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ABOUT ISSS

International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) is the primary contact office for international exchange students visiting the University of Minnesota. ISSS assists all international students and scholars on campus and conducts Immigration Check-In. Exchange students usually have their visa documents issued through this office. ISSS also offers services and programs for international students, including counseling and advising.

ISSS’s office hours are Monday-Thursday, 8:00 a.m.-noon and 1:00-4:15 p.m. CST, and Friday, 10:30 a.m.-noon and 1:00-4:15 p.m. CST. The office may close due to special events; visit isss.umn.edu/office/hours.html for updates.

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## UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA CALENDAR

### Fall Semester 2018
- **August 13-18**: iSuccess pre-academic program (optional, fees apply)
- **August 15**: University Village housing contract begins
- **August 20**: Recommended arrival date for exchange students needing to take an English Test or find off-campus housing
- **August 20-31**: Global Gopher Events (optional, free)
- **August 24**: International Exchange Student Orientation (REQUIRED)
- **September 3**: Labor Day holiday (no classes, all UMN offices closed)
- **September 4**: First day of classes
- **November 22-23**: Thanksgiving holiday (no classes, all UMN offices closed)
- **December 12**: Last day of instruction
- **December 14-20**: Final examinations
- **December 21-January 21**: Winter Break

### Spring Semester 2019
- **January 12**: Recommended arrival date for exchange students
- **January 15**: International Exchange Student Orientation (tentative)
- **January 22**: First day of classes
- **March 18-22**: Spring break
- **May 6**: Last day of instruction
- **May 9-15**: Final examinations
- **May 15**: End of term
UNIQUE QUALITIES OF EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

The University of Minnesota hosts over 6,000 international students from more than 130 world locations, so it is truly a global community. The far majority of these students are degree-seeking students, who will live in Minnesota for several years, and have different objectives, requirements, and priorities. This guide is designed to specifically help exchange students who will be on our campus for only one or two semesters. In many cases, your processes, financial information, academic guidelines, and even visa requirements are different from degree-seeking international students.

The Global Programs and Strategy (GPS) Alliance administers many different exchange programs at the University of Minnesota. The requirements and benefits of each program differ due to the particular exchange agreement under which it exists.

As an exchange student, you may also have to follow different guidelines than other international students on campus. If you have questions about the requirements and benefits of your program, please ask the exchange staff for clarification. Information you receive from other offices or students (even another exchange student) may not be applicable to your situation.

In some cases, international students from the same institution may come on a different exchange program, and each of their benefits may therefore be different. Your home institution should clarify your status prior to departure.

VISA INFORMATION FOR EXCHANGE STUDENTS

It is very important to enter the U.S. with the proper visa. Most exchange students come to the UMN on J-1 student visas. The J-1 visa is issued to persons who receive all or most of their funding from their government, the UMN, or a U.S. government agency, or those who are participating in a formal exchange program. Others, depending on their program, will get an F-1 visa. Be sure to read the “VISAS” section of the Pre-Arrival Guide for more information. Both F-1 and J-1 visas allow students to enter the U.S. up to 30 days before the “Begin Date” on their documents.

You will not be able to re-enter the U.S. before school starts if you enter and then depart. If you plan to visit Canada or Mexico before classes start, you should travel there first and then enter the U.S.

While in Minnesota

It is your responsibility to maintain your legal status at all times while you are in the U.S. J-1 and F-1 students who allow their legal status document (DS-2019 or I-20) to expire and do not reinstate or apply for an extension within the prescribed grace period (30 days for J-1 visas and 60 days for F-1 visas) are “overstayers.” If you become an overstayer, you are in violation of your legal status. Your U.S. entry visa stamp may be canceled, and this may affect your ability to reenter the U.S. in the future. If you have questions regarding your immigration status, speak with an adviser in ISSS.
If you plan to leave the country for any period during the exchange, you must have your visa document signed by an ISSS adviser. The travel signature is valid for one year.

When you travel around the U.S. or leave the country temporarily, carry your passport and DS-2019 or I-20 with you.

