

**HAMPDEN-  
SYDNEY  
COLLEGE**



# **INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK**

Office of Global Education and Study Abroad  
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January 07, 2011



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# Hampden-Sydney College

*Please read the statement below, sign, and submit the form to Mary Cooper, Director of Global Education and Study Abroad.*

I have read Hampden-Sydney College's International Student Handbook. In addition, I understand the policies outlined in this Handbook and know that I can always contact the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad if I have any questions or need help relating to any of these policies.

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Please print name here

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Signature

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Date



# Hampden-Sydney College

*The Office of Global Education and Study Abroad assists foreign students with orientation, acculturation, visa and I-20 matters, as necessary and other issues pertaining to government policies and procedures. The Director of Global Education is the Primary Designated School Official (PDSO) and is responsible for maintaining information in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System—SEVIS.*

*The Office of Global Education and Study Abroad also assists faculty and students with the development of study abroad opportunities, including May Term and semester and year abroad programs.*

# Hampden-Sydney College

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## International Student Handbook 2010

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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Welcome to Hampden-Sydney College. We are pleased you have chosen H-SC. Our faculty and staff are here to help you with your transition into the College community and to the United States. The Office of Global Education and Study Abroad oversees both the incoming international student program including the maintenance of SEVIS records, study abroad programs, and faculty led May Term abroad programs. Our mission is to provide a range of services and programs that support the academic mission of the college and the principles of international educational exchange that enhances the learning environment.

In addition to academic coursework, H-SC provides a variety of services and enrichment activities for you throughout your academic career in the following areas: academic support, immigration advising, cross-cultural experiences, and assistance with other problems. Should you be in need of any of these services, or would like to chat, please do not hesitate to come by my office.

Hampden-Sydney College is an exciting campus community filled with unique and challenging academic areas as well as many student learning opportunities to help you develop the skills necessary to become “Good Men and Good Citizens” in tomorrow’s society. I encourage you to make use of the resources and services which have been established to assist you. Take time to read through this material. This handbook will serve as a resource for on-campus services and as a guide to help you learn more about life in the United States.

We hope that your stay at H-SC is a happy and productive one.

Mary Cooper  
Director, Global Education and Study Abroad  
Bagby Hall Room 315  
Phone 434-223-6311 Fax 434-223-6347  
Email: [mcooper@hsc.edu](mailto:mcooper@hsc.edu)

## **THE OFFICE OF GLOBAL EDUCATION AND STUDY ABROAD**

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During your time here, any questions pertaining to visas, I-20s, and other immigration issues, should be discussed with a designated school official. Others on campus might be familiar with immigration related issues; however designated school officials (DSO) will have access to the most up to date information.

Mary Cooper, Director of Global Education and Study Abroad, is the Primary Designated School Official (PDSO) for matters pertaining to the Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), which is the monitoring system for foreign students in the United States. Any change in your student status, such as change of major, change of address, or reducing your course load below 12 credits, must be reported to the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad. Please read the information contained in this booklet to avoid the possibility falling out of status.

The Office of Global Education and Study Abroad  
Bagby Hall, Third Floor, Room 315  
Phone 434-223-6311  
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There are two other Designated School Officials on campus: Jason Ferguson, Director of Admissions, and Katherine Stratton, Global Education Assistant. They are authorized to sign the I-20 form for travel outside the United States.

Jason Ferguson, Director of Admissions  
Graham Hall, 103  
Phone 434-223-6327  
Email: [jferguson@hsc.edu](mailto:jferguson@hsc.edu)

Katherine Stratton, Global Education Assistant  
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## I. IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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### F-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT REGULATIONS

#### **Maintaining Status:**

The following section provides general SEVIS information. If you have questions regarding your status, please contact the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad. Please do not rely on friends, professors or staff in your academic department for advice on immigration matters. While many people are well-intentioned, they usually do not know all of the regulations pertaining to your immigration status and situation. Following such advice may jeopardize your legal status in the U.S. or may cause you to lose opportunities available to you.

Please Note: U.S. Immigration regulations can change frequently. Always check with the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad before traveling out of the U.S., transferring to another school, considering employment, completion of your studies, or any other immigration matter. Detailed information can also be found at the Department of State website:

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa\\_1750.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html)

#### **Definition of F-1 Status**

An F-1 visa and F-1 student status may be granted to an alien “who is a bona fide student qualified to pursue a full course of study” at an academic or language institution authorized to admit international students. When applying for an F-1 visa, the individual must prove to a U.S. consular official that he or she wishes to enter the United States temporarily and solely for the purpose of study and that the applicant has a permanent residence in a foreign country which he/she does not intend to abandon. You must present your I-20 form from the U.S. institution you wish to attend along with other documents.

**Note:** Although the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad is here to assist you, it is your responsibility to maintain your immigration status by familiarizing yourself with the regulations that govern it. Failure to comply with these regulations will result in the loss of your student status and may subject you to deportation. Please see Appendix I for the SEVIS Fact Sheet on maintaining status.

### IMPORTANT TERMS AND POLICIES

**I-20:** This form issued by Hampden-Sydney College is needed to apply for your F-1 visa and enter the United States, or to transfer from another U.S. institution to Hampden-Sydney College. Page (1) of your SEVIS I-20 should be stamped and marked D/S F-1 by the Immigration Officer at your port of entry and returned to you is a permanent record of your immigration status. Keep it with you at all times while you are in the U.S. Do not surrender this document when you leave the U.S. because it will be required for entry into this country when you return.

**Important:** Keep copies of all I-20s that have been issued to you as these documents must be submitted with various USCIS applications for optional or curricular practical training, or change of status applications.

**I-94:** This is the 3” x 4” white card stapled in your passport near your visa when you entered the U.S. It shows the date and place of your most recent U.S. entry and is used by the USCIS as a record of when you leave the U.S. This is surrendered to USCIS or an airline employee each time you leave the U.S.

**“D/S”:** This notation on your I-94 stands for “Duration of Status.” This means that you have been admitted to the United States for the period during which you are pursuing a full course of study with a valid SEVIS I-20 plus a 60-day period within which you must depart the U.S. or begin employment as Optional Practical Training.

**Designated School Official (DSO) or Primary Designated School Official (PDSO):** This is the individual whose name is typed in item #2 of the SEVIS I-20 and whose signature can be found on item #10 of the SEVIS I-20. The DSO at Hampden-Sydney College is authorized to issue the initial SEVIS I-20, the PDSO is authorized to approve or recommend approval of requests made by students with F-1 status (such as OPT, change of status, or extension of program date). Either a DSO or PDSO can sign the I-20 for travel.

**H-SC Scholarship Regulations:** International Honors Scholars may not use their institutional funding to study abroad. College sponsored grants and scholarships are limited to 8 semesters and require full-time enrollment.

**Passport:** This document was probably issued by your country of foreign residence. Your passport is extremely valuable, so keep it in a safe place. Replacement and renewal can be done through your country’s embassy in Washington, D.C. A passport must be kept valid for up to six months after your intended stay in the U.S.

**SEVIS ID Number:** This is the 11-digit number assigned to you by USCIS. It is on the I-94 you received when you first entered the U.S. You will keep this same number throughout your time as a student in the U.S.

**Social Security Number:** This important tax identification number is required of all employees in the U.S. An application and information on how/where to apply is available from the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad.

**USCIS:** The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services is a branch of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the government office which has authority over all aliens in the United States.

**Visa:** This is the entry permit stamped or affixed to a page inside your passport by the U.S. consular officer. It is only used to enter the U.S. and does not need to be renewed while you are in this country; however, an expired visa must be renewed if you go outside the U.S. and seek to return. A new visa can only be obtained outside the U.S.

## **IMMIGRATION REQUIREMENTS FOR F-1 STUDENTS**

### **Address Change**

You must report any address change, including dorm assignments to the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad within ten days of the change. Failure to do so could result in loss of F-1 status.

### **Course Load**

USCIS regulation state that students in F-1 status must maintain a full course of study, which at Hampden-Sydney College is at least 12 semester hours, except in the following circumstances:

- during official school breaks and summer vacations if the student is eligible and intends to register for the next term;
- if the student needs less than a full course of study to complete the academic requirements in his final term;
- if the student is participating in authorized Optional Practical Training.

In all circumstances, permission for a reduction in course load to drop below full-time status must be approved by the Primary Designated School Official (PDSO).

### **Employment**

A student must maintain F-1 status for one academic year (2 semesters) before he can request off-campus employment authorization. However, on-campus employment may begin immediately upon matriculation at Hampden-Sydney College after receipt of a social security number. The student must make all requests for off-campus employment authorization in writing to the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad. Approval and/or recommendation of employment must be approved in SEVIS by the PDSO before employment can begin.

### **Employment options available to students with F-1 status:**

- 1. On-Campus Employment** A job on campus may be authorized for 20 hours per week while class is in session and full time during College vacation periods. It is the student's responsibility to find on-campus employment by looking for postings on bulletin boards, around campus and talking with College staff. Once on-campus employment has been found, you must advise the PDSO of the job's location, your supervisor and the number of hours of employment per week. If you work more than 20 hours per week at any time while class is in session, you will be considered out of status and could face deportation.
- 2. Curricular Practical Training (CPT)** This off-campus employment is normally, although not limited to, a paid or unpaid internship for students who:
  - Have been enrolled full-time in F-1 immigration status for at least one academic year.
  - Are in good academic standing with Hampden-Sydney College.
  - Are required to take an internship (with or without receiving academic credit) as an integral part of their degree program.

There is no limit on the amount of part-time CPT you can receive, as long as it meets the above requirements. However, if you complete one year of full-time CPT, you will be ineligible of Optional Practical Training (during or after completion of your degree program). Part-time CPT does not affect your eligibility for optional Practical Training.

**Note:** You must have been already offered specific employment in order to apply for Curricular Practical Training.

When approved for CPT, the PDSO will endorse your SEVIS I-20. All requests for extension of CPT or for a change of employer require a new application. Please allow 30 business days for processing of your CPT application by the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad. You cannot begin employment without proper authorization.

- 3. Optional Practical Training (OPT)** this off-campus employment is directly related to a student's degree, but is not part of the academic curriculum. Students in F-1 Status may receive up to 12 months Optional Practical Training if:
- You have been enrolled full-time in F-1 status for at least one academic year.
  - You are in good academic standing with Hampden-Sydney College.
  - You are applying for training to begin during a vacation period, after finishing a degree, or in the time period between completing coursework and finishing your thesis or dissertation.

Students who receive a degree in a STEM discipline may apply for a 17 month OPT extension. STEM disciplines are in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Please see Appendix II for more information on the 17 month extension.

If you choose to apply for Pre-Completion OPT, OPT while you are still in classes, you can work no more than 20 hours per week while school is in session. You may work full-time during College vacations, holidays, or after completion of your degree program.

Approval for OPT comes from USCIS in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Once all application materials have been presented to the Office of International Studies, your SEVIS I-20 will be endorsed through SEVIS, and all application materials will be sent to the appropriate USCIS office.

It can take three to four months for USCIS approval and to receive EAD, employment authorization document. It is recommended that an OPT application be submitted to the Office of Global Education 3 months prior to the expected start date of employment. You cannot begin employment without an EAD. Please see the OPT Fact Sheet on page 15.

