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GETTING STARTED

HOUSING

UIS has sufficient housing for all international students who desire to live on campus. You should keep in mind, however, that the number of openings in each type of housing is limited. Prospective students that apply early are more likely to receive a housing assignment that matches their preferences.

There are many advantages to living on campus as opposed to finding your own off-campus housing, not the least of which is knowing that you will have a place to live as soon as you arrive. Although some off-campus housing may be available at a lower cost, the difference will seldom offset the cost in transportation expenses, time commuting each day, the general inconvenience of living far from where you study, and the loss of campus social life. You should seriously consider living on campus at least until you have gotten settled in the U.S.

If, after you have paid your housing deposit, your student visa should be denied, your deposit will be refunded. Simply contact the Housing Office, request the refund, and send them a copy of the denial letter issued by the U.S. consular official. So, please do not wait until late to request your campus housing. Doing so will make things much more difficult for the Housing Office and for you. Contact Housing as soon as you receive your admission.

Once your housing assignment is made, unless you follow the correct procedures for obtaining permission to break your contract and that permission is granted, you will be obligated to pay for the entire cost of the period under contract. Please read the housing application carefully and contact the Housing Office with any question you may have before submitting the application.

To apply for housing, go to the following website: http://www.uis.edu/housing/

Click on the link Apply for Housing. There you can download an application and the website offers useful information and answers many concerns you may have. Contact them directly for any housing specific questions.
THINGS TO DO AFTER ARRIVING TO UIS

☐ Check in with the Office of International Student Services. Bring your Passport, Visa, I-94 Card, and I-20 Form.

☐ Attend Orientation. Orientation is mandatory for all international students.  *(First Registration Hold will be removed)*

☐ Take care of all Health Immunizations with Health Services (BSB-20). *(Second Registration Hold will be removed)*

☐ Check in with the Admissions Office (UHB). Take your Passport, Visa, I-94 Card and I-20 Form with you. Call for an appointment at 217-206-7278. *(Third Registration Hold will be removed)*

☐ Arrange an appointment with your Faculty Advisor.

☐ After all your Holds are removed, go to Deborah Dove (UHB-1080A), to get your TCN (Temporary Control Number). TCN is necessary to create a Net-Id Online.

☐ Create a Net-Id and Password. For directions to create your Net-Id & Password, follow the link:  

☐ After creating your Net-Id and Password, update your current mailing address in Student accounts:  
Connect to www.uis.edu and select “A-Z Index”, select “Student Accounts”, select “UI-integrate Self Service”, select “University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS)”, enter your Net-Id & Password, select “Personal Information”, select “Addresses & Phones”, select “Current Mailing Address”, update the data with your current mailing address and phone. This means where you are living NOW, in the United States – not your foreign address.

☐ Select your Courses from:  
(Computer Science Students should first send an email to: csc@uis.edu for WPI-Request--With Permit of Instructor. The email must contain your UIN number, Course number and Section number. For Example:  CSC 470A).

☐ After getting the WPI-Approval (for CSC only), students can register online for the classes:
Connect to: [www.uis.edu\registration](http://www.uis.edu/registration) and select appropriate semester, select “Student and Faculty Self-Service”, select “University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS)”, enter your Net-Id & Password, select “Registration & Records”, select “Registration”, select “Look-up or Select Classes”, select “I Agree”, select Term, click Submit, select Subject, click Class Search, mark the Check-boxes for the Courses you want to register for that particular term, Click Register, enter CRN Number in the rectangle-boxes provided, click Submit Changes. Now you are registered. Check your “Student Schedule – Detail” in “Registration-Menu” for registered course details.

☐ After registering for classes only, go get your i-Card (PAC-108): [http://www.icard.uillinois.edu/](http://www.icard.uillinois.edu/)

Check the website often for additional information.

**BANKING**

Soon after arriving on campus, you should open a banking account. There are many banks located in Springfield and you may choose whichever bank you prefer. Below is a listing of banks near campus. You can also view the Yellow Pages of the Phonebook for a more extensive list.

**Bank of Springfield**
2600 Stevenson Dr
Springfield, IL 62703
(217) 529-5555
[https://www.bankwithbos.com/](https://www.bankwithbos.com/)

**Illinois Educators Credit Union**
4600 University Drive
Springfield, IL 62703.
(217) 241-0771
[iecumember.org](http://www.iecumember.org)

**Security Bank**
2500 Stevenson Drive
Springfield, IL 62703
(217) 789-3500

You may open two different types of accounts. A Checking Account allows you to use a debit card or check which deducts money directly from this account. Opening a Checking Account is very easy. Some banks require you to have a social security number
before opening an account and others (like the Credit Union) do not. A Savings Account is an account you may not need during your stay in the United States. It is an account to save money for the future. You will collect interest on the money in your Savings Account and the interest rate is determined by each individual bank.

**SPRINGFIELD**

**ABOUT**

Springfield is the state capital of Illinois and has a population of about 116,500. Springfield is located in central Illinois. St. Louis, Missouri and Chicago, Illinois are two major cities in the vicinity. St. Louis is located about 100 miles (160 km) southwest and Chicago is located about 200 miles (320 km) northeast.

