



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

Pre-Arrival Handbook





Welcome!

The University of St. Francis (USF) is a small, private, Catholic university located near Chicago that promotes inclusion of all students no matter their country, ethnicity or faith of origin. USF will assist all international students in achieving their educational goals and overcoming the challenges of studying and living in a foreign country. USF's International Programs Office also provides many services to international students, including assisting in the processing of non-immigrant applications for admission and obtaining an F-1 visa to study in the USA.

USF is a small liberal arts school located in a beautiful historic suburban neighborhood about 35 miles southwest of Chicago—just a short train ride away!

University of St. Francis graduates become extraordinary citizens, community members and global leaders. As a Catholic university rooted in the liberal arts, we are a welcoming community of learners challenged by Franciscan values and charism, engaged in a continuous pursuit of knowledge, faith, wisdom, and justice, and ever mindful of a tradition that emphasizes reverence for creation, compassion and peacemaking. We strive for academic excellence in all programs, preparing men and women to contribute to the world through service and leadership.



At the University of St. Francis, you will be part of a diverse student body of over 1,500 undergraduate and 1,900 graduate students. The International Programs Office (IPO) offers a wide variety of services to international students including student support, advising, and immigration/visa counseling. The IPO staff is also committed to fostering international understanding on campus and in our community.

Studying in another country offers many advantages to students including a more global perspective and a chance to make international friends and contacts. The University of St. Francis' small size allows international students to be fully immersed in university culture and receive a personal attention to their academic studies that is not always possible at larger universities.

The International Programs Office is happy to assist you with any questions you may have about application procedures, visa requirements and student life at the University of St. Francis. We look forward to getting to know you better in the months ahead!

Best wishes, and welcome to USF!

The International Programs Office

Obtaining Your Visa

After an I-20, every international student needs to pay a \$200 SEVIS fee to apply for a student visa. The I-20 is an immigration form to document F-1 immigration status.

To pay the SEVIS fee, go to the following website and fill out the form I-901 online:

<https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee>. Your I-20 provides information that you need to fill out the form I-901. Make sure to keep a copy of your SEVIS fee receipt.

After receiving your I-20 and paying the SEVIS fee, you must make an appointment with the U.S. Consulate to get your F-1 visa. The earliest that an F-1 visa can be granted is 120 days before the reporting date listed on the Form I-20. That means that you cannot make your appointment at the consulate more than 120 days before you are starting school. Make sure to bring all of the documents listed below for your interview at the U.S. Consulate:

Required Documents

- I-20 form
- Valid passport
- Bank statement
- Acceptance letter from University of St. Francis

- High school transcripts and their translations
- Receipt of SEVIS fee (I-901 fee)
- Completed visa application
- Two 2x2 passport photos
- Receipt for visa application fee

For more information about required documents, including application forms and visa fee, please visit the website of the American Embassy in your country.

Please also check:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/study-exchange.html>

Checklist for Applying for Your Student Visa

1. Verify that all the information on your I-20 is correct.
2. Pay the \$200 SEVIS fee and keep a copy of the receipt.
3. Apply for the F-1 student visa in the nearest U.S. Consulate in your country. For more information, please visit the American Embassy webpage in your country and follow the steps of application for the F-1 student visa.
4. Interview at the U.S. Consulate. Please make sure you have all required documents with you.

*** The IPO does not recommend purchasing your plane ticket until you have your student visa. Once you have your visa and purchase your plane ticket you MUST complete and return the STUDENT ARRIVAL FORM that was in your welcome e-mail. If you have any questions about this or need another STUDENT ARRIVAL FORM, please contact the IPO.

Crossing The American Border

When you arrive in the U.S., you will be interviewed by an immigration official at your port of entry. You do not need to be nervous, just be sure that you have the following documents ready to show the officer:

- Valid passport
- Valid student visa in passport (except students from Canada)
- I-20 with a valid signature on the form
- Financial documents (bank statement)
- Official acceptance letter from USF

Please contact the USF's International Programs Office at internationalprograms@stfrancis.edu, if you have ANY questions about entering the U.S.

