

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PRE-ARRIVAL GUIDE



MISSISSIPPI STATE
UNIVERSITY™

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
International Services Office



WELCOME TO MSU Greetings from the International Institute

Dear MSU Student,

Congratulations on making the decision to join our Mississippi State University family! Although our campus and student population are large, the University would not be complete without our many international students and the unique perspectives, culture, and intellect that they bring.

We hope that when you arrive on campus, you will find our landscape as beautiful and the attitudes of our faculty and staff team as hospitable as the students who have come before you. Each year, hundreds of new international students join us from close to 100 different countries as they pursue academic interests at MSU. These students have enjoyed the challenging academics, world-class research facilities, and comprehensive student services that we know you will also appreciate during your program.

The International Services Office (ISO) is available to assist you with your unique international student needs throughout the entirety of your program. We offer immigration advising and document assistance for any questions related to your visa and federal immigration compliance, as well as a number of services including orientation sessions, workshops, shuttles during university breaks, and tax compliance assistance. Our staff is welcoming and eager to provide you with the resources you need to be successful in your endeavors at MSU.

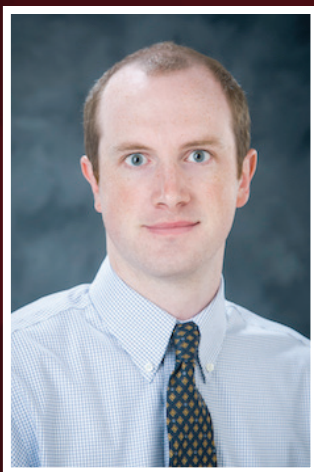
Please look through this guide as you prepare for your arrival at MSU. You will find information about getting to campus, finding housing, obtaining your visa, understanding health and immunization requirements and more. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with these requirements and read through the information thoroughly as your first days upon arrival will be very busy.

We are eagerly awaiting your arrival on campus, and are thrilled that you will soon be joining us at MSU. See you soon!

Lauren Wright
Director
International Services Office
116 Allen Hall
Mississippi State, MS 39762
662-325-8929



Lauren Wright
 Director
 (662)325-3741
wright@international.msstate.edu



Kendrick Johnson
 International Student
 Advisor
 (662)325-3875
kjohnson@international.msstate.edu



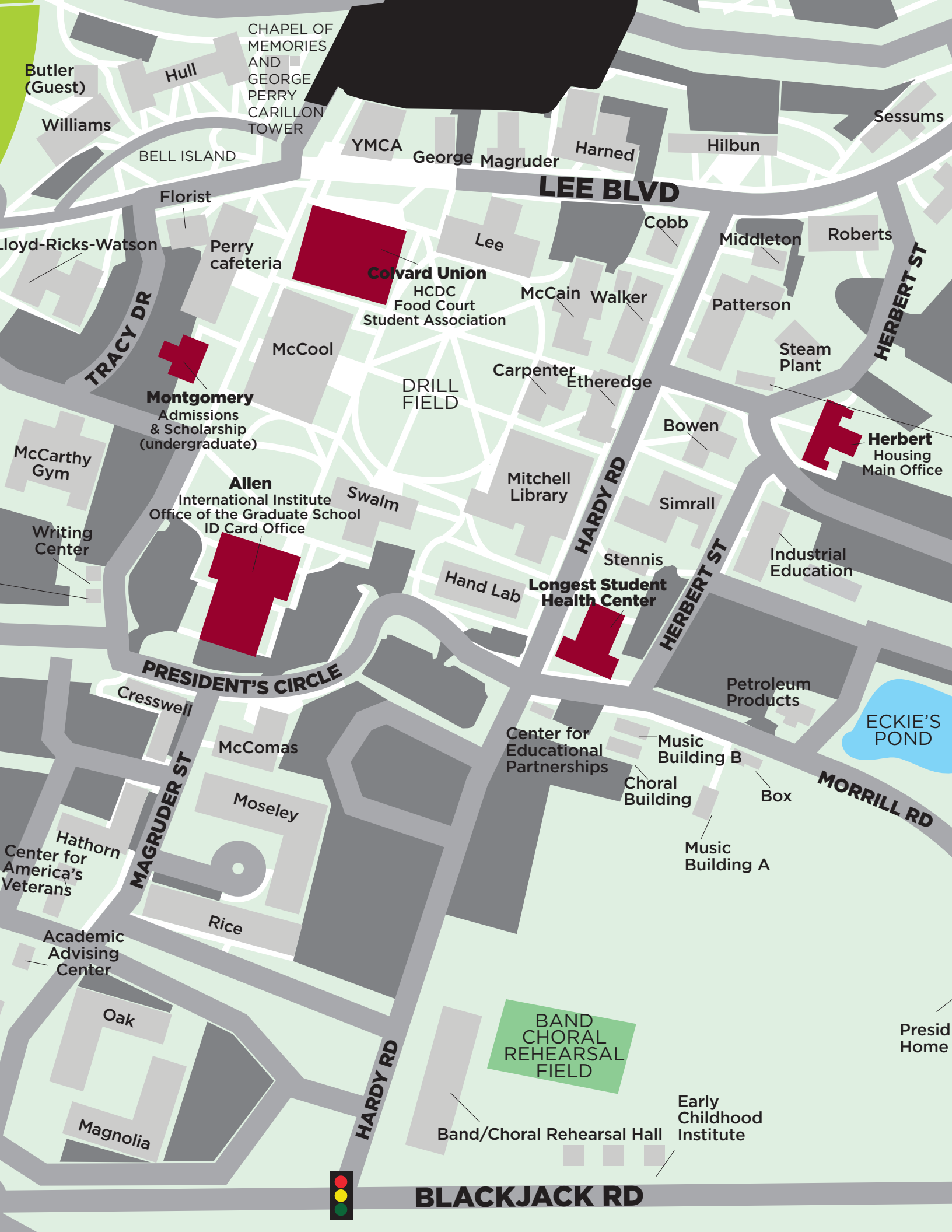
Marendra Banks
 Immigration Specialist
 (662)325-0788
mbanks@international.msstate.edu