The city lies on a mostly flat plain with many corn, bean, and wheat fields surrounding. A large man-made lake called Lake Springfield provides the city with recreation and drinking water.

Springfield is home to past president Abraham Lincoln, who led the nation through the Civil War and ended slavery. He is considered a hero by many and Springfield offers many Lincoln tourists sites such as his home, tomb, and the new Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. Other attractions include Washington Park, the state capital, and every August Springfield hosts the Illinois State Fair.

The horseshoe sandwich, which is an open-faced sandwich not well-known outside of central Illinois, originated in Springfield. It consists of thick, toasted bread, choice of meat, fries on top, and covered in a special cheese sauce. You can order this at most area restaurants.

To learn more about the city of Springfield visit Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau website: [http://www.visit-springfieldillinois.com/](http://www.visit-springfieldillinois.com/)
WEATHER

The climate in Springfield is variable, generally characterized by hot summers and cold winters. It is advisable to listen to weather reports and warnings. Weather information is generally available on most local radio and television stations as well as at: www.weather.com

Springfield has four distinct seasons:

- **Summer** begins in late June and continues through September with hot and humid weather and temperatures ranging from 60 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit (15 to 37 degrees Celsius).
- **Fall** arrives in late September. Cooler temperatures (30 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit / 1 to 21 degrees Celsius), rain, and sometimes snow are characteristic of this season.
- **Winter** is at its worst in December to March with snow, ice, and cold temperatures as low as 20 degrees Fahrenheit below zero. You can expect anywhere from only trace amounts of snow to 1”- 6” of snow on the ground.
- **Spring** arrives in late March and generally lasts until late May or June. Rain, winds and mild temperatures are characteristics of spring.

**Tornadoes** are the most common natural disaster in this region. A tornado is an intense storm that forms a funnel cloud, which can cause severe damage in a short amount of time. The UIS Police Department will send out emails during severe weather and local television and radio stations will be interrupted to alert people. A **tornado watch** means that conditions are favorable for a tornado to occur. During a tornado watch, you should stay close to a safe place and should not be driving if possible. A **tornado warning** means that an actual tornado has been spotted and a loud siren will be activated to warn people. You should seek shelter immediately. UIS Housing will provide you with directions on where to go during a tornado. If you live off-campus, talk to your landlord or the owner about safe zones.

*Note: Do not be alarmed if you hear the siren on the first Tuesday of the month at 10 a.m. This is only a test.*
TRANSPORTATION

BUS

SMTD (Springfield Mass Transit District) is a bus service with 13 fixed routes throughout the Springfield area. SMTD offers routes to and from the UIS campus. You may stop by the Office of International Student Services for a current bus map. You may also view their website for routes, services, and other information: http://www.smtd.org/

10 Simple Steps for Riding the City Busses

1) Locate the bus stops on campus

They are:
a) Intersection of Vachel Lindsey and Eliza Farnham Drives
b) On Richard Wright Drive, near TRAC sidewalk
c) On Richard Wright Drive, near Butler Housing Commons
d) Intersection of University Drive and Shepherd Road

2) Look at the bus route schedule and see what time a bus comes to those points
They come by every 30 minutes between 6 am and 6 pm. Busses do not run on Sunday.

3) Arrive at the bus stop a few minutes early
Wait for the bus near the corner, or designated bus stop. Do NOT wait in the middle of the block. You must be at the bus stop sign or the bus will not stop.

4) Have exact change
The drivers do not make change. The cost for one ride is $1.00 (one dollar).

5) Get on the bus

6) Put your money into the little glass box

7) Take a seat
The seats up front are reserved for handicapped people and elderly.

8) When you want to get off, press the yellow rubber strip which is located next to the windows
The bus will then stop at the NEXT bus stop. They do not stop in the middle of the block. They stop where there is an SMTD bus stop sign. If you do not know where to get off, talk to the driver when you get on. Tell him/her where you want to get off, and sit close by so s/he can tell you when you have reached your stop.

9) If you need to transfer to a second bus to reach your destination:
When you get on the first bus, pay $1.00. Then, say, “I need a transfer”.
You will get a small piece of paper. It is free. Go downtown. Look for the second bus. Get on the second bus and give the driver the transfer paper.

To return to campus, reverse the process.

Some buses go out one way, but return via a different route. Make sure you know this before you get off the bus so that you know where to catch the bus to return to campus.

You can transfer from one bus to another if the routes cross.

UIS is served by Route 11.

The buses are marked with large numbers on the front, back, and sides.

10) If you have questions call 522-5531
Be prepared to tell: where you are, where you want to go, the time you want to arrive.

You can obtain a bus pass at the Bursar’s Office. It will cost $15.00 and will serve for 20 rides. You will not need to always have correct change if you have a bus pass. They will punch the pass one time for each ride.

If you ever get on a bus and you don’t think you’ve got on the correct one: Stay on it. They ALL return to downtown. You can then get off and decide the right one. If you get off anywhere else, you may get lost.

If you do get lost or confused and it is Monday-Friday, 8:30-5, call the Office of International Student Services (217-206-6678) and we will walk you through this.

