on-campus for at least your first year will help you to adjust to your new surroundings. Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center offers on-campus accommodations as available on a full time or temporary basis. On-campus living arrangements can be organized directly through the Manager of the LSUHSC Residence Halls, which can be contacted via telephone @ (504) 568-6259. You may also visit the web site at <http://www.auxent.lsuhsu.edu/reshall/>. More information can be obtained at (504) 568-6260.

Because living on campus is inexpensive, there is usually a waiting list to get in. Living off campus usually entails extra expenses such as utilities (gas, electric, water and sewage) and telephone. The tenant is responsible for having the utilities connected. There are many different types of places to choose from, such as an apartment, studio, house, or efficiency. There are a variety of ways to search for a place to live. The Sunday newspaper (Times Picayune) is one of the best sources of availability.

Apartment - The cost of renting an apartment can vary substantially depending on location and size. Most apartments require first month's rent, deposit and signing a lease. A lease is a contract between you and the owner that documents rights and responsibilities. You may wish to have a roommate, which will lower the cost. Most apartments are unfurnished, but you can rent a furnished apartment for an added fee. Furnished apartments usually include a bed, chest of drawers, a couch, dining room table and chairs. Here are some defined terms that may help you:

— **Efficiency** is a single room with a private bathroom. The room will include a small kitchen and place to sleep. Sometimes utilities are included with the rent.

— **Studio** has a separate kitchen and eating area and is larger than efficiency.

To check the various types of accommodations, locations, and pricing, go to:

— www.apartmenthomesbytonti.com

— www.1stlake.com

— www.forrent.com

— www.rent.com

— www.apartments.com

These web sites will provide location of properties, pictures, amenity listings, etc.

House - Houses are roomier than apartments and can be cost effective if you have one or several roommates. When renting a house, you may be responsible for paying your water and sewage in addition to the electric and telephone bills. The following is a list of telephone numbers to call to get your utilities connected:

	<u>Orleans Parish</u>	<u>Jefferson Parish</u>
Water	(504) 529-2837	(504) 736-6060
Electric	1-800-368-3749	1-800-368-3749
Gas	1-800-368-3749	(504) 849-4300
Telephone	1-888-757-6500	1-888-757-6500

Telephone - When arranging for telephone service, you will be given many options from which to choose. Ask the operator to explain what each option is. Many of the options are not necessary and cost extra money, such as Call Waiting and Caller ID. Once your phone is installed, you will receive White and Yellow Pages directories. These directories will include local listings, personal numbers, business numbers and directions on how to place an international call. Many people will choose to obtain a cellular telephone instead of or in addition to a home phone.

Cellular phone –Cell phone service is available from various providers in the area. The cost will depend on the calling plan and features you choose. For more information, visit:

<http://www.att.com/>, <http://www.verizonwireless.com/b2c/index.html>, <http://sprint.com/>, <http://www.boostmobile.com/> The service area of each provider is different, and may overlap. Most carriers offer nationwide as well as international service.

Prepaid cell phones are also available from a variety of retailers: WalMart, Best Buy, Radio Shack, AT&T, Verizon

Most require a certain dollar amount to be purchased every 90 days or so. The phones work like a regular cell phones and usually require an email address to set up and activate the service. Instructions for activation and use should come with the phone at the time of purchase.

Public Telephones- Pay telephones are located in or near public buildings. Local calls cost fifty cents. To call long distance, deposit fifty cents and dial the number. A recorded voice will instruct you on how much money you must deposit to complete the call or how to use the calling card. Considering the increased use of cell phones, it has become increasingly more difficult to locate public pay phones.

Overseas Calls from Public Telephone - To charge to a calling card- dial 011 + country code + city code + telephone number. To call collect- dial 01 + country code + city code + telephone number.

Shopping

Shopping is a favorite pastime of Americans. Most cities in America have large selections to choose from. Prices can vary significantly, but it is not a general practice to barter in the U.S. (except in the French Market or when buying used merchandise).

