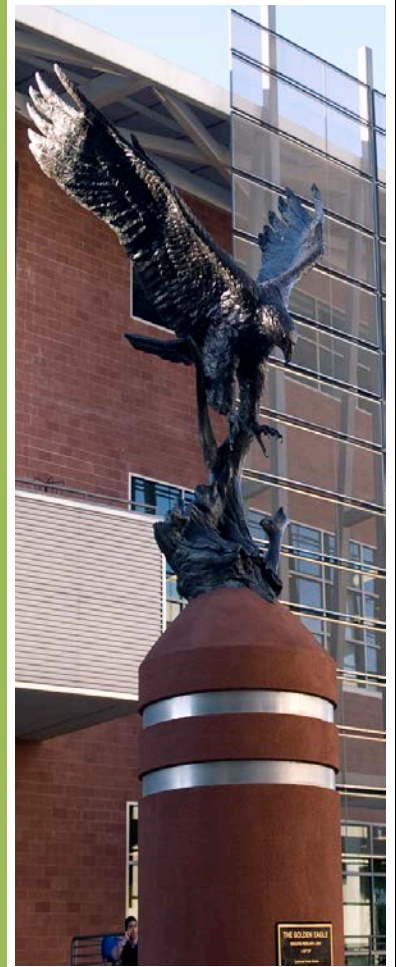


# International Student Pre-Arrival Handbook

International Office

College of Extended Studies and International Programs



2011

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# Welcome to CSULA

Congratulations on your admission to California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA). We are pleased to welcome you to the Cal State L.A. family. We look forward to working with you to maximize the benefits of your F-1/J-1 international student status, and helping you to achieve your academic goals as an international student at CSULA.

The International Office is an office that provides immigration counseling to the international students and faculty members at CSULA. Our staff is well trained to meet the needs of our international students. We are focused on helping you to maintain a legal status and adjusting to your new life in the U.S.

Our role on the campus community is to provide assistance to you. If you have questions about visa, employment, or travel feel free to contact one of our staff members.

In order to maximize the time you spent at CSULA and in the U.S., we recommend the following to you:

- Read this booklet carefully
- Get to know the International Office staff
- Ask questions and seek advice from the International Office, classmates, friends, faculty and others you meet on campus
- Attend class and study daily
- Utilize the services offered by Student Affairs Services and your academic department
- Converse with your professors both inside and outside of class
- Seek advice from your academic advisor
- Participate with American and other international students
- Travel to different parts of the U.S. during vacation periods.

We wish you all the best and look forward to greeting you upon your arrival at Cal State L.A.



# Visa Requirements

1. Upon receipt of your I-20 (F-1) or DS-2019 (J-1), schedule an appointment with the nearest U.S. Consulate for a visa interview as soon as possible. Click here for a list of U.S. Embassies or Consulates worldwide: [www.usembassy.gov/](http://www.usembassy.gov/).
2. Contact your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate for instructions on how to apply for a student visa. Read all the instructions carefully.
3. Pay the Form I-901 (SEVIS) Fee before the visa appointment. Instructions on payment methods are available at: [www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm). You can pay online (recommended) or by mail. Attach the payment receipt to your visa application.
4. You will need to complete the following forms for your visa application:
  - DS-156 Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form
  - DS-158 Contact Information and Work History for Nonimmigrant Visa Applicant
  - If you are a male between the ages of 16 and 45, DS-157 Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application
5. Prepare the following documents to take with you to the visa interview:
  - A passport valid for at least six months
  - Form I-20 or DS-2019
  - School admission letter
  - Completed visa application forms
  - 2" x 2" inch photographs in the prescribed format
  - A receipt for the visa application fee
  - A receipt for the I-901 (SEVIS) fee
  - Financial evidence that shows you have sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period of your program.
  - Any information that proves that you will return to your home country after finishing your studies in the United States. This may include proof of property, family or other ties to your community.
6. Remain calm and speak clearly during the interview.

