

Lewis University

International Students and Scholars Information Handbook

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WELCOME

Welcome to Lewis University! We are looking forward to meeting you and having you join our Community. We want your stay at Lewis to be academically rewarding and personally fulfilling.

This booklet is designed to help answer your questions about coming to the U.S. to study at Lewis University. It will help you to:

- 1) do a bit of planning,
- 2) know what to expect once you arrive, and
- 3) learn more about what your life will be like at Lewis.

Please read it carefully, as it contains many useful points of information for you.

If you have questions, please contact us. Our contact information is below.

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For all student services questions, please contact:

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I. BEFORE YOU ARRIVE: PREPARING TO MOVE TO LEWIS UNIVERSITY

Deciding on Housing

Living on Campus

Once you submit a housing application with a deposit, the Office of Residence Life will assign you to one of the Lewis University residence halls. Students normally reserve a room for a year at a time, and may continue their residency in following years.

Residence hall rooms are furnished with beds, desks, chairs, closets, microwave ovens, and small refrigerators. Laundry facilities are free, and wall connections for telephones, cable television and free Internet hookups are standard. Students must furnish sheets, blankets, pillows, towels, and any other amenities (e.g., lamps, wall pictures, radios, etc.). However, for students traveling from another country, it is often inconvenient to carry these things in luggage.

Living off-Campus

Many students and scholars at Lewis reside off campus, renting apartments or houses. Some students choose to spend their first semester or year in the Lewis residence halls. Then when they feel familiar with the area, they find off-campus housing, sometimes sharing with friends. Some advantages of off-campus housing include readier access to the community, possibly lower housing expense, and the ability to do one's own cooking. Some disadvantages include the expense of owning a car (which is a necessity, since public transportation to Lewis University and elsewhere is very limited - see the *Transportation* section of this booklet), and the distance from on-campus students and Lewis daytime or evening events. If you decide to live in off-campus housing, we recommend that you wait until you arrive at Lewis to arrange your housing. Off-campus housing considerations will be discussed in more detail later in this handbook.

Besides living in apartments, another off-campus option to consider is living in a homestay. Lewis University has recently partnered with an organization to provide you the opportunity to live with a family while you are here. American Homestay Network is a homestay management company that places international students with local host families. International students have a truly American experience by living with a qualified host family. American Homestay Network offers a number of host living environments – students may be paired with singles, retirees, traditional families, and single parents with children or high school age children.

The service conducts extensive screening, training and background checks on all host families to provide students with a safe and secure living environment. No contracts are necessary. Apply online at www.homestaynetwork.com.

Considering Medical Insurance and Immunizations

Medical Insurance

The costs of medical treatment in the U.S.A. are extremely high. **Lewis University requires that you obtain medical insurance of at least the minimum of \$10,000 for each injury** to cover the cost of medical treatments. The **maximum** you should consider carry with you must be equal to or greater than **\$25,000 for the year**. You may use medical insurance from your country if your company has a U.S.-based office. Or, you may purchase International Students Health Insurance offered through Lewis. If you provide your own medical insurance, you must give proof of coverage with a copy of the type of coverage or a letter from an authorized agent of the insurance company. If the company has an American counterpart, we request the name of a contact person and a phone number. This

information must be in English.

Students must inform the International Student Services (ISS) office of their choice within the first week of school. Please note that you will automatically be billed for the Lewis International Students Health Insurance plan along with your semester fees:

- 1) If you do not have insurance, or
- 2) If you do not have sufficient coverage, or
- 3) If ISS does not receive the required information on first week of school.

J Visa Exchange Visitor Program participants are required to obtain the Lewis University health insurance to ensure that the coverage meets the program's requirements.

International Student Immunization Policy

The Illinois Immunization Law requires all incoming students to have proof of their immunization on file at the Center for Health and Counseling Services. This law pertains to you if you are:

1. Born after January 1, 1957, and
2. Take 6 or more credits a semester on the Romeoville Campus (including graduate, readmitted or transfer students).

If you fit these criteria, you must present Lewis University with copies of your immunization records showing you have received the following immunizations:

1. Measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR), received after 1 year of age.
2. A second measles vaccine, received after 1 year of age.
3. Three or more doses of Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (DTP) vaccine; or Diphtheria and Tetanus (DT) or Tetanus and Diphtheria (Td) vaccine, with the most recent dose having been received within 10 years.

A physician must certify all immunization records.

If you are not absolutely certain that you can show documentation of the above immunizations, you should contact your private physician for updates. The Center for Health and Counseling Services also offers free immunizations to assist you. Medical and religious exemptions are acceptable, but you must discuss your request for an exemption with the director of the Center.

Lewis must receive all immunization records at least one month before the start of the semester. Please note that fines will be assessed to all students who do not come into compliance before the end of the student's first semester. Students must pay all fines. These fines will escalate each semester of continued non-compliance. In addition, grades may be withheld and the Illinois Department of Public Health can demand refusal of class registration for the following semester.

Tuberculosis Testing

Tuberculosis (TB) is a communicable disease with potentially serious, long-lasting consequences if not treated. Because TB rates are on the rise in many parts of the world, the Center for Health and Counseling Services requests that all international students take a TB skin test (there is no charge for this test). TB can be treated and Health and Counseling Services can assist you if you have been exposed or are infected by TB. Please take advantage of the free TB tests offered there.

Budgeting Your Money

It is a good idea at the beginning of your stay to **carefully plan a budget for your first semester and first year, and assume a similar budget for all the years you will be at Lewis**. List the actual amounts of your costs, though some must be estimated. These will include your fixed costs (initial one-time costs and periodic costs which occur every month or semester). Subtract the total of these costs from your total amount of money for the year, and this will tell you how much "discretionary money" you have left to spend on a monthly basis.

Budget conservatively and realistically. It is better to plan for and expect higher costs, and have some funds remaining at the end of a year, than **not** to plan realistically and find you have insufficient funds.

Here are some things you should consider when budgeting for your first year:

Books and supplies: \$300 - \$500 is a typical cost range for semester. Books for graduate courses, or for technical courses (e.g., nursing) may be more expensive on the average than other books. Remember also paper, pens, flash drives, and similar items.

Housing and Food: Calculate residence hall costs plus a meal plan, or calculate rent (possible other services like electricity, water, etc.) plus the cost of food purchases.

Personal items: Bedding and towels, shampoo, soap, toothpaste, contact lens solutions, and similar items.

Household items: Laundry soap, light bulbs, kitchen and bathroom cleaners, etc.

Postage and telephone costs: You will wish to maintain contact with your family and friends.

Insurance: Health and medical insurance, car insurance, personal item insurance if you keep valuables (sometimes called "renter's insurance").

Clothing: If you do not already have clothing for the various seasons, plan to do some clothes shopping.

Entertainment: An occasional night out with friends, restaurants, sightseeing, museums.