Departing the U.S.
J-1 visa holders have a 30-day grace period after the ending date on their DS-2019 form within which they must leave the country. F-1 visa holders can leave the country up to 60 days after the end date on their I-20. Students who wish to travel within the U.S. for a longer period of time should consult with an ISSS adviser to discuss legal options. Be aware that if you exit the U.S. during the grace period, you will not be allowed to re-enter the country because your student visa status will have expired.

Visa Extensions
Extension for an Internship or Work
Students can request an extension of their visa document for work or for an internship, assuming that the activity is directly related to their field of study. Extensions and work permissions are heavily restricted, and they are not automatic. Students should visit the ISSS office to determine individual eligibility. Be sure to contact ISSS at least one month before the start of your internship or work.

Extension to Conduct Research
Sometimes students wish to remain on campus in order to conduct further research. In most cases, you will need to also maintain status as either a student (by taking courses and paying for them yourself) or as an employee (refer to the above paragraph). Please be aware that you have up to 30 days for J-1 and 60 days for F-1 after your program completion within which to leave the country. This extra time may allow you to finish any necessary research before going home.

Extension as a Tourist
If you wish to travel beyond the grace period allowed on your visa document, please consult with ISSS about this possibility.

YOUR FIRST WEEK ON CAMPUS
Exchange students must attend the Exchange Orientation in addition to the Immigration Check-In required for all international students.

You should complete the International Student Preparation Course prior to your arrival in Minnesota, and, within the online module, you should choose an Immigration Check-In date as early as possible after arrival that does not conflict with Exchange Orientation. In total, the International Student Preparation Course will take approximately two hours to complete.

Visit isss.umn.edu/new to access the course. When asked, you are NOT a “Sponsored Student.”

When to Arrive
Refer to the Important Dates calendar on page 3 for your optimal arrival date. In general, plan your arrival date in Minnesota so that you can 1) complete Immigration Check-In, 2) attend the Exchange Student Orientation, 3) meet with a departmental adviser, 4) register for classes, and 5) supply your apartment with household and grocery items.

If any of the following situations apply to you, we recommend that you arrive up to three weeks before classes begin:

1. **If you have chosen not to live on campus**, we suggest that you arrive earlier, as you will need the extra time to acquaint yourself with the neighborhoods around the University and to locate suitable housing. See more information about finding off-campus housing (including where you can stay while you search) on page 8.

2. **If you need to take the English proficiency exam** you may wish to arrive early to allow extra time for the exam to be scored and register for classes (see page 8 for more information).

3. **If you want to participate in iSuccess**, you should arrive sooner, too. See isss.umn.edu/programs/isuccess to learn more about this program that will teach you the academic and social skills you will need during your first semester.
Open a Bank Account
Students are highly encouraged to open a bank account in the U.S., even if they will stay only one or two semesters. There are several banks with campus branches that are accustomed to working with international students. See z.umn.edu/isssbank for banks near campus.

Having a U.S.-based bank account will make paying University charges much easier, and banks will provide more services, or reduced fees, for their customers.

We recommend students plan weeks in advance if they are completing a wire transfer of funds from overseas to their U.S.-based accounts. As a faster, more secure alternative to a wire transfer, you can visit the bank where you have an account and request a “cash advance” from a home-issued credit card. You can put the money directly into your MN account without fees. Check with your card-issuing bank for fees and restrictions.

UMN Identification Card
Every UMN student must obtain a UMN ID card. The “U Card” is your key to many campus services and facilities, such as the library, recreation center, computer labs, and campus dining.

Once you register for classes, you can obtain your U Card by bringing your passport to the U Card office in Coffman Union any time between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For more information, contact the U Card Office at 612-626-9900, via email at ucard@umn.edu or online at ucard.umn.edu/umtc/home.

Shopping, Eating, and Drinking
There are numerous small shops, groceries and eateries around campus. On the Minneapolis campus, you will find these in Stadium Village (east of campus), Dinkytown (north of campus), and the West Bank (the west side of the Mississippi River).

If you wish to purchase items for your room or apartment (such as sheets, pillows, lamps, clocks, or kitchen utensils) you should consider a trip to Target or IKEA. They sell these items at reasonable prices (approximately $150 total).

