PREPARING FOR ARRIVAL

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REFLECTION

Before you leave for the United States, you may want to think about your goals and expectations for the experience. Doing so can smooth your adjustment process and help you get maximum benefit from your stay.

You can think about these matters in your own mind, write yourself some notes about them, or discuss them with someone.

First, what are your goals (see page 20) in studying in the United States?

Second, what are your expectations? Whether you are aware of it or not, you have in mind ideas about what your experience as a student in the United States will be like. Those expectations help determine your reactions to the actual experience. Your expectations may be realized, but they may not be. Your experience can be more positive if you are aware of your expectations and think about how appropriate they are.

To help you consider in more detail your expectations or assumptions about being a scholar in the United States (see page 21). You will not know the answers to all these questions now. Even so, it helps to think about them.
Possible Goals for Researching/Post Doc-ing/Teaching in the United States

What do you hope to accomplish while you are in the United States?

Do you have certain goals related to a career path? What career path do you hope to pursue? What will you need to do in the United States to help yourself succeed in that career path? What experiences besides lab/field work (for example, attending professional conferences, getting papers published, making the acquaintance of certain people) will help you realize your career objectives? Will you have to take some classes? Will you have to teach?

Thorough preparation for life in an interdependent world requires learning to live and work among people who are different from you. Beyond your career goals, do you want to learn as much as possible from your intercultural experience? If you do, you need to think about living, eating, working and socializing within and outside the circle of colleagues in your office/lab.

Do you intend to improve your English? If so, what plans do you have for making sure it happens? Will you take classes? Get a tutor? Find native speakers of English to practice with? Do you realize that learning English is difficult to do, and that you will need to practice virtually every day to make sure your English gets better? See the English Language Opportunities section of this website.

What are your goals concerning family relationships? What kind of relationships do you want to maintain with your parents, any siblings, and with your friends? How will you maintain those relationships while you are away? If you are married and want to maintain your marriage, what will you have to do? If you have a child, how will you maintain the parent-child relationship?
Questions to Reflect On

YOUR TRIP

- How long will you have to wait at the airport before you actually depart?
- How long will the trip last? Will you be able to sleep?
- How will you respond to any delays in your travels?
- Will you have to change planes inside the United States? If so, what will that be like?
- How will the customs and immigration officials at the port of entry treat you?
- How much will you have to use English?

ARRIVAL

- What time of day will you arrive at the airport (or bus station or train station) nearest your school?
- What will the weather be like?
- Who, if anyone, will meet you at the airport?
- How will you get to your campus? How long will it take?
- Where will you stay the first night?
- Where will you eat?
- Whom will you talk to? Who will be available to help you?
- How will you find out about places to shop for the things you need?
- Will you be worried about money?
- What will you be thinking about?

CULTURE SHOCK AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

- What new things will you notice the most?
- What will you miss about your home?
- How well will people understand your English? How well will you understand theirs?
- How will you be feeling, physically?
- How will you be feeling, emotionally?
- How will people treat you?
- How will you respond to the informality among Americans—their relative lack of attention to differences in social status or age?
- Will your social status as a scholar be the same as or different from what it is in your home country?
- How much of the Americans' "individualism" will you have to adopt? What does "individualism" seem to mean to them? "Freedom?"

HOUSING

- If you do not already have a place to live "permanently," how will you find one?
- What will the place where you live be like?
- How much will it cost?
- If you live with someone else, who will it be?
- How will you get back and forth between the place you live and your school?
FOOD

- Will you eat much American or other non-familiar food?
- Will you cook your own food? If not, where will you get your meals?
- Who will eat with you?
- Where will you get your groceries? How will you transport them?
- How much will it cost to eat?