

# **International Student and Exchange Visitor Program Handbook**



Information has been taken from IIE Exchange Handbook and modified to Northern Michigan University.

This handbook was created to provide you with accurate and authoritative information concerning the subject matter covered; however, this handbook was not necessarily prepared by persons licensed to practice law in a particular jurisdiction. The Institute of International Education, Inc. is not engaged in rendering legal advice, and this handbook is not a substitute for the advice of an attorney. If you require legal or other expert advice, you should seek the services of a competent attorney or other professional.

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

**DHS:** Department of Homeland Security

**EVP:** Exchange Visitor Program of the U.S. Department of State

**IIE:** Institute of International Education

**IRS:** Internal Revenue Service

**ITIN:** Individual Taxpayer Identification Number

**PPO:** Preferred Provider Organization

**SAVE:** Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements **SEVIS:** Student and Exchange Visitor Information System **SSA:** Social Security Administration

**SSN:** Social Security Number

**USCBP:** U.S. Customs and Border Protection **USCIS:** U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services **USDHS:** U.S. Department of Homeland Security

**US VISIT:** U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology

# Definitions

**Accompanying spouse and dependents:** The alien spouse and minor unmarried children of an exchange visitor who are accompanying or following to join the exchange visitor and who are seeking to enter or have entered the United States temporarily on a J-2 visa or are seeking to acquire or have acquired such status after admission. For the purpose of these regulations, a minor is a person under the age of 21 years old.

**J visa:** A non-immigrant visa issued pursuant to 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(J). A J-1 visa is issued to the exchange visitor. J-2 visas are issued to the exchange visitor's immediate family.

**Professor:** An individual primarily teaching, lecturing, observing, or consulting at post-secondary accredited institutions, museums, libraries, or similar types of institutions. A professor may also conduct research, unless disallowed by the sponsor.

**Research Scholar:** An individual primarily conducting research, observing, or consulting in connection with a research project at research institutions, corporate research facilities, museums, libraries, post-secondary accredited educational institutions, or similar types of institutions.

**Short-term Scholar:** A professor, research scholar, or person with similar education or accomplishments coming to the United States on a short-term visit for the purpose of lecturing, observing, consulting, training, or demonstrating special skills at research institutions, museums, libraries, post-secondary accredited institutions, or similar type of institutions.

**Specialist:** An individual who is an expert in a field of specialized knowledge or skill coming to the United States for observing, consulting, or demonstrating special skills.

**Student:** An individual in a designated exchange program while studying in the United States at a degree-granting post-secondary accredited institution. Exchange visitors under this category may participate in degree and non-degree programs. Such exchanges are intended to promote mutual understanding by fostering the exchange of ideas between foreign students and their American counterparts.

**Teacher:** An individual teaching full-time in a primary or secondary accredited educational institution.

**Terms of Appointment:** This is the letter from NMU that provides the details of your exchange visitor sponsorship.

**Trainee:** A foreign national who has either: (1) A degree or professional certificate from a foreign post-secondary academic institution and at least one year of prior related work experience in his/her occupational field acquired outside the United States, or (2) Five years of work experience outside the United States in his/her occupational field, and who enters the United States to participate in a structured and guided work-based training program in his/her specific occupational field.

*Source:* Department of State Federal Regulations Part 62- Exchange Visitor Program: Sections 62.1, 62.4 and 62.23.

## Before You Leave Your Own Country

### UNDERSTANDING YOUR TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

Your *Terms of Appointment* describe the benefits and conditions of your exchange visitor program. Be certain to read your invitation letter carefully and bring it to the United States for reference during the year. If you have any questions, consult the NMU contact listed in your Terms.

### FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Your *Terms of Appointment* will indicate the source and amount of funding you will have available to cover your expenses during your Exchange program. You may want to bring additional funds to cover the purchase of clothing, equipment, funds for vacation travel, or any other contingencies that may arise.

### YOUR VISA AND ENTERING THE UNITED STATES

The Form DS-2019, which is generated by the NMU International Programs Office, is sent to you in your home country. You will need this form to obtain your J-1 visa from the U.S. Embassy. You should apply for your J-1 visa immediately upon receipt of your Form DS-2019. You are required to apply for a J-1 Exchange Visitor visa on NMU's Exchange Visitor Program P-1 05450. This Exchange Visitor information will be reflected on the DS-2019 issued to you by NMU.

Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond the expiration date of the Form DS-2019. Along with your passport and Form DS-2019, you may also be asked to present to the United States Embassy or Consulate information about your medical history (i.e., x-ray photograph of your chest, certification of good health, and proof of vaccination against small-pox or measles within the last three years) and your NMU *Terms of Appointment or invitation letter*.

### SAMPLE UNITED STATES J-1 VISA



In order to leave and reenter the United States throughout your exchange visitor program period, you will need a visa that permits multiple entries. If you wish to leave and reenter the U.S. but your visa permits only one entry, then you must apply for a new visa in your home country. For further information, consult with your NMU immigration advisor (2101 Hedgcock).

## UNITED STATES VISITOR AND IMMIGRANT STATUS INDICATOR TECHNOLOGY (US -VISIT)

US-VISIT is part of a continuum of biometrically enhanced security measures that begins outside U.S. borders and continues through a visitor's arrival into and departure from the United States. It incorporates eligibility determinations made by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of State at the U.S. Consulate/Embassy abroad.

US-VISIT currently applies to all visitors (with limited exemptions) entering the United States regardless of country of origin or whether they are traveling on a visa or arriving by air, sea, or land. Most visitors experience US VISIT's biometric procedures - digital, inkless finger scans and digital photograph - upon entry to the United States.

Foreign visitors to the U.S. arriving via air or sea no longer need to complete paper Customs and Border Protection [Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record](#) or [Form I-94W Nonimmigrant Visa Waiver Arrival/Departure Record](#). Those who need to prove their legal-visitor status—to employers, schools/universities or government agencies—can access their CBP arrival/departure record information online.

CBP now gathers travelers' arrival/departure information automatically from their electronic travel records. Because advance information is only transmitted for air and sea travelers, CBP will still issue a paper form I-94 at land border ports of entry.

If travelers need the information from their Form I-94 admission record to verify immigration status or employment authorization, the record number and other admission information they are encouraged to [get their I-94 Number](#).

Upon arrival, a CBP officer stamps the travel document of each arriving non-immigrant traveler with the admission date, the class of admission, and the date that the traveler is admitted until. If a traveler would like a paper Form I-94, one can be requested during the inspection process. All requests will be accommodated in a secondary setting.

Upon exiting the U.S., travelers previously issued a paper Form I-94 should surrender it to the commercial carrier or to CBP upon departure. Otherwise, CBP will record the departure electronically via manifest information provided by the carrier or by CBP.



## **TWO YEAR HOME RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT**

As an Exchange Visitor you are participating in an exchange program that may require you to return home to share your experience. To fulfill this requirement, Exchange Visitor Program participants may have to return to their home countries when their authorized academic exchange activities in the United States end. As a J-1 Exchange Visitor, United States law requires a two-year period of home residency before an individual applies for non-immigrant (H and L) visas as temporary workers, for permanent residency in the United States, or as immigrants. This requirement does not prevent you from reentry into the United States within the two-year period to attend conferences, tourism, or for further study nor does this requirement prevent you from going to a third country after leaving the U.S.

## YOUR FAMILY

When bringing members of your family with you, be sure you have sufficient resources to provide for their financial support and round-trip international travel. Their health insurance coverage must be in compliance with the levels established by the U.S. federal immigration regulations. We suggest you seek information locally on programs and support services for spouses and children. You also must keep your immigration advisor current on their address, phone number and e-mail address at all times.

### Visas for Family Members

Family members who come with you to the United States are referred to as your *dependents*. Your spouse and any unmarried children under the age of 21 are eligible to apply for J-2 dependents' visas. (Other family members such as parents, brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews are not eligible for J-2 classification, but may be eligible for B-2 classification to visit the United States as tourists.)

If you plan to have your dependents travel with you to the United States, you must notify NMU.

To obtain Forms DS-2019 for each dependent, you will need to provide proof of sufficient funding to support them, including round trip transportation and health insurance coverage. You will also need to provide verification of health insurance coverage for each of your dependents. Once they are in the U.S. each of your dependents will also need a valid passport at the time that they are applying for the J-2 Visa.

## HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

**You are responsible for making your own housing arrangements.** If you have not already received information about housing from your host organization, be sure to ask about rental rates, required deposits, payment schedules, and a recommended or appropriate time schedule for confirming arrangements.

Finding suitable housing accommodations can be challenging. If you are unable to find permanent housing you should make temporary housing arrangements prior to your arrival so you will not be searching for a place to live at a time when you have many other concerns. **Read all information on housing carefully and follow instructions.**

### ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS BENEFITS

I. To guard against financial hardship if you should become ill or have an accident while in the United States, you must hold adequate accident and sickness insurance. The J-1 and J-2 exchange visitor status requires coverage at levels in compliance with the *Exchange Visitor Program Regulations*.

II. ***We strongly suggest you carefully review your health insurance coverage needs to determine what constitutes sufficient coverage. If you determine that one policy does not meet your needs, you may consider purchasing a supplemental policy or searching for another policy.***

III. In cases of serious accident or illness you should notify NMU immediately so that all possible guidance may be provided to you.

IV. Most health insurances require you to purchase dental and vision coverage separately.

V. **Exchange Visitors accompanied by dependents are required to provide their dependents with adequate health and accident insurance in compliance with exchange visitor regulations.** Failure to do so violates the Terms of Appointment of your exchange visitor program and may result in termination of the program. Participants are cautioned that medical insurance coverage is expensive, and the cost of insurance must be carefully considered in any decision about the financial feasibility of bringing dependents to the United States.

## Preparing for Departure and Arrival To the United States

Before you leave your home country, be sure all details concerning your travel arrangements have been finalized. For your trip, carry with you the names, addresses and phone numbers of your supervisor at your host institution and your NMU immigration advisor. Carry these items separately from your passport and Form DS-2019. We suggest you also carry your *Terms of Appointment*. Have these items accessible in case the United States Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) request them at your port of entry into the United States. **Do not pack your passport, Form DS-2019, or Terms of Appointment in your luggage.**

*Once you enter the United States, you are required to notify NMU of your arrival within 10 days of the start date on your Form DS-2019.*

### *PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST*

This checklist may help you organize your departure from your home country and your arrival to the United States.

Research housing options in the United States, both short term and long term.

Obtain or update your passport and the passports of dependents that will accompany you. (Your passport should be valid for at least six months beyond the duration of your Form DS-2019.)