# Traveling to CSULA

There are two international airports near CSULA:

- Los Angeles International Airport: [www.lawa.org/welcomelax.aspx](http://www.lawa.org/welcomelax.aspx)
- LA/Ontario International Airport: [www.lawa.org/welcomeont.aspx](http://www.lawa.org/welcomeont.aspx)

If you are making a connected flight from another city to Los Angeles, make certain you allocate sufficient time in between flights in case of delay.

From the airport, there are several local transportation options to get to the campus:

- ISI Greater LA provides free airport pickup: [www.isi-greaterla.org/pages/](http://www.isi-greaterla.org/pages/)
- SuperShuttle: [www.supershuttle.com](http://www.supershuttle.com)
- Prime Time Shuttle: [www.primetimeshuttle.com](http://www.primetimeshuttle.com)
- Shuttle2LAX: [www.shuttle2lax.com](http://www.shuttle2lax.com)

Reservation with the ISI Greater LA is required, and reservation is highly recommended for the other companies. Prices vary depending on your final destination from the airport.

Prior to traveling to the U.S., you must make temporary housing accommodations. If you have a room confirmation from the University Housing Services, you may contact them to arrange an earlier move-in date. You will need to provide an address where you will be living upon entry into the U.S.

## Weather Conditions

The weather in Los Angeles is generally mild with very few days of extreme temperatures. Listed is a range of temperatures in Los Angeles to guide you in your packing.

<u>Month</u>	<u>Average High</u>	<u>Average Low</u>
February-May	75F/24C	50F/10C
June-September	85F/29C	61F/22C
October-November	73F/23C	53F/12C
December-January	69F/21C	48F/9C



## Packing

When you travel, you should carry some specific documents on your person. Do not check them in your baggage. If your baggage is lost or delayed, you will not be able to show the documents to the Customs and Border Protection Officer and may not be able to enter the United States. In addition, do not pack fresh fruit, produce, meat, prepared food, spices, or plants. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers will not allow you to bring these items into the country.

Do not check the following documents in your baggage:

- ✓ Passport with nonimmigrant visa.
- ✓ SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019.
- ✓ Visa exempt nationals entering the United States for the first time should have a Form I-797, Receipt Notice or Internet Receipt verifying SEVIS Fee payment. For additional SEVP/SEVIS Program Information, refer to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement website at [www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/students/index.htm](http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/students/index.htm).
- ✓ Evidence of financial resources.

Recommended documents to also carry with you:

- ✓ Admission letter.
- ✓ Name and contact information for Designated School Official (DSO) or Responsible Officer (RO) at your intended school or program.

Do not feel necessary to pack everything you think you need. You can purchase toiletries and other necessities in the U.S. inexpensively. You need only bring sufficient amount for first couple of weeks until you can locate stores near you. Check baggage limits with your airline or travel agent so that you are aware of the limits and fees for exceeding it.

## At the Airport

If you are traveling by aircraft, the flight attendants on board will distribute CF-6059 Customs Declaration Form and Form I-94, Arrival-Departure Record for immigration, before you land at your initial point-of-entry in the U.S. Complete these forms while you are on the aircraft and submit them to the appropriate Customs and Border Protection Officer upon your arrival. **If you do not understand a form, ask the flight attendant for assistance.**



Upon arrival at the port-of- entry, proceed to the terminal for arriving passengers for inspection. As you approach the inspection station, **ensure you have** your passport, SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019; completed Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record and, CF-6059 Customs Declaration Form available for presentation to the CBP Officer. The Form I-94 should reflect the address where you will reside (not the address of the school or program sponsor).

If you are entering through a land or designated seaport, the Customs and Border Protection Officer will provide the necessary CF-6059, Customs Declaration Form and Form I-94, Arrival-Departure Record at the port-of-entry. If you do not understand a form, ask the CBP Officer for assistance.

Like all entering visitors, you will be asked for the reason of your visit. You will also be asked to provide information about your final destination. It is important to tell the CBP Officer that you will be a student or exchange visitor. Be prepared to include the name and address of the school or exchange visitor program where you will enroll/participate.

Once your inspection is complete, the inspecting officer will:

- Stamp your SEVIS Form for duration of status (“D/S”) for F and J visa holders;
- Stamp the Form I-94 and staple it in the passport;
- Return the SEVIS Form.