**4. Off-Campus Employment Due to Severe Economic Hardship**

USCIS may grant students who have a severe, unforeseen change in their financial circumstances permission to work off campus. To qualify for this permission, you must meet the following requirements:

- You must have been enrolled with F-1 status for at least one academic year.
- You must be in good academic standing at Hampden-Sydney College.
- You are enrolled in a full course load and can prove that your employment will not interfere with your studies.
- Your sponsor listed on your SEVIS I-20 is unable to provide you the guaranteed support due to unforeseen circumstances (such as death, severe illness, loss of a job, etc.).
- You have not been able to find sufficient employment on campus.

Under no circumstances may you begin employment without the proper authorization from the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad and/or USCIS, or without a social security number. It is important that you keep the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad informed of all changes in your job location and phone number.

### **IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT EMPLOYMENT**

**Employment:** the rendering of services on either a part-time or full-time basis for compensation, financial or otherwise, including self-employment.

- To be paid for employment, you must obtain a Social Security number from the Social Security Administration. (See Appendix III)
- All international students may work on campus without further permission from USCIS. On-Campus work is limited to 20 hours per week while school is in session and 40 hours per week during school breaks (i.e. Christmas and summer). Students who work more hours than authorized do not maintain legal status and will jeopardize future work authorization.
- The Office of Global Education and Study Abroad must be notified by students of all employment. Please visit the office or call 434-223-6311 or e-mail [mcooper@hsc.edu](mailto:mcooper@hsc.edu).
- Permission for off-campus employment under several different categories is only available to students who have maintained F-1 status for at least one academic year.
- After one academic year in student status, F-1 students may apply for employment due to economic hardship, Curricular Practical Training (internship), or Optional Practical Training (practical experience, usually after graduation but may be taken before under certain circumstances). Some applications require a fee.
- Under no circumstances are individuals with F-2 immigration status authorized to work in the United States. There are no exceptions.
- Applications for CPT off-campus employment authorization should be filed with the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad 30 days before the date employment is to begin

### **ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT**

F-1 students are eligible to work on campus without special authorization but can only work a maximum of 20 hours per week during the semester or full-time during vacation periods. It is your responsibility to find your on-campus job which could include the following employment categories: part-time, permanent, temporary, or Research Assistant.

### **Where to Look for Job Openings**

- Human Resources
- Check with professors directly
- Ask around the different College offices

### **Aramark Dining Services**

Hampden-Sydney College has a contract with dining hall services; therefore, a job with Aramark is considered on-campus employment. For a listing of jobs available, check with the Aramark offices in Settle Hall.

### **Documents Required for Employment**

- Employment application (available from Human Resources Office)
- Social Security card (see the Human Resources Office for procedures)
- I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification (distributed by Human Resources)
- W-4 Tax Withholding Certificate (distributed by Human Resources)
- State Tax Withholding Certificated (distributed by Human Resources)
- I-94 Card
- SEVIS I-20
- Passport

## **TAX EXEMPTIONS**

F-1 students do not have to pay Social Security or Medicare taxes. If you find that Hampden-Sydney College is withholding money from your paycheck for these taxes, please notify the Business Office immediately. If an off-campus employer is withholding for Social Security and/or Medicare, contact your employer.

## **TAX TREATIES**

The U.S. has income tax treaties with a number of foreign countries. Under these treaties, residents (not necessarily citizens) of foreign countries are taxed at a reduced rate or are exempt from U.S. income taxes on certain items of income they receive from sources within the U.S. The following countries currently have tax treaties with the U.S.:

Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Moldova, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, Trinidad, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States Model, Uzbekistan, and Venezuela.

To inquire about whether you can claim a tax treaty, please contact the Human Resources Office immediately after receiving any employment. You will need to complete a special form in order to claim the treaty and have the treaty amount reflected in your pay.

## **APPLYING FOR F-1 CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING**

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) allows you to work off campus under a paid or unpaid internship program, or other employment approved by your academic advisor.

### **To qualify for CPT:**

- The work must be directly related to your major field of study.
- You must have been in lawful F-1 status for one academic year.
- You must be in good academic standing with Hampden-Sydney College.
- Submit the following documentation:
  - You must provide the location of the internship and the duties you will perform, the beginning and end dates of the internship, and the total hours per week.
  - A letter from your academic advisor (see sample below)
  - A letter from your employer on company letterhead (see example below)

The Office of Global Education and Study Abroad will review all documents and if appropriate, will authorize CPT in SEVIS. USCIS authorization is not required. Once your new SEVIS I-20 has been signed and returned to you, you may begin the employment for the dates authorized.

**Note:** You must file a separate application for each change of employer, extension or new period of CPT.

## **CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING SAMPLE FACULTY ADVISOR LETTER**

(Date)

To The Office of Global Education and Study Abroad:

(Student's Name), a student at Hampden-Sydney College, has been approved for an internship during the (Fall/Spring/Summer) semester(s). He will be working at (Company/Organization Name) from (Date) through (Date).

In compliance with USCIS regulations, the student is undertaking this training experience as a required part of his program or as an integral part of his studies, and he will be receiving (number) semester hour(s) of credit.

Sincerely,  
(Signature)

(Printed Name)

**CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING  
SAMPLE PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYER LETTER**

(Date)

To The Office of Global Education and Study Abroad:

This letter is being written in connection with the application of (Student's Name) for Curricular Practical Training.

(Student's Name) will be employed by (Company/Organization Name) as a (Job Title). This period of employment will begin on (Date) and end on (Date).

(Student's Name) will be responsible for the following duties: (Give a brief job description).

This or any offer of employment is contingent upon this student's ability to obtain and demonstrate the proper authorization to work.

Sincerely,  
(Signature)

(Printed Name)  
(Title)

## **OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING FACT SHEET**

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is off-campus employment that is directly related to a student's degree, but is not part of the academic curriculum. OPT allows students to gain experience through employment in his or her field of study. Its purpose is to "round off" or complement your academic work. OPT is most often done after completion of your degree program, but it can be done during your degree program as well.

Students in F-1 status may receive up to 12 months Optional Practical Training if:

- You have been enrolled full-time in F-1 status for at least one academic year.
- You are in good academic standing with Hampden-Sydney College.
- You are applying for training to begin during a vacation period, after finishing a degree, or in the time period between completing coursework and finishing your thesis or dissertation.

Students who receive a degree in a STEM discipline may apply for a 17 month OPT extension. STEM disciplines are in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Please see Appendix II for more information on the 17 month extension.

If you choose to apply for Pre-Completion OPT, OPT while you are still in classes, you can work no more than 20 hours per week while school is in session. You may work full-time during College vacations, holidays, or after completion of your degree program. Full time pre-completion OPT may reduce the amount of time eligible for post-completion OPT.

Approval for OPT comes from USCIS in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Once all application materials have been presented to the Office of International Studies, your SEVIS I-20 will be endorsed through SEVIS, and all application materials will be sent to the appropriate USCIS office.

It can take three to four months for USCIS approval and to receive an EAD, employment authorization document. It is recommended that an OPT application be submitted to the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad 3 months prior to the expected start date of employment. You cannot begin employment without an EAD.

To apply for OPT, submit the following to USCIS:

- Copy of new I-20 recommending OPT along with copies of all previous I-20s.
- I-765 form (Note: Item 16 should be marked (C) (3) (A) – pre-completions OPT or (C) (3) (B) – post-completion OPT).
- 2 passport-style photos
- Copy of your I-94 white card (front and back).
- Copy of the most up-to-date Passport ID-page and F-1 visa pages (clean photo).
- \$380 check or money order (Made payable to USCIS).

The PDSO will review and finalize all documents and mail your application to the USCIS Service Center.

Your permission to begin OPT is not final until you have received an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from the USCIS in the mail. You can begin work on the date stated on the EAD, but not before. Do not begin working without the EAD.

**\*Important.** Throughout your OPT you must contact the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad within 10 days of any change including:

- change of employer and employer address
- any periods of unemployment
- change of address
- change of e-mail address

**PRE-COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING  
SAMPLE LETTER FOR ACADEMIC ADVISOR**

Date:

To: Office of Global Education and Study Abroad

As academic advisor for (Student's name) at Hampden-Sydney College, the student (will be completing/has completed) his degree program on (date).

The student is now applying for a period of Optional Practical Training. This training would be most valuable to the student in his career by providing actual practical experience to supplement his studies.

The following is a brief but specific explanation of the types of training the student is seeking:

It is my hope that you will grant this student permission to undertake this period of Optional Practical Training. If there is any further information which I can furnish to aid in this regard, please let me know.

Sincerely,  
(Signature)

(Printed name)  
(Academic Title)

## **ECONOMIC HARDSHIP EMPLOYMENT**

This employment authorization is given only if you can prove severe economic hardship due to unforeseen circumstances beyond your control, such as substantial fluctuations in the value or currency or exchange rate in the country from which you receive support, unexpected changes in the financial condition of your sponsor(s), medical bills, or other substantial and unexpected expenses.

To qualify for Economic Hardship:

- You must have actively searched for on-campus employment and been unsuccessful.
- You must have been in lawful F-1 status for one academic year.
- You must be in good academic standing at Hampden-Sydney College.
- You are currently enrolled in full-time studies (and employment will not keep you from being a full-time student).

To apply for Economic Hardship, you must submit to the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad:

- A written explanation of the nature and cause of the financial difficulty (Be specific; this will be presented to USCIS.)
- Your current budget showing income and expenses.
- I-765 form (Note: Item 17 should be marked (c) (3) (iii)).
- I-765 signature card (Sign inside blue box. No fingerprint is required.)
- 2 photos (see instructions for specific photo size)
- Original SEVIS I-20 Student Copy with all signatures.
- Copy of most recent Passport ID pages, Visa pages and I-94 white card (front & back).
- Check or money order for appropriate fee (Make payable to USCIS)
- Copy of EAD if you had previous work permission (front and back.)

The Office of Global Education and Study Abroad will finalize all documents, make photocopies, and mail your application to the USCIS Service Center by first class mail. (If you wish to use a faster mail service, you may mail it yourself.) The Office of Global Education and Study Abroad will return your SEVIS I-20 to you.

If the USCIS approves your application, you will receive an “Employment Authorization Document” (EAD) from USCIS in the mail. You can begin working on the date stated on the EAD, but not before. Do not begin working without the EAD.

You can work no more than 20 hours per week while school is in session. You may work 40 hours per week during vacation periods.

## **F-1 EXTENSION OF STAY**

You may request an extension of your SEVIS I-20, thereby extending your F-1 status in the U.S., if your degree program or authorized employment extends beyond the completion date on your SEVIS I-20.

To qualify for an SEVIS I-20 extension:

- You must be maintaining legal F-1 status.
- You must be in good academic standing at Hampden-Sydney College.
- You must be actively progressing toward completion of a degree program.

To apply for an SEVIS I-20 extension, you must submit the following to the Office of International Studies at least 30 days prior to the expiration of your current SEVIS I-20:

- A letter from your academic advisor (see sample)

The Office of Global Education and Study Abroad will review your request and, if approved, issues a new SEVIS I-20. You will be contacted when your SEVIS I-20 is ready for pick up, or if there are questions.

### **EXTENSION OF STAY LETTER FROM ACADEMIC ADVISOR SAMPLE**

Date:

To: The Office of Global Education and Study Abroad:

(Student's Name) was expected to complete his degree by (date).