Apply for the J-1 entry visa for yourself and the J-2 entry visa for any dependents that will accompany you, if your program permits dependents.

Pay the SEVIS fee at least three days before your exchange visitor visa interview.

Obtain international air tickets. Find out about any baggage specifications and security clearances for your particular airline.

Review medical insurance information and purchase insurance for yourself and your accompanying dependents.

Inform NMU of the following;

1. Your complete itinerary including airlines, flight numbers, transfer cities, and dates and times of flights.
2. The names of any dependents that will accompany you. Give the NMU contact information to your family.

Transfer personal funds to a U.S. bank. Purchase traveler's checks and carry only a small amount of U.S. currency.

### *What to Bring*

Below is a list of items that you may not readily think about bringing but will be glad you did!

Your driver's license or international driver's license.

A supply of medications for existing medical conditions. Prescriptions from abroad cannot be filled in the United States. It is a good idea to have your physician provide you with a description of the prescription medicine(s) you take. You can then consult a physician in the U.S. for a prescription that can be filled here.

An extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses.

Medical records, dental records, and academic records of any dependents that will be enrolling in school in the United States.

Birth certificates or other proof of age for children who will be entering school for the first time in the U.S.

Credit cards (Exchange Visitors sometimes have a long wait after applying for credit cards in the United States).

Proof of safe driving record in your home country for the past one to three years, if you might be purchasing automobile insurance in the U.S.

Your Social Security Number or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number if you were issued one on a previous trip to the United States.

Slides, photographs, magazines, CDs, music and maps of your home country, which can be used in informal presentations you may be invited to give.

It is probably wise to omit most household items such as linens and cooking utensils, because they can be purchased in the U.S.

### Arrival Checklist

This checklist will help you prioritize some things that need to be taken care of immediately upon your arrival in the United States.

Upon entering the United States, you **must notify NMU within 10 days** of the start date on your Form DS- 2019.

Verify that your passport stamp includes the notation J-1 D/S or J-2 D/S.

Locate permanent housing and open a bank account (see section on Banking).

Apply for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) or a Social Security Number (SSN).

Obtain gas, electricity, water and telephone services.

Identify a doctor, dentist and hospital in case of an emergency.

If you bring or buy a car, obtain a driver's license, register the car and purchase car insurance.

Look into opportunities for professional meetings and other enrichment opportunities.

Provide your U.S. address to your host institution.

### ARRIVAL AT YOUR HOST INSTITUTION

Many participants find it helpful to arrive several days before the official reporting date as indicated on the *Terms of Appointment* and Form DS-2019. There is little advantage in arriving too early, and you should follow whatever instructions you have received from your host.

***Once you arrive in the U.S. you are required to report your address to NMU immigration advisor within 10 days of the start date on your Form DS-2019. NMU can then activate your record in the SEVIS database. Failure to do so will negatively impact your legal status in the U.S.***

If you do not have a permanent residence by the 10th day from the start date of your DS- 2019, you should provide NMU with the address of your temporary housing. As soon as you secure permanent housing, you must notify NMU of your address change, as well as any subsequent changes in your U.S. residence address.

### TRANSFERRING MONEY FROM HOME

If you require regular or emergency financial support from someone at home, Western Union Money Transfer services can be used to transfer cash from many countries. A bank account or credit card is not necessary. A family member, friend or sponsor may bring the cash they wish to send to any Western Union location, where they fill out a simple form and pay a service charge based upon the amount to be sent. You can withdraw that money in local currency minutes later at any Western Union location.

Each country has its own central telephone number that gives callers detailed information regarding locations and service hours. Check your local telephone directory under *Western Union Money Transfer* or in the U.S. call toll-free 1-800-325-6000.

### BANKING

If your government does not restrict the exchange of currency, you may wish to transfer some personal funds to the U.S. There are no restrictions on the importation of U.S. or foreign currency. This can be done by instructing your bank to issue a foreign draft on a bank near your U.S. host institution with which your bank has a correspondent relationship. Upon arrival, you can then open an account at that bank and draw on the funds or arrange for the funds to be transferred to a more conveniently located banking institution.

You are strongly advised to bring some personal funds with you in the form of traveler's checks to cover expenses during transit and immediately after your arrival. When you arrive at the airport in the U.S., it is useful to change some money (traveler's checks or foreign currency) into U.S. dollars to pay for transportation to host site, tips for baggage handling, a hotel, and other possible expenses.

As soon as you arrive at your host site, you should open an account at a local bank. If you have transferred funds from your home bank, you may choose its correspondent bank in the U.S. if it is conveniently located. If not, ask your supervisor to suggest an appropriate banking facility. Although the bank you select will offer you many different kinds of accounts, they will generally fall into two categories: (a) savings accounts, which pay interest at a modest rate but limit the number of withdrawals per month and may require your presence at the bank to handle the transaction, and (b) checking accounts, which will be most useful to you because they are designed to help depositors pay their bills by writing checks that can be sent safely through the mail (to pay rent or utility bills, for example) or handed to cashiers in local stores. Some checking accounts are offered without a fee but require that you maintain a minimum balance; others require no balance but debit the account a monthly service charge as well as a small fee for each check cashed. The bank customer service staff will list the options available to you.

## Sample check

Labels for the sample check:

- Your name and address: JOHN DOE, 123 SAMPLE DR, ANYWHERE, OH 12345-5432
- Payee account number: 123445
- Contact information: To: Bill Payment Processing Center, P.O. BOX 7236, Sioux Falls, SD 57117
- Check date: May 21, 2006
- Check number: 00002378
- Amount: \$1.00
- Pay: ONE AND 00/100..... DOLLARS
- To The Order Of: LAWN SERVICE, 341 GREEN LANE, GREENVILLE, OH 54321-1234
- Signature: SIGNATURE ON FILE
- Authorized signature: THIS CHECK HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED BY THE ACCOUNT HOLDER
- MICR line: \*002378\* 0704000123 07 02898012345 \*
- Warning: WARNING: THIS BORDER CONTAINS MICR-O-TYPE WHICH WILL NOT REPRODUCE ON A COPIER

Most banks issue an ATM (automatic teller machine) or debit card that allows bank customers to access funds in their accounts through machines that are open 24 hours a day. These are located outside the bank. Increasingly, grocery stores, gas stations and other stores have installed machines that allow you to pay for your purchases at the check-out counter or gas pump using your ATM or credit card. Remember to take your receipt with you.

It is important to note that checks drawn on out-of-town banks will take approximately 5 business days to clear, (i.e., the time required for the money to be transferred from one bank to the other before it will be available to you). If you transfer from one city to another during the period of your exchange visitor program, you can move your funds to a new bank in one of two ways: (a) you can write a check drawn on your original bank for deposit in the new account (which must then clear), or (b) you can purchase traveler's checks with the balance of your funds.

### Credit Cards

Credit/charge cards are widely used in the U.S. The most popular cards are those issued by American Express, Visa, MasterCard, and Discover Card, but there are many others available from credit companies with a local focus and from individual shops and department stores. Ordinarily, cards are issued only to applicants with a substantial income and proof of past credit worthiness. The safest place to apply for a credit card is at your bank. Given the complexity of credit checking outside the U.S., it may be difficult for visitors to qualify for cards once they are in the U.S. However, if you can obtain one before you leave home, you will find it useful, especially if you should wish to rent a car.

Credit card companies bill monthly and charge interest at very high rates on any unpaid balance from the previous month. Some companies, such as American Express, require payment in full at the end of the month. Although no interest is charged on the current month's bills, there are sometimes hidden costs for the convenience of credit.

## BAGGAGE

It is recommended that you arrange to have additional baggage sent to you directly once you have found permanent housing in the U.S.

## IMPORTANT U.S. INCOME TAX INFORMATION

### General U.S. Income Tax Information

As an exchange visitor, you may be required to pay income taxes to the U.S. tax authorities on the income you receive from U.S. sources unless you are exempt (excused) under a tax treaty or special rulings of the tax authority, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). U.S. source income includes but is not limited to:

- Funds provided to you by any U.S. institutions, organizations or agencies of the U.S.
- Any wages paid by any U.S. employers should you be engaged in employment during your U.S. stay

**Important Information for Those Currently Employed or Starting Employment in the U.S.** In general, U.S. employers are unfamiliar with the way in which U.S. tax law applies to nonresident aliens (U.S. tax terminology). Consequently, many employers will withhold income tax from your wages at the same rate as a U.S. citizen. This means that when your annual U.S. tax report is submitted to the IRS, you will owe a significant amount of money. Your annual U.S. tax report will not be the same as a U.S. citizen's tax report. U.S. citizens are entitled to various tax benefits that are not available to nonresident alien taxpayers. Finally, at the end of the year, when you are required to report all of your U.S. source income to the IRS, you may be surprised to find yourself with a higher tax responsibility than you would have guessed.

Since it may be difficult for you to pay off a significant debt all at once, you should ask your employer to withhold the maximum amount from your wages. If at the end of the year, when all of your income and all of your tax responsibility have been calculated, it is determined that too much of your income has been held for tax purposes, the annual U.S. tax report submitted on your behalf will result in a tax refund paid to you rather than you paying the IRS.

### When You Start Your Job

One of the forms your employer will ask you to complete is the form W-4. Your employer will use the information on this form to calculate the percentage of your wages that should be held back for tax purposes.

If you earn more than \$10,000 annually, ask your employer about an additional withholding (about 5% of your gross income) OR be prepared to pay additional tax at the time your U.S. annual tax report is sent to the IRS.

### Tax Terms and Tax Forms You May Encounter

1042-S (Foreign Person's U.S. Source Income Subject to Withholding)

This form is used to report U.S. source income paid to a nonresident alien. *Income reported on this form includes:*

- **Compensation payments** made to employees.
- **All non-employee compensation** payments made to nonresident aliens such as **bank interest, dividends, and exchange visitor funding**. Many U.S. financial institutions may instead issue Form 1099 to report non-compensation income such as bank interest and dividends.

1099 (Miscellaneous Income)

This form is used to report income that is not reported in forms 1042-S or W-2. It is compensation as an independent contractor, bank interest, dividends, etc. However, if you receive this form as a result of your employment, please ask your employer to issue the form W-2 instead and withhold appropriate income taxes and submit to the applicable tax authorities. Otherwise, you may find yourself having to pay a large tax bill.

8233 (Exemption from Withholding on Compensation for Independent (Certain Dependent) Personal Services of a Nonresident Alien Individual)

If you are planning to engage in U.S. employment during your U.S. stay and if you are from a **tax treaty country** and want to claim a tax treaty exemption on your compensation, you must complete this form and submit it to your employer. An employer will file this form with the IRS on your behalf. You must complete this form for each tax year that you are employed in the U.S.

