

Diocese of Davenport

Pre-arrival International Student Information

International Student Services Office

www.davenportdiocese.org

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Welcome to the Diocese of Davenport school system!

This guide is a primary resource for international students and scholars studying in the Diocese of Davenport school system. It is designed to provide you with important information regarding available resources at the Diocese of Davenport and in the Quad City Area while you finalize your plans to come to the U.S.

The International Student Services Office is dedicated to assisting you during your time at the schools in the Diocese of Davenport and has, therefore, developed this guide to ease your transition. Please contact us with any questions you may have.

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Our office is the liaison between all international students and scholars and the United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Service (BCIS), the Department of State, and other organizations involved in international cultural exchange.

Our gratitude goes out to the International Student Office at St. Ambrose University who allowed us to share some of their information in this manual.

OBTAINING A VISA

Once you receive the documents from the Diocese of Davenport which you will need to take with you when applying for an F-1 Student Visa please call your Consulate Office or Embassy to determine what their procedures are for issuing student visas. It is likely they will either ask you to mail the documents you have received from the Diocese of Davenport or to bring them with you to an interview. If you have originals of some of these papers, perhaps because you had to fax copies to them to me, please replace the copies with the originals BEFORE using them to get your visa. **DO NOT SIGN** the I-20 until you get to the interview unless told to by the Embassy official. Please feel free to include any additional papers you think will assist your case after reading the included papers regarding what the embassy/consulate official are looking for when determining whether to issue a student visa. This will help you prepare for the meeting. Do not take the documents on visa interview techniques with you. They are only for your benefit.

You will likely be asked to complete other forms at the Embassy during this process and pay a fee for the visa as well. Please be prepared to do so at that time.

Generally, it is expected that you will be able to get a visa. However, should you be denied a visa please ask for the reason before leaving the Embassy. Sometimes it is simply a matter of providing additional information to the official. If you are denied a visa please call or email me as soon as possible so that I might be able to assist.

Once you get your visa please let the International Student Services Office know. The regulations generally permit that you enter the U.S. 30 days prior to the start of the program or the start date on your I-20. If the Consular Official tells you something different you will of course have to abide by their request.

DOCUMENTS TO BRING TO THE U.S.

When coming to the United States you should plan to bring with you the following documents:

1. Passport
2. Visa Stamp
3. I-94 (arrival card)
4. I-20
5. Prescriptions – medicines, eyeglasses
6. Medical Records translated into English

YOUR ARRIVAL AND GETTING COMFORTABLE

TRAVEL TIPS

When making your plans to arrive you can fly right into Moline, Illinois. However, some students find it less expensive to fly into Chicago, Illinois' O'Hare airport and then take the Greyhound bus or Act II Limo service (see public transportation) to Davenport, Iowa. Please monitor your flights when coming to the United States so you don't fly through SARS infected countries. This is for your protection.

If you are attending a school that is not in Davenport please contact the Diocese of Davenport and see what is the closest airport.

Hand carry (do not check) the following documents:

- 1) Your passport
- 2) Your SEVIS form I-20 or DS-2019
- 3) Evidence of financial resources
- 4) Evidence of student or exchange visitor status, such as tuition receipts, transcripts or letter of acceptance
- 5) Paper receipt for the SEVIS fee
- 6) The name and contact information of your designated school official or sponsor

*****If you're a new student, remember to carry with you the sealed envelope given to you by the U.S. Department of State's Consular Officer – attached to your passport. It is important that you do not open this envelope.***

Inform the CBP Officer at the port of entry as soon as possible that you will be a new or returning student or exchange visitor in the U.S.

Report to your school or program upon arrival so that your school official can validate your participation in SEVIS.

Maintain contact with your designated school or sponsor official throughout your stay to ensure your SEVIS data is updated and accurate.

REPORT DATE

In order to get settled in, find your way around the city and get over jet lag, plan to arrive at least one week before the day of the Student Orientation/Registration for the semester. If this is not possible, it will be absolutely necessary that you arrive by the date listed on your I-20 form. Please notify the International Student Services Office (ISSO) of the date you plan to arrive well ahead of time.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES OFFICE (ISSO)

The International Student Services Office is available to all International Students for help with issues including:

- Document Maintenance (visa, I-20, etc.)
- Information, advice, and assistance related to your student status

The International Student Services can assist you with problems or concerns you may have during your stay in the United States. The office is located at 2706 N. Gaines Street, 2nd floor in Pastoral Services.

WHAT TO BRING

What to bring to the US will, of course, be a matter of personal need and preference. Consult the International Student Services Office if possible about climate, social customs and the availability and cost of clothing. Given below are some hints:

(a) Clothing

Clothing at our schools follows the schools dress code. Midwest winters usually bring severely cold weather that requires heavy coats and boots, which are best purchased after you arrive. Clothing is readily available in a wide price range in the US. Try to bring some traditional clothing from your home country to show the American students.

(b) Books

Bring books, manuals or journals that you think may be difficult to obtain in the US. Specific and general information about your country will be helpful to share with new friends.

(c) Contract Addresses (home)

Bring the name and address of the individual who should be contacted in case of a travel delay or an emergency. Also bring the name, address and telephone number of a contact person at home.

(d) Medicines

If you take medication regularly, bring a sufficient supply, along with a copy of the prescription. If you wear glasses, it is a good idea to bring an extra pair and your prescription, if possible. You may feel more comfortable using non-prescriptive medicines you are familiar with for headaches, colds, upset stomachs, etc., which you should then bring from home. However, aspirins, ointments and remedies are widely available in the US.