- When shopping in the United States, it is rarely necessary to pay full price for items. It is wise to comparison shop and wait for items to go on sale. The Sunday newspaper is a good place to find sales, as well as discount coupons for groceries. The internet also has many “couponing” sites that will match local sales with available coupons, which can lead to significant cost savings. Most stores have their own exchange or refund policy, with some items non-refundable. Check the policies of the stores you shop when making purchases.
- Be aware that the “sales tax” is not included in the displayed price. Sales tax varies for each parish and is added by the store clerk when you check out. When purchasing large items and appliances you should keep your store receipts, read the instruction booklet and carefully fill out warranty cards. The manufacturer may have a guarantee on their products from defects and malfunctions for a period of time.

The sales tax for Orleans Parish is as follows:

Parishwide - General Sales	A	1.50%	1.00%	2.50%	5.00%	4.00%	9.00%
Parishwide - Food & Drug Sales	B	1.50%	0.50%	2.50%	4.50%	4.00%	8.50%

The sales tax for Jefferson Parish is as follows:

Rates

4.75% - General

3.50% - Food / Drug items

2.00% - Airport District ¹

Sales / Use Tax Listings (all rates and levies of sales taxes are parish-wide except for the Airport Tax District).

1. The New Orleans International Airport Tax District levies a 2.0% tax, in addition to the general levy, on all sales and rentals occurring within the airport facility.

There are many different types of stores:

Department Stores carry a wide range of merchandise such as clothing, shoes, bed linens, dishes and jewelry. These include Dillard's, J.C. Penney, Sears, and Macys.

Discount Stores sell items similar to Department Stores but are generally less expensive. Discount Stores may also carry cosmetics, prescription and non-prescription drugs, household goods, some food, and appliances. These include Wal-Mart, Target, and Big Lots.

Convenience Stores carry a limited number of items such as ice, milk, drinks, and snacks. As the name implies, convenience stores are located in residential areas and are usually open 24 hours a day. Items bought at these stores are often very expensive. These include EZ-Serve and Circle K. Most gas stations also have a convenience store.

Drug Stores carry more than prescription medications. Many of the larger drug stores carry magazines, cosmetics, personal products and seasonal items. They may also process photograph film development. These include Walgreens, CVS, and Rite Aid.

Shopping Malls typically feature several department stores as well as a variety of specialty stores. These malls also usually include food courts serving a variety of fast foods. These include Clearview, Riverwalk, New Orleans Centre, Canal Place, Lakeside, Oakwood and the Esplanade.

Factory Outlets and wholesale houses sell merchandise directly from the manufacturer, usually at lower prices. Be careful, however, as some items could have flaws or defects and may not be returnable.

Grocery Stores can be small and carry specialty foods or large and carry many kinds of products. The large grocery stores (also called supermarkets) are usually part of a chain and may be less expensive. These include Winn Dixie, Whole Foods, and Rouse's. Many supermarkets have a section for international foods and other items.

Buying Used Goods - Second-Hand Stores carry inexpensive used goods. Common sources of second-hand items are Thrift Shops, Goodwill, "flea markets" and garage or rummage sales. Items are usually of good quality and are simply no longer needed by those selling them. Second hand stores are listed in the Yellow Pages and garage sales are listed in the newspaper. However, buying used appliances can be risky, as there is no "guarantee" provided and the items are usually not returnable. **Be extremely cautious about buying second hand goods online from individuals using sites, like Craigslist. Never give out your personal information and arrange to meet in a public place.**

Transportation

Automobiles- Cars are certainly convenient and cost effective. However, if you live on or near campus, you will find biking, walking or public transportation to be less expensive.

Bicycles- A bicycle is an inexpensive means of travel. Bicycles are often stolen so you should invest in a good lock and, for added safety, a helmet should be worn. A U-shaped lock with cylindrical keys is the best. Cyclists must obey all traffic laws and signals. For further information on rules and regulations on riding a bike on the street you should contact the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Buses- Riding the bus is a very inexpensive way to get around the city. A schedule for the local bus service can be obtained from the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) at www.norta.com. You may also visit the RTA at 2817 Canal St. or call (504) 242-2600 for a schedule and price listing for fares, as the driver cannot provide change. You may purchase a pass for the bus online, through local vendors, or at the kiosks at various stops. More information about Jazzy Pass purchase can be found [here](#).

You can also travel state to state with the Greyhound bus service. Greyhound offers an Ameripass to international visitors for unrestricted travel as well as a 10% discount for international students with the proper identification. Contact Greyhound at 1-800-231-2222 or go to <http://www.greyhound.com>.

