IMMIGRATION INFORMATION NEW STUDENTS

The International Student, Scholar and Immigration Services (ISSIS) office within the Office of International Education (OIE) is pleased to welcome you to The University of Georgia (UGA). You will be joining a diverse campus that includes approximately 1,500 international students from over 100 different countries. OIE will assist you with understanding and complying with U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immigration regulations and required documentation during your stay at UGA. DHS requires us to create and maintain your Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) immigration record. U.S. regulations require you to keep us informed of any changes to your academic status, or your immigration status, so we can update your SEVIS record in a timely fashion. Our office is the best place to ask any questions you may have regarding your immigration status while in the U.S.

In order to have your SEVIS record registered when you arrive on campus, you must report to ISSIS for mandatory immigration check-in. Failure to do this could result in a termination of your SEVIS record, and your legal ability to remain in the U.S.

BEFORE YOU COME TO THE U.S.:

Paying the SEVIS Fee:
All F-1 and J-1 student visa applicants must pay the SEVIS fee prior to going to the U.S. embassy or Consulate for the visa interview. Students will use the I-20 form or DS-2019 form issued by the school where they intend to study in order to pay the fee on-line via the following website, http://www.FMJfee.com. The student should print the receipt and bring it to the Consulate interview as proof of payment in order to be qualified for the F-1 or J-1 visa. Canadian & Bermuda citizens, who are not required to have an F-1 visa, must pay the SEVIS fee and show proof of payment in order to qualify for admission at the Port of Entry.

Applying for a Visa:
All students issued an initial I-20 or DS-2019 form, either overseas or while in the U.S., must apply for a visa outside the U.S. Although UGA has admitted you and issued the I-20 or DS-2019 form you must first apply for a student visa from a U.S. Embassy/Consulate. (NOTE: A visa is not required for Canadians)

What embassy or Consulate should you contact for an appointment? The U. S. Embassy/Consulate closest to your home will usually process your visa application.

When should you apply? An F-1 visa can be issued no more than 120 days before the reporting date listed on Form I-20, but a student can enter the U.S. no earlier than 30 days before I-20 program start date.
Most Embassies/Consulates have specific hours to review non-immigrant visa applications. Applicants generally apply online, but then must to go to the Embassy/Consulate for an interview. Please check with the Consulate located closest to your home for their application procedures.

- Remember that the Embassy/Consulate will close for both U.S. and local holidays.
- All student visa holders are required to pay the SEVIS fee before making an appointment for a student visa.
- Most U. S. universities begin their academic year in August or September, so this is a very busy month at the Embassy/Consulate. Plan ahead so you can arrive in time for orientation and class.

Online Form Required for Visa Application http://travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms_4230.html

How much is the visa application fee? See the State Department website for details on the visa application fees. http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1263.html

What should you take to the U.S. Embassy/Consulate? – It is crucial that you take all the proper documents with you during your visa appointment. If you don’t, you may be required to return for a second time, which may delay your visa for several weeks.

Last updated 02/10/2012
Be sure to take to the Consulate:
- receipt of SEVIS I-901 fee payment
- I-20 or DS-2019 form provided by UGA or sponsoring agency
- letter of admission from UGA
- valid passport
- copy of TOEFL Score (non-native English speakers)
- original proof of finances, assistantship letter if applicable
- photographs for visa
- previous school transcripts, diplomas or records (if requested)

What happens at the U.S. Embassy/Consulate?
You may be required to speak with a consular official that reviews many visa applications every day. The consular officer will quickly review your documents and ask about your plans of study. The officer will verify that you have the academic ability, English language skills, and the financial resources to study at UGA. Since you are applying for a non-immigrant visa, the officer will require documentation of proof of intent to return to your home country. The officer will then give you instructions about when to return to pick up your documents and your visa or when to expect them in the mail. A few applicants may receive a request to submit additional information.