Transportation: If you purchase a car, note that there are additional costs for insurance, gas, periodic maintenance, and possibly occasional repairs. If you plan to return home during holidays, factor in travel costs.

Gifts and souvenirs: You will undoubtedly wish to get a few gifts and souvenirs for family and friends.

Travel: While you are in the United States, consider some travel either in the Midwest area or beyond. Travel is educational, and you will find it valuable to travel beyond the Chicago area.

Wire Transfer Money to the United States

It is a good idea to plan how and when you will transport your money to the United States. You will wish to have sufficient funds available to meet your immediate needs on arrival, and for the first several weeks of your stay. You may wish to have about \$100 in U.S. currency when you arrive for any immediate needs.

It is not a good idea to carry large amounts of cash. It is safer to transport your money as traveler's checks. Within the first few days of your arrival at Lewis, a representative of the Office of International Student Services will assist you to open a bank account. You may open a checking account for routine needs, and if you wish, a savings account for keeping larger amounts of money for long-term needs. We recommend using only those banks which are members of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). These banks insure all bank accounts up to \$100,000.

If you prefer, you can wire your funds from your home country to the United States by depositing your funds at Lewis University's account operated by JP Morgan Chase. *The transaction usually takes from 7 – 10 business days.*

Bank: JP Morgan Chase
Account Number: 713437754
Routing Number: 021000021

Packing Your Luggage: What to Bring

Luggage Restrictions

International airlines generally permit:

- A) One (1) carry-on bag whose measurements (heights, width, and depth) do not to exceed 45 total inches. Women may carry their purses in addition to the carry-on bag.
- B) Two (2) pieces of checked luggage. Neither bag may exceed a total of 62 inches, nor may the combined inches of the two bags exceed 107 total inches.

Restrictions on luggage may vary between airline carriers. It is best to confirm restrictions directly with your assigned airline before departure. Be sure your suitcases are sturdy and can be locked. An extra set of keys is a good idea, but do not leave them in your luggage. Be sure to place your name and address on the outside and inside of each piece of luggage, including carry- on bags.

If you need an address in the United States, you can use:

International Student Services
Lewis University
One University Parkway #280
Romeoville, IL 60445-2200
USA

Temperatures and Clothing

Lewis University is located in Illinois, part of the U.S. Midwest, and there are four seasons: Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter

Sometimes winter temperatures can go down to -20 ° Fahrenheit or -30 ° Fahrenheit, but this is rare and doesn't last long. You may already have appropriate clothing for these varying temperatures. However, if you do not have proper clothing for the different seasons, please be prepared to purchase these necessary items. International Student Services can offer advice and assist you with shopping.

Plan to bring those articles of clothing which you will wear more than once and which travel well. Simple, basic clothes are absolutely right for the greatest number of occasions. Note that the Midwest is fairly conservative in clothing styles. Students manage well with casual clothing for classes. Pack clothes that are easy to care for, quick to dry, and wrinkle-resistant.

Here is a general list of suitable clothing for college students, adapted from Lewis University – International Student Service

Men	Women
1 pair athletic shoes	1 pair athletic shoes
1 pair dress shoes	1 pair dress shoes
1 pair casual shoes	1 pair casual shoes
1 pair heavy, warm shoes	1 pair heavy, warm shoes
5 t-shirts, 5 casual shirts	5-10 blouses or sweaters
3+ pairs jeans	3+ pairs of jeans
2+ pairs casual pants	2+ pairs casual pants
2+ sweaters	2+ sweaters
Coat/tie and dress pants/shirt	Dress clothes (dresses, skirts, blouses, etc.)
Swim suit	Swim suit
12 pair's socks	12 pair's socks
Lined jacket/outer coat	Lined jacket/outer coat
1 heavy winter coat	1 heavy winter coat
Native dress	Native Dress

In addition, you may wish to bring prescription medications (be sure to use the original container with the doctor's information on it), or medications that you are accustomed to for specific health problems. "Over the-counter" or drugstore medications for minor ailments are readily available. People who wear glasses or contact lenses should bring an extra pair of eyewear and the prescription, in case eyewear needs to be replaced.

What NOT To Pack

- Prescription medication that does not have the prescription from a doctor or pharmacy clearly labeled on it.
- Anything which could be considered an offensive weapon under the law, i.e., mace, hunting knife, etc.
- Heavy books which are not absolutely essential.
- Large bottles of shampoo or other cosmetic items, (just enough to get you through the first week or so is sufficient).
- Glass containers of any kind. Transfer liquids and other items to plastic containers.

Anticipating Duties and Tariffs When You Return Home

You will wish to plan ahead for your return to your home country. Upon your re-entry to your country, you will declare your purchases and perhaps pay duties. If you bring such items as cameras and laptop computers to the United States, especially if foreign-made, you may need to register these items with the customs service of your country to avoid paying duty on your return. Learn about the customs requirements and restrictions of your country before you leave home.

Learning About the Chicago Area Before You Travel

Local Area Web Sites

Lewis University is located in Romeoville, adjacent to the cities of Joliet and Lockport, and near the city

of Naperville. Here are some web sites to acquaint you with the area immediately around Lewis University.

City of Joliet Home Page:
<http://www.cityofjoliet.info/>

More on the Joliet community:
<http://www.jolietillinois.com/>
http://cityguides.addresses.com/city_guides/Joliet/IL.html

City of Lockport Home Page:
<http://www.lockport.org/>

Illinois & Michigan Canal visitor centers, events, map:
www.nps.gov/ilmi/index.htm

Illinois & Michigan Canal Virtual Tour - video footage, historical pictures:
<http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/i&m/main.htm>

City of Naperville:
www.naperville.il.us/

Chicago Web Sites

Lewis University is about 45 minutes by car from downtown Chicago. You can do some exploration of this famous city by exploring these web sites.

City of Chicago Home Page - art, architecture, festivals, museums, parades, restaurants, theaters:
<http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/webportal/home.do>

Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce:
<http://www.chicagolandchamber.org/home.asp>

Chicago Tribune - weather, traffic, news, events:
www.chicago.tribune.com/

The Chicago Public Library - history, symbols, sites A-Z, facts about Chicago:
<http://www.chipublib.org/>

Chicago Historical Society Home Page - history, programs and events, exhibitions, collections:
<http://www.chicagohistory.org/>

II. WHEN YOU LEAVE: TRAVELING TO THE UNITED STATES

Plan to Arrive One Week Before

We require new international students and scholars to arrive on campus one week before a semester begins. This allows us to help you get many daily life matters settled. It also allows you to get accustomed to your “new home” at Lewis. Then you may start your classes with everything in good order.