There is a small Target in Dinkytown (1329 5th St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414), or you can take the bus or light rail (visit metrotransit.org for more information) to another store.

You may also wish to go to a Goodwill store where you can purchase second-hand (used) clothes and household items at a reduced price.

The closest grocery store to University Village is Fresh Thyme at 24 30th Ave SE. The Target in Dinkytown sells a limited amount of groceries. University Village may also run a shuttle throughout the year for residents going grocery shopping and completing other errands. Please ask the front desk staff for options.

Below are some of the affordable restaurant options nearby restaurants popular with students:

- **Dinkytown area**: Shuang Cheng (Chinese), Mesa Pizza, Burrito Loco, Qdoba (Mexican), Five Guys (hamburgers), Al’s Breakfast, Pagoda (Chinese), Jimmy John’s (cold sandwiches), Wally’s (Mediterranean), K-bop (Korean)

- **Stadium Village area**: Hong Kong Noodles, Naf Naf Grill (Middle Eastern), Punch Pizza, Afro Deli (East African), Bar Luchador (Tex-Mex)

- **West Bank**: Hard Times Cafe (Vegan and Vegetarian), Chipotle (Mexican), Campus Cafe (Turkish)

Please Note
international students have an additional layer of legal responsibility on campus.

It is important for you to remember that the legal drinking age in the U.S. is 21 years old. You will be asked to show an ID card with your birthday if you try to buy alcohol at a store or restaurant/bar (referred to as “being carded”). There are penalties for drinking if you are younger than 21, purchasing alcohol for younger students (if you are 21), or even being present where “minor” students are drinking. If you do receive a ticket from police regarding an alcohol violation, be sure to meet with Student Legal Services immediately.

You should not use marijuana while in the U.S. It is illegal in Minnesota. While some states have made it legal, there can be visa consequences if you are caught using or in possession of marijuana even if you traveled to a state where it is legal.
Transportation On or Near Campus
There are many transportation options for students on campus, and many people walk or bike.

Campus Buses
The University has five free Campus Shuttle system routes running Monday through Friday during the day and early evening between the Minneapolis West Bank, East Bank, and the St. Paul campus. There is also a weekend circulator service.

An inter-residence hall bus provides limited service during late evening hours and on the weekends between all eight residence halls as well as libraries, classroom buildings, sports complexes, and shopping areas at no cost.

Light Rail
There are three light rail stations on the Minneapolis campus (West Bank, East Bank, and Stadium Village). All students can get a free “Campus Zone Pass” that will allow you to travel between these stations. To get your pass, bring your U Card to the Information Desk in Coffman Union. This pass is only for the three stops listed above, and you should purchase a U-Pass if you want to travel off campus.

Walking
Many students use the “Gopher Way” when walking on campus (especially during winter months). These tunnels and skyways connect many buildings on campus, and they are open Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. A map of this network is on page 15. Security escorts are also available for those who wish to have someone walk with them across campus and to several nearby areas. Learn more at publicsafety.umn.edu/home/security.

Shuttle
The Gopher Chauffeur is a free late-night shuttle service that will drive students home safely, and it can be scheduled for pick-up. More information is available at z.umn.edu/gopherchauffeur.

Other Transportation Options
Taking the bus and light rail train around the Twin Cities is fairly quick and easy — it only takes 10 minutes to get to downtown Minneapolis from campus. More information, including a trip planner, is available at metrorail.org.

If you wish to use the bus or light rail train off campus, you can purchase a U-Pass for $100 per semester. You can use this card to take the bus and light rail 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The charge will be applied to your student account. Go to z.umn.edu/upass to order your pass.

A bike-share program (Nice Ride) has stations all over the Twin Cities, including on campus. These bikes are designed for short rides, and they can be rented for one trip or by annual subscription. Learn more at niceridemn.org.

Some students may wish to buy a bicycle to use on campus and around the Twin Cities (there are numerous bike trails within the city). There are several bicycle shops near campus.

The UMN’s ReUse Center has an auction of used bikes twice a year (learn more at reuse.umn.edu). A high-quality lock is recommended (for example, a U-bar or Kryptonite lock.)