8843 (Statement for Exempt Individuals and Individuals with a Medical Condition)

This form must be filed in order to ensure your exempt status for U.S. tax purposes as a J-1 visa holder. It's usually attached to your income tax return (annual income and tax report). Even if you are not subject to U.S. taxes because you did not receive U.S. source income, you must complete this form and submit it to the IRS.

W-2 (Wage and Tax Statement)

This form is used to report your U.S. income from employment regardless of your U.S. residency status. Your employer reports gross income you earned during the year as well as income taxes they withheld from your wages and submitted to tax authorities.

**W-4** (Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate)

If you work while you are in the U.S., your employer will ask you to fill in this form prior to the commencement of your employment. This form will determine the withholding tax amount from your wage.

FICA Tax (Social Security & Medicare Tax)

This tax is imposed on all earned wages in the U.S. This tax is to finance the old age/survivors/disability insurance and the medical insurance for such eligible individuals provided under the Social Security Act. Even though you have or have applied for a Social Security Number, you are most likely exempt from paying this tax, which represents 7.65% of your gross wage. Unfortunately many U.S. employers are not aware of this fact and they withhold this tax from your wages. **Please question your employer if you notice any FICA deductions on your statement of earnings.**

Nonresident Alien

If you are not a U.S. citizen, you are considered a nonresident alien unless you meet the Green Card test or the Substantial Presence test. However, for Exchange Visitors that came into the U.S. with a J visa, you will be considered a nonresident alien for the first **five** tax years that you are in the U.S. You will become a resident for tax purposes on your 6<sup>th</sup> tax year in the United States.

#### *OBTAINING A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER OR INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER*

Every person who receives income in the U.S. is identified by either a Social Security Number (SSN) or an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). These are unique personal identification numbers, widely used in the U.S. If you receive U.S. source funds you must obtain an SSN or ITIN.

If you have been issued an SSN during a previous stay in the U.S., bring it with you as it will still be valid.

#### *Applying for your Social Security Number*

To apply for an SSN, you must appear in person at the office of the Social Security Administration nearest your host institution. Take the following documents with you:

- A completed Form SS-5, Application for a Social Security Card (available online at <http://www.ssa.gov>).
- Your passport and one other document that establishes your age and identity.
- Your Form I-94.
- Your SEVIS Form DS-2019.
- Some Social Security Administration Offices may require a letter that states that you are authorized to work in the

U.S. Your NMU immigration advisor can provide you with a letter that states that you have permission to work in the United States as a J-1 Exchange Visitor and that because you work, you will need a SSN.

Remember, that you may not accept employment at any time without prior NMU approval.

- NOTE: It is extremely important that your name on the application for an SSN be spelled exactly the same way it is spelled on your passport and on your SEVIS Form DS-2019 and Form I-94.

The Social Security Administration verifies your non-immigrant visa document and status through the DHS Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program. SAVE is populated by data collected from DHS at the time you were admitted to the U.S. DHS estimates that this data will become available in the SAVE system within 10 calendar days of your admission into the U.S.

***You should not try to apply for an SSN until after you have reported your arrival in the U.S. to NMU. Notify NMU of your arrival within 10 days of the start date on your Form DS-2019.***

### *Social Security Taxes*

Social Security is the U.S. national retirement plan. A portion of every wage earner's pay is automatically deducted for Social Security taxes.

Services performed by Exchange Visitors (holders of J-1 visas) may not be subject to Social Security taxes if the services are performed in accordance with the purposes for which the participant was admitted to the U.S. If you receive wages from an employer, you should be aware of this exemption and bring it to the attention of your employers immediately in case Social Security taxes (sometimes identified as FICA on paycheck stubs) are withheld by mistake.

**Please note:** The wages of J-2 visa holders are usually subject to Social Security taxes.

### *AUTOMOBILES*

Not only is an automobile expensive to maintain, but it also carries with it certain liabilities and responsibilities.

If you find it necessary to purchase an automobile or other motor vehicle, please note that not only must you abide by state and host institution regulations, but you also must secure adequate insurance coverage. This is extremely important, since neither NMU nor any other sponsoring agency can assume responsibility in case of accident or loss. You should seek the advice of your supervisor in securing adequate coverage and in informing yourself of the liability insurance laws of the state in which your host institution is located.

Only tourists may use the driver's licenses of their own country for up to one year; international students, short-term scholars, trainees, teachers, professors, research scholars, or specialists, are expected to apply for a license in the state in which they reside. You may not be issued automobile insurance if you do not have a valid United States driver's license. To obtain a license, visit the local office of the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). If you have a valid license from home, the driving test required of new drivers will probably be waived, but you will be asked to take a written test proving you understand the road rules of the U.S. The DMV will give you a book outlining these rules.

You may bring a car into the country for your personal use for up to one year without payment of a customs tax, but you will have to comply with the insurance and registration regulations noted below. If you remain beyond a year or wish to sell your car before you depart, you will be charged the tax in effect at the time you entered the U.S.

There are many car rental agencies all over the country, and they can be found at all major airports. Cars can be rented or leased by the day, week, month, or year; usually the fee is based on the duration of the rental and, in some cases, a mileage charge. Gasoline is sometimes included in the fee; many times it costs extra. You must present the agency with a valid driver's license. Most agencies ask for a credit card before they will rent a vehicle; those that accept cash usually ask for a substantial deposit and return any excess when the final bill is settled.

If you need to purchase an automobile, whether new or used, it is a good idea to ask a colleague to accompany you to the car dealership. It is challenging to buy a car in the U.S., and you will benefit from being with a colleague. For example, this is one occasion where bargaining is the rule, and many options regarding equipment, services, and financing will be offered that can be confusing. You should always ask to test drive the car and, if it is used, have it checked by an independent mechanic before you sign the purchase papers.

In addition to the vehicle's purchase price, you must expect to pay a local or state sales tax, a registration fee, personal property

tax, and insurance premiums. Public liability and property damage insurance is compulsory in most states and advisable everywhere; it can be a costly item. This protects you financially in the event you injure someone or damage property with your vehicle. It is also wise to insure yourself against fire, theft, or damage to the vehicle itself. Costs of these items vary so widely from area to area that it is advisable for you to discuss them with colleagues when you arrive at your host institution. Holders of J-1 visas are eligible for reasonably priced automobile insurance from the American Automobile Association. A certification of a safe driving record from home may help to facilitate the purchasing of automobile insurance.

Gasoline is sold by the gallon slightly less than four liters and is usually available in three unleaded grades, each designed for different-sized engines. Environmental laws require cars in the U.S. to use unleaded gas. Diesel fuel is also available but less frequently. Gas stations, also called service stations, provide restroom facilities as a convenience to the traveler.

Driving laws are strictly enforced, and ignorance of them is not an excuse. Parking rules are clearly posted on the roadsides, and fines are imposed or cars towed away if they are not observed. Moving violations, such as passing in a no-passing zone, speeding, driving through a red light, are considered the most serious and carry the heaviest fines. Speed limits are also posted; the maximum speed limit permitted on highways varies by state and type of road. Speed limits are posted in "miles" per hour. There are laws in the U.S. to prevent driving under the influence of alcohol, and penalties for doing so are severe.

To protect yourself and your property, never pick up hitchhikers you do not know, never leave the keys in the ignition, never leave packages visible in the car, and be sure to close all windows and lock car doors whenever you park. When driving you should be aware that pedestrians **always** have the right of way. You should also note that making a right turn against a red light may be illegal in some urban areas.

#### MAIL

Whenever you move, you should leave a forwarding address at your place of residence and complete a change-of-address form at your local post office or at <http://www.usps.com>.

The United States Postal Service, a government-owned corporation, provides mail service. Post Offices are usually open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and until noon on Saturday, although some have extended hours. Blue mailboxes are located on many street corners and in public buildings; each carries a sign on which collection times are indicated. In most areas of the country, mail is delivered to individual residences, Monday through Saturday.

Postage for first-class mail within the U.S. depends on the weight and size of the envelope, postcard or package, as well as the destination and type of service selected. U.S. postal rates are set by the U.S. Postal Service. Check with your local post office for rates.

Use of the ZIP code that follows the city and state names is required for delivery. The first five digits are in common use; the final four are part of a system designed to direct mail to specific addresses more quickly, but they are not required. "USA" needs to be added as a final line to the address if the letter is to cross an international boundary.

#### UNDERSTANDING MULTIPLE ADDRESSES

Individuals in the U.S. often use a variety of addresses. It is common for an individual to reside at one location and receive mail at another. For instance, one may choose to pay for a private mail box even though a mail box is provided at the place of residence.

Throughout this handbook you will have read references made to both mailing address and the address where you physically reside. You are responsible for notifying your IIE representative within 10 days of making a change of either of these addresses at any time during your period of sponsorship.

## During Your Exchange Program

### GENERAL ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

During your stay in the U.S., NMU will be ready to assist you whenever possible. The NMU Immigration Advisor with whom you will correspond and who will be most directly involved with your program will have knowledge of Exchange Visitor Program regulations. Throughout the year, NMU will send you general instructions and announcements to inform you of reporting requirements and special opportunities. For information and advice about work related matters consult your supervisor.

### REPORTING TO NMU

You will be expected to send to NMU, confirmation of commencement of your training, internship, research project or teaching assignment shortly after you arrive in the U.S. Those of you who are conducting independent research will be expected to update NMU on the continuation and the progress of your research. Email messages will be sent to you advising which forms to complete and their exact deadlines.

You are expected to keep your NMU Immigration Advisor informed of your current local and email addresses. The local address you provide must be the actual physical location where you reside. The address of the host institution should never be used as your residence address. If your mailing address is different from the address where you physically reside, let your NMU Immigration Advisor know that as well. If either of your addresses changes, you must notify NMU within 10 days of the change.

An Internet-based system is used to enable sponsors and the United States Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) to exchange information on the legal status of students, short-term scholars, trainees, teachers, professors, research scholars, or specialists and their dependents nationwide. This program, called the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), is also used by the U.S. government to track the arrivals and departures of international exchange visitors, as well as your address, site of activity, and dates of sponsorship.

***You must report to NMU within 10 days of the start date on your Form DS-2019 and provide your address. NMU can then activate your record in the SEVIS database. If you fail to report to NMU within 10 days, then your record in the SEVIS database is noted as such and may negatively impact your ability to stay in the***

### Report to NMU

1. Any employment problems.
2. Major changes in your personal status such as marriage, divorce, births.
3. Name changes due to marriage, divorce, etc. within 10 days of making such a change.
4. Serious health problems that could impact your program.
5. The arrival in the U.S. of any dependents.
6. Any international travel.
7. Change in address within 10 days of making such a change.
8. Plans for departure from the U.S.

