



GUIDE
TO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM
IN THE UNITED STATES

BY

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ISSS

International
Student & Scholar
Services

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LEGAL ISSUES

Here are the major areas (outside of immigration issues) where the U.S. legal system affects international students and scholars that have children who will attend school.

Teen Age Driving and Transporting Children

In the United States, teenagers are allowed to obtain a driver license. The eligibility age and the rules which limit and govern teen age, first time drivers vary, depending on the state of residence. Different states also have different rules and requirements for transporting children (like the mandatory use of booster seats for children under a specific height). The following website contains specific information on the rules that govern Teen Age Driving and Transporting Children in the state of Minnesota: <http://www.dps.state.mn.us/ots/>

Sexual Discrimination and Harassment

The U.S. Government, the State of Minnesota and most lower and higher education institutions have strict rules affecting the equality of all (students and staff); these rules apply to many situations that you may not be accustomed to in your home country.

While the U.S. guarantees religious freedom, it also has strict separation between church and state; therefore, although certain behaviours may be sanctioned by religious rules, these sanctions may not be legal in the U.S. Civil rights laws protect most minorities, base on religion, gender identification, race, sex, age and sexual preference. For more information, you can visit the following website: <http://www.humanrights.state.mn.us/>

Violence within the family or in a domestic situation of any kind is illegal and can result in severe penalties. The law accepts no justification for physical violence, threatening behavior, or any restraint on the freedom (of an adult family member). For all purposes except drinking alcohol, a person is considered an adult at 18 years of age.

Bullying and harassment within the schools is also illegal and should be reported to school authorities.

Child Neglect and Abuse

Children are protected from abuse and neglect by strictly enforced laws. Corporal punishment is not favored in the U.S. Healthcare, including immunizations and exams, may be required as a pre-requisite to attending certain schools. Special seats and restraints are required when children are transported in cars. For additional information you can visit the following website: www.dps.state.mn.us/ots

Alcohol and Drug Use

Many drugs used in the treatment of disease and injury are available only by prescription and are strictly regulated. You may not dispense or share prescription drugs even among family

and friends. The legal drinking age is 21 and strictly enforced even within the family. Driving and drinking can result in arrest and severe penalties.

School Policies on Behaviour and Academic Standards

Upon enrolling your child in a school, you should carefully read that school's handbook covering students' and/or parents' rights and responsibilities related to school behaviour and academic standards. The rules and requirements are varied for each program (as are costs and admission requirements).

Common Standards of Academic Conduct

(From the UMN ISSS International Student Handbook 2006-2007)

Academic standards and practices are influenced by culture. What is considered appropriate academic behavior in your home country might be different from what is appropriate in the United States. Therefore, it is important that you understand U.S. standards and practices. Not meeting these standards can result in charges of academic dishonesty and possible expulsion from the University.

The U.S. definition of academic dishonesty is based on the cultural values of individualism, fairness, the idea that individuals must think and work independently, and a strong value of original thinking, creativity, and invention.

In most schools, academic dishonesty is defined as any act violating the rights of another student in academic work, or involving misrepresentation of one's own work. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, cheating on assignments and examinations; plagiarizing or representing as one's own work any part of work done by another; submitting the same work, or substantially similar works, to meet the requirements of more than one course without the approval and consent of all instructors concerned; depriving another student of necessary course materials; or interfering with another student's work.

EXAMS and CHEATING

It is common in many countries for students to study and work together to prepare for exams. This is customary in the United States as well. However, once in the classroom, students are on their own for exams. Students cannot copy or discuss answers with each other during an exam. It is essential in the U.S. education system that each student be evaluated individually on his or her own work. "Cheating" is defined as copying someone else's work or taking prohibited information or tools to an exam.

PLAGIARISM

"Plagiarism" is defined as copying the work of someone else and not naming your source. In the United States, this will be considered an attempt by you to pass off the ideas or words of another person as your own. **Plagiarism is one of the most serious violations of the standards of academic conduct in the United States.** It can ruin your academic career.

Of course, when you are writing a paper, you research many sources and present or summarize other people's ideas. But you must name your sources and identify when you are using their words and ideas by these methods:

- name your sources in the text
- put quotation marks around words and sentences that you copy from someone else's work
- provide footnotes and endnotes (even when you are paraphrasing someone's words)
- include a list of references or a bibliography

This also applies to the work of other students. Discussing ideas for a paper with friends is okay, but it is not acceptable to hand in papers that are the same as your friends' or to let someone else write your paper for you, even though the ideas are yours.

Dean at Boston U. faces allegations of plagiarism

BOSTON—A dean at Boston University is facing allegations of plagiarism after he reportedly gave a commencement speech in which he used large portions of an article without attributing the ideas to the author.

The dean, H. Joachim Maitre of the university's college of communication, was traveling in Malaysia last week and was unavailable for comment.

In his speech, which was videotaped, Mr. Maitre is said to have used ideas and sentences contained in an article written by Mi-

chael Medved, a film critic for the Public Broadcasting Service. Mr. Medved's article, "Popular Culture and the War Against Standards," appeared in *Imprimis*, a journal put out by Hillsdale College.

John Silber, president of the university, said in a statement: "Charges of plagiarism are among the most serious that can be brought in academic life." He said it would be inappropriate to "prejudge" the situation until Mr. Maitre is given a chance to respond to the allegations. ■

—*The Chronicle of Higher Education*,
July 10, 1991

If you have questions about these issues or any other legal issue please come to ISSS and we will try to answer your question or refer you to legal assistance.