Students with Disabilities
If you have a disability (i.e., visual, audio, mobility, learning, etc.), contact the Disability Resource Center at least two months prior to arrival so they can work with you to provide appropriate accommodations. You can learn more at diversity.umn.edu/disability.

Connecting with Other Students
ISSS offers programs to help international students connect with international and domestic students, learn about other cultures, and gain leadership experience.

For example, the International Buddy Program (IBP) pairs new international students with current students for mentorship. Registration is limited, so apply now at z.umn.edu/ibpumn.

You can learn about all of ISSS’s programs and events at isss.umn.edu/programs.

Want to be more involved? In addition to the programs organized by ISSS, there are more than 900 student groups at the University of Minnesota. Joining a student group is a great way to meet students with similar interests, make new friends, and become a student leader. Visit gopherlink.umn.edu to see a full directory of student groups.
HOUSING

All GPS exchange students who complete the on-campus housing application will be assigned a space in a University-managed apartment.

Students who complete an application/contract to live in campus housing must abide by the terms of the contract, which is legally binding. Students agreeing to live in the campus housing will be required to fulfill this contract, and any requests for an exception will be granted only with the formal review and approval of the Housing officials.

University housing does not officially have a “Fall Semester Only” option, so if you will be in Minnesota for only Fall Semester, you will still complete the application for the academic year. You will be able to complete a Contract Release Form during your stay that will allow you to terminate your housing contract ONLY if you are leaving the University. Students staying for the full academic year do not have the option to end their housing contract mid-year. The $25 Housing Application fee will be added to your first bill.

One of the unique features of University Village is that the University provides a housing contract that begins on August 15 and ends on May 31. This contract term does not require staying through the summer months and that flexibility is not typically offered in other non-university managed apartment facilities. The monthly/semester rate is somewhat higher as a result of the flexibility provided with this contract.

Housing Assignment
The housing office sends housing assignments directly to students’ UMN email accounts in early August. ISSS, therefore, does not have this information, and exchange staff cannot confirm your exact housing assignment or if a special request has been met, such as a single room. Unless you have requested a specific roommate, the housing staff will try to place you in a room with diverse roommates, who do not speak your native language.

If you are not satisfied with your housing assignment once you arrive, you can check with the housing staff and request that your name be put on a waiting list for a room transfer.

A private room costs approximately $900 more per semester than a shared room.

Off-Campus Housing
If you have chosen not to live in campus housing, you will need to find your own housing. The exchange staff does not assist with this. We strongly advise against entering into rental agreements with people unknown to you or for apartments you have not seen.

To learn more about off-campus housing, contact Housing and Residential Life at housing@umn.edu or housing.umn.edu/offcampus.

Temporary Housing
Students planning to live off-campus are encouraged to arrive early to start their search for an apartment. The rental housing market is usually very tight, especially at the start of a new school year. Students seeking a four- or nine-month lease and/or a furnished apartment may need to allocate extra time to their search.

Students arriving in the fall who will live off-campus can stay in the International Early Arrival Housing until August 25. It costs $26 a day, and this fee will be billed to your student account. You will be responsible for paying these charges when bills are due in mid-September.

You can make a reservation in advance at housing.umn.edu/international.

ORIENTATIONS
You must complete several orientations as an exchange student: 1) International Student Preparation Course, 2) Immigration Check-In, 3) Exchange Student Orientation, and 4) Meetings and/or advising sessions with your advisers. All of these orientations, except the International Student Preparation Course, will occur in-person.

ISSS is also working with offices across campus to plan Global Gopher Events in August and January. These activities will help you learn about the University of Minnesota and the surrounding area. A schedule will be posted at z.umn.edu/ggumn.

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY
If you scored below a 79 on the TOEFL, or a 6.5 on the IELTS, or reported a writing subscore below 21 TOEFL or 6.5 IELTS, you will not be able to register for classes until after you have met with staff in the Minnesota English Language program.
Bring a copy of your test results to MELP’s office in Nicholson Hall on the East Bank to determine if you will need to take the Minnesota Battery Test of English or register for an ESL course during your first semester. The test will take about 2.5 hours, and the cost is $30.