However... (Describe why the student's completion of studies has been delayed, and verify that the student has been making good academic progress. Please note that these delays must be for valid reasons and are normally beyond that student's control.)

(Student's name), therefore, needs to extend his stay in order to complete his studies. His new graduation date is set for (date). Your assistance for immigration authorization for (Student's name) in extending his time for students will be greatly appreciated.

(Signature)

(Printed Name)

(Title)

## **RENEWING YOUR VISA**

An F-1, F-2, J-1, or J-2 visa cannot be renewed within the U.S.

It is only necessary to renew an expired U.S. visa when traveling outside the U.S. and seeking re-entry to the U.S. with the same visa status. While you are in the U.S. with legal status, there is no penalty for possessing an expired visa.

U.S. visas are issued at U.S. embassies and consulates abroad. It may not be necessary to apply for renewal in your home country. To find specific information regarding an embassy and visa renewal requirements, visit: <http://www.embassy.org>

You will be required to complete an application and attend an interview. It is a good idea to be prepared to provide the following documentation at your interview:

- All previously issued and current immigration documents
- Valid passport
- Financial documentation
- Transcripts or registrar's records verifying school attendance
- Evidence of previous travel (passport entries, tickets, etc.)
- Proof of ties to your home country

## **RENEWING YOUR PASSPORT**

Unlike a U.S. visa, an international passport can be renewed in the U.S. through the Embassy of your country of citizenship.

The guidelines vary with country; however you will be required to submit your current passport either in person or by mail.

If possible, it is recommended that you go to your embassy (located in Washington, D.C.) in person to expedite the process and guarantee security of your documents.

You must maintain validity of your passport at all times.

### **A VALID VISA IN AN EXPIRED PASSPORT**

It is helpful to think of the visa and passport as two independent documents. If your country of origin allows you to keep your expired passport, you can continue to use your valid visa by presenting both the old passport (with the valid visa in it) and the new passport at the U.S. port of entry when you travel. However, if your country of origin does not return your old passport to you when the new one is issued, the valid visa is lost and you will be required to obtain a new visa the next time you wish to enter the U.S. When a nonimmigrant is admitted to the U.S. with a visa in an old passport, USCIS will sometimes write the notation "VIOPP" either on the passport or the I-94. The notation means "visa in old passport."

### **LOST OR STOLEN PASSPORT WITH A U.S. VISA**

It is important to contact your country's embassy immediately if you suspect that your passport has been lost or stolen. Remember, a U.S. visa can only be obtained outside the country.

### **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN F-1 AND J-1 STATUS**

- The chief academic difference is that J-1 provides for certain non-degree or non-enrolled educational programs not easily available to the F-1 category.
- The chief administrative and sponsorship difference is that most students who are totally funded by personal or family funds are not eligible for the J-1, while no such restriction pertains to F-1.
- Both provide for admission to the U.S. for “duration of status,” which provides minimal administrative interruption in the academic program.
- Both provide for employment for fellowships, assistantships, on-campus work, employment required by or related to the curriculum, and Academic Training (J-1) or practical training (F-1). Academic Training for J-1 is limited to 18 months (36 months for postdoctoral training) and requires a job offer if being undertaken after completion of studies. The post-graduation F-1 limit is 12 months, but there are additional opportunities for pre-completion employment related to the curriculum. No job offer is required for the awarding of post-completion practical training.
- In general, F-1 procedures are more complex and involve applications to the USCIS. Procedures for J-1 are handled by the responsible officer at the sponsoring institution.
- J-2 dependants are eligible to apply for work permission in the United States; F-2 dependants are not.
- The J category may subject the participant to a potential two-year home country physical presence requirement. The F-1 does not.

### **TRANSFERRING SCHOOLS WITHIN THE U.S.**

If you plan to leave Hampden-Sydney College and transfer to another school in the U.S., the PDSO must transfer you out. You will also need to notify the Registrar and your academic department of the transfer. Your new address and phone number must be provided to the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad and the Registrar.

If you choose to leave the U.S. for a short period of time between changing schools and you have a valid visa, you may complete the transfer of schools simply by presenting the SEVIS I-20 from the new school upon your reentry to the U.S. If you have not maintained proper F-1 status and are therefore “out of status,” you will be required to apply for reinstatement to student status through the USCIS.

**Note:** International Honors Scholars may only use their aid for H-SC credit and may not use it to study abroad or to transfer to another U.S. institution.

## **TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE U.S.**

If you will briefly travel outside the U.S., with the intention of returning, you must have your SEVIS I-20 signed for reentry by the College's Designated School Official (DSO) or Primary Designated School Official (PDSO). A signature for travel is valid for one year.

You must also have a valid passport and F-1 visa. If your visa will expire before you return to the U.S. and you will seek to renew it out of the country, please request a letter for visa renewal from the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad at least 30 days before you leave. Be sure to carry a valid passport and visa with you, as well as all copies of all SEVIS I-20 forms you have been issued, and any relevant letters issued by the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad.

The Office of Global Education and Study Abroad will be happy to answer any questions you might have about F-1 regulations. Please call 434-223-6311 or e-mail the PDSO, Mary Cooper at [mcooper@hsc.edu](mailto:mcooper@hsc.edu).

## **TRAVEL TO COUNTRY OF RESIDENCY OR CITIZENSHIP**

Whenever an F-1 visa holder visits their home country temporarily (for fewer than 5 months), it is important to secure the necessary documents for re-entry to the U.S.

An F-1 non-immigrant student should have:

- All issued SEVIS I-20 forms (current and previous ones)
- Valid signature on back of current SEVIS I-20
- Valid passport with expiration date for no fewer than 6 months after date of U.S. re-entry
- Valid U.S. visa

Valid U.S. visa, to secure a U.S. visa you will need:

- Letter verifying student status: see the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad
- Proof of your financial support
- EAD (employment authorization document) if engaged in practical training

## **PERMANENT RESIDENCE**

The bases for qualifying for permanent residence are: Family, Employment, Public or Humanitarian Policy. This is an extremely complex and selective process, which makes permanent residence status difficult to obtain. It is recommended that you seek the advice of an immigration attorney when applying for permanent residency.

### **TRAVEL TO A THIRD COUNTRY (OTHER THAN HOME COUNTRY)**

When visiting another country, it is important to check with the Embassy of that country about specific entry requirements/procedures. It is your responsibility to research the country requirements and follow exact procedures. Failure to do so may result in a denial of entry into a country.

The U.S. State Department publishes Publication 7846, “Foreign Consular Offices in the U.S.,” which contains a complete list of foreign consular offices and contact information. You can find this publication on the Web at: [www.travel.state.gov/travel](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel).

The following documents should be taken during all travel outside the U.S.:

- All previously issued SEVIS I-20
- Current SEVIS I-20 with valid signature
- Passport valid for no fewer than 6 months after the date of U.S. re-entry
- Valid U.S. visa
- Letter verifying student status- see the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad
- Proof of your financial support
- Valid entry visa for country of visit (if necessary).

### **TRAVEL TO CANADA OR MEXICO**

Because Canada and Mexico border the U.S., students sometimes forget that these countries have entry requirements like other countries.

**Entry requirements/procedures can be found on the Web.**

Canada: [www.canadianembassy.org](http://www.canadianembassy.org)

Mexico: [www.embassyofmexico.org](http://www.embassyofmexico.org)

It is a good idea to do your research well in advance of your travel, as it may be necessary to obtain a visitor’s visa for entry.

Note: If travel is for visa renewal, you may not be allowed to reenter the U.S. if your visa application is denied. It may not be worth the risk of travel to Canada or Mexico for this purpose. Hampden-Sydney College cannot assist you if you are refused re-entry to the U.S.

## **OBTAINING A U.S. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER**

A Social Security number is an identification number that is issued by the Social Security Administration, a branch of the federal government. All U.S. employees (including international students) are required to obtain a Social Security number. You can only apply for a Social Security number and card if you have been offered and have accepted employment. After being in the U.S. for 10 days you may apply for a Social Security number in person at a local Social Security Administration Office. The Office in Farmville is located at:

**1506 S. Main Street  
Longwood Shopping Village  
Phone 434-392-8121 Hours: 9:00am – 4:00pm**

Before applying for a Social Security number, it will be necessary to obtain a letter verifying your employment from the Human Resources Office and from the Director of Global Education and Study Abroad (PDSO). Contact the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad at 434-223-6311 for application information and to make transportation arrangements.

In addition to the application for a Social Security number, documents you will need to present to the Social Security Administration are:

- your valid, unexpired passport
- your I-94 card (the white card stapled to your passport when you entered the U.S.).
- a letter from the Human Resources Office verifying your employment and immigration status
- your original SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019
- any Employment Authorization Document (EAD) previously issued to you by the USCIS (if applicable)

You can expect a wait of 3 – 6 weeks before receiving your Social Security card in the mail. It will be sent to you at the address that you specify when you fill out the application. For more information about Social Security, call toll free 1-800-772-1213 or visit the Social Security Administration's official web site at: [www.ssa.gov/](http://www.ssa.gov/).

A Social Security number is not required before you start work. However, the Internal Revenue Service requires employers to report wages using a Social Security number. While you wait for your Social Security number, your employer can use a letter from us stating that you applied for a number. Your employer may use your immigration documents as proof of your authorization to work in the United States. Employers can find more information on the Internet at: [www.socialsecurity.gov/employer/hiring.htm](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/employer/hiring.htm).

We advise students to request the Social Security receipt letter at the time of application filing. An added benefit to having the letter is that in the event of a delay in receipt of the number, the reference information on the letter assists the SSA staff in determining the cause of the delay.

We also recommend the use of SSA form SSA-3288 Social Security Administration Consent for Release of Information which allows SSA to fax the number to us when it is issued. The card is still mailed to the student.

## II. GETTING SETTLED ON ARRIVAL AND STUDENT SERVICES

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### 1. Accommodation

All housing matters will be handled by the office of Dean of Students. Once you have been accepted by the College, you will be informed of your room and board services. You will have received the details from the office prior to attending the College. You may choose to live on or off-campus. If you have any questions regarding your housing needs, please contact the address below:

**Dean of Students & Resident Life**

**Blake-A (Next to Winston Hall)**

**Contacts: David Klein, Dean of Students**

**Phone: 434-223-6128, e-mail: [dklein@hsc.edu](mailto:dklein@hsc.edu)**

**Contact: Wes Lawson, Assistant Dean of Students for Resident Life and Housing**

**Phone: 434-223-6127, e-mail: [wlawson@hsc.edu](mailto:wlawson@hsc.edu)**

This office also handles matters regarding orientation, resident advisers, multicultural affairs, campus rules, Code of Student Conduct, disciplinary issues, student government, fraternity matters, and much more.

### 2. International Students' Orientation Program

The International Students' Orientation Program is mandatory for all new international students. It is conducted by the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad, and the Dean of Students Office.

Orientation allows international students to become better acquainted with Hampden-Sydney College, the American culture, as well as other international students. During orientation, students will receive additional information about living and studying here, as well as valuable information about maintaining their non-immigrant legal status. The date and time will also be sent to the students prior to their arrival on-campus.

### 3. Financial Matters

Cabell House is where you will find the Student Accounts Office to pay on your account or ask questions regarding your school fees; to get or replace your H-SC Identification card (on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor); and to pay bills and parking tickets. The Business Office will also offer assistance on payment of U.S. taxes which are due April 15 each year.

