Illinois State University

Pre-Arrival Information

Office of International Studies and Programs
Normal, Illinois
U.S.A.

Fall 2012
**Welcome to ISU!**

Congratulations on being admitted to Illinois State University as an international student! We look forward to welcoming you to our friendly campus and community.

Enclosed please find information to help you prepare for studying as an international student at ISU. Should you have any questions, please contact Kayla Carroll or Stephanie Gonzalez, who will be your international student advisors. They will be glad to assist you with immigration, cultural, academic and social matters.

**International Studies**

Please feel free to contact us.

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<tr>
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</table>

**TOPICS TO READ**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traveling to ISU</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Important Dates</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where We Are Located</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Traveling from Chicago to ISU</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tell Us Your Travel Plans</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Carrying Your Immigration Papers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having Access to Enough $</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation: August 13-18</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What Happens at Orientation?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living at ISU</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Your First Days Here</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Paying Your Housing Deposit</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What Is Provided in Your Room?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating at ISU</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meal Plans</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eating during Orientation Week</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health History Report</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Immunizations/Vaccinations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Health Insurance</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing Immigration</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Laws You Must Obey</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Classes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How Many Classes to Take?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Selecting Your Classes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What Is A Pre-requisite?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit Our Websites</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Information</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Traveling to ISU

Important Dates

Orientation programming for all new international students begins Monday, August 13. This means that you need to arrive in Bloomington-Normal on August 11 or 12.

Where We Are Located

Illinois State University is located in the central part of the United States, in the state of Illinois, and in the town of Normal. Our community is called Bloomington-Normal because the town of Normal and city of Bloomington sit next to each other.

Most people arrange their international flight plans so they land in our closest big city: Chicago, Illinois. ISU is a 3-hour drive south of the Chicago O'Hare and Midway International Airports. Once you arrive in Chicago, you will need to take a bus or another plane to Bloomington-Normal, Illinois. (Do not hire a taxi because it is extremely expensive!)

Traveling from Chicago to ISU

There are two easy ways that you may reach Bloomington-Normal from Chicago:

1. **FLY**: The Central Illinois Regional Airport (CIRA) is located in Bloomington, IL. It is a smaller airport, so you must take a connecting flight from a larger airport (like Chicago O’Hare). It takes about 30 minutes to fly from Chicago to Bloomington-Normal. CIRA is very close to the University and is only a few minutes from ISU.

CIRA is currently served by AirTran Airways, American Eagle, and Delta. You may access specific airline information on the Web at www.cira.com under “Airline Info.”

2. **TAKE A BUS**: When you fly to Chicago O’Hare Airport, you can take a Peoria Charter Bus to the Illinois State University. The Peoria Charter Bus runs between Illinois State University and Chicago O'Hare International Airport and Midway International Airport. The cost is around $30 and the trip takes about 3 hours.

Tell Us Your Travel Plans

While we are not able to meet students in Chicago, we do have a friendly group of volunteers who can meet you when you arrive in Bloomington-Normal.

When you know your travel plans, please email the following information to Kayla Carroll (klcarro@ilstu.edu):

- How you will arrive at ISU (bus or plane)
- The date and time you will arrive
- The airline and flight number

Carrying Your Immigration Papers

When traveling, be sure to carry your important papers (I-20/DS-2019, passport, visa, letters from ISU, I-94 card) with you. **Do not put them in suitcases that will be far away from you.** When you arrive in the U.S., you will need to find your documents quickly for Customs Officers.

Having Access to Enough $

We recommend that you have access to about $2,500 for your travels and your first days at ISU. This should cover unexpected hotel and food expenses. It will also help you to buy things when you first arrive (books, school supplies, bedding, things for your room, etc.). **Please be careful with your money when traveling.** It is a good idea to keep it hidden from view when possible.
Orientation August 13-18

What Happens at Orientation?

During orientation week, you will: meet other students, professors and members of the community; learn important information; tour the campus and community; receive immunizations; finalize class registration; get your student ID card and email account; buy books; go shopping; and open a bank account.

Monday and Tuesday, August 13 & 14: Check in with the Office of International Studies for Immigration purposes. Details on times and locations will be announced later.
Please bring the following items:
- Immigration documents: Passport, visa, I-94 card, I-20 form or DS-2019 form
- Check, money order, or cash to pay a $300 Housing Deposit (if you will live at ISU)

Tuesday and Wednesday, August 14 & 15: Attend formal presentations about classes, immigration, health care and insurance, banking, bills, employment, culture shock, safety, using iCampus, and much more!