Buses do not run on the following holidays:
New Years Day – January 1
Memorial Day – the last Monday in May
Independence Day – July 4
Labor Day – the first Monday in September
Thanksgiving Day – the last Thursday in November
Christmas Day – December 25

TAXI

If you call a taxicab, they will pick you up wherever you are and take you directly to where you want to go. A taxi is more convenient than the bus, but much more expensive, and it is customary to tip 15% of the fare. Phone numbers for a taxi are in the yellow pages of the phone book under “Taxicabs”.

The World Peace Taxi has a deal specific for all UIS students. They will take any student to the Amtrak station from campus or vice versa for a set rate of $12 or to/from the
airport for $15. That is not bad in itself, but they will take each additional passenger for only $.50 up to a total of 5 (they have both a car and a van). So, 5 students could travel to the airport for only $17. Here is their information:

World Peace Taxi  
Owner-Operator: Clyde Treat AKA “Old Hippie”  
(217) 544-4704

Open: 12:00 p.m. -- 3:00 a.m. Monday-Sunday  
Closed: 3:00 a.m. Sunday -- 12:00 p.m. Monday

BICYCLES

Although bicycles may not be as common in the United States as other countries, and it is sometimes difficult to get from the UIS campus to around town, some may find this a good transportation option. You can usually find used, inexpensive bicycles at garage sales to use during your duration at UIS. Bicycles are also available to rent from the Student Life Office.

AUTOMOBILES

If you are able to own a car, then you must apply for an Illinois driver’s license. Before you can drive, you are required by law to purchase automobile insurance and you must also purchase license plates. Please visit the National Immigration Law Center website for more information on obtaining a driver’s license:

http://www.uis.edu/internationalstudentservices/students/handbook/documents/DriversLicense1.pdf

http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/#stv_content_2

http://www.uis.edu/internationalstudentservices/resources/driving.html

The Office of International Student Services has Rules of the Road books available for you to use to prepare for getting your driver’s license. Please stop by our office to get one.
SHOPPING

Shopping in the United States

Usually, prices marked on merchandise are fixed and you cannot negotiate for a lower price. You may, however, bargain for a lower price for cars, major appliances, and at garage sales.

When you have finished shopping, a cashier will total the amount of your purchase and add the sales tax. (Currently, the sales tax in Illinois is 7.75%). Many stores have installed “self-scan” electronic devices which allow you to ring up your own purchases. It is also important to note that some stores have “speedy check-out” lanes. This means that a particular lane is for customers with 15 items or less (or another amount determined by the store). Sometimes people want to run into a store and just buy, for example, a loaf of bread and milk. The store allows them to use a specific lane for quick exchanges instead of waiting behind people with a full cart of items. It should be indicated by a sign above the cashier whether it is a “speedy check-out” lane and it is considered impolite to use this lane if you have more than the specified number of items.

It is important to keep the receipt for your purchase because if an item is poor quality or if you change your mind, you may need your receipt to return it to the store.

Methods of Payment

There are a few different options for making payments, which are probably similar to your home country. The most familiar method of payment is cash. Another convenient method of payment is by using a debit card or personal check from your bank. Make sure to have adequate funds in the bank to cover any check you may write. Usually, you cannot use your debit card when you do not have sufficient funds, but you should still keep track of your debits and credits and always know your balance. You may also apply for credit cards at stores, which sometimes offers discounts. Credit cards are convenient, but late fees and interest rates can really add up and it can be easy to find yourself in debt. The best advice is: If you can’t afford it, don’t buy it.

The Sunday issue of the State Journal Register (http://www.sj-r.com/) offers many ads and coupons. Coupons offer a discount off the regular price of certain products. Some coupons are only good at certain stores and other coupons are good at any store which carries the product. Store brand products are usually cheaper than name brand products and are of the same quality.

Major Shopping Areas

There are several major shopping areas in Springfield. White Oaks Mall (http://www.simon.com/mall/default.aspx?ID=180), located on Veterans Parkway is our largest retail shopping facility with over 100 stores and restaurants.
Parkway Pointe anchored by Target and Wal-Mart, is another shopping area off Veterans Parkway that offers a variety of specialty shops, restaurants and a movie theater. There is also a Super Wal-Mart located just a couple miles north of campus. Also, near campus, is Capital City Shopping Center, which has a Shopko as well as several shopping and dining opportunities and a movie theatre. This area is located about 3 miles from UIS on South Dirksen and Stevenson Drive.

For a listing of stores in Springfield, visit the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau website:

http://www.visit-springfieldillinois.com/

Used Items

In the summer months it is popular for people to hold sales in their garage or yard to get rid of items they no longer need. People sell used clothing, furniture, and household items at these sales for very low prices and it is acceptable to bargain. Such sales are often advertised in the classified advertisements section of The State Journal Register.