Tuition And Fees

All students must pay their tuition and fees at the beginning of each semester. All tuition and fees can be found stfrancis.edu/admissions/financial-aid/tuition-fees-room-and-board-refund-policy. Other costs and fees associated with attending USF are housing, meals, health insurance and other personal expenses. Please note that the cost of books, personal spending costs, and transportation costs all vary from student to student. The figures presented on the website are strictly estimated costs.

Housing

University of St. Francis offers campus housing with traditional residence halls in Marian Hall or Tower Hall or residences in the historic Motherhouse, which includes modern apartments and suites.

In each residence hall, students have access to computers and printers on every floor. Students can also use university equipment to play ping pong, pool or watch a movie in a student lounge. Bathrooms and showers are located on every floor. For more information on residence halls, please visit stfrancis.edu/admissions/freshman/admission-checklist.

It is required that all international students spend at least one year living on campus. Exceptions to this rule can be made on a case-by-case basis. If you have concerns about living on campus, please contact internationalprograms@stfrancis.edu and we will be happy to assist you.

***The International Programs Office will provide linens for you upon your arrival so you will feel comfortable as soon as you enter your room. This linen package contains a sheet set, pillow, comforter, and 3-piece towel set.





Meal Plans

Meal plans are available to all students.

Meal plans can be used in our full service cafeteria or at the Three Oaks Bistro in the Motherhouse and Snack Shop.

International students can find information about meal plans and dining options at University of St. Francis at stfrancisdining.com/plans.

The cafeteria, located in Tower Hall, offers a variety of food. Breakfast, lunch and dinner is served buffet style and is all you can eat! There are always two hot meals provided; additionally, students can choose soups, burgers, fries, salad, pizza, sandwiches, fruits, desserts, etc. and many different beverages. The Bistro, located in the Motherhouse, offers coffee

and meals such as pizza, salads, sandwiches and much more! The Pub, a popular dining place located in the Motherhouse, offers a variety of food and it gives students a restaurant type of dining experience. For students on the go, the Snack Shop, located in Tower Hall, offers a variety of foods such as burgers, wings, nachos, mozzarella sticks, chips, ice cream, drinks and more! The Snack Shop is open until 11 p.m., offering late night snacks!

****It is important to note that if you live on campus, you are required to purchase a meal plan.**

Personal Spending Money

Most international students report spending between \$1,000-\$3,000 a year to cover extra expenses. This includes entertainment, personal expenses, clothing and transportation. These numbers are just estimates. It is important to evaluate your personal spending habits and decide what you will be doing while in the U.S. Will you want to travel? Do you enjoy attending concerts and sporting events? All of these things should be considered when you are planning your budget.

The International Programs Office is available to answer any budgeting questions you may have before you arrive and during your time in the US.

Managing Your Money

It is extremely important that you have all of your finances in order before departing from your home country. When you are attending college in a foreign country you want to focus on your studies and extra-curricular activities, and not be constantly worried about your finances. Please contact the International Programs Office if you need help creating a manageable budget based on previous students' experiences.

Bank Accounts

During orientation, the International Programs Office will help you open an American bank account. We do not recommend that you carry around large sums of cash. Once you have a bank account, we recommend depositing most of your cash into your account. In the U.S., debit and credit cards are widely accepted forms of payment; you do not need to carry cash with you most of the time.

Wire Transfers

If your parents want to wire money to your American bank account, they can. When you open your bank account you will be given all the necessary account numbers for wiring money. If you have any questions, the International Programs Office can help.

Online Payments

International students may pay for tuition, housing and fees through our online system. Please visit secure.acceptiva.com/?cst=ea41ec to make a payment. A 2.5% transaction fee will be added to all payments through this system.

Health Insurance & Immunization

All international students are required to have health insurance. All students are automatically enrolled in USF's insurance plan. Some hospitals and physicians may not accept the health insurance purchased outside of the United States.