Do Not Enter the U.S. on a Tourist Visa!
You should not enter the U.S. as a tourist using a B-1/B-2 visa or using the WT-Visa Waiver Process! You are intending to be a student, so you should not apply for a tourist visa. You may encounter immigration problems if you enter the U.S. using an inappropriate visa. Don’t worry if you already have a tourist visa in your passport, this will not prevent you from getting a student visa. You cannot attend the University of Georgia if you enter the U.S. on a tourist visa.

Entering the U.S.
Wait to make your flight arrangements until you receive your student visa from the U.S. Embassy/Consulate. Remember that you cannot enter the U.S. more than 30 days before the start date listed on your I-20 or DS-2019 form. Carry your immigration documents with you onto the plane because you will be required to present your passport and these documents to the Immigration Officer at your port of entry. On the plane you will be given a form to complete called the I-94 arrival/departure record. Filling out the I-94 card correctly is imperative and can impact obtaining your Social Security Card, your Drivers License AND can delay your employment. More information about how to fill out your I-94 card can be found at: http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id_visa/i-94_instructions/filling_out_i94.xml

When you arrive at your port of entry, you will be inspected for admission into the U.S. At this time you will present your passport, I-20 or DS-2019 form, I-94 form, and financial information to the U.S. Immigration Officer. Your passport and I-94 will be stamped with an entry date and the departure part of the I-94 card will be stapled into your passport. The inspector will also stamp your I-20 or DS-2019 form and return it to you. Put these documents in a safe place because you will need to present them to the OIE upon your arrival at The University of Georgia. Loosing these documents will cost you significantly in time and money to replace.

Please Note: You are required by USCIS to attend the institution whose Immigration documents you use to enter the U.S.

ARRIVING AT UGA

Mandatory Immigration Check-in — All new F-1 and J-1 international students, including students transferring from other U.S. institutions, must come to the ISSIS mandatory Immigration Check-In during orientation. Please bring the following immigration documents with you to the check in session:
- I-20 or DS-2019 Form
- Passport
- I-94 card
- Visa if you have been issued one by the U.S. Embassy or Consulate

*** CHECK-IN WITH OUR OFFICE IS MANDATORY UNDER FEDERAL REGULATION! ***

Check-in will be held during International Student Orientation, hosted by International Student Life (ISL). More information about orientation can be found at the ISL website at: www.uga.edu/isl and in the Georgia Bound newsletter.
Mandatory Student Health Insurance:
All University of Georgia sponsored F-1 and J-1 international and exchange students are required by the Georgia Board of Regents to have medical insurance while attending UGA. The Board of Regents has strict requirements with regard to what comprises adequate medical insurance coverage in the United States and has selected a student insurance plan with Pearce & Pearce, Inc. to serve all of Georgia’s 35 public colleges and universities. Enrollment in the UGA Insurance Plan is automatic, and the cost of the insurance policy will be included on your student account upon registration for classes each semester or deducted from your assistantship stipend if you have a graduate assistantship with the University of Georgia. Students with J-1 visas who are sponsored by organizations that purchase insurance as a part of the sponsorship are qualified to apply for a waiver in addition to some other students who are covered on a spouse or parent’s employer group plan. Please see the Human Resource Benefits website at: http://www.hr.uga.edu/benefits/stuins/stuins.html for more information about the insurance policy and the waiver policy. Any insurance a student purchases before coming to the U.S. is considered supplementary to the Pearce & Pearce mandatory policy and the student will not be granted a waiver unless they complete the on-line waiver process and can document that their insurance meets the waiver eligibility requirements.

Questions??
Undergraduate students (new and transfer students from other U.S. institutions) will receive immigration documents and admission letters directly from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, 201 Terrell Hall, Athens, GA 30602
Graduate students (new and transfer students from other U.S. institutions) will receive immigration documents and admission letters directly from the Office of Graduate Admissions, 320 E. Clayton St. Suite 400, Athens, GA 30602.

**If you have ADMISSIONS-related questions, please contact these two offices directly.
**If you have IMMIGRATION-related questions please contact an ISSIS immigration advisor at issis@uga.edu