Wednesday through Saturday, August 15-18: Attend Passages – the campus-wide orientation with all the U.S. students. Some special international events happen at this time, including -
- WELCOME POTLUCK is also a special part of orientation! There will be a welcome dinner on Wednesday evening (August 15) for all new international students. You will be able to meet people and win prizes!
- AMERICAN HOME VISITS meet a local family and have dinner at their house with other new international students.

Classes Begin on Monday, August 20!!!

Living at ISU

All students who graduated high school less than two years ago are required to live in a residence hall on campus. International students are encouraged to live in International House. International House (or “I-House”) located in Manchester Hall. It is a great way to meet many people and enjoy a variety of social and cultural events with Americans and other international students!

For questions regarding living in International House, email Matthew Schwab, mlschwa@ilstu.edu

If you are required to live on campus and no space is available, you may be placed in supplemental (temporary) housing in a residence hall lounge somewhere on campus.

Housing assignments for I-House are finalized in the summer and we will be sending you additional instructions at a later date.

Most graduate students and many upper level international students choose to live off campus but are invited to participate in I-House programs.

To search for an apartment off campus, please do the following:
1. Activate your University ID number (ULID) at https://secure.ilstu.edu/ulid/activate/
2. Read the Off-Campus Services information at http://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/students/get-help/off-campus-service/ and access the Off-Campus Housing Database
3. Apartments listed in this database are furnished with a bed, chair, table, etc., unless otherwise noted.
4. Most apartments rent for a full academic year (August to May). Subleasing (renting from a student, for example, mid-year) opportunities are also listed.
5. Web information includes the following:
   - Access to bus routes or walking distance from the apartment to campus is also noted on the data-base.
   - Sample leases (contracts to live in the apartment)
   - Additional utilities, such as gas, electricity, water, cable television service, etc.
6. Apartment managers will give instructions for garbage, gas, electricity, water and cable service installation when the lease is signed.

Your First Days Here

You will be able to move into your International House room in Manchester Hall on **Monday, August 13**.

If you arrive earlier than that, you will need to stay somewhere else. There are two alternatives: Stay in a hotel or with a local family.

1. **Stay in A Hotel**: If you prefer, you can reserve a room in a nearby hotel. To make your arrangements, please see a list of Bloomington-Normal hotels: www.bloomingtonnormalcvb.org

2. **Stay with an American Host Family for 1 or 2 nights**. If you are interested, please email John and Linda Berger at jwberger@ilstu.edu. The Bergers volunteer with our office and help students by picking them up at the airport or bus station, and by arranging for you to stay with a host family. **You must contact the Bergers directly to sign up for a host family. Be sure to contact them right away.**

Paying Your Housing Deposit

If you will live on campus, you **DO NOT NEED TO complete a Housing application or pay anything before you arrive. Instead, you will do this during ORIENTATION.**

On your first day of orientation, you will sign a housing contract, select a meal plan, and pay a **$300 housing deposit.**

What Is Provided in Your Room?

The University supplies a desk, chair, dresser, closet, study light, draperies, a bed, and mattress (36” wide x 80” long x 6” deep) for your on-campus room. Live phone and computer jacks and free local phone service are provided in all residence halls.

Each residence hall floor has a microwave and bathrooms with showers and toilets. On floors with male and female residents, there are separate bathrooms. ATM machines, fitness centers (with Universal and/or Nautilus gyms and free weights), resource centers (quiet study areas with reference books), music/piano practice rooms, and laundry facilities are located in each area of campus.

Eating at ISU

Meal Plans

There are five meal plan options for students living in the residence halls ranging in price from around $1943 to $2220 per semester. This includes meals at on-campus restaurants, coffee shops and vending machines. You will learn more about meal plan options during Orientation.

Students living off campus may also purchase a meal plan for when they are on campus. Off campus meal plans range in price from $349 to $2117 per semester. [Link to meal plan options]

You will choose a meal plan **AFTER** you arrive at ISU during ORIENTATION. **You DO NOT NEED TO order your meal plan or pay for it before you arrive at ISU.**

Eating during Orientation Week

A welcome dinner will be provided Wednesday, August 15 of orientation week, but you will need to buy most of your meals off campus until the campus dining centers open. There are restaurants and shops close to I-House for your convenience.
Health History Report

Immunizations/Vaccinations

All students admitted to ISU are required to show that they have received immunizations/vaccinations for tetanus, diphtheria, measles, mumps, and rubella.

International students must also have a 
tuberculosis test (TB) when they arrive at ISU. The cost of this test will be about $70. You can find immunization information at:

http://www.shs.ilstu.edu/immunization/

- If you cannot prove that you have had immunizations, you must have them at ISU when you arrive. There is a small fee.
- If you have not had your immunizations by your second week of classes, you will also need to pay a penalty fee and you will not be able to register for future classes.
- For Tuberculosis, you must be tested within 10 days of your arrival to prevent a late fee. You will learn more about this during Orientation.