Most students have found it is better to take an ESL course, rather than trying to “test out” by taking the MN Battery Test, as they found that the courses enhanced their language proficiency for other courses.

**ACADEMICS**

At the University of Minnesota, like many American universities, students are able to choose from a wide variety of courses, even those located in departments outside their major. Exchange students often discover courses at the University that are not available at their home institution.

The UMN has more than 135 undergraduate majors, many ranked in the top 10 in their fields nationally.

**Course Information Prior to Arrival**

We are unable to confirm available classes prior to your arrival. You should refer to the University’s Search at [myu.umn.edu](http://myu.umn.edu) to gain a sense of what classes are offered in your areas of interest, and can see course titles and brief descriptions at [catalogs.umn.edu](http://catalogs.umn.edu). Note that not all courses are taught every semester.

**Academic Advising**

With all of the options available, exchange students often want to talk with an academic adviser about their class choices.

The first thing that is important to remember about academic advising is that you need to be primarily concerned with fulfilling the requirements of your home university. You should discuss your exchange carefully with the appropriate contact person at your home university and have a good idea of what types of courses you should be taking at the UMN before you arrive.

You should also determine with your home university whether they will count courses taken pass/fail or if you must receive a A-F grade.

**Prerequisites**

As you review course descriptions, some descriptions will include mentions of “Prerequisites” (written as “prereq” in the registration system). This term refers to a foundation course that must be taken before an advanced course (for example, a Fluid Mechanics course may have a prereq of Thermodynamics).

As the UMN’s system will not have a record all of the courses you have taken, you will be blocked from registering for courses that have prerequisites. Departments, however, can remove this block if you show you have the necessary foundational knowledge. To do this, bring a copy of your transcript and a description of the course you completed to the department’s office. If they agree that this course gave you the necessary knowledge, the department will give you a “permission number” to override the registration block. This permission number is time-sensitive and unique to you.

**Non-degree Seeking Status**

Unless you have been admitted formally into the Graduate or Undergraduate School to pursue a degree, you will be admitted to the University as a non-degree seeking student. As a non-degree seeking student, there will be restrictions on the courses available to you. The Academic Overview included with your acceptance packet provides information on these restrictions.
Because we cannot authorize exceptions, students need to be flexible regarding the classes they take.

**It is not possible to receive permission in advance to take upper-level courses, and we ask that you also do not contact faculty or departments in advance**, as they do not know the restrictions that apply to exchange students.

### Degree-Seeking Status

Students wishing to apply to become a degree-seeking graduate or undergraduate student must apply on their own through the Graduate or Undergraduate Admissions offices. This is a separate process from the exchange program, and the exchange staff cannot assist with this. Students who wish to enter a graduate degree program after their first semester on campus must speak with the exchange staff prior to registering.

The Graduate School has a special process that potential graduate students must complete to have any coursework apply to a future graduate program. This process may conflict with visa regulations in some cases, and transferring from non-degree seeking to degree-seeking within the U.S. is not allowed by the J-1 visa.

### Tuition Benefits

When specified by an agreement, exchange benefits provide tuition for 12-20 course credits per semester for those admitted as undergraduates. The minimum credit load for non-degree seeking undergraduates is 12, as regulated by the University and the U.S. State Department. There is no additional tuition charge for any credits over 12, but ISSS advises that exchange students do not take more than 16 credits per semester.

Tuition benefits for the exchange do not cover: 1) audited courses; 2) courses in the Professional Schools and other courses that have a special tuition rate; 3) special course fees (for example, music lessons, sports equipment, art supplies); or and 4) online “Unite” courses in the College of Science and Engineering. If you take classes of this sort, you are responsible for paying all tuition and fees incurred.

### Course Numbering System

The UMN classifies courses as 1000-, 2000-, 3000-, 4000-, 5000-, 6000-, or 8000-level. The 1000-level courses are introductory and are generally taken by first- and second-year students. The 3000- and 4000-level courses require some knowledge of the subject, so they are generally taken by third- and fourth-year students.