Airplanes- Travel via airplane is definitely a quicker way to get to your destination. Flights can be expensive, so you should shop around before purchasing your ticket. For more information contact the New Orleans International Airport at (504) 464-0831 or a local travel agent or visiting <http://flymsy.com> for flight information.

Train- Traveling by train can be a fun and inexpensive way to travel from state to state or greater distances. If interested in traveling by train you should contact Amtrak for more information at 1-800-872-7245 or visit <http://www.amtrak.com/home>.

Taxi- Getting around by means of a taxi can be economical if you do not live far from campus and will not use the service very often. Taxis (also known as cabs) can be obtained by calling the taxi service listed in the telephone book. Remember, the meter starts as soon as you get in the cab. Effective August 1, 2012 New Orleans taxi drivers must accept cash **and** credit/debit cards and may not refuse customers who only have a credit/debit card. A tip of about 10-15% of the fare price is customary payment in addition to the cost of the ride. A "tip" is an expression of gratuity common in many American businesses. In addition to taxis, Americans also tip their waiter or waitress at restaurants, and stylists at hair salons.

Streetcars- Streetcars are a cheap and easy way to travel with a limited route in the Downtown and Uptown areas. Make sure you have correct change, or a pass, as the driver does not have the ability to give change. For more on routes and fares, go to www.norta.com. You may purchase a pass for the streetcar online, through local vendors, or at the kiosks at various stops. More information about Jazzy Pass purchase can be found [here](#).

Hitchhiking - Hitchhiking is very dangerous. It is unsafe to pick up hitchhikers or to hitchhike, as well as **illegal** in the United States. Every year people are killed or hurt accepting rides from strangers.

Driver's License-The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) will provide a Louisiana driver's licenses, learner's permit, or state ID card to foreign nationals who are or will be residents of the United States for at least six months (180 days) from the date of application and have acceptable documentation. In addition, to obtain a regular driver's license, learner's permit or State ID Card, you must provide proof of lawful entry into the United States with one of the following:

- A valid passport with entry stamp or I-94 card/printout and DS-2019 or I-797 receipt as applicable
- A valid DHS employment card (EAD)
- A Permanent Resident Card

Please note that the DMV accepts original documents only. While it is not absolutely necessary to have a Social Security Number to apply for a driver's license, having one can make the application process easier.

- Each applicant for a driver's license must comply with all identification, medical and vision requirements before the administration of any test.
- Unless an out-of-country or out-of-state driver's license is presented, all first time applicants must present a certificate of completion for the appropriate driver's education course. A list of schools pre-approved to give the appropriate training course can be found at: <http://dpsweb.dps.louisiana.gov/OMVDrivingSchools.nsf>
- All applicants transferring to Louisiana from out-of-the-country will be required to successfully complete the Road Signs Test, Road Rules Test and driving test. Only those countries with which Louisiana has a reciprocity agreement will be exempt from this testing. Applicants may retain their out-of-country driver's license.
 - Although out-of-country drivers are exempt from pre-licensing training, they are not exempt from the visual/medical requirements or from the written and driving portion of the examination upon making application for a license. (International drivers' licenses are not acceptable to waive appropriate driver's education course or as identification.)
- The OMV handbook for Class E licenses can be found at: <http://dpsweb.dps.louisiana.gov/omvpubs.nsf> or may be obtained from the ISO through email request.
- You must provide a vehicle for the road/driving test, the DMV does not provide a vehicle for this.
- The vehicle provided for the driving/road test must have current registration, a current inspection sticker, a current license plate sticker and proof of insurance.

No road tests are given between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. or during inclement weather (i.e. when it is raining.)

The fee for a personal driver's license is \$24.50.

The fee to renew an expired (more than 10 days) license is \$39.50

The fee for an ID card is \$21.00

Check with the offices listed below for further details:

Department of Motor Vehicles-Driver's License or I.D.

1-877-368-5463

Department of Motor Vehicles-Vehicle Registration

1-877-368-5463

To drive a car in Louisiana you must have the following:

- _ A valid driver's license with you in the car. If you are caught without a license, you could receive a jail sentence and a monetary fine.

- _ Liability insurance on the car you are driving, and proof of that coverage. Louisiana requires minimum insurance coverage of \$15,000 per person, and \$30,000 per accident. If you are involved in an accident and are found to be without insurance or proof of insurance in the car, your driver's license can be revoked and you could be subjected to fines.