**Business Office**

**Cabell House**

**Contact: Amanda Massie**

**Phone: 434-223-6224, e-mail: [amassie@hsc.edu](mailto:amassie@hsc.edu)**

Any questions pertaining to financial matters may be directed to the Admissions Office or the Financial Aid Office:

**Admissions Office**  
**Graham Hall, Second Floor**  
**Contact: Anita Garland, Dean**  
**Phone: 434-223-6120, e-mail: [agarland@hsc.edu](mailto:agarland@hsc.edu)**

**Financial Aid Office**  
**P.O. Box 726**  
**Hampden-Sydney, VA 23943**  
**Phone: 434-223-6119**  
**Fax: 434-223-6075, e-mail: [hsfinaid@hsc.edu](mailto:hsfinaid@hsc.edu)**

**4. Transcripts and Class Registration**

This office handles all matters pertaining to enrollment, attendance, academic transcripts, registration for classes, grade-point averages, adding/dropping courses, examination schedules, transfers, and degree requirements. New students will be given a tentative schedule prior to their arrival. They may make changes to their schedule if the desired class is available. The course descriptions are given in the college catalog; Students are advised to read the catalog before they make any decision. Each student is also assigned with an academic advisor, who will guide him through his academic transition at H-SC.

**Atkinson Hall, Second Floor**  
**Contact: Dawn Congleton, Registrar**  
**Phone: 434-223-6274, e-mail [dcongleton@hsc.edu](mailto:dcongleton@hsc.edu)**

**5. Academic Success**

This office handles matters pertaining to academic and social adjustment. They also provide learning disabilities testing, documentation, and support services for all issues pertaining to academic issues.

**Office of Academic Success**  
**Bagby Hall, Room 202**  
**Contact: Mrs. Christa Fye, Director**  
**Phone: 434-223-6286, e-mail: [cfye@hsc.edu](mailto:cfye@hsc.edu)**

**6. Medical Insurance And Health Care**

The Student Health Center is open for clinic hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) on a walk-in basis during the regular academic year (fall and spring term) The College Physician is available to see students at 7:30 a.m.-9:00 a.m., Monday through Friday. At other times, the Center is staffed by professional nurses who are experienced in the care of health problems that frequently plague students.

**Moore Student Health Center**  
**Winston Hall, Ground Floor**  
**Contact: Mrs. Beth Graham, Director**  
**Phone: 434-223-6167, e-mail: [bgraham@hsc.edu](mailto:bgraham@hsc.edu)**

Dr. Bowman's office provides professional counseling services covering a wide range of issues, and offers a 24-hour crisis intervention service. Psychological testing and evaluation, self-help resources, and referral to off-campus mental health care providers are available to all students.

**Counseling Center  
Bagby Hall, Room 202  
Contact: Dr. Glen Bowman, Director  
Phone: 434-223-6107, e-mail: [gbowman@hsc.edu](mailto:gbowman@hsc.edu)**

#### **7. English as A Second Language (ESL)...*Rhetoric Department***

**Rhetoric Department  
Contact: Shawn Schooling, Adjunct Associate Professor of Rhetoric  
Phone: 434-223-7150, e-mail: [sschooling@hsc.edu](mailto:sschooling@hsc.edu)**

#### **Safety**

Most people you meet in the United States will be friendly and helpful. However, there is still a moderate amount of crime against person and crime against property, some of it directed specifically at foreigners. A few simple precautions will help safeguard you from crime.

#### **Emergency Telephone Numbers**

Throughout the United States, dialing 911 on any phone will connect you to the appropriate emergency services, such as ambulance, fire, and police. You do not need to put money in a pay phone to dial 911. Another way to get emergency help is to dial 0, when using a land line which reaches a telephone operator. This does not always work on cell phones. Tell the operator that you have an emergency and the street address and city where help is needed. The operator will connect you to the appropriate emergency service.

You can find a listing of local emergency numbers on the first page of the local telephone directory. You should compile a list of the local emergency numbers, including poison control and the local hospital emergency room.

Call the emergency telephone numbers if you need help immediately in a life-threatening situation. For example, you should dial 911 if a crime is in progress, someone is badly injured or ill, there's a fire, or you fear for your life.

For non-emergencies you should call the non-emergency telephone number for the local police station or campus police. For example, if a car is blocking your driveway, someone broke into your apartment but is no longer there, or to report vandalism.

## Safety Precautions

Violent crime in the United States has been decreasing in recent years, and you are more likely to be a victim of a crime against property than a crime against person. College campuses tend to be very safe, even when located in urban areas. Nevertheless, cities in the United States are not as safe as those in Europe and Japan.

The following common sense rules will help prevent you from becoming the victim of a crime.

- **Tips for the Room.** Remember to lock the doors and close the windows to your room when you are not at home.
- **Tips for the Car.** Keep your car doors locked at all times. Always park your car in a well-lit area. Never leave valuable articles or packages on the seat; lock them in the trunk. Before getting in your car, look at the back seat to make sure nobody is hiding there.
- **Walking at Night.** Don't walk alone at night. Try to walk with a group of friends. If your school offers an escort service, use it. Walk on busy well-lit streets and avoid poorly lit and deserted areas. If you are lost, walk as though you know where you are going and stop at the police station or a gas station for directions. Do not hitchhike, especially if you are female. It is not safe.
- **Crossing the Street.** In the United States cars drive on the right side of the street, not the left. So on most streets cars will be approaching you from your left. Always cross the street at a corner and look both ways before crossing the street.

A pickpocket can work in many surroundings, especially at the airport, bus station, or other places with large crowds. They might bump into you or spill something on you to distract you while an accomplice steals your bag. They might use a knife to cut open the bottom of your backpack or bag and steal the contents without your knowledge.

Don't give money to panhandlers. There are public agencies and charities that provide food, shelter, and job assistance to the poor. A panhandler will probably spend the money on alcohol and illegal drugs. Most likely their appearance and story is a carefully contrived lie. Panhandlers often collect several hundred dollars a day from gullible students.

The following are a few precautions to help protect you from pickpockets and thieves:

- Put your wallet and important documents in your front pocket, not your back pocket. Pocketbooks should have a strong strap and be worn across the front of the body, not over a shoulder.
- At the airport, use a luggage cart if you are having trouble managing your bags. Hold onto your bags tightly.
- Avoid crowds.
- Keep photocopies of important documents at home, since this will make it easier to replace them if they are lost or stolen.
- Keep some money separate from your purse or wallet to use in an emergency or if your other money is stolen. For example, if your wallet is in one pocket, keep a \$20 bill in the other or in your sock.

- Be alert as you walk. Keep your head up and be aware of your surroundings. Don't stare at the ground in front of your feet. Walk with a definite purpose.

### **Legal Aid**

If you are arrested in the U.S. for a serious crime, say nothing until you have spoken to an attorney. You have the right to remain silent. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed for you by the court free of charge. You will be given the opportunity to make one telephone call. You should use this telephone call to call your embassy or consulate. The American legal system differs significantly from legal systems in other countries. The accused is considered innocent until proven guilty by the state beyond a reasonable doubt. The accused is also entitled to a trial by jury for serious offenses, such as murder, rape, burglary, and drug trafficking. Attorney-client communications are privileged, meaning that your attorney cannot be called to testify against you and that your conversations with your attorney are private. These rights are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. If you are not already familiar with the U.S. legal system, your attorney can explain it to you. If you plead guilty to a serious crime, or are convicted of a serious crime, you will be subject to deportation.

### **Climate**

In Virginia, temperatures during the summer will run from the 70s through the 90s, and in the winter from near zero degrees to the 40s or 50s. You will probably need a sweater or jacket for part of the year. Virginia often gets snow, so you will need a good winter coat, boots, and gloves. If the coat does not include a hood, you will need a hat that covers your ears. Clothing is relatively inexpensive in the U.S., and it may be easier to find appropriate clothing at your destination. Wait until you arrive, and watch what the natives wear.

### **Cultural Differences**

Adjusting and settling into a new environment, whether it's a new school, home, job or country, is a process that takes time and energy and affects the mind and body. Much has been written about "culture shock" which is that phenomenon experienced by most of us who are suddenly relocated to an environment vastly different from our traditional one. Because of variations in food, climate, geography, religion, social mores, politics and basic life philosophy, it is common for a newcomer to feel somewhat "lost," confused or maybe even physically ill during the first few weeks in the new locale.

The College and the Office of Global Education and Study Abroad in particular attempt to ease your adjustment to the city and school, however, that feeling of ease and comfort may take time to achieve depending on the individual. There are many generalizations and stereotypes made by people of one culture about people of another. It is important to keep in mind that while generalizations may provide entertaining discussion among friends, they provide a disastrous intercultural experience if you can't see beyond them.

An open mind - a willingness to observe first and make conclusions later - is the best approach to a new situation. The total experience you have in the U.S. may end up a very positive or negative one in your life and much of that experience depends on your attitude.

### **Culture Shock**

One consequence of traveling to another country is culture shock. The stress of a new situation, confusion due to language difficulties, and a myriad of small cultural differences add up to culture shock. You might feel depressed, be homesick for your country and family, have difficulty sleeping or concentrating, and avoid contact with others.

If you experience these symptoms, try talking to someone. Talk to the international student advisor, a friend, the staff at the campus counseling center, or your neighbor. It also helps to participate in activities you enjoy. Write a letter to your family back home. Take a walk in the park. Read a book. Watch a movie. Eat a good meal at a fancy restaurant. Visit the museum or an art gallery. Play a game with some friends. Don't believe all of the stereotypes you may have heard about Americans. Even the ones that are true in general may not be true about specific individuals or a large segment of the population. For example, although Americans tend to be louder and more boisterous than people from other cultures, many of the people you meet will be quiet and polite. Some people may be intolerant and xenophobic, but most will be pleasant and welcoming. Remember that American films and television exaggerate in order to generate excitement, and thus present a rather distorted picture of what life in the United States is really like.

Americans do tend to be more informal than people from other countries. It is common for Americans to wear casual clothing to school and to greet professors by first name. Nevertheless, good manners and politeness are always appropriate. If you are courteous and polite, and dress a little more formally than your American friends, it will only reflect well on you.

However, there are situations and environments in which formality is the norm. Some businesses require their employees to wear a uniform or a suit. It would be inappropriate to wear a T-shirt and blue jeans to a job interview. Some of the more prestigious restaurants require a coat and tie. Americans tend to dress up for cultural events (the opera, theater and ballet) and to dress down for athletic events. Formal wear is required at weddings and funerals, or any other event with religious overtones.

### **Personal Space**

When two people are talking to each other, they tend to stand a specific distance apart. Each person has an invisible boundary around their body into which other people may not come. If someone pierces this boundary, they will feel uncomfortable and move away to increase the distance between them. (The major exception is family members and other loved ones.) This personal distance is not due to body odor or bad breath, but because closeness lends a sense of intimacy that is at odds with their relationship to the other individual.

Interestingly, the average personal distance varies from culture to culture. Americans tend to require more personal space than in other cultures. So if you try to get too close to an American during your conversation, he or she will feel that you are "in their face" and will try to back away. Try to be aware of this, so if the person to whom you are speaking backs away a little, don't try to close the gap.