Notify the Admission Office and International Services of Your Travel Plans

Please give our Admission Office exact arrival information at least one week before arriving: Airline and flight number, day and time of arrival. If you have last-minute changes in your travel plans, please alert us! This will ensure that we can meet you at the airport. You may provide this information at feketemi@lewisu.edu or zhouyi@lewisu.edu

Bringing Your Documents

Be sure to keep your passport, immigration paperwork, and any other important documents with you on the plane. **Do not pack them in baggage** which will be separated from you as you travel and go through U.S. Customs. You must give your passport and immigration paperwork to the U.S. Customs agent before you collect your baggage.

Arriving at O'Hare International Airport (or Your First U.S. Port)

On the airplane, you will be asked to fill out:

- A U.S. Customs Declaration, which asks for items to be declared, and
- Immigration paperwork (DS-2019 or I-20) form, which asks the purpose of your visit.

Once you arrive, you will go to the Immigration gate to present your passport with currently valid Visa, I-20 or DS-2019 form, evidence of financial support (the same evidence used to apply for the visa), and I-94 form.

The immigration agent will mark your immigration paperwork with the same information. (If you should arrive at another port first, you will have the same immigration process. You may need to collect your baggage, and then have it rechecked for your flight to Chicago.) The immigration agent will return the Student copy of your I-20.

- **Do not throw away any of your documents.** Keep all of your travel documents as long as you are in the United States.
- You will then collect your baggage and proceed to Customs. You may be asked to open your baggage
- **You will be welcomed at O'Hare International Airport by our Airport Assistance Company if you communicated to us prior to arriving that you needed assistance coming to campus.** Travel from the airport to Lewis is about one hour.

If you arrive and you do not find a person to meet you, call one of the following numbers until you reach a person to talk to (it may be convenient to use a calling card or credit card):

International Student Services (Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.)
1 815-836-5635 or 815-836-5549

Campus Security Office (24 hours, every day)
1 815-836-5222

Of course, some newly arriving students have family or friends in the area, and will prefer to be met by them. If this is your circumstance, **please also let us know of your arrival plans**. Then we will look forward to meeting and greeting you when you first visit the campus.

Arriving at Your "New Home" on the Lewis University Campus:

Lewis University's International Student Services Office provides airport assistance for those who need picked up from the airport. You will need to contact the office prior to arrival (815-836-5549) to make arrangements. There is a fee involved for this service. Once you arrive on campus the Office of Residence Life and Campus Police will assist you in checking into your residence hall.

No matter what time of the day you arrive, Residence Life staff will be available to assist you with whatever you need. If you are arriving during business hours (9:00 am to 5:00 pm) and were assigned a Mentor, this person will be available to meet you and give you a brief campus tour. For those who arrive after meals are served in our dining facilities (usually midnight), a small pre-purchased meal will be available in your room refrigerator free of charge.

Residence hall rooms are equipped with a bed, a desk, and chair. International Student Services will initially supply on-campus students with bed linens, a pillow, bath linens, and personal items like soap and shampoo. You may bring these items from your home or you may shop for any additional needs at your convenience.

For those planning to live off campus, the same airport assistance will be provided to assist you to your housing.

III. AFTER YOU ARRIVE: LIFE AT LEWIS UNIVERSITY

Orientation for New International Students and Scholars

Here is a description of the events of Orientation:

- Campus Tour: Key places and people
- Introduction to Campus Security Services, Tutoring Services, Computer Labs, Student Recreation and Fitness Center, Center for Health and Counseling Services, University Ministry, and other offerings;
- Welcome by the International Student Association president
- Information regarding medical insurance requirements: Information regarding Residence Life policies;
- Notification regarding immigration requirements
- Review of Business Office policies and services;
- Discussion of Social Security Number and Process
- Review of student employment policies and information;
- Receipt of a Lewis ID card
- Setting up of bank accounts;
- Shopping;
- Finally - a bit of socializing and relaxing!

There may be other documents new students may want or need, such as:

Illinois State Identification Card

If you do not wish to obtain a driver's license, an Illinois State Identification Card will serve all identification purposes. It can be obtained at the Secretary of State's Office for approximately \$20. The same documentation needed for your driver's license is needed for an identification card.

Driver's License

If you want to drive a motor vehicle, then you must obtain an Illinois State Driver's License. This requires taking a written test on the driving regulations, a vision test, and a driving test at the Driver's License Bureau. To take the driving test, you will need to provide a vehicle. International students with a driver's license from their home country must change to an Illinois driver's license within 90 days.

If you choose to purchase an automobile during your stay, please be aware that in the United States, an automobile owner is FULLY responsible for any damages or injury from an accident involving your car or vehicle. This is true even if another person is driving your car. **If you own and drive a car, Illinois law states that you must buy automobile insurance.**

You can see there is a lot to do before the beginning of class! However, taking care of all these things will mean that everything is in good order when you start your classes.

On-Campus Housing

The 12 residence halls on the Lewis campus are home to approximately 1,200 students. Lewis offers a variety of residence hall and meal plan options, as well as many amenities that include numerous useful services.

Among the advantages of living on campus you will find:

- A comfortable, furnished room complete with bed, desk, desk chair, wardrobe/closet.
- In-room access to both wireless and Ethernet cable internet, cable television and a microwave / refrigerator / freezer unit.
- Unlimited use of laundry machines in every residence hall.
- Convenient study areas and lounges in every residence hall.
- Social, community, diversity and educational programming in every hall.
- Close proximity to classrooms, the library, Student Recreation and Fitness Center, dining facilities, and Student Union.

On-campus housing in the residence halls is administered by the Office of Residence Life and Housing Services located in the Office of Student Services in the Student Union (+1-815-5275). More information and applications can be found on its website (<http://www.lewisu.edu/student-services/housing/index.htm>)

The International Student Association works with the Office of Residence Life and Housing Services to plan programs for international students in addition to the other programs offered to students living in the residence halls.

Housing during Semester Breaks

Housing is provided for international students and scholars who are unable to go home during school holidays and breaks (Fall Break, Thanksgiving, Winter Break, Spring Break, Easter and Summer Break).

There is an additional charge for housing during Winter, Spring, and Summer Breaks.

Contact the Office of Residence Life and Housing Services for the cost and procedures for staying on campus during these breaks.

Meal Plans/Meal Cards

On-Campus Plans

Students who live in on-campus housing must participate in a Meal Plan. There are three types of Meal Plan offered, with varying prices. All new on-campus residents are automatically placed into Meal Plan II unless you choose a different meal plan. Information about meal plans, menus, and dining halls on campus can be found at the Dining Services website (

You will use your student ID card to access your meal plan. Cards are non-transferable, and cannot be used by anyone but the purchaser. Meal plans are credited every Friday morning with the appropriate weekly food allowance; the dollar value will vary depending on the meal plan you select.

Off-Campus/Commuter Plans

If you decide to live off-campus, the university also has a Commuter Meal Plan. The Plan will allow commuting students to enjoy the convenience of eating at the on-campus dining halls using your University student ID.