1000- and 3000-level courses often involve large lecture sessions, complemented by smaller discussions or labs (20-30 students). Lectures are usually taught by professors, while the labs and discussions are led by teaching assistants (advanced graduate students).

5000-level courses are graduate level, although advanced undergraduates with sufficient academic qualifications may take these. 8000-level courses are advanced graduate seminars and are not open to undergraduate or non-degree students. 6000-level business courses are not open to exchange students.

### Course Load and Evaluation

A normal course load is 12 to 16 credits for undergraduates and 6 to 9 credits for graduate. However, all non-degree students admitted in undergraduate status are required by immigration regulations to take a minimum of 12 credits each semester, regardless of the level of coursework they are taking. Exceptions to this rule must be authorized by ISSS.

The U.S. education system consists of frequent testing. Students should be prepared for an intense workload, and they should be cautious about taking too many classes or extracurricular activities in their first semester. In addition to the final examination, most classes will have a mid-term examination.

Weekly assignments and short essays or quizzes (short tests) are also common. Although many types of examinations are used, the most common exam format for 1000-level courses include multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. 3000- and 5000-level courses usually involve essay examinations, 8- to 15-page research papers, and projects or presentations. Working in groups with other students is also common.
Most courses at the UMN are two, three, or four credits. The number of credits is based on the number of hours spent in class each week. For example, a four-credit class will meet four hours per week. You should expect two to three hours of work outside of class (reading, doing assignments, etc.) for each hour spent in class.

Registration
You will register for courses after you arrive and submit your documents to ISSS during Immigration Check-In. You can register for courses online at myu.umn.edu or at the One Stop offices in 333 Bruininks Hall (East Bank), 130 West Bank Skyway (West Bank), or 130 Coffey Hall (St. Paul campus). (Note: Some departments require that students meet with an adviser before registering)

When you register, update your personal information on MyU (myu.umn.edu) to include your current address. You must also update your record on MyU if your address changes so the information will be accurately reported to SEVIS.

Please Note: Once you have registered for a course, you must attend the first day. If you are not able to attend a class, contact your professor before class to explain your absence.

When it comes to registering for your first semester on campus, it is important to have flexibility! Because you cannot register until you arrive, it is very likely that some of your preferred classes will already be filled (closed).

If a class you want to take is closed, call or go to the department, explain your situation, ask what you should do, and follow their advice. Above all, do not get discouraged without trying to get into a course. While many of the exchange students say that one or two of their first choice classes were closed when they registered, almost all of them were able to get in by following the departmental procedures.

Before the first week of classes, you will receive an online Fee Statement. This statement itemizes the tuition, fees, and other expenses billed to your student account. You must pay for any expenses not covered by your exchange program, and the GPS Alliance accounting staff will pay exchange benefits (see page 12 for more about paying your bills).

Canceling and Adding Classes
You may cancel or add classes in the first week of the semester with no penalty. You can change your registration online or at a One Stop office. You must change your registration in order to drop a class. You cannot simply stop attending the class.

Do not drop or add a class after the first week of the semester. If you find it necessary to do so, please consult with an exchange staff member.

Maintaining Status
Undergraduate students must maintain at least a 2.0 (C) average and graduate students must maintain a 3.0 (B) average each semester to remain in status and continue to receive exchange benefits.

In most cases, students can take courses pass/fail (S/N) rather than for a letter grade (A–F). Be aware, however, that it is not possible to receive a letter grade at a later date if you elect to take a class pass/fail. Check with your home institution about grade requirements in advance.

Transcripts
You will be given a Transcript Request Form to complete at your exchange orientation. This will ensure that a transcript is sent to your home institution upon completion of the program. You can expect a transcript to arrive at your home coordinator about two months after the term ends. If you wish to have a second transcript sent to you, request it online at myu.umn.edu.

Note: If you request a transcript directly from the Office of the Registrar before your grades have been posted, you will receive an incomplete transcript, as your request will be processed right away.

Want more advice? Read our International Student Ambassadors’ blogs to learn directly from current students about classes, finances, activities, and campus opportunities. The blogs are available at passport.umn.edu/ambassadors.
HEALTH CARE

Immunizations
All new students must complete the immunization form that was sent with your acceptance materials. This form must be submitted to Boynton Health Services within the first 45 days of your first term on campus. More about these requirements at z.umn.edu/intlhealth.