It is very important for all international students to have health insurance because health care in the United States can be very expensive. American citizens and international visitors are required to pay medical costs by themselves unless they have health insurance. Insurance provides protection against high costs and gives you access to health care in the United States.

All undergraduate, graduate, and transfer students must have proof of their immunizations based on the Illinois Immunization Law. If a student does not show documentation of all required immunizations, he or she must pay to receive the necessary vaccinations at USF. Your health care provider must have all official health and immunization records translated into English.

The required health forms are on the USF Portal. You will need your username and password to log on to the portal to find out what forms you need. We will also discuss these forms and requirements during international student orientation.

For Athletes

All athletes must complete a physical examination before the start of their seasons in order to participate in official practices. If you are seen by a physician in your country, you must bring official and translated documents with you. If you do not complete your physical examination in your country, you will need to see a physician in the United States.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in many ways, including instruction on the components of academic honesty, modeling the Franciscan values of respect and integrity, as well as abiding by university policies on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Cheating

Cheating is taking, giving, or accepting any illicit advantage for any course work inside or outside of the classroom. This includes use of materials, books, notes, electronic devices and communication with others not expressly permitted for the assignment or activity. Students may not employ others, including commercial enterprises, to conduct research or prepare work for them. Students also may not submit the same work more than once without prior instructor approval. Submitting the same assignment twice violates the assumption that every assignment advances the student's learning and growth.

Fabrication

Fabrication is the falsification or invention of any information, data, or citation in an academic exercise.

Facilitating Academic Dishonesty

Students who knowingly or negligently allow their work to be used by other students or who otherwise aid others in academic dishonesty are violating academic integrity. Such students are as guilty of intellectual dishonesty as the student who receives the material, even though they may not themselves benefit academically from that dishonesty.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be properly cited in the text or in a note. Citation is also required when material from any source in print, electronic or other medium is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one's own words. Since information that is "common knowledge," such as names of leaders of prominent nations and basic scientific laws, need not be footnoted, plagiarism can, in some cases, be a subtle issue. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with a faculty member.



Weather Conditions

Illinois has four different seasons: winter, spring, summer and fall.

| Month | Average High | Average Low | Mean | Average Precipitation |
|-----------|--------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| January | 31°F/-1°C | 24°F/-8°C | 24°F/-4°C | 1.80in./45.7mm |
| February | 36°F/2°C | 29°F/-6°C | 29°F/-2°C | 1.79in./45.5mm |
| March | 47°F/8°C | 38°F/-2°C | 38°F/3°C | 2.25in./57.2mm |
| April | 61°F/16°C | 50°F/4°C | 50°F/10°C | 3.49in./88.6mm |
| May | 71°F/22°C | 60°F/9°C | 60°F/16°C | 4.08in./103.6mm |
| June | 81°F/27°C | 71°F/16°C | 71°F/22°C | 3.88in./98.6mm |
| July | 84°F/29°C | 74°F/18°C | 74°F/23°C | 4.33in./110.0mm |
| August | 82°F/28°C | 73°F/17°C | 73°F/23°C | 4.16in./105.7mm |
| September | 76°F/24°C | 66°F/13°C | 66°F/19°C | 3.01in./76.5mm |
| October | 64°F/18°C | 54°F/6°C | 54°F/12°C | 2.84in./72.1mm |
| November | 49°F/9°C | 41°F/1°C | 41°F/5°C | 3.06in./77.7mm |
| December | 35°F/2°C | 28°F/-6°C | 28°F/-2°C | 2.20in./55.9mm |

Packing

When you begin the packing process it can be very daunting. We recommend packing light because anything you pack you have to carry. To save space, only pack clothing that can be worn for many different occasions. Remember that you are packing for four different seasons, so you will want clothes that are very versatile. You do not want to take up room in your suitcase with clothing that you will only be able to wear one time! Also, there is no need to bring large

containers of shampoo, soap, etc.; all of those things can be purchased quite inexpensively in the U.S. Be sure you have all of your medication and important documents with you, and carry a list of all important addresses and phone numbers. Also, bring photocopies of your passport and visa. We also recommend that you bring between \$100–\$200 U.S. dollars with you when traveling, in case of an emergency.