- _ Be sure to tell the insurance company/agent you are an international student/researcher and confirm that you are eligible for coverage. There have been incidents in the past where people thought they were insured and only found out after an accident that their insurance company would not pay any claims because they were internationals.

- _ A valid Safety Inspection Sticker (Brake Tag) is required in Louisiana. This inspection sticker must be renewed every year. The inspection sticker is inexpensive and only takes a few minutes to get. If you are stopped without a brake tag, you could receive a fine or your car could be towed.

Finding an Automobile - If a car is only needed for a few days, you may find renting to be the best option. If you find it necessary to purchase a car, there are two options, new or used vehicles. Although a used car can be less expensive, make sure you have a reliable independent mechanic to check the car for any problems before purchasing it. Car dealerships, bulletin boards, and individuals list used cars for sale. Many used cars are advertised in the Times Picayune and News on Wheels, a free local magazine. To check out the typical price

for a used car, you can buy a copy of the Kelly Blue Book, which lists prices based on the year of the car and its features. Information is also available at their [website](#). Consumer Reports is also a good source for finding information on new or used automobiles.

Leasing a Car - Though similar to buying a car, leasing an automobile provides for different benefits and responsibilities on the part of the owner. When leasing a car you are usually required to have a down payment. Although your payments may be lower, you will be required to pay a lump sum at the end of the lease in order to keep the car. Leasing a car can be more expensive, and it sometimes limits the amount of miles you can put on your car every year. Research leasing carefully before making a decision, as the terms of a lease can last several years.

Traffic Accidents

Traffic accidents should be reported. The manner of reporting may vary according to the parish. Call the emergency number of the parish, usually 911, to report the accident and await further instructions. You should not move anything before the police arrive. Before leaving the scene of the accident you must exchange the following information with the other driver:

- _ Name and address, driver's license number, insurance company and policy number, license plate number, and car description and description of the damage
- _ Names and addresses of all occupants of the cars involved
- _ Names and addresses of all witnesses to the accident

Some Important Facts

In Louisiana, you will receive a ticket if the driver or passengers are caught not wearing a seatbelt. Seat belts have been proven to be successful in saving lives.

Observe speed limits and drive with caution at all times. If a police officer stops you and he or she gives you a ticket, do not try to pay the officer with cash. It could be perceived as bribery and that is against the law. Sign the ticket; it is not an admission of guilt, only acknowledging you received it. You can pay your ticket through the mail or request a hearing to contest your ticket. All information needed to pay the ticket is on your ticket.

Drinking and Driving is against the law. If you receive a DWI (Driving While Intoxicated), you will be subjected to heavy fines and a possible jail sentence. Texting and driving is also against the law in Louisiana (and other states). More information is available [here](#).

Money/Banking

Monetary System - The US Monetary System is a decimal system, with one dollar equal to one hundred cents. Paper currency is used for amounts of one dollar or more and coins are used for amounts up to a dollar (while not widely used, the dollar coin is available and in circulation). For more information go to the website www.ustreas.gov/topics/currency

Exchange Rates - Some banks will exchange foreign currency for a fee. No banks will exchange foreign coinage. Currency can be exchanged at the airport or at a major hotel. You can also exchange currency through the Thomas Cook Foreign Exchange. For more information call 1-800-287-7362. Current exchange rates can be found on the financial pages of the newspaper.

Checking Account - It is not practical to carry large amounts of cash. You should open a checking or savings account. You may need a checking account to pay bills such as rent and utilities. Sending cash through the mail is not safe. Personal checks are accepted almost everywhere within Louisiana when accompanied by some form of identification, such as a driver's license or ID card.

LSUHSC has a banking institution, the Campus Federal Credit Union, with a location in the Resource Center at 433 Bolivar Street, the same building as International Services.

Money Orders— It is important to know how to obtain money orders in the event of a delay in setting up a checking account or when some businesses prefer not to accept cash (an example of this are apartment properties). A money order works similar to a check. They can be purchased at supermarkets or convenience stores. If you know the amount to be paid via a money order, you would pay a supermarket cashier the amount in addition to a charge for the money order which is usually no more than a dollar.