*You must obtain NMU's approval in advance for the following:*

1. Change in Employment.
2. Transferring to a different Host Institution (see page 18).
3. Changing research focus (see page 18).
4. International travel (see page 17).
5. Emergency departure from the U.S. (see page 18).

## SHARING INFORMATION WITH THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

NMU, as your sponsor, is responsible for sharing information about you with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (USDHS) through SEVIS. SEVIS enables schools and program sponsors to transmit electronic information and other notifications via the Internet to the USDHS. The data entered will reside in a central database maintained by USDHS. This information will be accessible by U.S. embassies abroad, schools in the U.S., USDHS and other U.S. government agencies. It is important to note that much of this information has always been available to the U.S. government, but not in a web-based format.

## INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

You should notify NMU in writing before making any trips outside the U.S. Provide the inclusive dates of travel, your destination, and contact information while outside the U.S.

The process of issuing visas may be a lengthy one due to necessary security clearances. NMU cannot guarantee that your application will be successful or will be handled by the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in a timely fashion. Please be aware that of the potential difficulties of traveling and reentering the U.S. Go to <http://travel.state.gov/visa> for comprehensive information on applying for U.S. visas.

If you must travel outside the U.S., please note the following:

1. In all cases where you plan international travel, you must remain in regular contact with your NMI Immigration Advisor, who will validate your Form DS-2019 and review your documents. *Only an NMU Immigration Advisor can validate your DS-2019.* Be prepared to provide full information on your travel dates, destinations, and contact information.

2. To reenter the U.S. you must have:

- A valid passport.
- A validated Form DS-2019 with your name exactly as it appears on your passport. This is critically important. The name must read exactly the same in both documents (for instance, your family name cannot precede your given name on DS 2019; multiple given names on the passport need to match the names on DS-2019).
- A separate Form DS-2019 for each family member traveling with you.
- A J-1 multiple entry visa stamped in your passport that is valid through the date you are reentering the U.S.

## Check Your Travel Documents Early

Examine your passport and U.S. entry visa at least one month before you travel, and answer the following questions:

- Is your passport valid for at least six months beyond the expiration of your Form DS-2019?
- Has your Form DS-2019 been re-validated for travel and reentry once during the past 12 months?
- Is your U.S. visa entry stamp valid for the date you will reenter the United States?
- Do you need to apply for a new visa because your previous visa was a single-entry visa which you used the last time you entered?
- Does the country you intend to visit require a visa for entry? Contact the embassy of that country for further information.

If you answered no to any of the first four questions, call your NMU Immigration Advisor immediately for instructions.

If your passport needs to be renewed, it can be renewed by your embassy or consulate in the U.S. before you leave the U.S. Visas may be renewed only at a U.S. Embassy or consulate abroad. NMU cannot renew visas. **NOTE:** We are advising participants to seriously consider any and all options rather than try to renew their visas in a country other than their own. If during a visit of 30 days or less to Canada or Mexico, you choose to apply to renew your J-1 visa and your application is denied, the denial will be reflected in your passport and **you will NOT be permitted to reenter the U.S.** If, during your visit of 30 days or less, you have not applied to renew your J-1 visa, you may still re-enter the U.S. using your **expired visa**, along with the supporting documents mentioned above.

If you will visit Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean Islands for more than 30 days, you **must** have a valid J-1 visa for re-entry into the U.S.

*At least three weeks before your planned international travel, bring your original Form DS-2019 to your NMU Immigration Advisor to have it signed to show that you continue to be in good standing.*

If your Form DS-2019 has not been returned to you, if your permission to stay has expired, or if you are uncertain whether your documents are in order to permit your reentry to the U.S., consult your NMU Immigration Advisor concerning the procedures to follow.

#### *TRANSFERRING TO A DIFFERENT HOST INSTITUTION*

If a more satisfactory program is available at another host institution and you wish to consider a transfer, you must discuss the matter with your supervisor.

#### *CHANGING FOCUS OF RESEARCH*

Participants may not change their focus of research without prior consultation with and approval from both their supervisor and NMU Immigration Advisor. A request for change must be submitted well in advance at the time the decision will be needed. Strong justification of the change must accompany the request. Impact on sponsorship time frame must also be addressed.

#### *EXTENSION OF SPONSORSHIP*

To request an extension of your permission to stay in the U.S., you should send a request to NMU Immigration Advisor explaining why you need additional time in the U.S.; how you will utilize the experience once you return home and your intent to fulfill the exchange upon program completion. Include a copy of your passport with your request. Have your supervisor send a letter to your NMU Immigration Advisor with the following information:

- New end date of sponsorship being requested
- Description of activity
- Confirmation of funding
- Proof of health insurance coverage

Once the extension is approved, you will be notified directly by your NMU Immigration Advisor and will also receive a Form DS-2019 in support of your permission to remain in the U.S.

## Departure from the United States

#### *OBTAINING RETURN TICKET*

You should plan your return early, giving yourself sufficient time to make the appropriate arrangements. When making plans to return home you should note that last minute arrangements can be more expensive and difficult, especially during the summer months when international travel is particularly heavy.

#### *FINAL REPORTING*

Before your departure, ask your NMU Immigration Advisor for a Departure Form which you should complete and get back to NMU Immigration Advisor shortly before you leave the United States.

It is important that you report your anticipated departure date accurately on the departure forms. If your departure date changed from the date you list on the form, you must let your NMU Immigration Advisor know.

#### *EMERGENCY DEPARTURE*

If it becomes necessary for you to return home for an extended period of time before the end of your exchange visitor program, you must consult your supervisor and NMU Immigration Advisor to obtain approval for your departure. Should such an emergency arise, please inform NMU Immigration Advisor of the situation immediately.

## American Society and Culture

#### *Characteristics of Americans*

It is not easy to make generalizations about the United States — above all, it is a land of diversity. The size of the country, its geographic and climatic differences, and the ethnic mix of its people all contribute to its variety. Still, there are a few characteristics you will encounter in “typical” Americans from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

For example, Americans tend to value their individuality, to think themselves the equal of any other man or woman, and to believe they are masters of their own destiny. They feel free to speak their minds on most subjects and are often astonishingly frank in expressing political opinions, cherishing above all other rights

the freedom of speech guaranteed by the United States Constitution. They are direct in their communications; they ask questions when they need information; they say “no” when they mean no. Americans do not commonly exhibit class consciousness or make distinctions among themselves along class lines. If anything, the vast majority identify themselves as belonging to the middle class. Except for perhaps the very rich or very poor, Americans do not usually believe that their success in life will be determined by the social class into which they were born and do not usually show excessive deference or superiority to each other in public situations.

Americans appear open and friendly at first meeting, but this means only that they are pleased to make your acquaintance; it may or may not lead to true friendship. They are informal; they often introduce themselves by their first names and call others by their first names on very slight acquaintance. In professional situations, however, it is preferable to address people using their title and last name (e.g., Dr. Smith, Ms. Jones) until they ask you to use their first name. Americans tend to stand at least an arm’s length apart when conversing and are not inclined to touch one another, except to shake hands upon greeting one another. They value their privacy and rarely visit even good friends, without telephoning first.

### *Appointments/Punctuality*

It is always appropriate to make an appointment before visiting someone, particularly at an office. It is best to be on time for appointments. When they are professional in nature—an appointment with a doctor or a colleague at the host institution—you should appear within 5 minutes of the time you have agreed upon. On social occasions, especially when the invitation is for a meal, plan to arrive no more than 10 to 15 minutes after the appointed hour (but never before the hour—the hosts may not be ready). In both cases, be sure to telephone if you are unavoidably delayed.

### *Invitations*

If you accept an invitation or make an appointment, it is very important that you appear as promised since your hosts will have taken considerable trouble to prepare for your visit, and professional people will have arranged their schedules to accommodate you. It is perfectly acceptable to decline an invitation if it is not convenient for you, but some response is always called for. On a formal, written invitation, “RSVP” means “please reply.” It is not necessary to bring a gift unless the occasion is a birthday or Christmas party or perhaps if the invitation is for an entire weekend. In these cases, a simple, inexpensive gift of flowers, candy, a bottle of wine, or a small souvenir from your own country would be appropriate. A thank-you note to your host or hostess, especially following an overnight visit, is considerate. If you have been invited to go out for a meal, you should assume that all parties will pay for themselves, unless the invitation included a specific offer to pay for your food.

### *Dietary Restrictions*

If health or religious beliefs restrict the foods that you can eat, you should feel free to explain this when you accept an invitation to visit. Such preferences are always understood; your host or hostess will usually be happy to take them into account when the menu is planned. You can also be assertive about dietary preferences or restrictions in a restaurant. Many places will try to accommodate your request.

### *Smoking Restrictions*

It is now quite common in the United States for cigarette smoking to be either restricted or completely prohibited in public places. This includes restaurants, airplanes and other public transportation, theaters, stores, museums, and many office and university buildings. Cigar and pipe smoking are almost always prohibited. You should also be aware that Americans often object to guests smoking in their homes, and it is considered a courtesy to inquire whether your host will mind before you “light up.”

### *Asking Questions*

Probably the best advice this handbook can give is to suggest you ask questions whenever you need guidance or information. Americans do so freely and never think that inquiries are a sign of ignorance or weakness. On the contrary, questions indicate interest, and you will find most people glad to be of help.

## ***CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES***

The United States is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. This cultural diversity stems from having had a steady flow of immigration from different parts of the world for over 150 years, which contributed to the already existing culture. These immigrant populations have influenced both the cultural and physical landscape of their environment. The degree to which each group’s influence is felt depends on the density of a given ethnic group and the length of time that the community has been in the United States.

The 2010 United States Census found that 12.9% of people living in the United States are foreign born and 18% of households speak a language other than English at home. The largest groups of immigrants in the last ten years have been from: Latin America and the Caribbean (53%), Asia (28%), Europe (12%), Africa (4%), Northern America (2%), and less than 1% in Oceania.

Climate and geography are other factors that play a role in the cultural diversity of the United States. This is reflected in the lifestyle differences found in the various regions of the United States expressed through their choices in architecture, cuisine, leisure activities, etc.

## *THE LAW AND CIVIL RIGHTS*

The United States is governed by the “rule of law.” It must be observed by every resident, including the President and other public officials, and can be changed only through established legislative procedures. The law also offers everyone its equal protection; it applies to everyone equally, regardless of position or wealth.