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

There are many different places of worship in the Springfield area that welcome your attendance and participation in their programs. For a listing of area churches of multiple denominations, please view the following link:

http://springfieldil.areaconnect.com/churches.htm

THINGS TO DO

There is a lot to do in Springfield and the surrounding area. Visit the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau website for a complete listing of art galleries, historic sites, museums, nightlife, outdoor activities, and more: http://www.visit-springfieldillinois.com/

Also, there is a weekly magazine called the Illinois Times available for free, which lists all the events for that week. http://www.illinoistimes.com/gyrobase/
CAMPUS INFORMATION

PAYING TUITION/UNIVERSITY BILLS

The University Student Financial Services and Cashier Operations is the UIS department that assists students with making sure payments are paid and are paid on time. Their website offers useful information to answer any questions you may have.

http://paymybill.uillinois.edu/

HEALTH INSURANCE

The health care system in the United States may be quite different from your home country. Health care is neither free nor cheap. The university requires all students to have health insurance. The university offers health insurance and health care services and the fee is automatically assessed to your university bill unless you have proof of other insurance, which is of the equivalent or better. Please view the Human Resource website for more information on health insurance.

http://www.uis.edu/humanresources/studentinsurance/index.html

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Health Care Services at UIS offers care to all students for minor injuries, annual appointments, immunizations, and other services. They are located in the Business Services Building, Room 20. Please visit their website for more information on services.

http://www.uis.edu/healthservices/

If this is a severe emergency, you should immediately to the Emergency Room at the hospital or call 911.

BOOKSTORE

The UIS Bookstore offers one-stop shopping for all your books, supplies, and UIS apparel. The bookstore will buy back most textbooks at the end of each semester for a percentage of the original price. The UIS Bookstore is located on the first floor of Founders Hall. Visit their website for additional information.

http://www.bkstr.com/Home/10001-10630-1?demoKey=d
RECREATIONAL SPORTS

Recreational Sports offers activities, equipment, facilities, and services to enhance your mind, body, and spirit. The TRAC is a gym available for all UIS students (bring your i-card for admittance), which has a running track, racquet ball/squash courts, weight machines, and more. Check out the recreational sports website for more information.

http://www.uis.edu/recsports/index.html

STUDENT LIFE

There are a number of student organizations at UIS of interest to international students. The International Student Association is open to all UIS students interested in international affairs, campus life, and other cultures. Other organizations serve primarily to provide fellowship and support to students from one particular country or region of the world. Still others provide opportunities to practice a particular language or to explore international political relations. All international students are encouraged to participate in any and all of these in order to maintain their ties to their native cultures and to learn from and share with each other our common needs and aspirations. See the Student Life website for a listing of all Student Organizations.

http://www.uis.edu/studentlife/

Student Life also offers numerous events and activities throughout the year. Look for announcements about these in your campus email and on posters throughout campus.

CAMPUS POLICE

Please familiarize yourself with the local laws. They may be different and/or have different consequences from your home country. For example, in Illinois, you may not drink alcohol in public if you are under 21 years old. Also, the laws for drunken driving are very strict in Illinois. You should never drive while under the influence of alcohol. UIS has its own police unit. Please view their website for university policies and state laws:

http://www.uis.edu/police/welcome.htm
OFFICE INFORMATION

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

Human Resource Building, Room 52
One University Plaza, MS HRB 52
Springfield, Illinois  62703-5407

217-206-6678
iss@uis.edu

HOURS

Monday – Friday
8:30 AM – 5:00 PM

MAINTAINING F1-VISA STATUS

It is very important for all non-immigrants to maintain their status for the full time that they are in the United States. Maintaining your status means that you are following all the rules. If you fail to follow the rules, even once, you may be considered by the U. S. government to be out of status. Failure to maintain status may result in loss of all benefits and possible removal from the United States (deportation) under government regulations. Maintaining status is the responsibility of the non-immigrant, not of the school or its officials.

These are the requirements for maintaining your status according to your visa category:

F-1 Students

1. Report to the Office of International Student Services to have your SEVIS record Registered in a timely fashion: no later than 30 days after the Program start date (new students in Initial SEVIS status); and each semester thereafter, no later than 30 days after each next Session start date (continuing students).
2. For the first entry for initial school attendance, the school listed on the visa and on the I-20 must be the same, and that is the school that the student must attend (unless accepted by and transferred to another school within 30 days of entry).
3. Pursue a “full course of study” at the school listed on the currently valid Form I-20 during every academic session or semester except during official school breaks, or unless approved under a specific exception, in advance, by the Office of International Student Services. A full course of study for undergraduate students is at least 12 hours per semester. For graduate students the full course of
study consists of 8 to 12 hours (depending upon the program of study and whether
the student is participating in either a Graduate Assistantship or a Graduate
Public Service Internship). English Language Program students must take all
courses offered at their level.

4. Make normal progress towards completing the course of study, by completing
studies before the expiration of the program completion date on Form I-20.
5. Keep Form I-20 valid by following proper procedures for extension of stay.
6. Keep Form I-20 valid by following proper procedures for change in educational
levels or programs of study.
7. Keep Form I-20 valid by following proper procedures for transfer of schools.
8. Abide by the F-1 grace period rules.
9. Report a change of address to the Office of International Student Services within
10 days of the change, so that SEVIS can be updated.
10. Abide by rules requiring disclosure of information and prohibition on criminal
activity.
11. Abide by any special requirements, such as Special Registration requirements.
12. Not work, either on or off-campus, unless specifically authorized under the
regulations. Part-time, on-campus employment is authorized for all undergraduate
and graduate F-1 students during the school year. Full-time, on-campus
employment is authorized during breaks.