Credit & Credit Cards- Credit Cards are an essential part of the American way of life. There may be circumstances where you are required to have a credit card, such as renting a car or placing an order by phone. Credit cards are the best alternative to checks, especially when traveling out of state. Credit cards are issued based on past credit history. Many international students find it difficult to get a credit card in the United States because they do not have a credit history established. It is a good idea to bring a credit card with you.

Travelers Checks- A traveler's check is usually a safe way to transport money. If traveler's checks are lost or stolen they can be replaced if the appropriate log is kept. Most businesses will accept traveler's checks in United States denominations. Some businesses, such as taxis and buses, do not accept traveler's checks.

COINS	FIGURE ON FRONT	VALUE (CENTS)	COLOR
Penny	Lincoln	1 Cent	Copper
Nickel	Jefferson	5 Cents	Silver
Dime	Roosevelt	10 Cents	Silver
Quarter	Washington	25 Cents	Silver
Half Dollar	John F. Kennedy	50 Cents	Silver



Notes: 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 dollars



Coins: penny (1 cent), nickle (5 cents), dime (10 cents), quarter (25 cents)

PAPER MONEY	
DENOMINATION	PORTRAIT ON FRONT
\$1.00	George Washington
\$5.00	Abraham Lincoln
\$10.00	Alexander Hamilton
\$20.00	Andrew Jackson
\$50.00	Ulysses S. Grant
\$100.00	Benjamin Franklin

U.S. TAX BASICS

WHO: Every nonresident or resident alien (Non-U.S. Citizen) visa/status holder in the U.S. who has earned U.S. income must file an annual tax return and/or a statement to substantiate their status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) **AND** the State of Louisiana.

More information about how to determine if your status is resident or nonresident alien for tax purposes can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Resident/Non-Resident status for tax purposes is not always the same as residency status for immigration purposes.

Exception: If you are a non-resident and the amount of U.S. wages you receive is less than the personal exemption amount allowed for the tax year, you may not be required to file an income tax return. Click [here](#) for more information about if you are required to file a return. The 2013 personal exemption amounts and phaseout information can be found [here](#).

WHAT: Nonresident visa holders must file tax returns on Form 1040NR, 'U.S. Nonresident Alien Income Tax Return,' or Form 1040NR-EZ, 'U.S. Income Tax Return for Certain Nonresident Aliens with No Dependents.' They must also attach **Form 8843** to prove that they are nonresidents of the U.S. for tax purposes (**This form may be required even if you are not required to file a return**). More information about Non-Resident forms can be found [here](#).

Resident visa holders must file returns on form 1040EZ, 1040A or 1040 depending on the exemptions and dependents they can claim. More information about which form to file can be found [here](#).

More information on what form to use for State of Louisiana returns can be found [here](#).

WHEN: If you are a resident or nonresident alien who earned wages subject to withholding, you must mail your federal tax return **on or before April 15th**. Louisiana State tax returns are due **on or before May 15th**. Remember that statements and tax returns for the current year cannot be filed before January 1 of the following year.

WHERE: All nonresident alien tax returns and statements are mailed to the IRS Service Center in Philadelphia. All resident alien tax returns are mailed to the address included on the form's instructions.

Before mailing your return to the IRS or the State of Louisiana, you should make and keep a photocopy of your completed tax forms and any documentation submitted with them. In addition to maintaining good tax records, you will probably need a copy of any previous tax returns to complete your current return. If the IRS or the State of Louisiana should question your return, you cannot respond properly without an exact copy of the documents you submitted. As the IRS charges a fee to send you a photocopy of your return, it is much less expensive to make your own copy.

Non-immigrants applying to USCIS for permanent residency may be required to produce copies of returns filed for the last three years.

The Weather and Climate

During your stay in New Orleans, you will have the pleasure of enjoying our mild winters and warm summers. However, you should also be familiar with several weather-related issues common to this climate. Because of Louisiana's close proximity to the coast, we experience weather conditions not common in all parts of the world. Here are a couple of terms you should familiarize yourself with:

- _ ***Tropical Storm Watch*** means tropical storm conditions are possible in a specified area of the watch, usually within 36 hours.
- _ ***Tropical Storm Warning*** indicates tropical storm conditions are expected in the area, usually within 24 hours.
- _ ***Hurricane Watch*** means hurricane conditions are expected in a specified area within 36 hours.
- _ ***Hurricane Warning*** indicates hurricane conditions are expected in the area within 24 hours.