The Constitution of the United States, which supersedes all federal, state, and local law, protects all persons within the borders of the country. With the exception of a few laws that regulate such matters as immigration and voting, foreign nationals enjoy the same rights and privileges as American citizens. They also have the same obligations under the law.

The first 10 amendments to the Constitution, collectively termed the Bill of Rights, contain this country’s most cherished legal principles, among which are:

- the right to freedom of religion, speech, press, and assembly;
- the right to refuse to testify against oneself, to keep silent rather than answer questions that might be incriminating;
- the right to protection against unreasonable search and seizure; and
- the right to “due process,” to be safe from punishment under the law unless—and until— specified, orderly procedures have been followed. For example, persons charged with a crime need not prove their innocence; rather, they are considered innocent until proven guilty. They are also entitled to representation by legal counsel, appointed by the court if a defendant cannot pay for such services.

The body of civil law regulates contractual relationships between individuals. If one party to a contract fails to observe its conditions, the injured party can ask the court to enforce the terms or demand compensation for loss or damages.

The Exchange Visitor Program Regulations promulgated by the U.S. Department of State govern the requirements for your J-1, and any dependent’s J-2, visa. These regulations implement the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended. In September 1996, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) was enacted, which directed the development of an electronic information collection system, known to you as SEVIS, for individuals in J visa status. In October 2001, the USA PATRIOT Act subsequently amended IIRIRA and mandated that the SEVIS database be implemented by January 2003 as part of its underlying effort to facilitate information sharing and cooperation among government agencies. Other laws were also passed by the U.S. Congress that further defined the types of information to be collected and maintained in SEVIS. Thus, it is important for you to be aware that, although the electronic collection of exchange visitor information is a new practice and the SEVIS database a new tool for United States government agencies, the laws that have promoted educational and cultural exchanges and have defined the requirements for your J-1 and J-2 visas have been in effect for over five decades.

## *ELECTORAL COLLEGE*

The Electoral College was established by the founding fathers as a compromise between election of the President by Congress and election by popular vote. The electors are a popularly elected body chosen by the 50 States and the District of Columbia on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November. The Electoral College consists of 538 electors (one for each of 435 members of the House of Representatives and 100 Senators; and 3 for the District of Columbia). Each state’s allotment of electors is equal to the number of House members to which it is entitled plus two Senators. The United States Census is used to reapportion the number of electors allocated among the states.

The term “electoral college” does not appear in the Constitution. Article II of the Constitution and the 12th Amendment refer to “electors,” but not to the “electoral college.” In the early 1800s, the term “electoral college” came into general usage as the unofficial designation for the group of citizens selected to cast votes for President and Vice President. It was first written into Federal law in 1845.

The states of electors are generally chosen by the political parties. State laws vary on the appointment of electors. Electors are often selected to recognize their service and dedication to their political party. They may be state-elected officials, party leaders, or persons who have a personal or political affiliation with the Presidential candidate. The electors meet in each State on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December. A majority of 270 electoral votes is required to elect the President and Vice President. No Constitutional provision or Federal law requires electors to vote in accordance with the popular vote in their state.

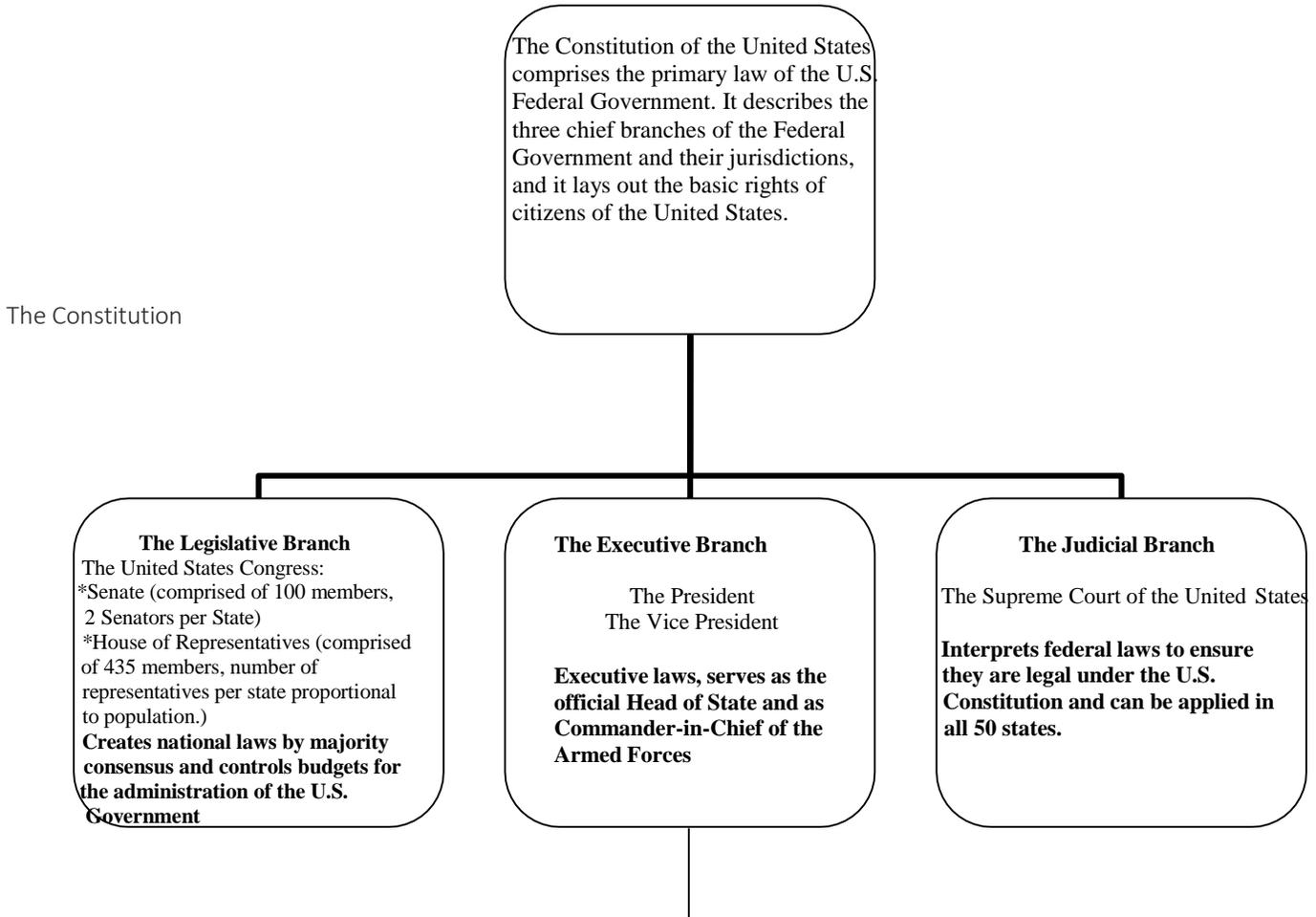
If no presidential candidate wins a majority of electoral votes, the 12th Amendment to the Constitution provides for the presidential election to be decided by the House of Representatives. The House would select the President by majority vote, choosing from the three candidates who received the greatest number of electoral votes. The vote would be taken by State, with each State delegation having one vote. If no Vice Presidential candidate wins a majority of electoral votes, the Senate would select the Vice President by majority vote, with each Senator choosing from the two candidates who received the greatest number of electoral votes.

You can find additional information regarding the Electoral College in the following suggested websites:

[http://www.archives.gov/federal\\_register/electoral\\_college/](http://www.archives.gov/federal_register/electoral_college/)

<http://www.fec.gov/>

## The Government of the United States of America



The departments listed below are an important part of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government and they employ the majority of federal government workforce in its various departments.

Department of Agriculture    Department of Commerce    Department of Defense    Department of Energy  
 Department of Education    Department of Health and Human Services    Department of Justice    Department of Interior  
 Department of Transportation    Department of Homeland Security    Department of Labor    Department of State  
 Department of Housing and Urban Development    Department of the Treasury    Department of Veteran Affairs

## Other Useful Facts

### ***HOLIDAY PERIODS***

Most businesses close during the Christmas and New Year holidays in late December, as well as for several days during the year. Participants who wish to travel and sightsee during vacation periods should take advantage of these vacation periods.

### *OFFICIAL HOLIDAYS*

Official holidays are those days of celebration recognized by the U.S. government and usually include the closing of government offices and private businesses and banks.

#### **New Year's Day** (January 1)

**New Year's Eve**, December 31, is more important to Americans than New Year's Day itself. Everyone gathers with friends and family to "ring out the old and ring in the new," an expression that reflects the old custom of ringing church bells at midnight to greet the New Year.

#### **Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, Birthday** (Third Monday in January)

Martin Luther King, Jr., a distinguished African American, organized and led the civil rights movement in the United States during the 1960s in his capacity as the leader of the Southern Leadership Conference. During the 1963 March on Washington, he delivered the stirring and memorable "I have a dream" speech to a quarter million people gathered before the Lincoln Memorial. Dr. King received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 in recognition of his message of change through nonviolence to promote freedom, equality and dignity of all races and people.

#### **Presidents' Day** (Third Monday in February)

This holiday commemorates the birthdays of George Washington, the first President of the United States, and Abraham Lincoln, President during the Civil War (1861–65).

#### **Memorial Day** (Last Monday in May)

Memorial Day is the day on which people in the United States honor those who died in the service of their country. Many families visit their loved ones' graves and decorate them with flowers. The day is also marked with patriotic parades. This holiday is considered the beginning of the summer season.

#### **Independence Day** (July 4)

Independence Day commemorates the day the U.S. Declaration of Independence was signed in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. Independence Day is celebrated all over the country with picnics, political speeches, parades, and community get-togethers that culminate in firework displays.

#### **Labor Day** (First Monday in September)

This holiday was established in recognition of the labor movement's contribution to the productivity of the country. This day marks the end of the summer season and is celebrated with picnics and other outings.

#### **Columbus Day** (Second Monday in October) *Official holiday in many states*

By popular tradition, Columbus "discovered" America in 1492, although the continent was already populated by Native Americans and had been visited earlier by other seafarers. The holiday, originally and still occasionally celebrated on October 12, is chiefly observed by Americans of Italian descent with parades and festivals. In the Northeast, the long weekend is the high point of the season for viewing the brilliantly colored fall leaves.

#### **Veterans Day** (November 11) *Official holiday in many states*

Originally established to commemorate Armistice Day—the end of the First World War—and celebrated on November 11, the date still observed in some areas, the holiday was changed after World War II to serve as an occasion to pay tribute to veterans of all wars. It is marked by parades, speeches, and the laying of wreaths at military cemeteries and war memorials.