Health Insurance
All international students will automatically be enrolled and billed for the University’s Student Health Benefit Plan insurance for the entire duration of your stay in the U.S. This insurance covers office visits and hospital stays in the event of an accident or a severe illness, but health insurance in the U.S. does not cover dental care. Because this coverage is mandatory, students will be billed for this coverage even if they have medical insurance from their home country or another source. Enrollment for the plan costs approximately $1,100 per semester. Learn more at z.umn.edu/sthbp.

Do not buy health insurance in your home country for the exchange period if it is not required. You will be double insured if you do.

MONEY MATTERS

Student Accounts and Bills
The GPS Alliance will make arrangements to pay exchange benefits for the appropriate programs. However, you must pay any charges which are your responsibility (such as housing charges, special course fees, the cost of a bus pass, etc.) during the first week of classes and directly to the University to avoid being charged late fees.

Billing statements are emailed to every student before the first week of each semester. If you do not receive your statement at this time, your billing information can be accessed on MyU. It is your responsibility to pay any fees due by the deadline, even if you do not receive your bill. Payments will be due in the fall by the second week of class.

We recommend you check your bill to confirm that your program benefits have been correctly applied. As errors sometimes do occur, you want to be sure that you are being billed an accurate amount. Please contact the exchange staff if you find errors on your account.

Employment
International exchange students are eligible to work on-campus for up to 20 hours per week during the academic year.

You should not, however, rely on receiving a position to fund your stay in the U.S. In addition, most exchange students find the required course load (students must take a full load of classes) very challenging and sometimes overwhelming. Thus, we recommend that you do not rely on earning income during your first semester.

Working “on-campus” means that 1) you are employed by an office or organization of the University, and 2) you receive a check from the University’s central payroll office.

Most student jobs are posted online. Since most employers seek students to begin work immediately, we suggest that you wait until you arrive on campus before beginning your search.

Visa regulations do not allow you to work for a local restaurant or any other private organization.

Social Security Number
You will only need to apply for a Social Security Number if you will be working or receiving scholarship funds, as you cannot receive wages without one. To be eligible, you must first obtain an offer for an on-campus job.

You do not need to apply for a Social Security Number if you will not be working. More information regarding social security numbers will be given to you upon arrival.

Taxes and Payroll
Many countries have tax treaties with the United States allowing students and persons in certain other categories to receive salaries tax free up to a certain income level. If you will be working on campus, you will need to go to the UMN Payroll Office and complete payroll forms. Be certain to notify Payroll if your country has a tax treaty with the U.S. This will ensure that you do not have taxes taken out of your checks.

All students must file tax forms in the U.S. By filing, you may be able to receive a portion of your taxes back, if you earned below a certain income level. Tax periods are from January 1 to December 31.
Tax forms are available in January, and they must be filed in April for the previous year of taxes. If you are here for the academic year, you will need to file once in April, and you will file again from overseas for the last six months of your stay in the U.S.

ISSS will provide resources on filing taxes in February, but ISSS staff cannot provide tax advice.

WEATHER

The weather in Minnesota varies throughout the year. During the winter (December to February), temperatures as low as -20 degrees Fahrenheit (-29 degrees Celsius) are not uncommon, although the average winter temperature is 0 to 20 degrees Fahrenheit (-18 to -7 Celsius). Minnesota normally receives several feet of snow each winter as well.

During the summer (June to early September), the average daytime temperature is in the 70s Fahrenheit (mid-20 degrees Celsius), and the temperature can reach 90 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit (32 to 38 Celsius) with high humidity.

If you plan to be here over the winter, you should bring a very warm coat, scarf, hat, warm mittens, and snow boots. Of course, you can also purchase these items when you arrive.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Understanding Campus

The Twin Cities campus of the University is really two campuses: the Minneapolis campus (within ten minutes of downtown) and the St. Paul campus. The campuses are linked by a special bus system that is free of charge (see page 7 for more information).