For more information, visit the U.S. Customs and Border Protection at [www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/clearing/traveler\\_entry\\_form/](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/clearing/traveler_entry_form/).

Once you have passed through customs, place your passport and SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019 securely into your bag or pocket. It is easy to lose your documents in a busy airport. Lost documents are very difficult to replace.

Pay special attention to the I-94 card. It shows that a nonimmigrant has been legally admitted to the United States, the class of admission (F-1/J-1), and the authorized period of stay. It is very important that the information on the form is correct. This information is entered into a system that shows arrival and departure information. Inconsistencies between the information on the Form I-94 and SEVIS records can reduce the chances of a successful systems interface. In particular, this can cause issues with status verification for Social Security numbers and driver licenses.

# Housing

## On-Campus

Newly admitted students can apply for on-campus housing. You must also be enrolled as a full-time student in order to pick up keys and move in. To apply for housing, you will need to submit an online application and make the initial payment. Apply as soon as possible as space is limited.

Application is available at University Housing Services: [www.calstatela.edu/univ/housing/](http://www.calstatela.edu/univ/housing/). You will also find information about application deadlines, costs, and housing style.

## Off-Campus

The International Office has provided some general tips on how and where to search for off-campus housing. You can view the information at [www.calstatela.edu/international](http://www.calstatela.edu/international).

If you plan to live off-campus, it is important to start your search early as it takes time to find the right accommodations that fit into your budget.

## Temporary Housing

You should arrange for temporary housing prior to your arrival in the U.S. You want to know where you will go from the airport. The International Office Housing Resources provides information for temporary accommodations near the campus.

# Money Matters

As an international student, you are required to show proof of financial support for the amounts listed on your I-20 or DS-2019. This is an approximate cost of attending CSULA. The amount will be different based on each individual's spending habits.

There are multiple payment methods acceptable in the U.S.: cash, credit card, and bank checks. Credit card is most commonly used amongst Americans. If you plan to use your credit cards in the U.S., notify the credit card company that you will move to the U.S. Often times, credit card companies will put transactions on hold that are out of the ordinary, such as new locations or unusual amounts. If you plan to use your credit card to pay for tuition, make certain the limit is over US\$5000.

Even if you do have credit cards, you should plan to have at least US\$1000 in traveler's checks and a small amount of US dollars for immediate use. It will take time for you to open and transfer funds into a new bank account.

If you plan to live off-campus, be prepared to have an additional US\$3000 in traveler's checks available. Most landlords require an extra month of deposit plus first month rent to move in. Since you will not have a credit history, you may be required to pay extra deposits. In addition, you will need to pay deposits to open utility accounts (gas, electricity, phone, etc.).



# Academic Honesty Policy

An important value of American higher education is that students and the society need to be vigilantly protected. Cheating and plagiarism can be neither justified nor condoned, as this would destroy the ideals and purposes of higher education. Students enter the University to gain the knowledge and tools necessary for participation in society. Academic integrity is one foundation for a society based on trust and honesty. Therefore, the University takes seriously its responsibility for academic honesty. The Judicial Affairs Office is the administering entity for academic honesty. If you have any questions, please contact them at 323-343-3103, Student Affairs Building #117, [www.calstatela.edu/univ/stuaffrs/jao/](http://www.calstatela.edu/univ/stuaffrs/jao/).

Violations of CSULA's academic policy include:

- Cheating – that is attempting to obtain credit for academic work through the use of any dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means.
- Plagiarism – any use of the ideas, words, or work of another person or persons as if they were your own, without giving proper credit to the original sources.
- Misrepresentation – knowingly furnishing false academic information to a University official, faculty member, or campus office.
- Collusion – any student who intentionally helps another study perform cheating, plagiarism or misrepresentation.
- Fabrication – using made-up information or sources in an academic exercise.
- Forgery – knowingly using another person's signature in an academic exercise or document.
- Destruction – knowingly removing, destroying or concealing academic materials belonging to the University, faculty, staff or students.
- Solicitation – asking another to assist in an act of cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, forgery or destruction related to an academic exercise, document or record, or offering to do so for another.

