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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, so check isss.umn.edu/office/hours.html for updates.

International Student and Scholar Services
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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA CALENDAR

Fall Semester 2017
August 14-19 iSuccess pre-academic program (optional, fees apply)
August 15 University Village Housing Contract Begins
August 21 Recommended arrival date for exchange students needing to take an English Test or find off-campus housing
August 21-September 1 Global Gopher Events (optional)
August 24 Recommended arrival date for all other exchange students
August 29 International Exchange Student Orientation
September 4 Labor Day holiday (no classes, all UMN offices closed)
September 5 First day of classes
November 23-24 Thanksgiving holiday (no classes, all UMN offices closed)
December 13 Last day of instruction
December 14-21 Final examinations
December 22-January 15 Winter Break

Spring Semester 2018
January 8 Recommended arrival date for exchange students
January 10 International Exchange Student Orientation (tentative)
January 16 First day of classes
March 12-16 Spring break
May 4 Last day of instruction
May 7-12 Final examinations
May 12 End of term
OVERVIEW OF EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

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.

COMMUNICATION

Communication with ISSS
If you have questions, contact Deanne Silvera at silve025@umn.edu. Email communication is best.

After your arrival, please direct your questions to ISSS, 190 Humphrey School. ISSS will periodically send emails during the semester, informing you of upcoming events and issues relevant to international students.

Read the ISSS Weekly Update and follow ISSS on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (@isssumn).

Mailing packages
The UMN cannot accept boxes, so it is best to have boxes shipped after you have moved in.

After you have settled into your permanent housing, visit myu.umn.edu to update your personal information to include your current mailing address. Keeping this address current in University records is mandatory for SEVIS reporting for all international students. In addition, you should update any U.S. companies with whom you have accounts (including banks, airlines, and credit cards).

Email
All students will be assigned a University of Minnesota email account. You are responsible for knowing the communications sent to this account.

You will be able to use the computer labs on campus once you have registered for classes and received your University ID card (“U Card”). Residence Halls also have computers available for resident use.

VISA INFORMATION

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.
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.

ARRIVAL INFORMATION

Preparing to Come to the UMN
The University of Minnesota’s international student orientation is primarily online. All new exchange students must complete the International Student Preparation Course. This online program is designed to help you learn about your immigration status and prepare for success at the University of Minnesota. As part of it, you will also make a reservation for your Immigration Check-In.

You should complete the International Student Preparation Course prior to your arrival in Minnesota, and you must complete it at least 24 hours before your Immigration Check-In. In total, the program 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) rest for one or two days, 2) complete Immigration Check-In, 3) attend the Exchange Student Orientation Session, 4) meet with a departmental adviser, and 5) register for classes.

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 9 for more information).
If you want to participate in iSuccess, you should arrive sooner, too. To learn more about this pre-orientation academic program, see isss.umn.edu/programs/isuccess.

Transportation from the Airport
Most international students arrive to the Twin Cities at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport. The University of Minnesota operates a free airport shuttle called the Gopher Chauffeur from Monday, August 14, 2017 to Saturday, August 26, 2017. Go to z.umn.edu/airportrides to make a reservation.

The Gopher Chauffeur will arrive at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport every hour on the hour, and it will wait at the airport for 20 minutes before leaving for the University of Minnesota. After collecting your baggage from the baggage claim, follow the arrows on the overhead signs that lead to “TAXIS, LIMOS, VANS, and SHUTTLES” (see more detailed instructions at z.umn.edu/airportridesdir).

The Gopher Chauffeur operates two large vans. They both say Gopher Chauffeur and have a picture of Goldy Gopher, the University's mascot.

If you cannot take the Gopher Chauffeur, you may take a taxi, Super Shuttle, or public transportation. For more information about transportation options, see isss.umn.edu/new/transportation.html.