If you fall out of status in spite of fulfilling all the above requirements, have not been out
of status for more than 5 months, do not have a record of repeated violations, are
currently pursuing or will pursue in the next available term a full course of study, have
not engaged in unauthorized employment, are not deportable on any other grounds, and
have clear and compelling evidence that this was due to circumstances beyond your
control, it may be possible for you to apply for reinstatement of status. If you believe that
all of these are true in your case, please contact the Office of International Student
Services immediately.

MAKING AN APPOINTMENT

In most situations where international students and scholars need the assistance of an
advisor, the staff urges that you first schedule an appointment rather than just appear
unexpectedly. Often, advisors already have meetings scheduled in advance with others,
and if no one is available to assist you, you may experience a long wait or you may have
to make an appointment to return at a later time.

If you are coming to submit a request or application, please be advised that you will find
almost all of the necessary materials on our website at:
http://www.uis.edu/internationalstudentservices/resources/infoforms.html
For most of your needs, you should review the website and download the necessary forms before meeting with an advisor because they explain the process and list all the required documents students/scholars must bring in order to submit their application or request.

You may not need to schedule an appointment to submit requests for such things as the issuance or revalidation of an I-20 or DS-2019. If, however, you wish to add a dependent to your I-20 or DS-2019, to file for OPT or CPT, or to request other actions that may require advising or close review of your documents, please call ahead to schedule an appointment with your advisor.

Always review carefully the web site to insure that you are bringing all of the necessary documentation to support your request or application. In almost all circumstances, this will mean at least bringing your passport, I-94 card, and Form I-20 or DS-2019.

Appointments may be made by calling or emailing our office.
EMPLOYMENT

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The Career Development Center is a great resource for students, which provides services such as resume critiquing, career counseling, interviewing tips, and more. Visit their website for more information: http://www.uis.edu/careerservices/

AUTHORIZED EMPLOYMENT

F-1 Students

In order to maintain valid F-1 status, you must not work in the United States, unless the employment is specifically authorized under one of these categories:

1. **On-campus employment**
   - Student Employment
   - Graduate Assistant
   - Graduate Public Service Internship

2. **Employment authorized because of severe economic hardship**
3. **Certain employment sponsored by international organizations**
4. **Practical training (Curricular or Optional)**

All of these categories require that you be currently maintaining valid F-1 status. If you are out of status, you are not eligible for this or any other F-1 benefit. Each employment category has specific eligibility requirements. Please review these carefully and discuss them with a DSO.

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

http://www.uis.edu/financialaid/studentemployment/index.html

GRADUATE ASSISTANT (GA)

http://www.uis.edu/graduateassistantships/index.html

GRADUATE PUBLIC SERVICE INTERNSHIP (GPSI)

http://cspl.uis.edu/graduateinternprograms/
**CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)**

Curricular Practical Training is work (paid or unpaid) that forms a part of an established curriculum and is expected of all students who are completing a specific program. Because it is part of the educational program, the U.S. government allows F-1 students to participate even though their visa status does not normally permit off-campus employment.

Applying for CPT is a fairly simple process, does not require any fee, and can be completed on campus, but there are some conditions and limitations:

1. You must have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year (unless you are in a graduate program that requires immediate curricular training).
2. It is available only while you are in F-1 status.
3. It is not available to students in English language training programs.
4. It requires a specific employer and location and is effective only during the period approved and recorded by a DSO in SEVIS.
5. It must be an integral part of an established curriculum in your course of study.
6. The work must fulfill the requirements for the course.
7. You must receive written authorization from a DSO before the work begins.
8. You must continue to maintain a full course of study during the employment period.

There is no specified limit on either the number of times or the length of time a student may engage in either part-time or full-time curricular practical training. This is governed by the nature of the training and the requirements of the student’s program. However, use of full-time CPT for one year or more eliminates eligibility for Optional Practical Training (OPT) (link to Optional Practical Training doc). Use of part-time CPT does not affect eligibility for OPT.

Students interested in obtaining authorization for CPT should:

1. Talk with your academic adviser about the kind of placement that will fulfill the requirements of the course in question.
2. Request from the prospective employer a letter describing the work that you will do.
3. Take the letter to your academic adviser, along with the Curricular Practical Training Request form and obtain your advisor’s signature.
4. Take a copy of the employer letter and the CPT Request form to the Office of International Student Services for authorization and registration in SEVIS.
5. Obtain a new Form I-20 showing the CPT authorization to show to your employer.
OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

OPT is a privilege provided by the U. S. government to international students who desire to gain employment experience in their major field of study. Most students avail themselves of this privilege following completion of their program of study. However, OPT may also be used during a vacation period if a student intends to register for the following session, or part-time while school is in session.

International students interested in applying for this privilege should carefully read all instructions below before contacting the Office of International Student Services.

Eligibility & Explanations

International students who have completed at least one full academic year of study (two semesters) may engage in Optional Practical Training upon approval by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) of the U. S. Department of Homeland Security. The application may be submitted up to 90 days prior to the completion of one academic year, but the authorization will be granted only from the date the student actually completes a full academic year.