Also, try to avoid physical contact while you are speaking, since this may also lead to discomfort. Touching is a bit too intimate for casual acquaintances. So don't put your arm around their shoulder, touch their face, or hold their hand. Shaking hands when you initially meet or part is acceptable, but this is only momentary.

## **Forms of Address**

American names are written and spoken with the given name first and the family name last. So John Smith's family name is Smith, not John. In formal settings, address men as "Mister" (abbreviated as "Mr."), married women as "Misses" (abbreviated as "Mrs."), and unmarried women as "Miss" (abbreviated as "Ms."). These days many women prefer to be addressed using the abbreviations "Ms." If the person has a M.D. or Ph.D., they will often be addressed as "Doctor" (abbreviated as "Dr."). Faculties are usually addressed as "Professor" (abbreviated "Prof.).

In an informal situation, Americans will introduce each other by first name, without titles, and occasionally by just the last name. If you are introduced to somebody by first name, you can address him or her by first name the next time you meet. The only exception would be for someone who holds an important position, such as the university president or provost. When in doubt, use the formal manner of address, since it is better to err on the side of formality.

Unless they tell you otherwise, faculty should be addressed using their title and last name (e.g., "Professor Smith"). It is also appropriate to ask how they prefer to be addressed. Children should always address adults in the formal fashion, using their title and last name.

## **Demeanor**

Americans are much more assertive than most international visitors. They use words as tools to express their opinions and to accomplish goals. The United States has a rather individualistic society, with less social pressure to conform. As a result, you will need to become more assertive and to speak out on your own behalf. Take the initiative and volunteer information that will be of interest. It is okay to talk about your goals and accomplishments.

Accordingly, Americans begin a discussion with a focus on accomplishments and concrete facts, and later proceed to the abstract. So you should begin a conversation or proposal with the most important information. Be direct, and reserve the small talk for later. To quote an American idiom, you have to put your best foot forward. It is ok to criticize someone's opinion, as long as you are providing constructive criticism. Eye contact is also important. It is not a sign of disrespect, but instead an indication of openness, honesty, and enthusiasm.

## **Gestures**

To wave goodbye or hello to someone raise your hand and wave it from side to side, not front to back. Wave the whole hand, not just the fingers. Holding your hand up with the palm facing forward but no movement means "stop". Holding your hand with the palm toward your body and wagging the fingers toward the body means "come here". Holding your hand with the palm up with all fingers curled and repeated curling and uncurling the index finger means "come here".

If you want to point at an object, extend the index finger and use it to point at the object. It is not polite to point at people.

If you want the waiter to bring the check, make a writing gesture with one hand as the pen and the other hand as the paper. If you just want the waiter to come, make eye contact and raise your hand.

Shaking your head from side to side means no. Shaking your head up and down means yes.

Never show your fist with the middle finger extended. This is an insult. Shaking a closed fist at someone is also rude, especially if it is in their face, and is an expression of anger.

It is not polite to pick your nose or chew your fingernails in public. Likewise, it is not polite to pick your teeth (with or without a toothpick) in public.

Winking at a woman is also inappropriate because of the flirtatious nature of the gesture. In other circumstances a wink will signal amusement or that the speaker is kidding. Because of the potential for misinterpretation, winking should be avoided.

When smiling, it is normal to bare your teeth, so long as the facial expression still looks like a smile, not a grimace.

### **Noises**

It is not polite to burp in public or to slurp your soup. It is not appropriate to play loud music or otherwise disturb the peace late at night. If your stereo is loud enough that your neighbors can hear it, it is too loud.

### **Dining**

Most Americans eat three meals during the day: breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Breakfast begins between 7:00 and 8:00 am, lunch between 11:00 am and noon, and dinner between 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. On Sundays "brunch" is a combination of breakfast and lunch, typically beginning at 11:00 am. Students often enjoy a "study break" or evening snack around 10:00 or 11:00 p.m. Breakfast and lunch tend to be light meals, with only one course. Dinner is the main meal.

For breakfast Americans will eat cereal with milk (often mixed together in a bowl), a glass of orange juice, and toasted bread or muffin with jam, butter, or margarine. Another common breakfast meal is scrambled eggs or an omelet with potatoes (hash browns) and breakfast meat (bacon or sausage). People who are eating light might eat just a cup of yogurt. Lunch and dinner are more varied.

When eating at a formal dinner, you may be overwhelmed by the number of utensils. How do you know the answer either (it's the number of tines or prongs on the fork). But knowing which fork or spoon to use first is simple: use the outermost utensils first and the utensils closest to the plate last.

### **Tipping**

Restaurants do not usually include a service charge in the bill, so you should tip the waiter 15% of the total bill. If service was slow or particularly bad, some Americans will tip only 10%. Likewise, if service was particularly good, it is appropriate to tip 20%. Tipping is only appropriate in restaurants, which offer table service. You do not tip the cashier in a fast food restaurant. The words "tip" and "gratuity" are used interchangeably, with "gratuity" having a slightly more formal connotation.

Taxi drivers expect to get a tip equal to 15% of the total fare. If the driver was especially helpful or got you to your destination more quickly than you expected, give a 20% tip.

### **Smoking**

Smoking has become socially unacceptable in the U.S., in part due to the health risks. Smoking is prohibited in government and public buildings, and many businesses, especially restaurants, will not permit smoking on the premises. Those restaurants that permit smoking will usually have a separate section for customers who smoke. Your school probably has a ban on smoking within campus buildings or near building entrances. Tobacco products may not be sold to anyone under 18 years old, and federal law requires stores to ask to see a photo ID for anyone under 27 years old.

If you are a guest in someone's home, you should ask whether it is ok to smoke before lighting up. If there are no ashtrays in the house, it is a good sign that smoking is not acceptable. Smoking on airplane flights within the U.S. is prohibited. There are severe penalties for smoking on an airplane or in an airplane lavatory. Smoking is also prohibited on interstate trains and buses. Smoking is prohibited on public transportation, including buses and trolleys.

Smoking around children is inappropriate. Buying cigarettes for a child, or giving a child a cigarette is illegal. It is extremely impolite to blow smoke in someone's face. If you are smoking and someone coughs, it is often a polite way of asking you to extinguish the cigarette.

### **Alcohol**

The legal drinking age in the United States is 21 years. Bars and liquor stores will require proof of age, such as a driver's license, before selling you any alcohol. Alcoholic beverages are labeled with the percentage of alcohol, but the actual percentage may be as much as 1.5% higher or lower. Wine coolers range from 3% to 7%, table wines from 7% to 14%, dessert wines from 14% to 21%, and distilled spirits are over 24%.

Beer is not labeled with alcohol content, but is required to have at least 0.5% alcohol, and usually has between 4.5% and 5.5% alcohol. The amount of alcohol in a name brand beer will vary from state to state and even city to city. Liquor (whiskey, gin, brandy) is labeled using proof degrees. To convert a proof degree into a percentage measure of alcoholic content, divide by 2. Light beer must have 1/3 fewer calories than the brewery's regular beer. Regular beer averages 150 calories and light beer 100 calories.

The number of calories in a regular beer, however, can vary significantly from brewery to brewery. Be careful when requesting a beer or other alcoholic beverages to use the proper units or you might get more or less alcohol than you expected. A British pint is twenty ounces while an American pint is 16 ounces.

## **Religion**

The U.S. Constitution guarantees religious freedom for all faiths. Freedom of religion also means that you're likely to be solicited by religious groups who want to invite you to their church. Some of these groups can be quite aggressive. There are also a few cults that prey on college students. Avoid them, as they can be extremely seductive. If you are approached by a recruiter for a cult or religious group, do not make eye contact, do not engage in conversation, and keep walking. They will often ask you a rhetorical question to open the conversation, such as "Do you believe in god?" Either ignore them, or respond with something that will fluster them enough to let you get past, such as "only on Tuesdays and Thursdays". Even if you're interested in their particular brand of religion, it is best for you to seek out the local churches on your own.

## **Numbers**

In the United States, the number 13 is symbolic of bad luck. Tall office buildings sometimes skip the number 13 when numbering the floors. The number 7 is symbolic of good luck. The word trillion means a 1 followed by 12 zeros, a British billion. The word billion means a 1 followed by 9 zeros, a British milliard. A period is used to indicate a decimal point, not a comma. A comma is used to separate groups of three digits in large numbers, thus "\$1,232.52".

## **Toilets**

The most important phrase you should learn is "Where can I find a toilet?" If you need to visit the toilet, nearly any word will do. All of the following words will work: men's room, restroom, lavatory, toilet, bathroom, little boy's room, potty, head, john, and water closet. The last four are less common, but will probably be understood. The words "loo," "earth closet," and "usual offices" will generally not be understood by Americans. If you ask for the cloakroom, you will be directed to the place where you hang or check coats, not the restroom.

There are no public toilets on the streets in the US. Public toilets can be found in hotels, bars, restaurants, museums, department stores, gas stations, airports, train stations, and bus stations. Some businesses may reserve their restrooms for the use of their patrons.

In many airports, toilets and urinals do not have a flush handle, but instead flush automatically when an infrared sensor determines that you have left. If you don't see anything that looks like a flush handle, step away from the toilet and see if it flushes after a few seconds.

## **U.S. Monetary System**

The US Monetary System is a decimal system, with one dollar equal to one hundred cents. One dollar is written as \$1 or \$1.00. One cent is written as 1¢. One dollar and twenty-five cents would be written as \$1.25. Dollar amounts are written with a comma every three digits, so one thousand dollars would be written as \$1,000.00. Paper currency is used for amounts of \$1 or more, and coins are used for amounts under \$1. The most common coins and their dollar equivalencies are as follows: Paper currency is most often circulated in the following denominations: \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100.

Occasionally you will encounter a \$2 bill. The denomination of all currency is clearly marked on the bottom of both sides of the bill, and on all four corners. Some stores will not accept bills larger than a \$20. The \$20 bill was recently redesigned to make it more difficult to counterfeit, so you will see both the new and old bills in circulation. All currency is green and printed using special paper. The slang term for a dollar bill is a "buck", so \$20 might be described as "twenty bucks". Each denomination includes a picture of a famous American statesman on the front. More information on U.S. paper currency can be found at [www.ustreas.gov/currency](http://www.ustreas.gov/currency).

### **Checking Accounts**

You will need a checking account to pay bills, such as rent and utilities. It isn't safe to send cash through the mail. It also isn't safe to carry large amounts of cash on your person, so you should pay for most of your purchases using a check or credit card.

To open a checking account, visit a bank and ask to open a checking account. You will need to deposit money into the account when you open it. You can deposit cash or traveler's checks, or arrange for a wire transfer from your home bank (cost around \$35). American Express also offers a variety of services that make it easy to withdraw money from your checking account back home. Additional deposits and withdrawals may be made at any time.

You can withdraw money from your account using a check or an Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) card. The check is a negotiable order of withdrawal that tells the bank to pay the money to the payee by withdrawing money from your account. When you open the checking account the bank will provide you with an initial set of checks with your name and address printed on top. Additional checks can be ordered in a variety of designs for a fee.

If there are insufficient funds in your account to cover the check, the check will "bounce" and your account will be overdrawn. This means that the bank will refuse to honor the check and will return it to the depositor. In addition, the bank will charge you a bounced check fee of \$15 to \$35, so it is important to make sure you always have sufficient funds in your account to cover any outstanding checks. If the payee tries to deposit the check again (sometimes their bank will do this automatically), you will be penalized with a second bounced check fee for the same check. Many international students expect the bank to pay checks even when their account is overdrawn, and get a rude and expensive shock when they discover that the U.S. banking system handles overdrawn accounts differently.