Cassy McInnis
 Immigration Advisor
 (662)325-1562
cmcinnis@international.msstate.edu

IMPORTANT CAMPUS PHONE NUMBERS

Academic Advising Center.	662-325-4052
Admissions & Scholarships	662-325-2224
Assessment & Testing Services	662-325-6610
Center for Student Activities.	662-325-2930
Dean of Students Office	662-325-3611
Dining Services.	662-325-7120
English as a Second Language	662-325-2648
Graduate Office.	662-325-7400
Holmes Cultural Diversity Center	662-325-2033
Honor Code Office	662-325-9151
Housing & Residence Life	662-325-3555
Information Technology Services (ITS)	662-325-9311
International Institute.	662-325-8929
Longest Student Health Center.	662-325-2431
Sanderson Center/Recreational Sports	662-325-7529
Student Counseling Services	662-325-2091
Student Support Services	662-325-3335
University Police	662-325-2121
Writing Center	662-325-1045



ARRIVAL DATES

You are allowed to enter the US up to 30 days before the program start date listed on your I-20 or DS-2019. You should consult with your department and the Office of the Graduate School (graduate students only) to determine the dates for any mandatory orientations for new students. You should plan your arrival around these dates and also keep in mind that you will need some time to get settled in Starkville before classes begin. If you will be holding a graduate assistantship, you will need some additional time to complete hiring paperwork before the semester begins so please plan accordingly.

LOGGING IN TO YOUR MYSTATE STUDENT ACCOUNT

Once you have been admitted to MSU, please take a few minutes to log in to your MyState student account. The instructions are below. It is helpful to activate this account before you arrive so that you can access housing, parking, meal plans, and your MSU email account.

1. Go to www.my.msstate.edu to get started
2. Underneath the log in boxes, click the link that says "Trouble Logging In"
3. If you know your NetID, choose "Set your initial NetPassword". If you do not know your NetID, choose "Lookup NetID" and once you have your NetID, go back to the previous page and select "Set your initial NetPassword"
4. Follow the instructions to set your initial password and finish logging in to the system.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to Mississippi State University/Starkville, MS

The nearest airport to MSU and the city of Starkville is the Golden Triangle Regional Airport, which has the airport code GTR. This airport is located 20 minutes from the MSU campus. For more information about flying to GTR, visit <http://www.gtra.com>.

Transportation from the Golden Triangle Regional Airport to Mississippi State University is available for all new students at the beginning of each semester by filling out the online form here: www.international.msstate.edu/pickup/. If you wish to be picked up, please fill out the form at least one week prior to your arrival.