OPT may be authorized for up to 12 months for each level of education. For example, a student pursuing a bachelor's degree may accumulate a total of 12 months OPT during and following completion of the degree. A master's degree student will become eligible for an additional 12 months following completion of one full academic year of study toward that degree. Students enrolled in the English Language Institute are not eligible for OPT.

OPT may be full-time or part-time. Full-time OPT may be authorized during summer breaks, after completion of all course work but prior to completion of the thesis (for master's degree students), or after graduation. Part-time (up to 20 hours per week) OPT is permitted while school is in session, but the student must maintain a full course load. Part-time OPT is counted at half the regular full-time accumulation. For example 4 months of part-time OPT will be counted as equal to 2 months of full-time OPT. Any part-time OPT used during school sessions will be deducted from the 12 months total remaining following completion of studies.

A student that desires to participate in OPT following completion of studies must apply prior to completion of studies. The process may take from 2 to 3 months. Employment cannot begin until the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) is received.

It is not necessary for a student to already have a job offer in order to apply for OPT. However, OPT once granted cannot be recovered if a job offer does not materialize. The employment must be directly related to the student's major field of study and must be appropriate for someone with the student's level of education.
Once the EAD has been received and employment has been obtained, students may travel with an endorsed I-20 form. If a student leaves the U.S. after completing the program of study but before receiving the EAD or obtaining employment, re-entry to the U.S. will most probably be denied. Even with the EAD, a letter from the employer indicating that the student is expected to resume duties after a brief absence is recommended.

To apply for OPT:

1. Obtain form I-765 from the Office of International Student Services or from the USCIS website. Complete the form I-765. Under number 16 write (c)(3)(A) - for pre-completion OPT, (c)(3)(B) for post-completion OPT. Note: the I-765 requires an address that will still be valid following completion of studies.
2. Ask your Academic Advisor to sign the OPT request form specifying your major and the anticipated date for completing your studies. The Office of International Student Services (HRB 52) must receive this completed form prior to making an OPT appointment.
3. Write a check in the amount of $380.00 payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Write your I-94 number on the bottom of the check.
4. Make a photocopy of both front and back of your I-94 card.
6. Make photocopies of your passport ID page and your visa.
7. Have two identical color passport photographs made according to these specifications:

   http://travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotoreq/photocomptemplate/photocomptemplate_5297.html

8. Print your name and I-94 number on the back of each photograph with a pen or pencil.
9. Contact the Office of International Student Services to make an OPT appointment once they have received your OPT Request Form (see #2). When you call, tell the office staff person the date that you would like to start working, whether you will be applying for the full 12 months, and your employer’s name and address (if you have one already).
10. If you would like to receive an electronic (either email or text message) notification when your application has been received, please fill out form g-1145.
11. Bring all of the above to the appointment.
CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The Career Development Center is a great resource for students, which provides services such as resume critiquing, career counseling, interviewing tips, and more. Visit their website for more information: http://www.uis.edu/careerservices/

HOW TO OBTAIN A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

1) You must first have a written job offer.
2) Have your employer/supervisor type a letter, using the template provided by UIS Office of Financial Aid.
3) Have your supervisor print the letter on office letterhead and sign it.
4) Take the letter to the Office of International Student Services for the Director to sign.
5) Visit the Social security office, taking with you the employment letter, a completed Social Security application, your current form I-20, your I-94, and your passport. The Social security office is located at: 2715 West Monroe Street. Their hours are: 9-4 Monday-Friday. It takes about an hour, so do not go at 3:30 or you will not get done before they close.
6) Give these 5 items to the staff. They will return your form I-20 and passport to you. If you do not have permanent housing when you apply, you should use the Office of International Student Services address. If you put down one address, and the card is sent there, but you are not living there, the card will be returned to the Social Security office and you will have to start all over!
7) Wait until you receive the card, usually around two weeks.
8) When you get your card, you will need to make an appointment to meet with Payroll. You should also take the card to show to Lori Atkinson in Admissions, Kathy Dehen in Student Employment and your bank or credit union. Then take the card home and put it in a safe place.

TAXES

All students and staff holding non-immigrant visas (F-1, J-1, H-1B, etc.) must file forms related to U.S. taxes, whether they have been actually employed in the past year or not. The International Student Services office will provide F-1 students with an access code to Windstar Tax Software which will assist the student in filing their taxes. The codes are available in mid-February.
CULTURAL ISSUES

CULTURE SHOCK

A certain amount of "culture shock" is normal when moving from one culture to another, whether across the world, across the country, or just across town. You should expect it, recognize it, and be prepared to deal with it. If you need help, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of International Student Services or the Counseling Center.