When writing a check, the amount of the check is written twice, once using numerals and once using words. If you were writing a check for \$23.35, you would write the words as "Twenty-three and 35/100 dollars", where the word "and" separates the dollar amount from the cents. You would write \$23.00 as "Twenty-three and NO/100 dollars". Draw a horizontal line through any leftover space, to prevent someone from adding extra digits to the amount.

At the end of the month the bank will mail you a statement showing all deposits and withdrawals from your account, as well as the current (ending) balance of the account. They will also return to you any cancelled checks. Cancelled checks are checks you wrote that have been processed. They are stamped (cancelled) to indicate that the money has been withdrawn from your account. Cancelled checks should be saved, since they provide proof of payment. This is especially important when you need a receipt of payment, such as for the security deposit on your apartment. You should reconcile the statement against your checkbook to make sure there are no errors.

Most banks offer a variety of checking accounts. Some banks will offer a "free" checking account with no monthly service charges if a minimum balance is maintained in the account. Typically the minimum balance is \$1,000, although some banks require as little as \$500 and some banks as much as \$2,500. If your visa allows you to work and you receive a regular paycheck, you may be able to avoid the monthly service charges by having your paycheck direct deposited into the account. Also, certain checking accounts will pay interest if a minimum amount of money is kept in the account. Such accounts are known as "Checking with Interest" or "NOW Accounts". But the interest rate on these accounts is very low compared with other investments, so you're better off putting your savings elsewhere.

When you deposit checks into your account, there is a waiting period of a few days before you can withdraw the money. The length of the waiting period depends on the bank upon which the check is drawn. Local banks will have a shorter waiting period than out-of-town banks. This delay is to protect the bank in case the check bounces.

Most checking accounts will include a debit card you can use to withdraw money from your account at any ATM, 24-hours a day. This lets you make deposits, withdrawals, and other transactions (e.g., balance inquiries) at any time, even when the bank is closed. ATMs are very convenient because they are located throughout the city near shopping areas and sometimes even inside grocery stores. (Banks like ATMs because it is much cheaper to install and service an ATM than to open a branch office and pay a human teller.) Most people don't carry a lot of cash, because they can get cash from an ATM when they need it. ATMs limit the amount of your daily withdrawals to a maximum of \$300, as a safety measure. (ATMs are known as MAC machines in some parts of the country.) If your ATM card is ever stolen, notify the bank immediately. Your liability for a stolen or lost card is limited to \$50 if you report the loss promptly.

Be careful in selecting an ATM to use, because the bank that owns the ATM can charge a fee (typically \$1.00) in addition to any fees your own bank may charge for ATM withdrawals. So it is best to use your ATM card to withdraw money only from ATMs owned by your bank. Although you can make withdrawals from almost any ATM, deposits should be made only at your bank's ATMs.

The two national ATM networks are PLUS (1-800-843-7587) and CIRRUS (1-800-4-CIRRUS or 1-800-424-7787). The networks to which your bank's ATMs belong are indicated on the back of your debit or credit card. Although you can use an ATM on the other network, your bank will probably charge you a larger fee for using an ATM that isn't on the bank's home network.

Some banks offer a debit card that combines the features of an ATM card with a credit card. You can use it like a regular Visa card, except the charges are directly debited from your checking account. This is in contrast to regular credit cards, which provide a grace period of 20 to 25 days for you to pay the bill before interest is charged. On the other hand, it helps avoid the temptation to carry a balance on the card. If you don't already have a credit card, it is worthwhile because international students sometimes find it difficult to qualify for a credit card after arriving in the U.S.

If you have an ATM card from a foreign bank, ask the bank whether your Personal Identification Number (PIN) will work in the US. Some banks will give you a different PIN for transactions abroad.

Although using a credit card to obtain a cash advance is not normally a good idea because of the high interest charges and fees, there is one aspect worth mentioning. If you get a cash advance using a foreign credit card, the exchange rate is the wholesale exchange rate, not the retail exchange rate. This is a somewhat better rate. Sometimes the savings will compensate for the interest and fees.

Most students choose the bank that is most convenient for them. This may be the bank with a branch closest to their home, a bank located adjacent to the grocery store, or a bank near school. Another consideration is the fees charged by the bank (especially for ATM card usage) and the minimum balance required for waiving the monthly service charge.

### **Credit Cards**

If you pay for purchases at retail stores using a check, they will want to see some form of identification, such as a driver's license or a major credit card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover, and American Express). A passport can also serve as a photo identification, but it isn't wise to advertise that you're an international visitor. Also, checks are only accepted if they are drawn on an in-state bank, so you cannot use them if you travel out of state.

Credit cards are such an ingrained part of the American way of life that you will have trouble making certain purchases with anything other than a credit card. If you want to place an order by phone, cash a check, rent a car, or buy airline tickets, you need to have a credit card. So it is better to use a credit card to pay for purchases. But you must take care to pay off your balance in full at the end of the month. Otherwise you will incur interest on the balance. This can substantially increase the balance due.

Many international students find it difficult to get a credit card in the U.S., because they do not have an established credit history. (The credit card issuers are concerned that international students might eventually return to their home countries and default on the balance remaining on the card. So if you already have a major credit card such as a MasterCard (Eurocard, Access, Chargex), Visa (Barclaycard, Carte Bleue), or American Express, it is a good idea to bring it with you. American banks can check your credit limit on the foreign card, and this may make them more likely to issue you a credit card. Also, if you opened a checking or savings account with a bank that offers credit cards, it may be easier to get a credit card from that bank since you have money on deposit with them.

Before a credit card issuer will grant you a credit card, they will conduct a thorough credit check. They will want to know information about your salary and the name of your employer, how long you've been in the US, and information about your expenses. Some banks will not issue a credit card until you've been employed in the US for at least six months. Other banks will make an exception if you work for a large, well-known employer. If you are a graduate student and receiving a stipend and tuition waiver, include the tuition waiver when figuring your gross income.

Because getting a major credit card is very difficult for international students, you should take every opportunity to establish a good credit record. Be careful to not bounce any checks. If you open a department store credit card, pay the bills promptly. Mailing your payment late several times or missing a single payment can ruin your credit rating. After you've established a good credit history, it will be easier to get a major credit card.

Since you will not be carrying a balance, you should apply for a card that does not charge an annual fee. (Make sure that the card includes a grace period, so that no interest is charged if you pay the balance in full when you receive the bill. Credit cards are required to disclose the interest rate and any fees on the card application.) There are even a few "rebate" cards that pay you for using the card by issuing a small credit. For example, the Discover Card (1-800-DISCOVER) has no annual fee and offers up to 1% cash back on your purchases using the card. The local telephone company may offer a credit card, with the rebates applied toward your telephone bill. The credit card companies will have tables set up on campus with applications and you can also find applications on bulletin boards around campus or at the college bookstore. The [www.bankratemonitor.com](http://www.bankratemonitor.com) and [www.cardtrak.com](http://www.cardtrak.com) web sites also provide information about the least expensive credit cards.

The major credit cards in the U.S. are Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover. Visa and MasterCard are offered by many banks and financial institutions. American Express and Discover Card are each offered by only one financial institution, but are accepted by many businesses.

### **Traveler's Checks**

Traveler's Checks are one of the safest ways to transport money. If the traveler's checks are lost or stolen, you can easily get them replaced. Do not countersign the checks until you are ready to use them. If you bring traveler's checks with you to the U.S., you should bring traveler's checks that are denominated in US funds. Most businesses will accept U.S.-denominated traveler's checks.

Taxi drivers and bus drivers will not accept traveler's checks, so you should bring some US currency with you as well. Within the U.S., you can purchase traveler's checks from many travel agencies, banks, Thomas Cook, and American Express offices for face value plus a 1% commission. The American Automobile Association (AAA) sells them to members without charging a commission. Aside from the AAA, the three largest sources of traveler's checks are American Express and Citicorp.

### **Exchange Rates**

Some banks will exchange foreign currency for a fee. No bank, however, will exchange foreign coinage. You can also exchange currency at the airport or at a major hotel.

Exchange rates are usually printed on the financial pages of the local newspaper. You can also get daily exchange rates from several web sites:

- [Universal Currency Converter](#)<sup>TM</sup> from Xenon Laboratories
- [Federal Reserve Bank of New York](#)
- [Classic 164 Currency Converter](#)

International students sometimes run into trouble because of fluctuations in the exchange rate. If your home country's currency is decreasing in value, it is strongly recommended that you conduct all transactions in the currency of the country in which you will be studying. For example, try to get loans issued in the foreign currency. Otherwise, if the value of your country's currency drops, you could find that you have much less money than you expected.

### **Sales Tax**

There is no national sales tax in the U.S., but each state has its own sales tax. The sales tax is charged as a percentage surcharge on purchases, and is printed on the receipt. Rates differ from state to state. The state of Virginia's sales tax is 5 percent.

Unprepared food such as groceries is exempt from sales tax, but prepared food purchased in a restaurant is not. Clothing and medicine may also be exempt from sales tax. If you purchase an item by mail order and the company has offices in your state, they will collect sales tax on your purchase.

Many airports have duty free shopping areas, where sales tax is not charged. This is only worthwhile when you are traveling to a country with a high sales tax rate. The average state sales tax rate in the U.S. is 3%. You can usually find the same items on sale in the U.S. for a lower price, even when sales tax is taken into account.

## **HEALTH CARE**

Unlike other countries, the United States does not provide socialized medicine. Because medical care can be very expensive, it is important to have health insurance, even if the school does not require it. See campus services section in the Moore Student Health Center.

### **General Conditions**

International visitors do not have to worry about any unusual health hazards in the United States. Tap water is safe to drink nationwide.

AIDS is as much a problem in the US as in other countries. College students are a particularly high-risk group because of unsafe sex practices and unrealistic beliefs about HIV transmission.

It is not possible to tell whether someone is HIV-positive just by looking at them. If you have unprotected sex with an HIV-positive individual, you will almost certainly become infected. The condom is the only contraceptive that has been proven to block the transmission of AIDS. But even condoms sometimes fail; they break about 2% of the time.

## PRACTIAL MATTERS

### American Holidays

The American calendar is filled with numerous holidays. The following table shows some of the more popular holidays. Important national holidays have been indicated in bold face. Most non-essential government offices will be closed on these days. (Fire, Ambulance and Police are always open.) Check the College calendar to see the H-SC schedule.

Holiday	Date
<b>New Year's Day</b>	January 1
<b>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</b>	Third Monday in January
Ground Hog Day	February 2
Valentine's Day	February 14
<b>President's Day</b>	Third Monday in February
St. Patrick's Day	March 17
April Fool's Day	April 1
Good Friday	Friday before Easter Sunday
Mother's Day	Second Sunday in May
<b>Memorial Day</b>	Last Monday in May
Flag Day	June 14
Father's Day	Third Sunday in June
<b>Independence Day</b>	July 4
<b>Labor Day</b>	First Monday in September
<b>Columbus Day</b>	Second Monday in October
Halloween	October 31
<b>Election Day</b>	Tuesday after the first Monday in November Federal holiday in years divisible by 4
<b>Veterans Day</b>	November 11
<b>Thanksgiving</b>	Fourth Thursday in November
<b>Christmas Day</b>	December 25

It is also important to be aware of the holidays of people of other religious faiths. For example, important Jewish holidays include Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Sukkoth, Chanukah, and Passover. Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, and Sukkoth occur in the fall. Chanukah occurs in December, near Christmas. Passover occurs in March or April.