The Minneapolis campus spans the Mississippi River, and the East and West Banks are connected by a double-decker bridge. The Carlson School of Management (CSOM), College of Liberal Arts (CLA), College of Design (CDes), and College of Science and Engineering (CSE) are all located on the Minneapolis campus. You will have less than a 20-minute walk to get from your apartment to anywhere on the campus. ISSS is located on the West Bank in 190 Humphrey.

The St. Paul campus is about three miles away (15 minutes by the campus bus). With 3,700 students enrolled in the College of Biological Sciences (CBS) and College of Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Sciences (CFANS), the campus has a “small college” atmosphere.

Nearby Neighborhoods

Dinkytown, touching the northwest edge of the East Bank, features cafes, coffee houses, restaurants, bookstores, and shops selling everything imaginable.

Stadium Village, on the southeast corner of the East Bank, is anchored by the University Hospital and TCF Bank Stadium. This is the neighborhood closest to University Village, the on-campus housing option for exchange students.

Cedar-Riverside, the neighborhood by the West Bank, is close to downtown, and it is home to theaters and music clubs, ethnic and vegetarian restaurants, and co-ops and cafes.

St. Anthony Park is the neighborhood most identified with the St. Paul campus. It is a community of shops and restaurants clustered about a half mile from campus, and it is easily connected to campus by the Green Line light rail.

Having Fun on Campus

With two student unions, more than 20 sports teams, major theaters and museums, and more than 900 student groups, there is always something happening on campus. Schedules are available at:

- All UMN Events: events.umn.edu
- ISSS Events: isss.umn.edu/calendar
- Student Group Directory: gopherlink.umn.edu

Students wanting exercise can go to the University’s Recreation Center (“Rec Center”) on the East Bank of the Minneapolis campus. This facility includes an Olympic-size pool, athletic equipment, gymnasiums, and classes in everything from swimming to weight lifting and aerobics. The St. Paul Gym, located on the St. Paul campus, is a similar, but smaller, facility. Both facilities are available to students at no cost during the academic year, but there is a small fee to rent a locker or take special classes. You can learn more at recwell.umn.edu.
THE TWIN CITIES

The Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul are viewed nationally as models of urban growth and vitality, with such “quality of life” indicators as air quality, job growth, and public safety comparing very favorably to other metropolitan areas.

They are Midwestern in the best sense of the word, offering the cultural sophistication of coastal cities like San Francisco and New York and the relaxed amiability and open spaces of small towns. “The Cities,” as they are known in Minnesota, have it all.

Lakes, Parks, and Outdoor Recreation

A huge park system runs throughout Minneapolis and St. Paul. It includes a network of parkways, waterways, walking and bicycle paths, nature trails, and cross-country ski trails. There are also hundreds of lakes in the metro area for boating, swimming, wind-surfing, and ice skating.

UMN Recreation and Wellness arranges small, affordable trips for hiking, camping, rock climbing, and more off campus, and students can rent ski and camping equipment at the Recreation Center (or purchase used equipment at their annual “Gear Sale”). More information is available at recwell.umn.edu/outdoor.

Music, Theater, Arts, and Sports

The Twin Cities is one of the main cultural destinations for the entire region. It is also home to a nationally recognized music scene (including two world-class orchestras), nearly 100 theater companies, and more theater seats per capita than anywhere in the U.S. outside New York.

Those wishing to see art can visit the Weisman Art Museum (located on campus), Minneapolis Institute of Art, Walker Art Center (including an acclaimed outdoor sculpture garden), and hundreds of privately-owned galleries.

Minnesota is also home to professional baseball, American football, hockey, soccer, and basketball teams.

IN THE WORDS OF ONE EXCHANGE STUDENT, “IT’S NOT A PROBLEM OF FINDING SOMETHING TO DO; IT’S A PROBLEM OF NOT HAVING ENOUGH TIME TO DO EVERYTHING!”
This is a map of the walking paths and “Gopher Way” tunnels on the Minneapolis campus. To see other maps of campus, go to campusmaps.umn.edu (interactive) or pts.umn.edu/maps (shuttle, walking, and transportation).