If a student is found to have violated the academic honesty policy, the student may be considered as not meeting some portion or all of the academic requirements of a course resulting in a failing grade. The incident may also be forwarded for administrative sanctions which can include: expulsion, suspension, probation, withdrawal of a degree or restitution. Please see the CSULA Academic Honesty policy for more details: [www.calstatela.edu/univ/stuaffrs/jao/](http://www.calstatela.edu/univ/stuaffrs/jao/).

# Medical Insurance Requirement

Health insurance coverage is a condition of enrollment at CSULA. Failure to purchase health insurance can result in placing a registration hold on your records. International students will not be permitted to register for classes until the International Office has received verification that they have purchased the mandatory health insurance.

In the U.S., individuals are responsible for paying for any health care they receive, a notable difference from the perspective of other countries. Therefore, it is essential that anyone spending time in the United States purchase health insurance.

There are two options for purchasing the required health insurance.

## **Option #1: CSU-sponsored Insurance**

The CSULA required health insurance plan may be purchased online using a credit card at: [www.csuhealthlink.com](http://www.csuhealthlink.com).

## **Option #2: Private Health Insurance**

You can use your private health insurance; however the policy of your health insurance must meet the minimum requirements described by CSULA's health insurance. If you want to waive university insurance, complete the waiver request online at [www.csuhealthlink.com](http://www.csuhealthlink.com) or go to the waiver page directly. If your policy meets the criteria described CSULA's health insurance, the International Office will be notified by the next business day and the hold will be waived.

## **Student Health Center Vaccination Clearance**

All international students are required to provide proof of the following immunization/vaccinations to the CSULA Student Health Center:

- Measles and Rubella (M/R) Immunizations – laboratory confirmation of Measles and Rubella immunity may be submitted in lieu of proof of vaccination
- Hepatitis B Immunizations – laboratory confirmation may be submitted in lieu of proof of immunization
- Tuberculosis (TB) – written proof of a negative test (Mantoux) or chest x-ray, taken within one year of your GET registration date

Students will not be able to register for a second quarter until these requirements have been completed.

Should you need to have immunizations updated through the Health Center, processing of your records could take up to three working days. Therefore, please plan ahead to clear this registration hold. Failure to do so may cause considerable delay in your eligibility to register for classes. More detailed information can be found at [www.calstatela.edu/univ/hlth\\_ctr](http://www.calstatela.edu/univ/hlth_ctr).



## SEVIS Check-In

You must report to the International Office in CSULA within 30 days of your entry into United States or by the first week of classes, whichever is earlier. This is mandatory for all new students, including transfer students from another U.S. institution. Failure to do so may result in termination of your I-20 and F-1 status.

You are required to bring the following original documents with you to check-in:

- Passport
- I-94 card
- CSULA I-20 or Form DS-2019
- Form I-20(s) or Form DS-2019(s) of your dependents (spouse and children), if applicable

## International Student Orientation

Attendance at the International Student Orientation is mandatory for all new students, including transfer-in students from another U.S. institution. The orientation fee is a non-refundable \$60.00. If you attended the University Orientation, you are still required to attend the International Student Orientation as we cover issues related to immigration regulations, visa status and so on. To register for the International Student Orientation, please go to [www.calstatela.edu/international](http://www.calstatela.edu/international).

For the students who are already in the U.S., you are recommended to attend the University Orientation as the attendees are granted earlier registration dates. This gives you the opportunity to enroll in classes prior to the open enrollment period. With limited courses available, an earlier enrollment date will help secure full time enrollment as required of your immigration status.

# Pre-Arrival Checklist

- ✓ Pay the Form I-901 (SEVIS) fee before the visa appointment
- ✓ Apply for your F-1 or J-1 Visa
- ✓ Confirm that your passport and nonimmigrant visa are still valid for entry into the U.S.
- ✓ Prepare for travel to the U.S.
- ✓ Prepare Your Finances
- ✓ Plan for Housing
- ✓ Purchase mandatory health insurance
- ✓ Provide Vaccination and Immunization information to Student Health Center
- ✓ Register for Orientation
- ✓ Complete SEVIS Check-in at International Office