### Calendar Dates

In the United States, dates are written as month/day/year. This is the opposite of the British method, in which dates are written day/month/year. So while 4/3/03 would be March 4, 2003 in Europe, it is April 3, 2003 in the United States. It is best to write out dates using the month name in order to avoid confusion.

### **Time and Temperature**

Temperatures are most often reported in Fahrenheit, and occasionally also in Celsius. To convert Fahrenheit to Celsius, subtract 32 and multiply the result by 5/9. The following table lists a few common temperatures:

<b>°F</b>	<b>°C</b>	<b>Description</b>
212	100	boiling point of water
98.6	37	normal body temperature
86	30	very hot summer day
72	22	room temperature
68	20	mild spring day
50	10	warm winter day
32	0	freezing point of water
20	-7	very cold winter day

Climate varies considerably across the United States. You will probably need an umbrella, even in Las Vegas or Los Angeles. In the northern cities, such as Boston, Chicago, Pittsburgh, New York, Seattle, Washington, Denver, and Minneapolis you will need cold weather and snow gear. In the southern states, such as California and Florida, summers may be very hot and the winters mild. In Virginia, temperatures during the summer will run from the 70s through the 90s, and in the winter from near Zero degrees to the 40s or 50s.

You will probably need a sweater or jacket for part of the year. Virginia often gets snow, so you will need a good winter coat, boots, and gloves. If the coat does not include a hood, you will need a hat that covers your ears. Clothing is relatively inexpensive in the U.S., and it may be easier to find appropriate clothing at your destination. Wait until you arrive, and watch what the natives wear.

The United States has four main time zones: Pacific Standard Time (PST), Mountain Standard Time (MST), Central Standard Time (CST), and Eastern Standard Time (EST). Virginia is in the Eastern Standard Time zone. During Daylight Savings Time clocks are set forward one hour. It begins on the first Sunday in April and ends on the last Sunday in October. The mnemonic "Spring Forward, Fall Back" will help you remember how to set your clocks.

## **Appendix I**

International Students: SEVIS Fact Sheet

## SEVIS Fact Sheet

Maintaining Your Immigration Status While A Student or Exchange Visitor  
([http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/sevis\\_english\\_fs.pdf](http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/sevis_english_fs.pdf))

This document is generated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

*The United States welcomes international students and exchange visitors who come to study in our nation. While you're enjoying your time in America, it is very important that you understand and comply with the requirement governing your stay to ensure that you don't jeopardize your immigration status.*

By maintaining immigration status and keeping school administrators and sponsoring officials well informed, students and exchange visitors residing in America have the opportunity to benefit from the outstanding academic and cultural programs of the United States.

Failing to maintain your status could result in serious consequences and may affect your ability to remain in or return to the United States. If you're an international student or exchange visitor studying in the United States, know your responsibilities.

### **Register with the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)**

SEVIS is the computerized system that collects and maintains information on the current status of non-immigrant students, exchange visitors, and their dependents during their stay in the United States.

Work with your designated school officials or exchange visitor responsible officers to ensure that your data in SEVIS is accurate and updated. In addition, these officials can help you better understand the requirements governing your immigration status and help you avoid making choices that might jeopardize your status.

### **Understand The Importance of Maintaining Your Status**

It's important for students and exchange visitors to understand the concept of immigration status and the consequences of violating that status. Being aware of the requirements and possible consequences will make it more likely that you can avoid problems with maintaining your status.

Every visa is issued for a particular purpose and for a specific class of visitor. Each visa classification has a set of requirements that the visa holder must follow and maintain. Those who follow the requirements maintain their status and ensure their ability to remain in the United States. Those who do not follow the requirements violate their status and are considered "out of status."

Failure to maintain status can result in arrest, and violators may be required to leave the United States. Violation of status also can affect the prospect of readmission to the United States for a period of time. Most people who violate the terms of their status are barred from lawfully returning to the United States for years.

### **Recognize and Avoid Status Violations**

By violating the requirements that govern your immigration status, you may jeopardize your ability to remain in the United States as a student or exchange visitor. Examples of violations include the following:

- Failure to enroll by the date specified by your school or exchange visitor program.
- Unauthorized employment during your stay.
- Failure to leave the United States following completion of your course, exchange visitor program, or program-related employment.
- For academic students (visa category F-1): Failure to maintain a full course load without prior authorization for a reduction from your designated school official.

Please note that this is not a complete listing of potential status violations. Check with your designated school official or exchange visitor responsible officer for more information.

**Note:** Non-immigrant students or exchange visitors who fall out of status for reasons beyond their control may be eligible to apply for a reinstatement of status. The student or exchange visitor must work with the school or program official to determine if reinstatement is an option.

SEVIS was established as part of ICE's objective to restore integrity to the immigration system. By more effectively managing status information on international students and exchange visitors in the United States, SEVIS plays a key role in ICE's homeland security mission while ensuring that all eligible international students and exchange visitors can experience the benefits of America's exceptional schools, educational programs, and cultural opportunities.

SEVIS's ongoing improvements begin with your comments and suggestions. Please contact the SEVP office with your concerns and feedback.

*By email:* SEVIS.Source@dhs.gov  
*By phone:* 1.800.892.4829 for the SEVIS Help Desk  
*By mail:* ICE/SEVP  
800 K. Street, NW  
Suite 1000  
Washington, D.C. 20536

## **Appendix II**

Extension of Optional Practical Training Program  
For Qualified Students

## Questions and Answers: Extension of Optional Practical Training Program for Qualified Students

### Regulations Relating to Practical Training:

#### What is optional practical training?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study. Under the prior rules, an F-1 student could be authorized to receive up to a total of 12 months of practical training either before (pre-) and/or after (post-) completion of studies.

- Pre-completion OPT:

An F-1 student may be authorized to participate in pre-completion OPT after he or she has been enrolled for one full academic year. The pre-completion OPT must be directly related to the student's major area of study. Students authorized to participate in pre-completion OPT must work part-time while school is in session. They may work full time when school is not in session.

- Post-completion OPT:

An F-1 student may be authorized to participate in post-completion OPT upon completion of studies. The post-completion OPT must be directly related to the student's major area of study.

#### What is the application process to participate in pre- or post-completion OPT?

- Students must initiate the process by requesting the Designated School Official (DSO) at their academic institution to recommend the OPT. The DSO makes such recommendation by endorsing the student's Form I-20 and by making appropriate notation in SEVIS, the system used to track F-1 students.
- Students then file Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization Document (EAD), with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). If approved, USCIS will issue an EAD to the student.
- The student may begin engaging in pre- or post-completion OPT only after an application has been approved and an EAD has been issued.

#### How many students stand to benefit from this interim final rule?

ICE records indicate that there are approximately 70,000 students currently in OPT and, of those, about 23,000 are studying in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (STEM) fields. Some of these students will be selected for an H-1B to start in October 2008. Others may choose to continue their education, while some will depart the United States. ICE and USCIS estimate that approximately 12,000 will take advantage of the STEM extension.

#### What is the maximum duration of post-completion OPT under this interim final rule?

Under the new rule, certain students will be eligible to receive a 17-month extension of post-completion OPT.

#### Do the periods of pre-completion OPT count against the available periods of post-completion OPT?

Yes. All periods of pre-completion OPT are deducted from the available periods of post-completion OPT.

**Are there fees associated with filing for extended OPT?**

Yes. USCIS charges \$380 when an applicant files a Form I-765 for optional practical training.

**When must a student apply for an OPT extension?**

- Under the prior regulations, F-1 students had to apply for post-completion OPT prior to graduation.
- This rule allows F-1 students seeking initial post-completion OPT to apply during their 60-day departure preparation periods in the same way that they are allowed to apply for a change to H-1B status during their departure preparation periods.
- Students may apply for an OPT extension at any time prior to the expiration date of their current OPT period.

**Is there additional post-completion OPT available to students working in the high-tech industry?**

- F-1 students who receive science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees included on the STEM Designated Degree Program List, are employed by employers enrolled in E-Verify, and who have received an initial grant of post-completion OPT related to such a degree, may apply for a 17-month extension.
- This extension of the OPT period for STEM degree holders gives U.S. employers two chances to recruit these highly desirable graduates through the H-1B process, as the extension is long enough to allow for H-1B petitions to be filed in two successive fiscal years.

**What are the eligible STEM degrees?**

- To be eligible for the 17-month OPT extension, a student must have received a degree included in the STEM Designated Degree Program List. This list sets forth eligible courses of study according to Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes developed by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).
- The STEM Designated Degree Program List includes the following courses of study:

o Computer Science Applications	o Biological and Biomedical Sciences
o Actuarial Science	o Mathematics and Statistics
o Engineering	o Military Technologies
o Engineering Technologies	o Physical Sciences
o Science Technologies	o Medical Scientist
- The STEM degree list is included in the preamble to the interim final rule and will be posted on the ICE website.
- Note that to be eligible for an OPT extension the student must currently be in an approved post-completion OPT period based on a designated STEM degree. Thus, for example, a student with an undergraduate degree in a designated STEM field, but currently in OPT based on a subsequent MBA degree, would not be eligible for an OPT extension.

**What are the eligibility requirements for the 17-month extension of post-completion OPT?**

- The student must have a bachelor's, master's, or doctorate degree included in the STEM Designated Degree Program List.
- The student must currently be in an approved post-completion OPT period based on a designated STEM degree.

- The student's employer must be enrolled in E-Verify.
- The student must apply on time (i.e., before the current post-completion OPT expires).

**What is the E-Verify program?**

- The E-Verify program is an Internet-based system operated by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA).
- The E-Verify program currently is the best means available for employers to determine employment eligibility of new hires and the validity of their Social Security Numbers.
- E-Verify electronically compares information contained on the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9 with records contained in SSA and DHS databases to help employers verify identity and employment eligibility of newly-hired employees.

**Is there a cost associated with employers participating in the E-Verify program?**

- No. E-Verify is a free, easy-to-use web-based system available to employers and in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

**What is the application process for the 17-month STEM extension?**

- The student files Form I-765 with USCIS, Form I-20 endorsed by the DSO, a copy of the STEM degree, and the required application fee.
- Form I-765 is being amended to require the student to indicate the degree and provide the employer's E-Verify information.
- If their post-completion OPT expires while the 17-month extension application is pending, students who timely filed their STEM extension applications with USCIS will receive an extension of employment authorization after their current employment authorization expires, but for no more than 180 days.

**What must a student do after being granted the 17-month STEM extension?**

- The student must report to his or her DSO (within 10 days) any change in:
  - Legal name;
  - Residential or mailing address;
  - E-mail address;
  - Employer name;
  - Employer address;
- The student must also report to his or her DSO every six months, confirming the information listed above; even if there have been no changes.
- The requirement to report continues if the student's 17-month STEM extension is extended further by the automatic cap-gap extension.

**Regulations Relating to F-1/H-1B Cap-Gap:**

**What is the H-1B cap?**

The cap is the congressionally-mandated limit on the number of individuals who may be granted H-1B status during each fiscal year. For FY08, the cap is 65,000, with certain statutory cap exemptions.