#### **Thanksgiving Day** (Fourth Thursday in November)

The first Thanksgiving Day was observed by the pilgrims of Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts in 1621 to give thanks for the bountiful harvest and their ability to survive in the wilderness. Today, it is a time when Americans give thanks for the good life they enjoy. They celebrate by getting together with family and friends to eat traditional foods such as turkey, cranberry sauce, sweet potatoes, and pumpkin pie.

**Christmas** (December 25)

Many people regard this as the most celebrated holiday of the year, with the Christmas season extending from a few days before December 25 to January 1, New Year's Day. Although originally a Christian holiday, commemorating the birth of Christ, people of many faiths join in the secular festivities common during this period. These include gift exchanges, the singing of holiday carols, visits to Santa Claus at the local shopping mall, and the decoration of a Christmas tree. Family members travel great distances to be together for Christmas, a day on which gifts are exchanged and a traditional dinner is shared.

*CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS*

Cultural holidays are those days of public celebration where businesses are not necessarily closed.

**Valentine's Day** (February 14)

A holiday celebrated by sending cards and giving candy in heart-shaped boxes and flowers to loved ones.

**Saint Patrick's Day** (March 17)

Saint Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland, and this holiday was brought to the United States by Irish immigrants. People mark this day by wearing green clothing and getting together with friends to celebrate. Some U.S. cities with large Irish American populations, like Boston and New York, also hold Saint Patrick's Day parades.

**Passover** (8 days, usually in April)

The Jewish holiday of Passover commemorates the liberation of the ancient Hebrews from slavery in Egypt in 1200 B.C. A highlight of the festival is the Seder, a ceremonial dinner attended by family and friends, during which the memory of the exodus is recounted through readings, singing, and the consumption of symbolic foods. Unleavened bread or matzo is eaten during this time.

**Mother's Day** (Second Sunday in May)

On this day, Americans honor their mothers by sending them flowers, buying them small gifts, and taking them out to eat.

**Father's Day** (Third Sunday in June)

Fathers are honored on this day with cards and gifts from their family members.

**Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur** (3 days in September and October) *Non official holidays*

The holidays of Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) and the 10-day interval between them comprise the most sacred period in the Jewish calendar. Known as the High Holy Days, this period combines the welcoming of the New Year with reflective examination of the course of one's life during the past year. Rosh Hashanah is characterized by prayer, family feasts, and the sending of New Year's greetings. Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish year, is a time of fasting and prayer.

## Easter Sunday

Easter, the Sunday of the Resurrection, Pascha, or Resurrection Day, is the most important religious feast of the Christian liturgical year, observed at some point between late March and late April each year (early April to early May in Eastern Christianity), following the cycle of the moon. It celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, which Christians believe occurred on the third day of his death by crucifixion some time in the period AD 27 to 33. In the United States, Good Friday (Friday before Easter Sunday) is observed by many businesses including the New York Stock Exchange.

**Halloween** (October 31)

In the United States, this day, the eve of a Christian holiday—All Hallowed's or All Saints' Day, which falls on November 1—has lost its original religious character. Today, it is largely celebrated as a day for children. Traditions include carving pumpkins with funny faces (jack-o'-lanterns), telling scary stories, and going door to door in costume to receive candy and treats from neighbors. When a door opens after they knock, the children say "trick or treat," meaning, "if you don't give me a treat, I will trick you." Many children and adults also attend costume parties and decorate their homes to celebrate Halloween.

**Hanukkah** (8 days, usually in December)

This Jewish holiday commemorates the successful uprising of a small band of Jews known as the Maccabees against their Hellenistic Syrian conqueror in 164 B.C. As part of the reconsecration of the Temple in Jerusalem, the victors lit a menorah or candelabrum with a small flask of holy oil that miraculously burned for 8 days. Hanukkah thus came to be known as the Festival of Lights and is celebrated today by the lighting of a menorah for 8 days. It is a time of conviviality and is marked by the gathering of family and friends and gift giving.

**Kwanza** (7 days, December 26 through January 1)

African-American nonreligious celebration of family and community patterned after African harvest festivals. Each day is dedicated to one of seven principles: unity, self-determination, collective responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. Each evening, family members gather to light one of the candles in the kinara, a seven-branched candelabrum; often gifts are exchanged.

**Ramadan** (9<sup>th</sup> month of the Muslim Calendar)

The Month of Ramadan is when it is believed the Holy Quran was sent down from heaven. This celebration lasts a whole month during which Muslims fast during daylight hours and indulgence of any sort is forbidden. It is a time to worship, contemplate and concentrate on their faith and spend less time on the concerns of their everyday lives.

*Other Holidays*

The United States is very culturally diverse and there are many communities with large immigrant populations. Such ethnic communities also celebrate their ethnic and religious holidays, such as: Chinese New Year, Devali the Hindu Festival of Lights, Cinco de Mayo and the Independence Day of several different countries.

Different months are also designated to the celebration of different populations in the United States, such as: Black History Month (February), Women's History Month (March), Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 to October 15) and Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month (May).

## TIME ZONES

The continental United States is divided into four time zones, as shown on the map below. The relative times for the outlying states are also indicated. Eastern Standard Time is 5 hours earlier than Greenwich Mean Time. Most states observe daylight saving time during the summer months. This means that clocks are advanced 1 hour on a given date in March and restored to standard time in November. (They “spring forward” in the spring, “fall back” in the fall.) Exceptions to this rule are made in Arizona, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and most of Indiana. Arrival and departure times of planes and trains are usually given in the current time of the arrival or departure point.



## HOURS OF BUSINESS

Offices are usually open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, with employees taking an hour for lunch sometime between noon and 2 p.m. Banks are generally open to the public only until 4 p.m. and most have automatic teller machines that dispense cash from your account or accept deposits 24 hours per day. Shops open about 9:30 a.m. and remain open continuously until 5:30 or 6 p.m., often until 9 p.m. one evening per week. All are open Monday through Saturday, and many on Sundays too. Most shops in suburban malls are open until 9 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and usually from noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays. Drugstores, supermarkets, and smaller food shops usually remain open until late in the evening and on Sundays.

## ELECTRICITY

Electrical current in the United States is produced at 110 volts, 60 cycles. Appliances manufactured for other voltages can be operated only with a transformer. Even so equipped, appliances with clocks or timers will not function properly, nor will television sets not built for the U.S. color system (N.T.S.C.).

## CLIMATE

Because of its size and geographical diversity, the climate in different parts of the United States varies widely. To a certain extent, Americans are insulated from weather extremes. Homes, offices, cars, and buses are routinely air conditioned in the warmer parts of the country, and central heating is the rule everywhere. Indoor temperatures are thus maintained at 20–22 °C (68–72 °F).

**The Northeastern States or New England** (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont): Winters can be very cold and long with lots of snow, and the summers are warm. In the north, winters can be very severe. Fall and spring are usually cool and crisp. You will find cooling fog along the coasts during winter and summer.

**The Mid-Atlantic Region** (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Virginia, Washington DC): Summers tend to be hot and humid, and late afternoon or early evening thunderstorms are common. Winters, while milder and a little shorter than in New England, can still produce a lot of snow. Spring and fall are very pleasant with relatively low humidity.

**The Southeastern States** (Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia): The southeastern states have long, hot, and humid summers and warm winters. Summertime, with its high humidity, can bring frequent but short-lived thunderstorms. Along the Atlantic coast, the hurricane season lasts from July to October. Southern Florida has an almost tropical climate where freezing temperatures are uncommon. In the mountains of West Virginia, the winters are similar to those in New England.

**The Midwest** (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Ohio, and Wisconsin): This region occupies the Great Plains, a vast, flat expanse located in the center of the country. Winters in the northern section of this region can be severe with blizzards and much snow, while summers in the southern section can be quite hot with frequent heat waves and drought.

**The Southern Interior and Gulf States** (Alabama, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas): Summers are hot and frequently humid, especially along the Gulf of Mexico. Average winter temperatures rarely fall below freezing, but there are occasional cold spells.

**The Rocky Mountain Region** (Arizona, Colorado, Southern Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming): Because of the range of altitudes in this mountainous region, there is considerable variety in local temperature and precipitation. Winters are very cold in the mountains and bring heavy snowfalls. Large areas of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Nevada are desert, where even winters can be extremely hot and dry.

**The Pacific Northwest** (Northern Idaho, Oregon, and Washington): The region enjoys mild winters and moderately warm summers. The Pacific Ocean helps keep the weather mild and wet along the coast, with a number of rainy days.

**California:** Southern California, including Los Angeles and San Diego, enjoys warm to very hot but dry summers, while the winters are mild and moderately rainy. Smog (fog and pollution) is a problem in Los Angeles. Northern California, including Berkeley and San Francisco, has a cooler, milder climate year round. San Francisco is known for its morning fog.

**Alaska:** Alaska is the northwestern most state of the United States and borders northwest Canada. It has long, snowy, frigid winters and short, mild summers. Days during mid-winter will only have 3 to 4 hours of daylight, and in mid-summer, only 3 to 4 hours of darkness.

**Hawaii:** A chain of tropical islands in the Pacific Ocean, Hawaii is situated approximately 6,900 miles from the west coast of the United States by airplane. The weather is low in humidity and comfortable year round.

Source: Pearce, E.A., and Gordon Smith. *World Weather Guide*. Time Books/Random House, 1990.

## WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Few Americans speak of weights and measures in metric terms. Temperature is the principal exception; these days, temperature is frequently quoted in both Fahrenheit and Celsius.

**Children's clothing** is sized according to the child's age from infancy through approximately 6 years. Infants' clothing is sized according to months of age, from newborn (NB) through 18 months. It is always wise to consider the child's height and weight when buying clothing. It is not uncommon for infants and toddlers to wear much larger sizes than what their age indicates. It is a good idea to ask a salesperson for assistance until you are familiar with children's clothing sizes.

**Adult clothing** sizes vary somewhat from one manufacturer to another. It is wise to "try on" clothing before making a purchase.