Health Insurance

Students enrolled full-time will automatically be charged for Illinois State University’s student health insurance. ISU insurance costs about $200 each semester and offers excellent worldwide coverage. If you would like to read more about ISU’s insurance please visit: www.shs.ilstu.edu/insurance/

Knowing Immigration Laws You Must Obey

You might be surprised to learn that while you attend an American university, you must know and obey some federal Immigration laws. The Government expects you to take this very seriously. It will be in your best interest to have a good “relationship” with the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security and State. Not obeying the laws can mean the cancellation of your visa and study program!

Here are the laws you must obey:

● ACTIVITIES –
  Your main objective is to attend classes and you must attend them regularly.
  - Undergraduate students must be enrolled for at least 12 credit hours each semester.
  - Graduate students must take at least 9 hours.
  - NEVER drop/quit a class without first receiving written permission from International Studies.

● IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS –
  Don’t let your passport, I-94 card, or I-20 form expire!

● HEALTH INSURANCE –
  All F-1 students are highly recommended to purchase health insurance from ISU. This health insurance meets all of the federal requirements for other immigration statuses.

● WORKING IN THE U.S. –
  International students are allowed to work up to 20 hours each week, at the university only. You are not permitted to work for a company outside of the university.

● CHANGE OF ADDRESS/NAME –
  If you should happen to move, you must report your new address to U.S. Immigration within 10 days. You can contact International Studies for more information and assistance.

● WHEN TO ENTER THE U.S. AND WHEN TO LEAVE –
  Your I-20 form (if you have the F-1 visa) or your DS-2019 (if you have the J-1 visa) shows a “Begin” date and an “End” date.
  - You may enter the U.S. up to 30 days before your begin date.
  - When your study program ends, you have 60 days (F-1 visa) or 30 days (J-1) after your end date for vacationing in the U.S. This is called a “grace period.” Be sure to leave by the 60th or 30th day after your end date, or you may have difficulty returning to the U.S. in the future.

Your advisors at Illinois State want you to have a successful stay and we will help you to the best of our abilities. However, it is your responsibility to know the Immigration laws and to obey them.

If you have any questions, please feel free to talk to an Immigration advisor in the International Studies Office.
Your Classes

When you arrive at ISU you will be assigned an academic advisor who will help you arrange your class schedule. The academic advisor is the person who can decide whether you are eligible to take the classes you request.

There are several factors that can influence being able to take a class:
- Whether or not the class is already full
- Whether some classes are limited to students in a certain major
- Whether you have the necessary background knowledge (prerequisites) to take a course

How Many Classes to Take?

Immigration law states that international students must be enrolled “full-time.” Undergraduate students must take at least 12 credit hours per semester, and graduate students need to enroll in at least 9 credit hours. International students are often surprised by the large amount of homework, tests, reports and group projects due for each class. They may also find studying in English is more difficult than expected. It can take time to adjust to the American education system. For these reasons, we recommend that new students take no more than 12 credit hours (about 4 classes) in their first semester. At ISU, this represents a very busy schedule!

Selecting Your Classes

For classes offered at ISU, please see the Undergraduate Catalog and the Graduate Catalog. Please note that classes in the catalog may not be available every semester.

When you look at the classes you want to take, you must pay attention to the Course NUMBER of each class. The number helps you know how difficult the class might be. The higher the number, the more difficult the class and the better your English skills must be.

At ISU, courses are numbered like this:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>100-Level Courses</th>
<th>Are for 1st and 2nd year students</th>
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<tr>
<td>200-Level Courses</td>
<td>Are for 3rd and 4th year students</td>
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<td>300- and 400-level Courses</td>
<td>Are for 4th year and graduate students</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What Is A Prerequisite?

When academic advisors are considering your requests, they want to be sure you have the necessary background knowledge. A “prerequisite” is a course that must be taken before another course may be taken. For example, if you want to take “Accounting 200,” you must have already taken “Accounting 100”.

Weather

The Midwest (or middle area of the United States) experiences extreme weather. In the winter, it is very cold and the summers are very hot.

When you arrive in August, you can expect that it will be very warm outside (perhaps around 35 Celsius). Be sure to bring a variety of clothes so you can be ready for any type of weather! Students tend to dress casually for class.

Visit Our Websites!

For the University’s Main Page:
http://illinoisstate.edu/

For International Students:
http://internationalstudies.illinoisstate.edu/students/

Contact Information

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