Common Symptoms of Culture Shock

- Extreme homesickness
- Desire to avoid social settings that seem threatening or unpleasant
- Physical complaints and sleep disturbances
- Depression and feelings of helplessness
- Difficulty with course work and concentration
- Loss of your sense of humor
- Boredom or fatigue
- Hostility toward the host culture

Dealing with culture shock - step back, assess, search for an appropriate explanation and response

- Observe how others are acting in the same situation
- Describe the situation, what it means to your, and your response to it
- Ask local residents how they would have handled the situation and what it means in the host culture
- Plan how you might act in this or similar situations in the future
- Test the new behavior and evaluate how well it works
- Decide how you can apply what you have learned the next time you find yourself in a similar situation

Throughout the process, take care of yourself

- Read a book or watch a video in your home language
- Take a trip
- Exercise and get plenty of rest
- Write or phone home
- Eat good food
- Do things you enjoy with your friends

Keep in mind that the reactions and perceptions of others toward you, and you toward them are not personal evaluations but are based on a clash of cultural values. The more skilled you become in recognizing how and when cultural values and behaviors are likely
to come in conflict, the easier it becomes to make adjustments that can help you avoid serious difficulties.

**ETIQUETTE**

Some things that Americans may view as rude, you may not view as rude, and vice-versa. This may be the result of cultural differences. You do not have to fully change your personality and beliefs, but it is important to know what Americans feel is important so that you don’t give the wrong impression. First, Americans value time more than most other cultures. The phrase “time is money” is a common belief among Americans. With this being said it is very important to be on time and is considered rude to be late. If you are late to an appointment, you may find that you will have to re-schedule. Deadlines are also very important with schoolwork. Many professors will not accept work that is late, so it is very important to pay attention to due dates on the syllabus.

**HOLIDAYS IN THE U.S.A**

*Holidays marked with * indicate an official holiday for which most schools, offices, banks, and stores are closed.*

* **January 1, New Years Day**
  Celebration of this holiday begins the night before, when Americans gather to wish each other a happy and prosperous coming year. Many Americans make New Year's Resolutions.

* **Third Monday in January, Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Birthday**
  Martin Luther King, Jr. organized and led the civil rights movement in America during the 1960’s. His leadership was characterized by peaceful dissent in the tradition of Gandhi. He is often quoted for his “I Have a Dream” speech.

* **February 12, Lincoln's Birthday**
  Abraham Lincoln was President during the Civil War (1861-1865), a period that had a profound effect on the history of the nation. He acted to bring the seceded states back into the Union and was instrumental in obtaining freedom of slaves. This is an official holiday in many states, including Illinois, often celebrated as President's Day in conjunction with Washington's Birthday (see below).

* **Third Monday in February, Washington's Birthday or President’s Day**
  Honors George Washington, the first President of the United States. This date is commonly called Presidents' Day and many groups honor the legacy of past presidents on this date.
February 14, Valentine’s Day
A romantic holiday, Valentine’s Day is celebrated by sending cards, giving candy to friends, and giving flowers to loved ones.

March 17, St. Patrick’s Day
This is a day dedicated to the patron saint of Ireland. Many people wear green on this day. Beware; you may be pinched if you do not!

April 1, April Fool's Day
This day is marked by the custom of playing practical jokes on friends.

One Sunday in March or April, Easter
This is a religious holiday for Christians. Many traditions are now connected with Easter, including the decoration of brightly colored eggs, giving baskets of gifts to children, and Easter Egg Hunts.

Second Sunday in May, Mother's Day
On this day Americans honor their mothers by sending them flowers, giving them small gifts and taking them to a restaurant for dinner.

Third Sunday in June, Father's Day
Fathers are honored on this day.

* Last Monday in May, Memorial Day
Memorial Day is the day when Americans remember those who died in the military service of their country. Many families visit graves and decorate them with flowers.

* July 4, Independence Day
Independence Day is the U.S. national day. It commemorates the day the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. This official holiday is celebrated all over the country with picnics, political speeches, and community gatherings that culminate with fireworks displays.

* First Monday in September, Labor Day
This official holiday honors the nation’s working people. It is the last holiday of the summer season and is celebrated with picnics and other festivities.

October 31, Halloween
Children dress in costumes and visit the neighbors to receive candy on this holiday. This is called “trick or treating.” Adults may attend costume parties.

* November 11, Veterans’ Day
This day is to honor American men and women who have served in the military services of the United States.
**Fourth Thursday in November, Thanksgiving Day**
The first Thanksgiving Day was observed by the Pilgrims at Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts in 1621 to give thanks for the bountiful harvest and their triumph of survival over the wilderness. Now it is a day when Americans give thanks for the life they enjoy and they celebrate by gathering with family to eat traditional foods, such as turkey, cranberry sauce, potatoes, and pumpkin pie.

**Late November or Early December, Chanukah**
An eight-day Jewish holiday marking the rededication of the Temple.

**December 25, Christmas**
Many people regard this as the most important holiday of the year, with the holiday season extending from a few days before Christmas until New Year’s Day. The origins are religious in nature, but is has become a day celebrated by almost everyone in the U.S. Family members travel great distances to be together for this day. Gifts are exchanged and a traditional dinner is shared. Even families who do not have strong religious convictions decorate a Christmas tree and join in the festivities of the season.

**December 26 to New Year’s Day, Kwanzaa**
This seven-day celebration is based on the African principles of family, community and spirituality, with an emphasis on children. Kwanzaa is particularly celebrated among persons of African descent.
ACADEMIC SUCCESS

GRADING

Grading in the United States is typically as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You should always review your instructor’s syllabus for more detailed information on how you will be evaluating.

To figure out your GPA (Grade Point Average), multiply the number of credits by the number of grade points you received and divide that by the total number of credit hours.