### **What is the F-1/H-1B “cap-gap”?**

Cap-gap occurs when an F-1 student’s status and work authorization expire in the current fiscal year before they can start their approved H-1B employment in the next fiscal year beginning on October 1. An F-1 student in a cap-gap situation would, in most cases, have to leave the United States and return at the time his or her H-1B status becomes effective at the beginning of the next fiscal year. Depending on when the student’s status expires, such circumstances could require the student to remain outside the United States for several months.

### **How does cap-gap occur?**

- Under the prior regulation (and unchanged by this rule), an employer may not file, and USCIS may not accept, an H-1B petition submitted earlier than six months in advance of the date of actual need for the beneficiary’s services or training.
- As a result, the earliest date that an employer can file an H-1B petition for consideration under the next fiscal year cap is April 1, for an October 1 employment start date. If that H-1B petition and the accompanying change-of-status request are approved, the earliest date that the student may start the approved H-1B employment is October 1.
- Consequently, F-1 students who are the beneficiaries of approved H-1B petitions with October 1 employment start dates, but whose periods of authorized stay (including authorized periods of post-completion OPT and the subsequent 60-day departure preparation period) expire before October 1, are in many cases required to leave the United States, apply for an H-1B visa at a consular post abroad, and then seek readmission to the United States in H-1B status.

### **What were the prior cap-gap regulations for F-1 students?**

- The prior regulations addressed the cap-gap problem by authorizing an extension of an F-1 student’s authorized stay, but they did not extend the student’s employment authorization. This extension was not automatic; a notice had to be published in the Federal Register announcing the extension.
- Under the prior regulations, when this Federal Register notice was published, the student’s authorized stay was extended, but not the employment authorization. This meant the student could remain in the United States until October 1, when the approved H-1B employment began, but could not work until then.
- If a Federal Register notice authorizing an extension was not published, affected students would in many cases be required to leave the United States, apply for an H-1B visa, and seek readmission to the United States in H-1B status.

### **How is the cap-gap situation changed under the interim final rule?**

- F-1 academic students on post-completion OPT maintain valid F-1 status until the expiration of their OPT. Once that OPT has ended, they are authorized to remain in the United States for up to 60 days to prepare for departure.
- Under this rule, the F-1 status of students is automatically extended when the student is the beneficiary of an H-1B petition for the next fiscal year (with an October 1 employment start date) filed on his or her behalf during the period in which H-1B petitions are accepted for that fiscal year.
- The automatic extension terminates when USCIS rejects, denies, or revokes the H-1B petition.

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- If the H-1B petition filed on behalf of the student is selected, the student may remain in the United States and, if on post-completion OPT, continue working until the October 1 start date indicated on the approved H-1B petition.
- The student may benefit from this provision only if he or she has not violated his or her status.

Last updated:04/10/2008

## **Appendix III**

### International Students: Social Security Fact Sheet

**International Students and Social Security Numbers**  
SSA Publication No. 05-10181, December 2007, [[View .pdf](#)], ([Español](#))

Are you temporarily in the United States to attend a college, language, vocational or nonacademic school with a nonimmigrant **F-1**, **M-1** or **J-1** student classification? Your school may ask you for your Social Security number. Some colleges and schools use Social Security numbers as student identification numbers. If you do not have a Social Security number, the college or school should be able to give you another identification number.

Social Security numbers are generally assigned to people who are authorized to work in the United States. Social Security numbers are used to report your wages to the government and to determine eligibility for Social Security benefits. Social Security will not assign you a number just to enroll in a college or school.

**What do I have to do to work in the United States?**

If you want to get a job on campus, you should contact your designated school official for international students. This official can tell you if you are eligible to work on campus and give you information about available jobs. Also, your school may approve certain limited off-campus employment, as permitted under Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations. **If your school has authorized you to work either on or off campus, and you meet Social Security's eligibility requirements described in the next section, you can get a Social Security number.**

**How do I apply for a Social Security Number?**

In general, only noncitizens who have permission to work from DHS can apply for a Social Security number. We suggest you wait until you are in the United States for at least 10 days before you apply for a Social Security number. Also, you should report to your school prior to applying for a number. Taking these actions will ensure we can verify your immigration status with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

To apply for a Social Security number:

- Complete an [Application For A Social Security Card](#) (Form SS-5); and
- Show us original documents proving your:
  - Immigration status;
  - Work eligibility;
  - Age; and
  - Identity.
- Take your completed application and original documents to your local Social Security office.

**Immigration status**

To prove your immigration status, you must show us the current U.S. immigration document, I-94, *Arrival/Departure Record*, issued to you when you arrived in the United States. If you are an F-1 or M-1 student, you also must show us your I-20, *Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status*. If you are a J-1 exchange visitor, you must show us your DS-2019, *Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status*.

**Work eligibility**

If you are an F-1 student and eligible to work on campus, you must provide a letter from your designated school official that:

- Identifies you;
- Confirms your current school status; and
- Identifies your employer and the type of work you are, or will be, doing.

We also need to see evidence of that employment, such as a recent pay slip or a letter from your employer. Your supervisor must sign and date the employment letter. This letter must describe:

- Your job;
- Your employment start date;
- The number of hours you are, or will be, working; and
- Your supervisor's name and telephone number.

If you are an F-1 student authorized to work in curricular practical training (CPT), you must provide us your Form I-20 with the employment page (page 3) completed and signed by your school's designated official.

If you are an F-1 or M-1 student and have an *Employment Authorization Document* (EAD Form I-766 or I-688B) from DHS, you must present it.

If you are a J-1 student, you must provide a letter from your sponsor. The letter should be on sponsor letterhead with an original signature that authorizes your employment.

We cannot process your application if:

- Your on-campus or CPT work begins more than 30 days from your application date; or
- The employment start date on your EAD Form I-766 or I-688B is a future date.

### **Age**

You must present your birth certificate if you have it or can easily obtain it. If not, we can consider other documents, such as your passport or a document issued by DHS, to prove your age.

### **Identity**

We can accept only certain documents as proof of identity. An acceptable document must be current (not expired) and show your name, identifying information and preferably a recent photograph.

Social Security will ask to see your current U.S. immigration documents. Acceptable immigration documents include your:

- Form I-551 (includes machine-readable immigrant visa with your unexpired foreign passport);
- I-94 with your unexpired foreign passport; or
- Work permit card from DHS (I-766 or I-688B).

***All documents must be either originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. We cannot accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents.*** We also cannot accept a receipt showing you applied for the document. We may use one document for two purposes. For example, we may use your DHS work permit as proof of both work eligibility and identity. ***However, you must provide at least two separate documents.***

### **Do I need a Social Security number before I start working?**

We do not require you to have a Social Security number before you start work. However, the [Internal Revenue Service](#) requires employers to report wages using a Social Security number. While you wait for your Social Security number, your employer can use a letter from us stating that you applied for a number. Your employer may use your immigration documents as proof of your authorization to work in the United States. Employers can find more information on the Internet at [www.socialsecurity.gov/employer/hiring.htm](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/employer/hiring.htm).

### **Contacting Social Security**

Our website is a valuable resource for information about all of Social Security's programs. There are a number of [things you can do online](#).

In addition to using our website, you can call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213**. We treat all calls confidentially. We can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday.

We can provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day. (You can use our automated response system to tell us a new address or request a replacement Medicare card.) If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you may call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**.

We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some telephone calls.

## **Appendix IV**

### **Campus Safety Plans**

## **CAMPUS SAFETY PLANS**

Hampden-Sydney College strives always to maintain a safe campus. Nonetheless, there is always the possibility that a crisis will arise as a result of a natural or man-made disaster. In such instances, the College will take steps to maintain the safety of students, faculty, and staff members, and to keep parents, alumni, and friends informed of actions the College is taking to respond to whatever situation arises.

### **CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN/PROCEDURES**

A crisis incident is something that poses and immediate risk to or has already affected the safety, health, and well-being of the Hampden-Sydney College campus community. It can also be an event or series of events that has made it difficult for campus programs to continue.

- A. Emergencies that may require the cancellation or suspension of campus programs and may require students to exit the campus include:
  - 1. Terrorist activity on the campus or areas contingent to campus.
  - 2. Wide-spread civil unrest or declaration of martial law.
  - 3. A breakdown in civil authority.
- B. Situations that may require the Emergency Plan to go into effect are:
  - 1. Shooting of firearms or other weapons on campus with the apparent intent of causing harm to others.
  - 2. Natural disasters
  - 3. Other unexpected tragedies

### **Procedures**

In the event of crisis incident, the CIM team will determine if the crisis is real, perceived or potential, and determine the type of response required. If the CIM team determines that the crisis is real, the campus will be notified and appropriate steps in response to the crisis will be initiated.

### **Emergency Notification**

In the event of an emergency, the campus will be notified via several means:

- 1. A text message will be sent to student, faculty, and staff cell phones that have registered their number with the H-SC Emergency Notification System.
- 2. A message will be sent to all H-SC email addresses.
- 3. If deemed appropriate, a message will be broadcast from the Veneble Hall carillon.
- 4. If deemed appropriate, campus police will drive around campus using a loudspeaker to broadcast the message.
- 5. Resident advisers will be contacted and then help spread the message to their residents.
- 6. A message will be posted to the home page of the College web site with instructions for steps individuals should take.

7. A message will be posted to the employee emergency notification number (223-7001).

### **Other steps**

- The Chief of Campus Police, as appropriate, will contact other law enforcement agencies.
- Campus Police or Health Center personnel will contact the Volunteer Rescue Squad, Davis Ambulance, and Centra Southside Community Hospital to alert them and engage their assistance, as appropriate.
- The two entrances to campus will be sealed if circumstances warrant.
- The student gun lockers will be immediately locked down as circumstances warrant.
- Once the crisis has passed, messages will be sent again to notify the campus and to assure that all are aware of necessary information in follow-up.

### **SAFETY ALERT FOR TORNADO WATCH**

1. When the sky begins to look ominous and you anticipate that there is a storm approaching, tune-in to a LOCAL television station for possible severe storm advisories. The local channels that carry weather alerts for our area are channels 6, 8, and 12. The Weather Channel (cable 19) also carries these. Also, most local radio stations carry the National Weather Service Warnings.
2. If there is a TORNADO WATCH in effect, stay tuned for further information. This means that conditions are favorable for the development of tornadoes.  
A TORNADO WARNING means that a tornado has been seen in the designated area and that people in that area should seek appropriate shelter immediately. You may have only a matter of seconds or, at most, minutes to get to your sheltered area; therefore, think ahead and know where you would go in this emergency.
3. Appropriate shelter means going into an interior room on the lowest level of a building. Basements are best. Ideally, you should try to be in a small, interior room (or protected area) without windows or exterior doors. The smaller the room the better, as there is less ceiling to fall.  
Note: Large structures with wide expanses of flat floor are not considered safe.
4. Once you have reached your shelter, crouch down and cover your head.
5. At night or in heavy rain, the only clue to a tornado's presence may be a roar. Thunderstorms can also produce dangerous winds that produce a similar sound. If you hear any loud, roaring sounds during threatening weather, it is best to take cover immediately.
6. If you are outside and absolutely cannot get inside shelter, find the lowest ground you can (a roadside ditch, for instance) and lie flat as you can.

These are suggestions from the Safety Committee of Hampden-Sydney College.