All full-time, non-residential, traditional, undergraduate students will be enrolled in this program. At the start of each semester, \$25 will automatically be added to your Student ID and charged to your student account for use in our dining areas or at the convenience store.

At any time during the semester, additional funds may be added to your account by visiting the University Bursar Office or the Sodexo Office. Meal Plan balances will expire at the end of each academic year and will not be refunded. Balances remaining at the end of the fall semester will roll forward to the spring semester.

Professors and scholars in the J Visa Exchange Visitors Program may also participate in the plan by visiting the University Bursar Office or the Sedexo Office after arrival on campus.

Meals during Holiday Breaks

The main Dining Hall is usually closed during holiday breaks. However, the Flyers' Den is generally open at announced hours. Flyers' Den hours will be posted prior to each break period.

Off-Campus Housing

Many international students live in apartments, flats, or houses which they share with other students in the vicinity of campus. Generally, students prefer to rent the less expensive unfurnished apartments and then buy inexpensive second-hand (used) furniture.

Short Term Accommodations

If you plan to live in off-campus housing, you will need a place to stay while you are searching for an apartment. Below is a list of hotels in the area around Lewis University. This is also a good list to share with family and friends who may come to visit you while you are here.

Name	Address	Locations	Description
Country Inn and Suites (3 Types of Suites Available)	1265 Lakeview Drive, Romeoville	630-378-1052  630-378-1052	Pool, Jacuzzi, exercise Room, Free Continental Breakfast From 6am - 10:30 am, Shuttle Service to and from university is available. Guest Laundry, free local calls, data ports on phones.
Extended Stay America	1225 Lakeview Court, Romeoville	630-226-8966  630-226-8966	Kitchenette in Rooms, Guest Laundry
La Quinta Inn Bolingbrook	225 W. S. Frontage Road, Bolingbrook	630-226-0000  630-226-0000	I-55 & Rt. 53
Holiday Inn	205 Remington Blvd., Bolingbrook	630-679-1600  630-679-1600	1/4 Mile west of Rt. 53 on Remington Blvd. Full Service Hotel, Pool,

			Business Services, Meeting Rooms
Ramada Inn Limited	520 S. Bolingbrook Drive, Bolingbrook	630-972-9797  630-972-9797	I-55 & Rt. 53, next to Union 76
Comfort Inn	3235 Norman Avenue, Joliet	815-436-5141  815-436-5141	Pool, Close to Lewis and Mall
Comfort Inn	135 S. Larkin Avenue, Joliet	815-744-1770  815-744-1770	Pool
Fairfield Inn	3239 Norman Avenue, Joliet	815-436-6577  815-436-6577	Close to Lewis and Mall
Fairfield Inn	1701 Riverboat Center Drive, Joliet	815-741-3499  815-741-3499	Close to Empress Casino, Off I-80, Exit 127
Ramada Express	3231 Norman, Joliet	815-439-4200  815-439-4200	Close to Lewis and Mall, off I-55
Super 8 Motel	3401 Mall Loop Drive	815-439-3838  815-439-3838	Very Nice Super 8, Pool, Close to Lewis and Mall, off I-55
Empress Hotel	2200 Empress Road, Joliet	815-744-9400  815-744-9400	At the Empress Casino Complex
Harrah's Casino Hotel	151 Joliet Street, Joliet	800-427-7247  800-427-7247 FREE	Fitness Center, Attached to Casio, Close to Lewis, 4 Kinds of Suites

Renting in the US – Resources and Considerations

In order to find an apartment, you can surf the web, look in some of the free apartment finder magazines, inquire through a real estate agent, or read the classified advertisements ("want ads") in the Oakland newspaper, *The Oakland Press*. A good source of information about off-campus housing in the area is through the free bi-monthly publication called "Apartment for Rent." This publication is a comprehensive guide to apartments and other rental properties in the area. Another easy way to find an apartment is to simply walk or drive around the area and look for "apartments for rent" signs.

Apartments and houses are rented either furnished (with furniture) or unfurnished (without furniture). Unfurnished ones are more common and cost less than furnished ones. It is easy to rent an unfurnished

apartment and then to obtain inexpensive used furniture.

Renters or "tenants" generally have to pay for their own utilities (electricity, gas, water and telephone), although the monthly rent may include some of these. The owner (called a landlord) or manager will provide you with information about obtaining utility services.

It is important when renting an apartment or house to ascertain which utilities, if any, are included in the rent such as water, heat, and/or electricity. Phones are never included in the price of the rent, although cable television may be. The ISSO can provide you with information about signing up with utility companies if they are not included in the rent, although the landlord will generally have this information as well.

When renting an apartment or flat, it is also important to promptly complete the checklist of defects, if any, so you are not charged for any damage to the apartment when you are moving out. You should also read carefully and thoroughly any lease you are asked to sign. It is also a good idea to obtain renters insurance, particularly if you intend to purchase a computer.

When looking for an apartment or other unit to rent, keep these things in mind:

1. Consider the convenience of the location to the Lewis campus and to neighborhood stores.
2. Look at the neighborhood; will you feel comfortable?
3. Look carefully at the rental property.
4. Is it in good repair?
5. Does it have an air conditioner? (summers are hot in this area)
6. Is it clean and are the buildings and grounds well-tended?
7. Are pets permitted?
8. Is there a swimming pool?
9. Ask whether there are laundry machines to wash and dry your clothes.
10. If not, is there a commercial laundromat nearby?
11. If you choose to rent a unit, you may ask to speak to references - that is, people who have lived there before and would be willing to recommend the place.
12. It is customary for a manager or landlord to require a deposit equivalent to one month's rent.
13. This deposit will secure the place until you move in, and can be used to pay for any damage you have caused when you leave.
14. If you have cause no damage to the property, the deposit will be returned to you.
15. You will be asked to sign a rental contract.

Read your lease carefully and make sure you understand everything in before you sign it.

Renting in the U.S.-Signing a Lease

Usually, when you rent an apartment or house in the U.S., you will be required to sign a lease. A lease is a written agreement between a tenant and a landlord describing the rights and responsibilities of each. This is common in the United States as Americans like agreements reduced to writing so there are no misunderstandings.

A lease is a binding legal document which, among other things, makes the tenant responsible for any

damage to the rental property. The lease also specifies the landlord's responsibilities for maintenance and repair of the unit. The lease will explain how much rent is due for each month, the date it is due, and the penalties if it is not given to the landlord on time. A lease may or may not contain provisions concerning its early termination.

When you sign a lease, you will usually have to pay a "security deposit" which may amount to as much as two months' rent. The landlord is required to return the deposit after you leave the apartment/house if you have paid your rent, left the apartment clean and undamaged, and have not been evicted (asked to leave by the apartment manager). If all of your deposit is not returned, the landlord should give you a written statement explaining why some or all of the deposit was withheld.