Where to Go
If you requested on-campus housing, you will receive a housing assignment directly from the University’s Housing Department via your UMN email by early August. Students arriving for spring semester should contact ISSS to determine which residence hall they should go to upon arrival. Please do not come directly to ISSS with your luggage, as it is a distance from your accommodations.

Students who will live off-campus during the fall may stay in the International Reception (IRC) while they look for housing. See page 9 for more information.

There is no cafeteria service before school begins, so students will need to visit local grocery stores or restaurants. See page 7 for a list of local restaurants.

Priorities Upon Arrival
After you arrive and settle into your temporary housing, please confirm the time of your Immigration Check-In through the International Student Preparation Course. During your appointment, staff will check your immigration documents and give you the date of your exchange student orientation, an arrival guide, and other important information.

Please bring originals and one copy of each of the following items with you to your Immigration Check-In session:
1. Passport
2. DS-2019 or I-20 form
3. Letter of admission to the University of Minnesota

Please see the To Do Checklist on the back of this book for a more complete listing of things to do once you have arrived.

Banking
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/issssbank 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 residence hall dining rooms.

Once you arrive on campus, 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.

Some students may receive information in the mail regarding the U Card’s Express Application Service. Since you may not have all the information they request at this time, it may be easiest for you to wait until you arrive to apply.

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 other 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 clothes and household items at a reduced price.

The Target in Dinkytown sells a limited amount of groceries. Rainbow Foods (1566 University Ave W, St. Paul, MN 55104) is a larger grocery store that is only a short light rail or bus trip from campus. To get there, get on the light rail train on the Green Line or the number 16A bus on the corner of Walnut Street and Washington Ave. S.E., going east towards St. Paul. You should get off in the Midway district, near Snelling Avenue.

University cafeterias will not be open when you arrive on campus. Below are some of the affordable 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

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

Please note 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”), and there are penalties for drinking if you are not 21.

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 also 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 (more information on page 8) 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 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 metrotransit.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 (e.g. U-bar or Kryptonite.) Any bike store will have books and maps of bike trails in the area.

Students with Disabilities
If you have a disability (i.e. visual, audio, mobility, learning, etc.), contact the exchange staff at least two months prior to arrival. The exchange staff will be able to work with Disability Resource Center 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 a 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.

HOUSING

All GPS exchange students who complete the on-campus housing application will be assigned a space in a University-managed apartment (you can disregard the information about on-campus housing in the Pre-Arrival Guide). The $25 Housing Application fee will be added to your first bill.

A single room costs approximately $900 more per semester than a double room. A shared room will be requested for you unless you request a single room.

Housing Assignment
The housing office sends housing assignments directly to students 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. If you are not satisfied with your housing assignment once you arrive, you can check with the residence hall reception staff and request that your name be put on a waiting list for a room transfer.

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.

Leaving Campus
At the end of your program, you will be required to vacate your apartment immediately after the last day of exams. If you wish to stay in Minneapolis longer, you will need to seek off-campus housing.

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, 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 by August 21 to start their search. 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 can stay in the International Reception Center (IRC) until August 27. It costs $24 a day to stay in the IRC, 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.

Please note:
- Only students can stay in the IRC; students traveling with others should find other housing.
- Students will be required to move out on August 27. Many leases do not start until the first of the month, so you may need to find other housing until September 1.

You must make a reservation in advance at [z.umn.edu/irchousing](http://z.umn.edu/irchousing).

**ORIENTATIONS**

You must complete several orientations as an exchange student: 1) The International Student Preparation Course, 2) Immigration Check-In, 3) The 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](http://z.umn.edu/ggumn).

**ENGLISH PROFICIENCY**

If you scored below a 79 on the Internet-based test on the TOEFL, a 6.5 on the IELTS, or a 21 on the TOEFL writing subscore, you must take the Minnesota Battery Test of English or register for an ESL course as determined upon arrival by advisors for the Minnesota English Language Program (MELP). The test will take about 2.5 hours, and the cost is $30.

You will not be able to register for classes until you have met with staff in the Minnesota English Language program to discuss this test.