<b>Area</b>		
<u>Unit</u>	<u>Equivalent</u>	<u>Metric</u>
acre	4,840 square yards	0.405 hectares
square mile	640 acres	2.590 square km

<b>Weight</b>		
<u>Unit</u>	<u>Equivalent</u>	<u>Metric</u>
pound (lb.)	16 oz.	0.454
kilogram (kg)		
ounce (oz.)	1.0 oz.	28.35 gram (g)
ton	2,000 lbs.	0.907 metric ton
0.04 oz.		1 g
2.20 lb.		1 kg

<b>Temperature</b>	
<u>Fahrenheit (°F)*</u>	<u>Celsius (°C)</u>
23	-5
32 (freezing)	0
41	5
50	10
59	15
68	20
77	25
86	30
95	35
104	40
↓	↓
212 (boiling)	100

\*(°F = 9/5 °C + 32)

## Clothing Size Conversion

### WOMEN'S CLOTHING

American	6	8	10	12	14	16
Continental	36	38	40	42	44	46
British	8	10	12	14	16	18

### WOMEN'S SHOES

American	5	6	7	8	9	10
Continental	36	37	38	39	40	41
British	4	5	6	7	8	9

### CHILDREN'S CLOTHING

American	3	4	5	6	6X
Continental	98	104	110	116	122
British	18	20	22	24	26

### CHILDREN'S SHOES

American	8	9	10	11	12	13	1	2	3
Continental	24	25	27	28	29	30	32	33	34
British	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	1	2

### MEN'S SUITS

American	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48
Continental	44	46	48	50	52	54	56	58
British	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48

### MEN'S SHIRTS

American	14-1/2	15	15-1/2	16	16-1/2	17	17-1/2	18
Continental	37	38	39	41	42	43	44	45
British	14-1/2	15	15-1/2	16	16-1/2	17	17-1/2	18

### MEN'S SHOES

American	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Continental	39-1/2	41	42	43	44-1/2	46	47
British	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

## Metric Conversions

### LIQUID VOLUME

U.S. gallons	To convert	Multiply by
Liters to U.S. gallons		.26
U.S. gallons to Imperial gallons		.83
Imperial gallons to U.S. gallons		1.20
Imperial gallons to liters		4.55

1 liter = .26 gal. or 1.8 pints; 1 gal. = 3.8 liters

### DISTANCE

Inches to	To convert	Multiply by
Centimeters to inches		.39
Feet to meters		.30
Meters to feet		3.28
Yards to meters		.91
Meters to yards		1.09
Miles to kilometers		1.61
Kilometers to miles		.62

1 mile = 1.6km; 1km = .62 mile; 1 ft. = .30m or 30cm; 1m = 3.3 ft.; 1 inch = 2.54 cm

### SALES TAX

You should also be aware that state and local sales taxes—ranging up to 9 percent of the price, depending on the area—are added to the marked price of many items at the time of purchase. Thus, a \$10 item with a 9 percent sales tax will actually cost \$10.90.

### U.S. CURRENCY

The American Monetary System follows the decimal system. The basic unit of the U.S. monetary system is the dollar, which can be divided into 100 cents. The “\$” is the dollar symbol and a “¢” or “.” may appear to denote cents. Bills in denominations of \$1, \$5, \$10 and \$20 are the most widely used. There are also \$50 and \$100 bills. Please **note** that all bills are the same size and color.

Coins may be used for self-service machines available in many public building to purchase soft drinks, coffee, or candy. Some forms of public transportation such as buses also allow you to use coins. You may also need coins to use public telephones, parking meters, and washing and drying machines in some dormitories or apartment buildings. You should note that most machines do not accept pennies (1 cent coins).

Samples of U.S. Currency:



### TIPPING FOR SERVICE

There are a number of circumstances in the United States when tipping is expected and, in fact, where tips make up a substantial portion of the wage of the person involved. Although tipping should be based on the quality of the service rendered, most people tip as follows:

- to porters at airports and train or bus stations, \$1 per piece of luggage (unless a set fee is posted in the terminal);
- to bellboys who show you to your room and carry your baggage in hotels, a minimum of \$1;
- to waiters or waitresses in restaurants, 18-20 percent of the bill (for large groups, a service charge may already be included in the bill);
- to taxi drivers, 10-15 percent of the fare;
- to barbers or hairdressers, 10–20 percent of the bill.

Unless they perform some unusual service for you, you need not tip hotel clerks, doormen, or chambermaids, nor is it customary to tip gas station attendants, theater ushers, bus drivers, or airline personnel. If you do not wish the services of a porter or bellboy, you can simply indicate your preference to handle your baggage yourself. Under no circumstances should you offer a tip to public officials, including police officers; this may be looked upon as an attempt to bribe the official and could have serious consequences.

### TELEPHONES

The telephone system in the United States is composed of many privately owned but cooperating companies. The system is effective, and a good deal of business is conducted over the telephone. One can reserve hotel rooms, make travel reservations, buy theater tickets, and shop for any item one might want without leaving home.

Telephone numbers in the U.S. contain 10 digits: a 3-digit area code, a 3-digit number for the local exchange (occasionally 2 letters and 1 digit), and a 4-digit number for the individual subscriber. Under the system, the United States is divided into many small regions or areas, each reached by an area code that must be dialed whenever you are calling outside your local area. Usually when you call a local number, only the exchange and individual subscriber number must be dialed. For example, the NMU International Programs Office number is 1-906-227-2510.

In some large metropolitan areas that span more than one area code, it may be necessary to dial the area code, as well, even if it is within the same area code.

In most locations it is necessary to dial “1” before the area code if calling outside your local area. Be careful not to confuse the letter “I” with the numeral “1” or the letter “O” with the numeral “0” (zero).

When calling outside your local area, or “long distance,” it is least expensive if you dial direct at night without using an operator. Calls from hotels often include a substantial service charge. All numbers in the United States can be dialed directly (i.e., without operator assistance), and overseas calls can also be dialed from many local exchanges. To ask an operator for assistance, dial “0.” He or she will be able to give you the area/international code for the city/country you wish to call and place “collect” calls (which are billed to the person called) and “person-to-person” calls (which incur a charge only if the person you wish to speak to is present, even if the phone is answered). It is also useful to remember that you can save about 35 percent of the cost if you dial domestic long-distance calls after 5 p.m. and 60 percent if you call between 11 p.m. and 8 a.m. on weekdays, all day on Saturday, and before 5 p.m. on Sundays or holidays. (This may vary, however, according to the long-distance provider you choose.) Some businesses in the United States have “800” or “888” as an area code; such numbers can be dialed (preceded by “1”) without charge to the caller from anywhere in the United States. You can obtain a local number by calling “Information” (dial “411”) and a long-distance number by dialing the area code followed by 555-1212. This service usually carries a small charge.

Telephone calls to numbers with “900” area codes cost more than normal long-distance calls—sometimes as much as \$50 for a 1-minute call! By dialing 900 numbers, you can order products, get financial tips, talk with a willing stranger, and much more. Although some legitimate services are provided through 900 numbers, it is vital to be aware that ALL of them cost money. Some companies are starting to send bills for calls placed to 800 numbers, as well.

In case of emergency, call the operator (dial “0”), and ask for the police, fire department, or an ambulance. In many cities, there is a special number (usually “911”) to use in the event of an emergency. It can be dialed from a pay phone without the use of coins.

Public, coin-operated telephones can be found on the street and in railroad and bus stations, airports, hotels, restaurants, drugstores, and other public buildings. Prepaid **telephone debit cards** are available almost everywhere in the United States. With them, you may place local, long-distance, and international calls from any location without the necessity of coins for a pay phone or a long-distance account with a U.S. telephone company. You may purchase these cards at convenience stores, supermarkets, drug stores and post offices or through your local telephone company. NOTE: These debit cards often offer the most economical rates for calling overseas and you avoid the various taxes and charges that will accompany your home phone calling plans.

To have a telephone installed in your home, dial the telephone company’s business office (see a telephone directory). Ordinarily, service can be provided within a week. The company charges for initial installation of the line and a monthly fee for local service and rental of equipment (or you may purchase your own phone), with extra charges for long-distance calls. Although there will be only one company providing local telephone service in a given area, you will be given information and asked to make a selection on a number of competing long-distance companies and their individual service options. If you have a long-distance account with a U.S. telephone company and plan to place international long-distance calls frequently, you may wish to enroll in your company’s **international calling plan**. These plans offer special discounts for international calls and can save you a lot of money.

An inexpensive alternative to an international calling plan is **Skype**. Set up an account on skype.com and get started! With Skype, you can call other Skype users for free or call local and international phone numbers for a small fee. Skype is only accessible with an internet connection and is a program available for download to your computer. Many public computers also have Skype access, which you can use to make phone calls in certain appropriate environments.

#### *Telephone Answering Machines and Voice Mail*

Telephone answering machines or voice mail are in frequent use in many U.S. homes and offices. Although this may seem impersonal at first, you will soon become accustomed to this practice and learn to leave comprehensive messages.

### *Cellular/Mobile Telephones*

“Cell Phones” are very popular and you can find very competitive prices or package deals. There are also many styles of telephones at different prices that offer a variety of tools beyond cell phone use. Unlike in other countries, where prepaid cell phone cards are popular, in the U.S. you will need to purchase a service plan. Many systems in the U.S. require a 2-year service agreement to get the best price; however, terminating the contract early carries a high penalty that may actually make the contract more expensive. Service agreements carry a number of minutes of services you agree to purchase per month. If you go over your agreed allotment you will be charged by the minute at a much higher rate. Be sure to purchase the amount of minutes that will serve your usage needs. You will need to read the contract carefully and sign only for services that you will need.

### *Internet Access*

You may choose to have a computer at home and will need to have access to the Internet. Most telephone companies offer some form of DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) access for an increased price to your telephone bill. You may also purchase a high speed Internet connection through your television cable company. If high speed Internet connections are beyond your price range, most Internet service providers (ISPs) still offer traditional dial-up connections for lower prices. There is a large variety of Internet providers available and you should shop around first before deciding.

### *Fax and Electronic Mail*

Americans frequently communicate with others by facsimile (fax) machine or electronic mail (e-mail). It is popular to seek out information and communicate with others by computer. E-mail allows you to correspond with anyone in the world with an Internet account. The World Wide Web, newsgroups, and online forums allow you to obtain news and specialized information. Ask your host institution about acquiring and using an Internet account. Sending information by fax is a common way to conduct business because it is quick and costs the same as a telephone call. Fax machines are available in most college and university departments. Some stores also provide fax services for a modest fee.

### *MEDIA IN THE U.S. (NEWSPAPERS, RADIO, TELEVISION, WEB)*

The press in the United States is independent and free of governmental control. The editorial policy of each TV or radio station or newspaper is determined by its owners. Most are supported financially by advertisers, although there are “public” TV and radio stations that broadcast no commercials and are supported by contributions from individuals, foundations, and corporations. Public TV usually features more educational and cultural programs than the commercial stations.