You should read the lease completely before signing. There are certain sections that require special attention. Make sure the lease runs for the length of time which you will need the apartment, but not longer. Ask if the lease can be renewed yearly or monthly when it expires and if there are options to sign the lease for shorter periods of time in case you find an accommodation which better suits your needs.

It is also important to find out what the conditions are under which you can "break" the lease (move out of the apartment), how much prior notice (usually one or two months) you have to give the landlord, and what the penalty is if you break the lease early. If you cannot break the lease, you may be required to pay rent until the end of the lease period even if you move out and live somewhere else. Ask if you may "sublet" (have another tenant rent the apartment in your absence) or if you can share the apartment with another. This can be helpful if you spend a semester away on an internship.

It is also important to check which utilities are included in the rent and which ones are not. If heat is included, this may save you as much as \$75 to \$100 a month in utility bills. You can ask the landlord or the utility company what the average utility bill is. These costs can vary significantly from one place to another. If you make any special agreements with the landlord concerning repairs or alterations, make sure those agreements are written into the lease, signed, and dated. **(Americans consider it essential to have important agreements written down and signed.)**

Finally, consider any restrictions and exclusions. For example, are children or pets allowed, can you barbeque near the building, hang paintings on the wall, paint the walls a different color, play music after 9:00 at night, etc.. Some landlords do not allow any of these things.

It is also a good idea to purchase "renter's insurance" (also called "homeowner's insurance") to protect against losses caused by fire, theft, or vandalism. This kind of insurance covers personal belongings in your house or apartment. It may also cover theft to items left in your car if you have one. It also covers damages for which you would be legally liable if a fire or other accident that was your fault damaged the apartment building and/or the property of other renters.

The cost of renter's insurance varies depending on the value of your personal possessions, but is relatively low. When buying insurance, get rate information from two or three different insurance agents. The names of insurance agents' and their telephone numbers are in the telephone directory yellow pages under "insurance." Your landlord may also have information about insurance agents who provide rental insurance.

Money Matters

Planning First-Year Costs at Lewis

The amount of money set aside for your school year (and indicated on your I-20 or DS-2019) may seem very large. However, it is a good idea at the beginning of your stay to carefully **plan a budget** for your first semester and first year. List the actual amounts of your costs (some must be estimated), deduct your fixed costs (initial one-time costs and periodic costs that do not vary from month to month), and this will tell you how much you have left to spend on a monthly basis. Expenses that you will have include tuition, books, health insurance, housing, food, communication (mail and telephone), transportation (local transportation? a car? holiday travel?), clothing, personal expenses, and recreation.

Beyond Your First Year

Plan realistically for the costs of your entire stay at Lewis. Make a budget similar to the one for your first year. For long-term planning, keep these things in mind:

- Be aware that there may be slight increases in tuition each year.
- Note that if you move from a campus residence to an off-campus residence, or vice versa, your living expenses may change.
- If you live off campus, you will need automobile transportation, with the associated costs of insurance, fuel, and maintenance.
- If you are seeking a degree that holds classes, clinical hours, etc. off campus at satellite sites (e.g. in education, business, or some other disciplines), be prepared to buy a car or arrange rides with classmates.
- Be aware that part-time, on-campus employment can assist with your costs, but probably cannot cover them all. **International students are permitted to work part-time on campus for a maximum of 20 hours per week.**
- **Note about Financial Aid: Financial Aid from U.S. federal and state grants and scholarships is available only for U.S. citizens and Resident Aliens. Lewis University has very few other scholarships, fellowships, or other aid for international students at this time.** You are responsible for your costs for the duration of your stay at Lewis.

Banks and Credit Unions

Commercial banks, credit unions, and savings and loan institutions are required by the U.S. government to insure accounts up to a value of \$100,000, in keeping membership with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). Look for the phrase "Member of FDIC" in the institutions' literature.

The local credit union and banks provide many kinds of financial services, such as savings and checking accounts, cashier's checks, money orders, loans, inter-bank transfers, travelers' checks, and safe-deposit boxes for valuables.

It is **not** advisable to carry large amounts of money with you or keep it in your room or apartment, where it is vulnerable to theft. **Place it in a bank account.** Also, if you have any valuable items such as jewelry that could be stolen, you should rent a safe deposit box at a bank.

You may wish to have both a checking account for current expenses and a savings account for reserve funds; you may transfer funds from your savings to your checking account when needed for current expenses.

Savings Accounts

It is wise to open a savings account with the money you do not need to use immediately. The advantages of a savings account are:

- Your money can earn interest.
- It protects your money against potential loss due to theft or burglary.
- Savings accounts are protected by the Federal Depository Insurance Corporation (FDIC).

When you open a savings account, you are given a passbook, which is a record of deposits, withdrawals, and interest earned on your account. Transactions may often be carried out electronically.

It is a good idea to compare banks, credit unions, and savings and loan associations as their rates for services differ. The interest rate depends on the time period you have the money in your account; this can vary from three (3) months to several years.

Important Note on Interest: Check with your home government; some do not allow their students to have accounts that earn interest.

Checking Accounts

Money can be deposited into a checking account for convenience and safekeeping. Once you open an account, you will be provided with numbered checks imprinted with your name, address, and account number so that you may write checks against the balance in your account. Some banks require you to have a minimum balance and some may charge your account a fee for services. Please check with the bank that you choose to see if fees are charged to your account, or if a minimum balance is required.

Personal checks can be used for payment of rent, tuition, and for purchases in most stores and markets in the Romeoville, Joliet, and Chicago area. You will be required to present several pieces of identification to validate your check. A student ID card is sometimes sufficient. However, most area businesses will request a driver's license or Illinois State ID card.

Credit Cards

Your bank or another bank may offer you a credit card. It will be issued based on the applicant's credit history, or if there is no credit history in this country, it can be issued based on a relative's credit history.

Credit cards are very convenient, because you can charge items and pay later. However, credit cards can be **very troublesome because you have to pay later!** Some people get into trouble because they charge items freely, and then cannot repay the entire amount at the end of the month. For each month a balance (i.e., unpaid amount) is kept, interest is charged. Shop for a **low-interest credit card (9-13%), and use it only when truly necessary.** Beware of credit card offers that have a low interest rate (e.g., 6%) for a few months, and then change to a high interest rate (e.g., 18-20%).

Debit Cards

A debit card is usually offered by your bank or credit union. You may use it instead of cash to pay for items; the cost of the item is taken directly out of your bank account, with no charge to you. This may be more convenient than carrying cash or writing checks. Just be sure to deduct the amount from your check register. Almost all stores and restaurants in the area permit the use of a debit card.

Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs)

There is an Automatic Teller Machine (ATM, also a "cash machine") on the Lewis campus. Many people use ATM cards, credit cards, or debit cards to deposit or withdraw funds from their accounts at ATMs. If the ATM is not owned by the bank or company which has issued the card, the user may be charged a .50 to \$3 "ATM fee." Please be alert to the ATM fee you may be charged.

An Alternative for Withdrawing Small Amounts of Cash

Often, when people wish to withdraw small amounts of cash from a checking account, they do so using a

debit card or check at the grocery store while making a purchase. For example, they write a check or use a debit card for the purchase, adding \$20 to \$50 "over the amount" or "cash back." Make sure to note store limits on the amount, however. The cashier provides the "cash back" as if it is change for the purchase. There is no fee for this service.

Health Matters and Medical Care

Lewis University Center for Health and Counseling Services

The Center for Health and Counseling Services offers several services, including treatment of minor accidents and illnesses, immunization, assistance with medical insurance claims, and assistance finding doctors and other health care specialists. Additionally, the Center offers personal counseling and crisis intervention. Most services offered by Health and Counseling Services are free of charge.

Routine Health and Medical Care

Students may go to the Center for Health and Counseling Services any weekday during working hours to consult with a nurse or doctor for minor or routine health concerns. Office hours and physician's hours are posted on the door, and students may walk in or make an appointment for non-urgent care.

Emergency Medical Situations

In case of a medical emergency, students should contact Campus Police at 1-815-836-5222 (just x5222 when on campus) during working hours and the Campus Security staff at any time. Emergency procedures and telephone numbers are readily available, and emergency call boxes are prominently placed around the campus. Campus Security will dispatch appropriate emergency response persons.

Finding a Doctor or Hospital

Students who need a doctor, dentist, optician, or other health care professional may contact the Center for Health and Counseling Services for a referral. The staff of the Center for Health and Counseling Services has contacts with several nearby doctor's offices, medical centers and hospitals, all in a radius of 5-20 minutes by car. These health care providers accept students' medical insurance. The Center staff assists students to find appropriate health care providers, and assists students in contacting a health care provider for appointments.

Resources at Lewis

Athletics at Lewis

Lewis athletic teams are part of the Great Lakes Valley Conference, an important NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) Division II Conference. Lewis has men's and women's teams in baseball/softball, basketball, track/cross country, volleyball, golf, soccer, tennis, and swimming.

Additionally, the Lewis University Intramural Sports Program offers an opportunity for all Lewis students to participate in team and individual sports. The Intramural Office is located in the Student Recreation and Fitness Center. Find out more about our athletics teams' news and events at: <http://lewisflyers.cstv.com/>

Bookstore

You may buy your textbooks at the Lewis University Bookstore. Some of the textbooks which are available are used; these are less expensive. At the end of the semester, you may sell books you do not need back to the bookstore. (They must be unmarked, however.) The bookstore also carries snack items, stationary supplies, and items with the Lewis University logo on them.

Business Office

The Business Office is the place for paying your University bill, making payment plan arrangements (after you have attended Lewis for one semester), picking up your student employee check if you work on campus, and cashing your payroll check if it is \$50 or less.

Computer Laboratories

Lewis University has a number of computer laboratories. The main labs are in the Academic Computing Center (ACC) in the basement of the Science Building. While some labs are used for classroom instruction, the Microcomputer Lab is available for use by all Lewis University students. You may ask a lab monitor to assist you in setting up your account for e-mail, Internet use, and for coursework. Other computer labs available for student work are located in the Department of Art and Design, Aviation department, English department, Journalism department, College of Business, College of Education, College of Nursing and Health Professions, the Lewis University Library, and CAPS. Find out about hours of operation, available software, and more.

Campus Life

The Office of Campus Life is part of the Student Services division. It provides and maintains the residence halls, provides educational and social activities for both resident students and commuter students, and ensures a positive experience for Lewis students. The Campus Life staff lives on campus and is always available to assist students. Campus Life staff members also work closely with the Office of Student Activities to support the multitude of student organizations and activities on campus.

Campus Police

Campus Police is available 24 hours a day in the Information Center at the main entrance of the University. Campus Police can assist students with lost and found items, parking stickers for cars, a Lewis ID, filing incident reports for theft or accidents, and all other emergency matters. Campus Police also offers an escort service in the evening hours for students going from one part of the campus to another part. You may simply call extension 5222 and request escort at the time you need it.

Campus Police can also be contacted using the Emergency campus telephones which are placed in each residence hall and in several campus buildings. **These boxes are different colors (depending on the building), with a large, red button, and the word “HELP” on them.**

Financial Aid Services

Financial Aid Services is responsible for on-campus student employment and student financial aid. Students seeking on-campus employment may go to the Office of Financial Aid Services. International Students are permitted to work part-time on campus for a maximum of 20 hours per week.

Financial aid in the form of scholarships, loans, etc. from U.S. government sources is available only for U.S. citizens and Resident Aliens. There are some limited private sources for international students, however. You may identify the types of financial aid available on the Lewis Financial Aid web site at www.lewisu.edu/admissions/financial.html, the NAFSA Financial Aid web site at www.nafsa.org, and the International Scholarship website at www.internationalscholarship.com.

International Student Services (ISS)

The Office of International Student Services (ISS) acts as an advocate for international students, and

assists students with orientation and adjustment to life at Lewis. The staff of ISS assists international students with United States Citizenship and Immigration and Service (USCIS) and the Department of State (DOS) documents and processes, such as applications for program extension, optional practical training, re-entry signatures for travel outside the United States, etc. The ISS also coordinates airport pickup at the beginning of each semester (see *Transportation* section of this booklet for details), and arranges social activities during the semester and field trips on holidays.

International Student Association (ISA)

The International Student Association (ISA) is a student-governed organization for international students. ISA members act as a support group for international students. They also help new students learn about their environment and how to manage in it. ISA sponsors educational activities and events to bring together the international students and the larger Lewis community. For example, the ISA hosts an annual International Festival, with lectures, a talent and fashion show, and a Food Fest. The ISA also organizes social events such as dinners and dances, and field trips on holidays.

Contact the Office of International Students Services for additional information on the ISA. You will enjoy getting to know your new “international family.” See the ISA website at

<http://www.lewisu.edu/student-services/multicultural/organizations/isa/index.htm>

Library

The Lewis University Library is located on the second and third floors of the Learning Resource Center. In addition to books, magazines, and journals, the library houses a school curriculum collection, a depository for government documents, and special collections for aviation and for the Illinois and Michigan Canal. The card catalog is computerized, and computers are also available for writing papers, searching the Internet, and searching databases. The library staff will put a bar code on your Lewis ID Card; it can then be used to check out books. The special reference librarian will assist you in finding materials and learning how to use the search tools. You can use the Lewis library databases online! Find out about these and other Library resources at <http://www.lewisu.edu/academics/library/index.htm>

Registrar

The Registrar’s office is the place where your registration for courses is officially recorded. Students may register “in person” by taking their registration materials to the office, or they may register “online” by computer. Instructions for online registration are given in the *University Course Schedule* booklet. Once you have completed registration, you may go to the Business Office to pay your tuition and other fees.