In addition to the International Institute's pickup service for new students, SMART and the Golden Triangle Regional Airport are now offering a route which connects the GTR Airport to the Starkville Community. The GTRA Express will include stops at Hwy 12 West and The Mill, providing direct access from the existing SMART route network. For exact shuttle times, please visit www.smart.msstate.edu/schedule-and-routes/gtr-express/

Transportation in Starkville

SMART – Starkville-Mississippi State University Area Rapid Transit 662.325.5204,
www.smart.msstate.edu/

Bulldog Shuttle and Cab Co. 662.312.5003, www.bulldogcab.com, Bulldogcab@gmail.com

McClain Taxi Service 662.312.4145, 662.323.9530





HOUSING

There are two housing options for students to consider: off-campus and on-campus. Freshmen are required to live on campus but upper level undergraduates and graduate students are not required to live on campus and can choose to live off-campus instead.

Off-campus Housing

Off-campus housing is not affiliated with MSU, but some of these accommodations are within walking distance of campus. Prices vary according to the proximity to the campus, room quality, and the size of the apartments. Rental rates range from about \$275 to more than \$500 per month, and off-campus housing may require a deposit of two months' rent.

If students choose to live off campus, they are responsible for making their own arrangements. For more information, an off-campus housing guide is online at <http://offcampushousing.msstate.edu>.

On-campus Housing

If you prefer to live on-campus, please consult the Office of Housing and Residence Life to apply (www.housing.msstate.edu). You will need to be officially admitted to MSU in order to submit your housing application. When you are admitted, you'll gain access to your MyState account which you will use to apply for your housing. There is a \$75 application fee associated with the on-campus housing application.

Residence Halls

Mississippi State University has 15 campus residence halls. You may visit <http://www.housing.msstate.edu/halls> to see the different housing options. Each residence hall has certain amenities standard with each building.

Residence Hall Amenities

- common lobby
- front desk with 24-hour assistance
- laundry room
- kitchen
- secure access

Room Amenities Provided For Each Resident

bed	dresser	wireless Internet
mattress	closet	cable TV hook-up
desk and desk chair	micro-fridge	sink with mirror

Hotels in Starkville

If you arrive before accommodations are available, be prepared to stay in a hotel. Students are responsible for their own hotel arrangements. Starkville has various hotels, but the most popular ones for arriving students are the following:

Comfort Inn (walking distance to campus)

www.comfortsuites.com
662.324.9595

Hilton Garden Inn

www.hilton.com
662.615.9664

Hampton Inn (walking distance to campus)

www.hamptoninn.com
662.324.1333

LaQuinta Inn & Suites

www.laquintastarkville.com
662.270.4100

VISAS

International students must have a valid passport to enter the United States, and students are encouraged to apply for their visa early to provide time for processing.

Visa Process and Entry

1. Pay the SEVIS I-901 Fee: Nonimmigrant students and exchange visitors are subject to the SEVIS I-901 fee. Without this fee, students are not eligible to apply for a visa. To pay, visit www.fmjfee.com. Please keep a copy of the I-901 receipt for your records.
2. Apply: Visit <http://usembassy.state.gov> to learn about appointments and instruction for applying for a visa at your U.S. embassy or consulate.
3. Visa Appointment: Follow the instructions given by the embassy website. Some of the required items for an F-1 visa include:
 - a. A SEVIS generated Form I-20
 - b. Valid passport
 - c. MRV fee receipt to show payment of the visa application fee
 - d. SEVIS I-901 receipt
 - e. Financial evidence/support
4. U.S. Port of Entry: At the U.S. port of entry, students should have all documents ready, including a valid passport, valid U.S. visa, and the form I-20 or DS-2019. An electronic arrival/departure record is created on entry, and the passport will be stamped with the date of admission, class of admission (e.g. F-1 or J-1), and length or time allowed to stay in the U.S.

Important Reminders:

- A visa does not guarantee entry into the United States. Customs and Border Protection officials have authority to permit or deny admission.
- If a traveler wants to obtain a paper version of the I-94 after arrival, it is available at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>.
- Students may enter the country up to 30 days before the program start date listed on their I-20 or DS-2019 and should report to the International Services Office upon arrival.
- Full information about the process is available online at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students>.



FINANCES & BANKING

Because you will be traveling abroad, it is a good idea to tell your bank and credit card companies. Also, compare your cards' interest and exchange rates when used in the U.S. to those of your home country.