Based on your placement test score, you may be required to take English as a Second Language (ESL) classes during your first (and possibly second) semester on campus.

Bring a copy of your TOEFL report when you meet with MELP’s staff upon arrival. They will be in the McNamara Center on the East Bank.

**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 you can see course titles and brief descriptions at [catalogs.umn.edu](http://catalogs.umn.edu). Please remember 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. Please bring an additional copy of your transcript and any relevant completed course descriptions with you when you arrive at the University of Minnesota.
Do not contact advisers or professors until you arrive on campus and meet with our staff. ISSS staff will identify academic advisers who will be able to meet with you once you arrive.

In addition, each department has a designated adviser or advising office. In the past, students have found it very helpful to meet with departmental advisers when planning their courses. It is important for students to understand that, in most cases, departmental academic advisers cannot create space in a “closed” class, and this person is not typically familiar with the degree requirements for your home university. Students should not expect that they will get access to a class because they need it for their home degree program.

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. Some courses will have prerequisites (courses that you should take prior to registering for the class). If you have already taken equivalent prerequisites at your home university, you may be able to take the course. If you are not sure, or if the permission of the instructor is required, you will need to check with the professor or department once you arrive on campus.

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 which 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 office. 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 or more 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; or 3) Special course fees (e.g. music lessons, sports equipment, art supplies). 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. You should not, however, expect to register for more than 16 credits per term.

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 exam, 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 for some reason, contact your professor before class to explain your absence. You must request an exception in advance if you will take fewer than 12 credits.

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.

After 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. 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.

**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. This more about these requirements at [z.umn.edu/intlhealth](http://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. 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 $1,000 per semester. Learn more at [z.umn.edu/sthbp](http://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 early move-in 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 during 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.

You are also responsible for your own telephone, utility, and other miscellaneous bills throughout your stay. Before you depart permanently at the end of the program, make arrangements to pay any outstanding bills. You will not receive a transcript of your work at the University of Minnesota if you have any outstanding bills.

**How to Pay**
You may pay for your bill through an automatic deduction or by a credit card (a 2.75% surcharge will be applied to do this).

International students can also pay their bills by using Flywire, a service that bypasses international transfer fees and accesses foreign exchange rates that are typically more favorable than those offered by banks.

After receiving your bill, log into MyU and select “International Payment” from the drop-down menu. You will need to create an additional account, so be sure to have your student ID and payer information.

Flywire, the international payment processor, provides multilingual customer support 24 hours a day if you have any questions. You may also contact ISSS if you have any issues or questions about making international payments. For more information, see [z.umn.edu/intlpay](http://z.umn.edu/intlpay).

**Bringing Cash or Checks When You Travel**
We recommend that students carry a minimal amount of cash on their person when travelling to the U.S. Once you have opened a bank account, you can have larger amounts wired to you, or you can do a cash withdrawal from your bank or credit card.

Be aware that you will be required to file a report with U.S. Customs if you carry more than $10,000 USD in cash or checks into the U.S. (read more in the “EXPENSES” section of the Pre-Arrival Guide).

**Employment**
International exchange students are eligible to work on-campus for up to 20 hours per week during the semester and 40 hours per week during official school breaks, according to the visa regulations.

You should not, however, rely on receiving a position...
to fund your stay in the U.S. In addition, most international 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. Visa regulations do not allow you to work for a local restaurant or any other private organization.

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.

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 a Social Security Card. Before applying, however, you must first obtain an on-campus job offer in order to be eligible. You do not need to apply for this 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 are not trained to 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 ski jacket or coat, scarf, hat, warm mittens, and snow boots. Of course, you can also purchase these items when you arrive. In September, May and June, students often wear shorts and T-shirts on the warm days.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
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.