The Registrar’s office will also assist you with adding or dropping a course. (A fee is charged for this after the first week of school.) The Office of the Registrar may also aid you with other concerns related to your transcript.

Sancta Alberta Chapel

The Sancta Alberta Chapel offers Mass on Sunday at 8 p.m. and weekdays at 12 p.m. It is in the same building as the Miguel Center for University Ministry. The chapel convocation center also serves as a place for many other meetings and activities.

Student Recreation and Fitness Center

The Student Recreation and Fitness Center is a wonderful place to exercise! As a Lewis student, you may use all the facilities there. You may swim, play basketball, run on the track, lift weights or use the exercise machines, attend aerobics classes, and more. Schedules of activities can be found at the front desk of the recreation center.

Transportation

Transportation Needs at Lewis

Lewis University is located in a semi-rural area. This means that it is a safe environment in which to live; **however, it also means that public transportation is very limited. If you intend to live off campus, please be prepared to provide your own transportation to and from campus. In most cases, this will mean purchasing a car.**

When you arrive, you can get detailed information about bus services, train services, charter transportation to the airport, etc. There is inexpensive public bus service from the University to some nearby towns. This bus also stops at the nearest Metra Train Stations, where you can get a train into Chicago. You may learn about the Metra on the web page: www.metrarail.com/. Taxis are convenient and safe, but expensive. You can also take a limousine to O'Hare or Midway Airports (which costs from \$45 to \$55) or downtown Chicago. For future travel needs, there is an airport shuttle bus from the nearby Joliet Shopping Mall to O'Hare or Midway Airports. It will cost you less (around \$14 each way) than a limousine or a taxi.

Transportation Policy for International Students

International Student Services will provide transportation to international students for the following occasions:

1. Airport pick-ups and drop-offs at the beginning of each semester. Students are responsible for informing the Office of International Student Services (ISS) of their arrival/departure date and time at least two weeks in advance. **If students are traveling for vacations or during breaks, they are responsible for their own transportation.** (There is nearby bus and taxi transportation to the airports.)
2. Transportation to a bank, the Social Security Office or any other off campus need for new international students will be provided by appointment with the Office of International Student Services.
3. Shopping trips to the mall, grocery store, banks, etc., are offered by International Student Services. A schedule will be posted in the Office of International Student Services each semester.
4. Field trips to places such as museums, parks, and cultural events are arranged by the Office of International Student Services.

Any other special transportation needs should be discussed with the Office of International Student Services. Students are responsible for their own transportation for personal use.

Owning a Car

If students choose to live off campus, they must buy a car. Many students who live on campus also buy a car. However, owning a car in the U.S.A. is expensive. Still, many students at Lewis do so because public transportation in the area is not very convenient.

The advantages of having a car include freedom to come and go as you please access to the larger community, and being able to assist friends who need transportation. The disadvantages include costs, the time and effort needed to have the car serviced, the risk of accidents, dealing with bad weather, and (possibly) friends who frequently need transportation.

Students who plan to buy a car should be prepared to consider costs realistically. There will

be other students who can serve as resources. People often find used cars to buy through word-of-mouth or from newspaper advertising. Buying a new car is done directly from a car dealer.

In the U.S.A., an automobile owner is **fully** responsible for any damages or injury as a result of an accident involving your motor vehicle. This is true even if another person is driving your car. **If you own and drive a car, Illinois law states that you must buy automobile insurance.** You may do some investigation of typical insurance costs by looking at the following web sites:

<http://www.geico.com/>
<http://www.allstate.com/>
<http://www.Nationwide.com>

Lewis is presently working with University Auto Services and they provide information at our orientation and can set up one on one time to discuss your interest in purchasing a car. They can assist students on how to get a license, purchase or lease a vehicle (short term) and assist with testing and getting to testing locations. They can be reached at 708-717-7649 or tim@universityautosolutions.com

Shopping

There are many nearby, convenient locations for shopping needs of every kind. Furthermore, when you shop for non-perishable items (canned or packaged food, clothing, and household items), most stores will allow you to return or exchange the item within a reasonable period of time (e.g., 30 days). When you are living at Lewis, you will become acquainted with several stores for household and personal needs (food, pharmacy items, household goods), department stores (clothing and furniture, also household items), and thrift shops (second-hand or used items which are inexpensive). You may also become acquainted with “garage sales” and “flea markets” where private individuals sell most anything!

Mail in the U.S.A.

Domestic Mail

Regular domestic mail can be sent in three ways:

- First Class Mail - least expensive and slowest, 1-7 day delivery
- Priority Mail - 2-3 days
- Express Mail - 1-2 day delivery, most expensive

In combination with these, you may choose these options:

- Certified Mail - You may also use Certified Mail when you want a receipt to prove delivery (in combination with the other types above). Always use this when sending immigration or legal documents; the cost is small and it is worthwhile.
- Insurance - You may insure the contents of a package for a small fee.

International Mail

There are several types of international mail:

- Letters and small packets - air mail.
- Global Priority Mail - accelerated air mail; maximum weight 4 pounds.
- Global Express Mail - high-speed mail for time-sensitive items, insured up to \$500 at no additional cost; return receipt service available for some countries, at no additional charge.

Information about the U.S. Post Office

The official web site for the U.S. Post Office has a wealth of information, including:

- guides for mailing or shipping letters, envelopes, parcels, and boxes;
- locations of Post Offices;
- sending postal money orders (domestic and international);
- a calculator which will tell you the cost of your mailing if you know the weight;
- a list of zip codes for U.S. cities;
- a site for tracking and confirming Express Mail; and
- a site for online bill payment of utilities and credit cards.

The web site address is <http://www.usps.gov/>

Lewis Campus Mailroom and Student Mailboxes

The Lewis Campus Mailroom located in DeLasalle offers all U.S. Post Office services except money orders, passports, and insurance on packages. Students who live on campus may obtain a Lewis University mailbox in order to receive mail.

Religious Worship

Each of you comes from different religious backgrounds, and in many regions of the world religious preference is a valuable part of one's culture. If you have any questions or need assistance finding a place to celebrate your religious heritage, contact the Office of International Student Services, or University Ministry. An extensive list of churches and temples (Catholic, Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, Muslim and others) can be found in the local telephone book under "Churches." A few choices that may not be in the local directory include: Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago, Joliet Jewish Congregation, Naperville Islamic Center, and the Islamic Foundation.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Living in a second culture is an adventure and a challenge! You might be fascinated at some of the differences between peoples' behavior and thinking in this country in comparison to your home country. At the same time, dealing with different surroundings, different customs, and a different language day in and day out can be stressful indeed. Patterns of communication differ, behaviors differ, values and beliefs differ, and you may sometimes feel that people do not understand you.