The first few weeks on campus are busy, so bring money to cover expenses in case you do not open a bank account immediately. You may bring U.S. cash, credit cards, or a prepaid credit card. If you bring a large amount of money, the safest way is in U.S. dollar traveler's checks, in bank drafts, or by credit card. Traveler's checks are not accepted at most stores and restaurants in the United States, but you can cash them at a bank in the U.S. once you have opened a bank account.

Mississippi State University accepts Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover, but there is a 2.7% transaction fee for each credit card transaction. Remember that transferring money from your home country into a U.S. bank account will also have transfer fees.

PACKING FOR STARKVILLE

Weather and Clothing

Mississippi is known for its mild, yet unpredictable, climate. Starkville's average yearly temperature is 62° Fahrenheit (17° Celsius), and the temperature averages range from 91° F (33° C) in the summer to 30 °F (-1° C) in the winter.

From October to March, expect generally sunny days, but mostly cool temperatures. Occasionally, one might experience four seasons within one day during these months, so always be prepared. Hats, gloves, scarves, and jackets are recommended throughout these months to remain warm and comfortable.

The months of April through September produce mostly sunny days with warm to very hot temperatures. Lightweight clothing is desirable, along with a hat, sunglasses, sandals, and sunscreen.

Items to Consider Packing

- . Medicines in original containers (take in carry-on), as well as copies of eyeglass/contact lens prescriptions
- . U.S. currency for initial expenses
- . Credit card
- . International telephone calling card
- . International driver's license
- . Original Birth Certificate
- . Electrical adaptors/plug converters
- . Mobile phone or SIM card (you may prefer to buy a pay-as-you-go cell phone or SIM card here)
- . Backpack for carrying class books and small bag for weekend trips
- . Emergency contact numbers
- . USA guidebook and pocket English dictionary
- . One traditional outfit from your home country for cultural activities (if desired)
- . Musical instrument, dance clothes, etc. for international cultural activities (if desired)
- . Small flag from your home country for international cultural activities (if desired)





HEALTH

Health Insurance at Mississippi State University

Mississippi State University requires health insurance for all international students. Proof of insurance must be shown within nine days of the start of classes. Insurance benefits must meet or exceed the student health insurance policy offered by Mississippi State University. Insurance must meet the following criteria:

- No overall maximum dollar limit (per insured person, per policy year)
- Deductible preferred providers: \$300 (per insured person, per policy year)
- Deductible out-of-network: \$600 (per insured person, per policy year)
- Coinsurance preferred providers: 80% (with some exceptions)
- Coinsurance out-of-network: 60% (with some exceptions)
- Out-of-pocket maximum preferred provider: \$6,350 (per insured person, per policy year)
- Out-of-pocket maximum preferred provider: \$12,700 (For all insured family members, per policy year)

If a student's spouse and children come along, health insurance for them also is highly recommended.

MSU Health Insurance

Repatriation and medical evacuation coverage is included in the health insurance. MSU's student health insurance policy does not cover the cost of eye examinations or eyeglasses, and it also does not cover routine dental. Dental is provided only as a result of a major medical incident pending a doctor's examination and referral. Therefore, it is wise to have eye and dental appointment procedures before leaving home.

Alternate Health Insurance

MSU students are automatically charged for health insurance upon registration for classes. If a student has alternate health insurance, the student must submit a copy to Robert Cadenhead in the health center for approval. Repatriation and medical evacuation coverage must be included in the policy.



Medical Requirements

Mississippi State University requires proof of immunizations against certain diseases for all students. All international students studying at MSU are required to have the following:

- Proof of adequate health insurance
- A Chest X-ray (some students are exempt, based on country of origin)
- Two (2) MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccinations

Chest X-rays

All chest X-rays must be taken on campus at the Longest Student Health Center. Students should make appointments at the health center to have the chest x-ray completed. X-rays from other hospitals will not be accepted.

MMR Vaccinations

Mississippi State University requires completed immunization forms as proof of MMR vaccinations. Measles and rubella in adults are serious and highly contagious illnesses. If unable to provide proof before arriving on campus, students will receive their first MMR vaccination along with their chest X-rays. Students who have had the vaccinations should bring the completed immunization form as proof. The Health Center must validate all vaccinations records. Information about the MMR vaccination is found on the following website: http://www.immunize.org/vis/vis_english.asp.

Make a copy of your vaccinations for your personal record and bring it with you.

If you have any more questions about health requirements, please email health@saffairs.msstate.edu.