Arriving At USF

Most international students arrive at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago, Illinois. Although there will be someone to pick you up from the airport (if you arrive during one of the designated pick-up times), it can be very overwhelming. Please keep calm, look for signs pointing you in the correct direction and ask questions! Most people will be more than happy to help you find what you need. If you are concerned about your English, just speak slowly and ask others to speak to you slowly as well.

Arrival Process

1. When you enter the International Terminal you will pass through the "Visitors" section of the United States Customs and Immigration, where your papers will be processed. This is when you will show your passport, visa, I-20 and evidence of your financial support. Be sure to have all of these documents somewhere that you can easily access.
2. Do not be nervous if the officer asks you some questions about your stay in the U.S.; this is very common and is nothing to worry about. Answer the questions honestly, and if you do not understand ask the officer to please repeat the question.
3. Put all of your documents back in a secure location and then follow the signs to the baggage claim.
4. You may have to wait for a few minutes for your bags, or they may have already been taken off of the carousel. Be sure to check around the baggage claim area if you do not see your bags on the carousel.
5. If you still cannot locate your bags, you can ask for assistance from the Customs Office in the baggage claim area or at the airline counter of the airlines with which you traveled.

Airport Pick-Up

If you arrive at the airport during the designated pick-up times, a USF employee will be waiting to pick you up and escort you back to USF. Two weeks before your arrival at USF, you will be sent an airport pick-up confirmation document. This document will include the name, a photo and phone number of the USF employee that will be picking you up. If you have any problems getting through immigration, please contact the USF employee immediately so she or he can help.

What Is Expected of You at USF

Students Living in the Residence Hall

All international students are required to live in the residence halls for their first year. It is expected that while you are living on campus that you abide by ALL USF policies and rules. You will be sent a separate document with all the policies, rules and regulations for living on campus, but please be aware that you will be expected to follow all of these rules. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the International Programs Office.

Residence halls never “close,” but over the holidays most services, including the dining halls, will not be available. All residence halls are equipped with kitchens, so if you stay on campus over the holidays you will be able to cook. Also, you are allowed to purchase a mini-refrigerator for your residence hall room; these cost between \$70–\$100 and will allow you to keep food in your room.

Mandatory International Student Check-In

Within 24 hours of arriving on a campus you are responsible for bringing the following documents to the International Programs Office in the Motherhouse, 2nd floor International Suite:

- Passport
- I-20
- Visa
- I-94 Card: This can be found online at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>

When you receive your orientation schedule, there will be specific times that you can go to the IPO with all of your required documents.

International Student Orientation and Arrival

Your welcome email will contain important details about your arrival to USF. USF provides a mandatory orientation to all incoming international students. The orientation helps new students learn more regarding their status, U.S. immigration laws, student services, academic requirements, medical insurance, work permits and various university policies. You will also meet new students and have an opportunity to explore the campus. USF's hope is that this orientation will assist you in making a smooth transition with both studying at USF and living in the United States. You will receive a complete orientation schedule two weeks prior to arriving on campus.

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE AT USF CHECKLIST

- ☐ Complete and return the STUDENT ARRIVAL FORM.
- ☐ Submit ALL documents that were sent to you in the welcome e-mail by the specified deadlines.
- ☐ Bring copies of all medical and dental records, including your immunizations records (in case of emergency.)
- ☐ Bring any information about medical conditions or prescription medications.
- ☐ Bring proof of medical insurance if you plan on waiving the USF-provided insurance.
- ☐ Bring your driver's license (if you have one).
- ☐ Pack your passport.
- ☐ Bring your I-20.

**Please contact the International Programs Office
with ANY questions:**

Phone number: +1-815-740-3711

E-mail Address: internationalprograms@stfrancis.edu