It is not unusual in this circumstance to experience some of the following symptoms from culture fatigue: exhaustion, irritability, depression, homesickness, sleep difficulty, anxiety, a desire to withdraw from the target culture, unexplained weeping, overeating or overdrinking. Many people experience one or more of these symptoms between two months and a year into their stay in the foreign country. Don't be surprised if you do too! Normally, these symptoms will come and go, and eventually pass.

There are ways to keep your culture shock to a minimum and to return to a happy and comfortable state. People who live in a foreign culture cope best when keeping these things in mind:

- First, take care of your physical health. Keep a good diet; get exercise and plenty of rest.
- Second, maintain good attitudes. Keep your sense of humor and don't be afraid to make mistakes.
- Learn as much as you can about U.S. culture. Be curious and interested. It will help you understand why Americans do what they do.
- Make at least one American friend - this is important. It will increase your English ability, help you understand the U.S., and make you feel a part of the community quickly.
- Be non-judgmental, open-minded, and tolerant of cultural differences. Remember that cultural practices evolve as part of a whole cultural system; there may be parts of a culture you dislike or disapprove of, but it is part of a broader social system, and makes sense inside that system.

Remember, there will always be someone to talk to when you are homesick - a friend or another international student who has been here for a while and can help you interpret the situation, or a staff person in International Student Services, Campus Life, Health and Counseling, University Ministry, or Student Services. Remember also that the cross-cultural lessons you learn now will be with you all your life.

Understanding American Culture

The United States has one of the most demographically diverse populations in the world from the immigration of so many groups of people. Because of this, it is not easy to characterize the people or the culture. The North American continent was originally populated by many nations of aboriginal people. Since European expansion into the territory, the dominant group in the U.S.A. has historically been white and of northern, western, eastern, and southern European origin. The largest two minority groups have been of African descent, from the legacy of slavery, and of Hispanic descent, from Spanish-speaking countries south of the U.S.A. However, newer and continuing waves of immigration from Asia, Southeast Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and elsewhere, have complicated the picture. A sign of the times is the fact that the latest U.S. Census allows citizens to list **two** races, not just one.

Surface characteristics of culture (e.g., clothing styles and music) change rapidly, especially in a country like the U.S.A. Deeper characteristics of culture (e.g., values and beliefs) change slowly. As time passes, you will have a deeper and deeper understanding of U.S. Americans' behavior in the school setting. You may like some characteristics. You may not like others. But the more you understand, the more comfortable you will feel in the U.S.A.

Here are some key characteristics of mainstream North American culture, which you may use as templates or general models to help you interpret and understand the behavior that you observe. As you gain more exposure to U.S. Americans, you will be able to observe how these characteristics get displayed in daily interaction, in formal and informal situations, and in the classroom.

Please remember that following are **very general descriptions**. The characteristics of African-American, Hispanic-American, Asian-American, and other subcultures will vary somewhat from this. Please also remember that the whole picture of North American culture is quite complicated, and there are many exceptions.

Individualism

U.S. Americans are known for their strong sense of individualism. It means that people will often make their own "path" their main concern, rather than the concerns of their family, community, etc. This may appear selfish to people of other cultures (indeed, U.S. Americans are sometimes self-centered!). However, the motive for this characteristic is a belief that each person has individual, unique gifts and talents, and that it is right and proper to develop these. U.S. Americans also generally believe that they are responsible for their own happiness and fulfillment, and that fulfilling themselves allows them to fulfill others. For example, U.S. Americans will often donate to charitable causes; many seek education for personal development; and some give up highly paying careers to follow lower-paying, service-oriented work. U.S. Americans usually feel that their identity comes from what they have accomplished in life, rather than whom their family is or their socioeconomic level.

Self-Reliance

Self-reliance is valued from the days of our pioneer heritage. People had to be self-reliant, or they didn't survive! As a result, it is generally an admired characteristic in this country. The greeting "How are you today?" is more of a ritual than a meaningful exchange. Watch what happens someday if you answer "Well, not too good. I am really depressed this week and need someone to talk to." The other person may have trouble knowing what to say! This characteristic also manifests in peoples' inclination to "do it yourself." Many people repair their own plumbing, do their own sewing, painting, fence repair, etc., even though they could afford to hire someone to do it for them. There is even a well-known joke about some Americans (especially men) refusing to ask for directions when lost!

Openness, Friendliness, Informality

U.S. Americans are generally quite friendly and informal. This may also be due to our history - we are egalitarian, and because we often move from one place to another, we learn to make casual friendships quickly. You may find that it is easy to find a "friendly" person to talk to, but it is much harder to find a true friend. The openness of people to discuss some topics can be deceiving; it may seem they are acting like a close friend on one occasion, but later act more distant. This is probably because U.S. Americans are raised to be friendly with everyone, but of course people cannot be truly close friends with everyone they meet. Most Americans have a few close friends, and many casual friends. They prize their privacy and share their feelings only after a close, trusting relationship has developed with another person.

Explicitness

While some cultures value meanings expressed by implication (suggesting that the inner understanding of people is in agreement), U.S. Americans value the clarity of explicitness (suggesting that inner understanding and outer behavior are in agreement). This *International Student Handbook* and *Student Handbook* (which you will receive on arrival) are all good examples to show that we value explicit information. You will also find that your professors usually hand out course syllabi which explicitly describe the requirements of the class, the grading methods, and a semester's schedule of activities and topics. The many rules you encounter may seem inflexible and unable to take into account individual circumstances. However, remember that we also value individuality; U.S. Americans believe where possible, it is rational to adjust the rules to sensibly fit the individual. So, if you have any concerns or problems, consult a staff member of International Student Services, Campus Life, CAPS, University Ministry, or Student Services.

Task/Time Orientation

You will find that U.S. Americans generally put the task at hand ahead of their relationships with people. In business, work, and school settings, people may engage in a bit chit-chat for friendliness sake (see information on Openness/Friendliness/Informality on page 23 of this booklet), but then they "get down to business"! Developing one's relationships and learning to trust or understand the other person are secondary. Decisions are based on the merits of the case, not on whom the person is or whom the

person knows. Related to this is an orientation to time. Punctuality is highly valued in U.S. culture. U.S. Americans feel time is valuable, should be made useful, and not “wasted.” People are expected to be on time for virtually any formal or semi- formal activity. Private parties such as get-togethers with friends, and dances are more flexible. However, if a friend says, “I’ll meet you at six o’clock in front of the library,” he/she might be very impatient if you arrive more than a few minutes late (and if you do, an explanation is expected). If you accept an invitation for a function and you cannot make it, let your host/hostess know as soon as possible. This includes appointments made with faculty, staff and some private events.