The Minneapolis campus spans the Mississippi River, and the East and West Bank are connected by a double-decker bridge. The Carlson School of Management (CSOM), College of Liberal Arts (CLA), College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), 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 the University’s athletic facilities. 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 that are clustered about a half mile from campus, and there is a suburban area north of campus that has malls, multi-screen movie theaters, and restaurants.

**Having Fun on Campus**

With two student unions, more than 20 sports teams, major theaters and museums, and more than 800 student groups, there is always something happening on campus. Schedules are available at:

- All UMN Events: [events.umn.edu](http://events.umn.edu)
- ISSS Events: [isss.umn.edu/calendar](http://isss.umn.edu/calendar)
- Student Group Directory: [gopherlink.umn.edu](http://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](http://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](http://recwell.umn.edu/outdoor).

**Music, Theater, Film, and Arts**

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 Arts, Walker Art Center (including an acclaimed outdoor sculpture garden), and hundreds of privately-owned galleries.

**And More**

Minnesota has professional baseball, American football, hockey, soccer, and basketball teams; two zoos; night life, and the Mall of America (also called the “mega-mall”).

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**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!”**
Walking & Gopher Way Tunnel System

To see other maps of campus, go to campusmaps.umn.edu (interactive) or pts.umn.edu/maps (shuttle, walking, and transportation).
Prior to Arrival

- Complete the mandatory International Student Preparation Course, and make your Immigration Check-In reservation at isss.umn.edu/new/online.html.
- Use your DS-2019 or I-20 document to apply for a visa.
- Email your Arrival Information (flight date and time) at least three weeks prior to your scheduled arrival to Deanne Silvera (silve025@umn.edu).
- Complete your Student Immunization form, and return it to Boynton Health Center. This must be submitted within the first 45 days of your first term on campus.
- Bring an extra copy of your home institutional transcript and course descriptions to show to your academic adviser at the U.
- If you need temporary housing, make a reservation for International Reception Center (IRC) at z.umn.edu/irchousing.
- Read the International Student Ambassador blogs at passport.umn.edu.
- Register for iSuccess (optional, fees apply) at z.umn.edu/isuccess2.
- Sign up for the International Buddy Program (optional) at z.umn.edu/ibpumn.

Once on Campus

- Settle into your housing.
- Complete Immigration Check-In on the date you reserved while completing the International Student Preparation Course. Bring the original and a copy of your passport, DS-2019 or I-20 form, and your letter of admission to the UMN.
- Attend the Exchange Student Orientation Program. Complete the Transcript Request Form and Tuition Waiver paperwork (if necessary) and return these to an exchange student staff member.
- Take action to remove all holds listed on your record at myu.umn.edu, including taking an English exam (if necessary).
- Update your current mailing address and phone number at myu.umn.edu.
- Visit your department or an academic adviser to discuss the courses that interest you. You may need to receive special permission to register for some classes. Students in science, engineering, business, and those on the St. Paul campus are strongly encouraged to do this.
- Register for classes. You must register for classes prior to the beginning of each semester you are on campus. Contact the department if one of your preferred classes is closed to ask what you should do.
- Obtain your U Card (UMN student ID card).
- Open a bank account. A list of banks near campus is at z.umn.edu/isssbank.
- If you plan to work, apply for a Social Security Number after you have a job offer.
- Participate in the Global Gopher Events in August or January. A schedule will be posted at z.umn.edu/ggumn.

During Your Exchange

- Cancel or add any classes you choose by the end of the first week of the semester. To do this, you must make these changes on myu.umn.edu or at a One Stop Office.
- Check your UMN email account regularly, and read the ISSS Weekly Update.
- Be sure that the University always has your current local address by updating it on MyU.
- Pay any bills you owe each semester online (myu.umn.edu) or at the One Stop Office. Be sure to review your bill and pay by the deadline to avoid being charged late fees.
- Visit ISSS to get a Travel Signature if you will travel outside the U.S. and the Travel Signature on your visa document will be more than one year old when you return.
- Attend ISSS’s optional programs and events. Visit isss.umn.edu/programs for more.