For example, if you took two classes this semester, both 4 credit hours, and received an A in one class and a B in the other class. Your GPA would be:

\[
\frac{(4 \times 4) + (4 \times 3)}{8} = 3.5 \text{ GPA}
\]

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students should read the university’s policy on academic integrity, which is the university’s commitment to academic excellence. This includes the rules regarding plagiarism, cheating, and misrepresentation. It is important that you review this because our policies may be different from what you are accustomed to in your home country.

The consequence of violating these rules is very strict and ultimately can result in dismissal from the university. The UIS Academic Integrity Policy can be found at the following website:

http://www.uis.edu/academicIntegrity/
APPENDIX

CONVERSION TABLES

Standard Measurements

1 cup = 24 centiliter (cl) or 240 milliliter (ml)
1 tablespoon (tbsp) = 15 milliliter (ml)
1 teaspoon (tsp) = 5 milliliter (ml)
1 fluid ounce (oz) = 30 milliliter (ml)
1 pound (lb) = 454 grams (gm)

Weight

1 ounce = 28.35 grams
1 pound = 453.59 grams
1 gram = 0.035 ounce
100 grams = 3.5 ounces
1000 grams = 2.2 pounds
1 kilogram = 35 ounces
1 kilogram = 2.2 pounds

Volume

1 milliliter = 1/5 teaspoon
1 milliliter = 0.03 fluid ounce
1 teaspoon = 5 milliliters
1 tablespoon = 15 milliliters
1 fluid ounce = 30 milliliters
1 fluid cup = 236.6 milliliters
1 quart = 946.4 milliliters
1 liter (1000 milliliters) = 34 fluid ounces
1 liter (1000 milliliters) = 4.2 cups
1 liter (1000 milliliters) = 2.1 fluid pints
1 liter (1000 milliliters) = 1.06 fluid quarts
1 liter (1000 milliliters) = 0.26 gallon
1 gallon = 3.8 liters

Temperature

Conversion formulas:
C = (F - 32) X 5/9
F = (C X 9/5) + 32
32F = 0C
40F = 4.4C
100F = 37.7C
200F = 93.3C
225F = 107.2C  
250F = 121.1C  
275F = 135C  
300F = 148.9C  
325F = 162.8C  
350F = 176.7C  
375F = 190.6C  
400F = 204.4C  
425F = 218.3C  
450F = 232.2C  
475F = 246.1C  
500F = 260C

**Distance**
1 inch = 2.5 centimeters  
1 foot = 30 centimeters  
1 millimeter = 0.04 inch  
1 centimeter = 0.4 inch  
1 meter = 3.3 feet

**Abbreviations**
Standard English  
cup = C  
fluid cup = fl C  
fluid ounce = fl oz  
fluid quart = fl qt  
foot = ft  
gallon = gal  
inch = in  
ounce = oz  
pint = pt  
pound = lb  
quart = qt  
tablespoon = T or Tbsp  
teaspoon = t or tsp  
yard = yd

**Metric**
millimeter = mm  
centimeter = cm  
 meter = m  
kilometer = km  
 milliliter = mL  
 liter = L  
 milligram = mg
gram = g
kilogram = kg

**DRY UNIT/LIQUID UNIT**
1 pint, dry = 1.1636 pints, liquid
1 quart, dry = 1.1636 quarts, liquid
1 gallon, dry = 1.1636 gallons, liquid

**WEIGHT**
The two most commonly used units of weight (or mass) measurement for cooking in the U.S. are the ounce and the pound. Do not confuse the ounce of weight with the fluid ounce, because they are not the same; there is no standard conversion between weight and volume unless you know the density of the ingredient. To make matters worse, there are different kinds of weight measurement; Avoirdupois weight, Troy weight, and Apothecaries weight. In the U.S., when someone refers to pounds and ounces of weight (especially in cooking) they are usually referring to Avoirdupois weight.

**Basic Cooking Rule:**
16 ounces = 1 pound

**COUNTING:**
Many foods are sold in quantities of dozen or gross. Eggs are a good example of something that you buy by the dozen. When referring to more than one dozen or gross, you do not add an "s" to the end; instead, you precede the word by the amount as follows.

Usage Examples:
One dozen eggs
Three dozen people
Five gross of pencils

It is also very common to use the phrase "half dozen" to mean six.

1 Dozen = 12
1 Gross = 12 Dozen or 144

(www.fitnessandfreebies.com/conversions.html)
INFORMATION AND FORMS

› Arrival Information (pdf)
› Campus Map (pdf)
› Change of Address Report form (pdf)
› Curricular Practical Training Request form (pdf)
› Host Family Student Application form (pdf)
› How to Establish your UIS Web/Enterprise ID (pdf)
› How to Obtain a Social Security Number (pdf)
› How to Ride the Springfield City Busses (pdf)
› International Student Data form (pdf)
› Optional Practical Training Employer Report form (pdf)
› Optional Practical Training Request form (pdf)
› Pledge of Compliance form (pdf)
› Program Extension Request form (pdf)
› Reduced Course Load Request form (pdf)
› UIS Immunization Requirements (pdf)
› UIS Required Immunization Information (pdf)