(e) Gifts

As you will probably find yourself invited to the home of an American family, it is a good idea to take several inexpensive but typical gifts from your country. Generally small, light gifts are most practical.

(f) Photographs

Don't forget to bring lots of photographs from home to share with your new American friends and classmates.

(g) Music

Try to bring some of your favorite music in your native language.

(h) Food

Bring some canned or prepackaged foods from your home. This is one thing many students say they miss from home. Be sure you only bring packaged items that will be allowed past customs.

WHAT TO LEAVE BEHIND

(a) Electrical Goods

The US uses a flat parallel two-pin plug on a 110 to 120 volt outlet, so your electrical goods will not work without a suitable adapter. Many electrical goods such as hairdryers, radio cassettes, and irons can be purchased cheaply in the US.

FINANCES

BUDGETING FOR YOUR STAY

Use the list below to estimate expenses that you will encounter during your stay in the U.S. The I-20 that accompanies your admissions letter from Diocese of Davenport will include current, accurate estimates.

- Expenses
- Tuition
- Fees
- Clothes
- Personal Expenses
- Travel

HOW TO KEEP YOUR LEGAL STATUS WHILE YOU ARE STUDYING IN THE U.S.A.

Immigration

The following section provides general immigration information (that includes information for individuals not immigrating but being present in the United States temporarily.) If you have any questions regarding your status, please contact the International Student Services. PLEASE DO NOT rely on friends, staff in your academic department or institution for advice on immigration matters! While most people are well intentioned, they are usually not sufficiently familiar with the regulations (laws) pertaining to your status and situation. Following bad advice may jeopardize your legal status in the U.S. or may cause you to lose opportunities available to you.

PLEASE NOTE: U.S. Immigration regulations are subject to change, so always check with the International Student Services before traveling out of the U.S., transferring to another institution, or completion of your studies.

Documents

Foreign students and scholars in the U.S. should be aware of the Immigration regulations applicable to their stay here and should be certain to keep all documents appropriately updated and valid. You should be familiar with the following documents:

PASSPORT: The passport is the legal document issued by your country of citizenship and must be kept valid at all times. The passport can usually be renewed through your Embassy or one of your Consulates in the United States.

VISA: The U.S. visa is a stamp or sticker on a page of your passport that permits you to enter the U.S. Students will have an F-1 or J-1. The visa may expire while you are in the U.S.; this has no bearing on your lawful status. You cannot and need not renew it while you are in the U.S. A new visa will be required only if the original one expires and you travel outside and then re-enter the U.S. You must present the form IAP-66 (for J-1) and I-20 (for F-1) to obtain your visa. A valid visa is not necessary for entry to and return from Canada or Mexico if you will be staying for less than thirty days (unless you have applied for and been denied a new visa while there.)

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS IN LIEU OF PASSPORT: If you have been issued a Travel Document in lieu of a passport by the government of the country of which you are a resident, the information above, regarding passports, applies to Travel Documents.

I-94 DEPARTURE RECORD: The I-94 is the white card that you complete before passing U.S. border officials upon entrance to the U.S. This is the document that authorizes you to be in the U.S. as a student or scholar for a specified period of time, in a specified program of studies or at a specified institute. Two dates appear on the I-94: the date of entrance into the U.S. and the date of expiration of your permission to stay. For people in J-1 immigration status, the expiration date is either the expected program completion date or D/S (duration of status), which implies the date of the program completion. For students in F-1 immigration status, the expiration date is D/S, which implies the date of program completion. The I-94, like the passport, must be valid at all times. The I-94 should be kept in the passport. It will be surrendered to airline officials when you travel outside the U.S. and a new I-94 will be issued upon your re-entry into the U.S. When traveling to Canada and Mexico, the I-94 will not be surrendered but must be valid for at least 30 days beyond the date on which you will re-enter the U.S.

I-20 and IAP-66: The I-20 form (for F-1 non-immigration status) or IAP-66 form (for J-1 non-immigration status) is the document issued by the agency or institution with which you are affiliated and which you present to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad to obtain a visa. You also present this document to border officials when you enter the U.S. These documents are

important records of your stay in the U.S. Take care not to lose them and do not throw them away, even if they have expired.

TRAVEL

In country: If you intend to travel within the U.S. during your stay, you need no special documents. Just carry your passport, I-20 and your I-94 so that you will have legal identifying documents in your possession should any problems arise.

Out-of-U.S.: If you intend to travel temporarily out of the U.S. and return, you should have the International Student Services check your documents prior to the trip. You will need a valid U.S. visa to re-enter and, of course, your passport must be valid within 6 month of traveling.

Travel to Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean Islands: Travel to these countries is exceptional in that you need not have a valid U.S. visa to reenter the United States if your visit is less than 30 days (and you have not applied for and been denied a new visa while there). However, you must be in possession of a valid I-94 form and passport (containing the expired U.S. visa) which you present upon entry to and exit from Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean Island. If you will be in one of these countries 30 days or longer, a valid U.S. visa will be required for re-entry to the U.S. You may need a visa to enter these countries (see below).

When traveling to Canada or any other country, all regulations of that country apply. You may need to obtain a visa for the country(ies) you intend to visit and if so, you should obtain those at the appropriate Embassy/Consulate here in the U.S. before departing.

For all immigration-related matters, including duration of status/permission to stay limitations on duration of status, eligibility requirements for program extensions, transfer of program or institutions, and employment, please consult the International Student Services. As a general rule, it is important to initiate all immigration-related procedures before expiration of relevant documents. **If one of your documents is about to expire, please contact the International Student Services Office at least 30 days before the expiration date.**