These storms originate in tropical waters and differ in severity based on the speed of the wind within the storm. Hurricane season is from June 1st through November 30th each year. During this time, hurricane conditions are most likely to occur. Often times, a storm may pass through our area without causing major disruption or damage. However, there are times when residents of certain areas are required to evacuate (leave the area until any danger has subsided). During your orientation on the LSUHSC campus, you will be provided with more detailed information about hurricanes, preparations, and evacuation routes. Read this information carefully, as you should be prepared for such a storm during your stay.

In addition to hurricanes, our southern location brings with it plenty of warm weather. Keep this in mind when packing for your stay. It is not necessary to pack large amounts of winter clothing or heavy coats, as cold weather is rare and snow is very unlikely. The coldest months in New Orleans are usually between November and January, when temperatures hover in the 40s. Spring begins early, usually February or March, and the climate will remain warm through the month of October. Pack plenty of short sleeves and light fabrics for this time of year as the humidity can make the temperature feel several degrees higher than what it is. Rain is also common in New Orleans. An umbrella and raincoat will be extremely useful, no matter what time of year you visit.

Cultural Adjustment

Culture- refers to the ideas, ways of thinking, and customary behaviors that are shared by members of a given group. It is possible to speak of the culture of a nation, of an organization, of a family, and even of a classroom. This section refers to culture at the national level.

Culture Shock - is the feeling of disorientation or confusion that occurs when a person leaves a familiar place and moves to an unfamiliar one. Moving to a place that may be very different from your home involves many changes that can affect your health and sense of well being. Here are some ideas that may help you:

- _ *Maintain your perspective.* Remember that many people have come to New Orleans from other countries and have thrived.
- _ *Keep an open mind.* People in New Orleans are acting according to their own set of values. Try not to evaluate their behavior against the standards you would use in your own country.
- _ *Evaluate your expectations.* If you feel disappointed, determine if your expectations were unrealistic.
- _ *Learn from your experience.* Moving to a new culture can be a fascinating and educational experience. The experience can broaden your point of view and expand your personality.

Stereotypes - Are standardized mental pictures that are held in common by a group of people that often represent an oversimplified opinion. You should rid yourself of any preconceived notions you have of Americans before you arrive. Some of the stereotypes you hear will be true about specific individuals or groups but not the entire population.

Greetings - “Good Morning”, “Good Afternoon” and “How do you do?” are formal greetings. Usually, people just say “Hello” or more commonly, “Hi.” Americans tend to be more informal. Good manners and being polite is always appropriate and will only reflect well on you.

Invitations - Reply to invitations as soon as possible. Appointments for social affairs are more flexible than those for business functions. It is acceptable to arrive at a social affair at staggered hours but this is generally not acceptable for a dinner invitation or a business affair.

Saying Thank You - it is considerate to send a thank you note to your host or hostess. It is not necessary to bring a gift if you are invited for dinner only. If you are invited to a birthday party or a special holiday event, a small inexpensive gift is appropriate. Saying “thank you” is often used in the United States.

Use of Names- First names are more readily used in the U.S. than in other countries. It is appropriate to use the first name of someone your age or younger. If someone is older than you are or you don't know a person's name, you may address a man as “Sir” and a woman as “Ma'am”.

Personal Distance- Americans tend to require more personal distance than most cultures. Try to avoid physical contact while you are speaking. For the casual acquaintance this is too intimate. It is, however, a common practice and custom to shake hands when first meeting someone. If a person extends his or her hand to you, it is acceptable for you to extend yours in return.

Dining Out - Most restaurants do not include a tip or gratuity on your bill. You should tip the server 10-15%. If your service is exceptionally good it is appropriate to tip 20%. “Going Dutch” means everyone pays his or her own way for entertainment or food.

Again, welcome to the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center and New Orleans! We wish you an enjoyable and educational experience during your stay and hope you come to realize what a diverse and interesting city you are visiting. For more information about our city and state, visit the following websites or contact the Louisiana Office of Tourism at 1-800-261-9144.

www.nola.com

<http://www.neworleans.com/>

<http://louisiana.gov>

www.neworleansonline.com