Final Pre-Departure Checklist

- ☐ Paid the SEVIS fee
- ☐ Obtained Visa
- ☐ Checked that the names on passport and I-20 or DS-2019 are the same
- ☐ Have passport, immigration documents, and any paperwork that you have received from MSU or a sponsor
- ☐ Completed travel arrangements
- ☐ Completed housing arrangements
- ☐ Included new address inside of luggage
- ☐ Written down emergency contact information
- ☐ Ensure necessary funds are available for at least one semester's expenses
- ☐ Have immunization records and completed measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) form (if already vaccinated)
- ☐ Obtained proof of health insurance in English if not enrolling in MSU's health insurance plan
- ☐ Given contact information for the International Services Office to family and friends in case of emergency:
International Services Office
116 Allen Hall
P.O. Box 9742
Mississippi State, MS 39762
662.325.8929

Travel Hints

- Before you leave for the United States, check for all needed documents you might need. Carry your original documents, and also keep money and emergency contact information with you. **Do not place them in checked baggage.**
- Along with your original passport and immigration documents, please bring photocopies in case the originals are lost or stolen. You may also leave a set of photocopies with a trusted relative or friend.
- Remember to bring shampoo, soap, toothbrush, and toothpaste for the first few nights. You may not be able to go shopping immediately upon arrival, so bring immediate needs.
- It may be helpful to take a picture of your luggage before you leave and keep it on your phone. If your luggage is lost, this will help the airport identify your bags.
- Put your contact information inside your luggage in case the outer tag is lost or destroyed.
- If a piece of your luggage is lost, file a claim immediately at the airline's desk at the airport.
- Do not lock your suitcase.
- It is common for international luggage to be delayed by 1-2 days. Please pack a small carry-on bag with your essential medications, toiletries, and a change of clothes.

When You Arrive

The faculty and staff of the International Services Office are committed to taking care of students. We provide a variety of services and cultural opportunities to all students and want to help however we can. Please use the following checklist to help your first few days on campus go smoothly:

- ☐ Check in at the International Services Office and attend a mandatory Immigration Orientation*
- ☐ Visit the Longest Student Health Center to submit immunization forms and make an appointment for a chest x-ray, if necessary*.
- ☐ Visit the Office of Admissions and Scholarships (undergraduate) or the Office of the Graduate School to turn in any final documentation needed*
- ☐ Log in to your MyState account and update your local physical address in Starkville.
- ☐ Visit your department and meet with an advisor to obtain a Registration Access Code which will allow you to register for classes.
- ☐ After course registration, visit the ID Card office in Allen Hall to have your Student ID card made.

**Registration Holds will be placed on your account for these items. A hold is a block on your student record that will prevent you from being able to access various campus facilities and will also prevent course registration. These holds must be cleared prior to the start of the semester so that you can register for the necessary classes.*

Reporting to Campus

The International Services Office expects you to contact the office upon your arrival. We will want to make copies of your documents and inform you of necessary requirements before class registration will be allowed.

Orientation

All new students are required to attend a mandatory immigration orientation. There will be numerous sessions offered before classes begin but please check the International Institute website for exact dates and locations. A registration hold will be placed on your student account which will prevent class registration until you have attended this orientation.

There will also be an additional International Student Orientation that is not mandatory but is highly encouraged. This orientation will cover various aspects of campus life and living in Starkville. Representatives from local businesses will be present to help answer any questions students might have about getting settled in during the first few weeks.

Fee Payment

Tuition and fees are due by the second month after classes start. If payment is not made by this date, students will receive late fees as well as a registration hold until the fees are paid. All the expenses will appear on one bill, payable to Mississippi State University. Checks, credit cards, money orders, and cash are accepted. All credit card transactions are charged a 2.7% transaction fee. These payments can be made online through a student's MyState account or at Account Services in Garner Hall.

NOTES

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WAYS TO GET INVOLVED ON CAMPUS

Holmes Cultural Diversity Center
Colvard Student Union Suite 220
www.facebook.com/msuhcdc

MSU Student Association
Colvard Student Union Suite 314
www.thestudentassociation.com

Center for Student Activities
Colvard Student Union Suite 314
www.one.msstate.edu

Department of Recreational Sports
Sanderson Center
www.recsports.msstate.edu

Mississippi State Athletics
www.hailstate.com



CONTACT US

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE International Services Office

175 Presidents Circle
116 Allen Hall
P.O. Box 9742
Mississippi State, MS 39762
Facebook: www.facebook.com/internationalmsstate
Twitter: www.twitter.com/msstate



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