Local newspapers, daily and weekly, abound, but it is also possible to purchase or subscribe to daily papers of regional or national stature. Among the latter, *The New York Times* is best known for general news coverage; *The Wall Street Journal*, for financial and business news.

There are four nationwide TV/radio networks (NBC, CBS, ABC, and Fox), each with affiliated local stations that carry almost all the networks’ programs. These are in addition to independent local commercial and public stations. In most areas, therefore, one can choose from among 6 to 10 stations. There is no fee for TV or radio usage unless one subscribes to a “cable service,” which offers such special programming as recent movies and CNN and requires the installation of special equipment. CNN and the public access stations in your area often broadcast news in a variety of foreign languages. They may provide more information about current events in your home country than is available in the local newspapers.

Most national and local newspapers, radio and TV stations operate websites which feature news, weather, sports, blogs, etc.

## TRANSPORTATION

### *Local Public Transportation*

The private automobile is the most widely used form of transportation in the United States. There is one car on the road for every two people. Americans jump into their cars for errands even a few blocks from home and view them as an important source of recreation. Because of the prevalence of automobiles, public transportation is less common in the United States than in many other parts of the world; in some rural areas of the United States, it is virtually nonexistent. Unless you can afford to purchase an automobile (see page 13), it is important to investigate the availability of transportation before you decide where to live.

Cities are served by both public and private bus systems; some of the larger ones have subways, as well. Buses frequently require exact change unless the passenger holds a monthly or weekly pass purchased earlier, while subways are entered with tickets or tokens that can be purchased at the time of travel. It is convenient to purchase a supply to avoid waiting in line each time you travel. There is less need for a private car in these areas unless you intend to travel outside the city with some frequency. Indeed, they can often be more trouble than they are worth, given the scarcity of parking spaces in urban environments.

### *Long-Distance Travel (Planes, Trains, Buses)*

The United States is covered with a network of air routes, and service is frequent to most destinations. Because distances are great, and because of the value placed on time, Americans frequently choose air travel, despite its relatively high cost. You can easily obtain information on flights and costs by telephone or on the Internet. Most planes have both first-class and coach – or economy – seating areas. Special low-cost fares are sometimes offered, although they may carry some restrictions as to the length of stay and the days of travel. These rates are specified on the airline website. Bus transportation from the airport to the city center is usually available and less expensive than taxis.

Many suburban areas are served by commuter rail lines that reach 50 to 60 miles outside major cities. The use of trains for more extensive trips had declined until a decade or so ago, but the railroad is more prominent now. The passenger service is provided by AMTRAK, which runs trains across the country but to a limited number of cities. A few of the trains travel through particularly impressive scenery and are popular with tourists. Most trains offer two classes of service, first class and coach, and some provide sleeping accommodations. AMTRAK also offers a Eurail-style pass especially for international travelers. A 15- or 30-day USA Rail Pass is available for regional or nationwide travel. This pass is only available for non-U.S. and non-Canadian citizens. Rates are higher for summertime travel. USA Rail Passes may be purchased at any AMTRAK station. Be sure to bring your passport with you when you reserve the tickets. The AMTRAK telephone number is toll-free 1-800-872-7245 and their web address is <http://www.amtrak.com>.

The least expensive mode of transportation is the bus, and those that provide long-distance service can be remarkably comfortable—with reclining seats, air conditioning, and rest rooms. Greyhound is the largest bus passenger service provider in the U.S. ([www.greyhound.com](http://www.greyhound.com)).

Airline, train, and bus companies sell passes that permit extensive travel within a given time period well below the usual cost and permit those with limited funds to see a good deal of the country. The companies themselves (see your local telephone directory or check the Internet) or travel agents can tell you current prices and conditions, but some of these passes must be purchased before you leave home.

If you find yourself in an airport with any kind of problem, you should seek a representative of the Travelers' Aid Society. This organization has desks in airports (and some railroad stations and bus terminals) across the country, operated by staff ready to assist with emergencies of all kinds, including illness, lost tickets, lack of funds, and language problems.

## RELIGION

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, which also mandates a separation of church and state. The practice of religion is considered a private matter and a person's religious preference may not be asked by employers, schools, clubs, etc.

The United States is a country that accommodates a large number of different religions and belief systems. It is often cited as the most openly religious country among the industrialized nations, with less than 10% of Americans selecting "None" as their religion in the 2000 U.S. population census. A large majority of Americans identify themselves as Christian (55% Protestant, 28% Catholic). Over 6 million Americans (2.3% of the population) identify themselves as Jewish, with the largest populations residing in New York, California and Florida. The U.S. is also home to a growing number of Muslims (2% of the population) both due to the growing Arab and African immigrant populations (which grew 38% in the 1990s) and a growing

number of converts to Islam, especially in the African American community. Some Muslim organizations put the number of converts to Islam as high 135,000 per year.

One of the most important ongoing debates for Americans is the role of religion in public life. While the separation of church and state is a cornerstone of U.S. government structure, it has been an issue for discussion among Americans as far back as Thomas Jefferson. The debate continues today and is prominent both in national and local politics. Some of the more controversial issues involving religion today include prayer in public schools and the role of public funding in religious social services (e.g. homeless shelters, drug rehabilitation centers). As American religious diversity grows, this debate promises to become even more interesting and should continue to play an important role in American discourse.

In large cities, even relatively obscure branches of the main religions have established their own churches, mosques, synagogues, or temples. A list of such groups can be found in the yellow pages of your local telephone directory, and many of these organizations also place notices in weekend newspapers announcing the hours of religious services. You will always be welcome to attend the services without invitation, and you may also wish to take part in the social activities many such groups sponsor.

## LEISURE

Whatever your leisure interests, you will find a great many pursuits to choose from. Those who prefer the spectator's role will find that university towns abound in concerts, plays, sporting events, ethnic festivals, and, of course, movies, the favored entertainment of young Americans. There are also small museums all over the country, with a number of distinguished institutions in the major cities that house outstanding collections of fine and applied art or objects of historical or scientific interest. Local newspapers (also the campus paper) regularly list upcoming events. City hotels distribute free booklets to visitors listing current cultural events as well as nearby points of interest with their hours of operation.

If you prefer a more active role, you will find it easy to join groups that make music, produce plays, or organize baseball, soccer, or basketball games. There are golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools, skating rinks, and bowling alleys open to the public for a modest fee. Again, colleagues and neighbors will often be glad to point you in the right direction.

## SAFETY

Many visitors to the United States are concerned about public order and safety, and it is true that certain precautions should be taken, especially in urban areas. It is best to ask a colleague for advice about which areas are safe if you will be residing in a large city, but a few general rules should be observed at all times:

- Do not leave a room, house, or car with doors or windows unlocked
- Do not carry valuables or large sums of cash with you
- Do not frequent parks or deserted public places after dark
- Do not attempt to arm yourself since any weapon you carry can be used against you
- Do not resist a robber or mugger
- Do not hitchhike or pick up hitchhikers
- Do not leave young children unattended, alone in the house
- Do not permit your pre-teenage children outside the house alone after dark
- Avoid using bank automatic teller machines (ATMs) alone after dark

These suggestions are not made to frighten you. You can be most certain of avoiding difficulties, however, if you follow these simple rules of safety.

# Map of the United States of America



# Glossary

## **Glossary of Commonly Used Terms**

**A.A.:** Associate of Arts degree, awarded upon completion of a two-year, liberal arts program, generally with emphasis on the humanities or social sciences.

**A.A.S.:** Associate of Applied Science degree, awarded upon completion of a two-year program, generally in a commercial or technical field of study.

**A.B.D.:** “All but Degree” or “All but Dissertation,” an informal title for someone who has completed all Ph.D. requirements except the dissertation.

**Accreditation:** Education in the United States is not controlled by a national ministry. An educational institution as a whole or one of its academic programs is certified as meeting the standards set by a particular association. Colleges and universities may be accredited by six regional and/or 40 professional accrediting bodies. Examples: Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, American Medical Association.

**Alumni:** People who have attended or graduated from a school, college or university (male: alumnus; female: alumna). Often alum is used as a catch-all term.

**Assignment:** Work required by a professor to be completed outside of class and due by a specific date; also called homework.

**B.A.:** Bachelor of Arts (or baccalaureate) degree, awarded upon completion of a four-year (occasionally five) program of study, generally with emphasis on the humanities or social sciences.

**B.S.:** Bachelor of Science (or baccalaureate) degree, awarded upon completion of a four-year (occasionally five) program of study, generally with emphasis on the natural or applied sciences.

**Board of Trustees:** The governing body of a university, composed of prominent citizens; occasionally known as the Board of Regents.

**Campus:** The college/university grounds, usually characterized by park-like green spaces.

**Card Catalogue:** Traditionally, a collection of index cards in the library listing books by author, title and subject. Access to collections in most major libraries is now through computerized databases.

**Carrel:** A small, enclosed desk in the library reserved by individuals doing research.

**Certificate:** A form of recognition for successfully completing a specified program of study, generally one or two years in length.

**Chairperson:** A professor who administers an academic department; also referred to as the Department Head.

**Chancellor:** Chief executive officer of an institution of higher education; also called the President.

**College:** Institution that offers undergraduate, bachelor’s degree programs in liberal arts and sciences as well as first professional degrees; may be an independent college or part of a university; also a generic term referring to all education at the postsecondary level.

**Consortium:** When there are several colleges and universities within close proximity to one another, they often join in a consortium to share library resources and often courses and other cultural and educational opportunities with one another’s students.

**Continuing Education:** An extension of study at the higher education level for post-high school or college students, usually those beyond traditional university age.

**Co-op:** A store originally organized and operated by students with the cooperation and approval of the school to sell books, school supplies, computers, clothing and other items useful to students. On many campuses, co-ops have developed into small department stores. Sometimes there are also food co-ops, which are student-operated supermarkets. Co-op can also refer to an apartment that is for sale instead of rent.

**Cooperative Education:** Substantial practical work experience related to the student's major field. It can be an educational plan that requires the student to alternate periods of full-time study with periods of full-time work, usually related to the major field.

**Core Curriculum:** A group of courses in varied subject areas, designated by a college as part of the requirements for a specified degree; same as Required Course.

**Credit:** The quantitative measurement assigned to a course; the recognition given for successful completion of course work; usually defined by the number of hours spent in class per week; one credit hour is usually assigned for 50 minutes of class per week over a period of a semester, quarter, or trimester.

**Dean:** Senior academic officer of a college. A university may have several colleges, each headed by a dean. **Dean's List:** List of undergraduate students who have earned above a certain grade point average for a given term. **Discipline:** A field of study, e.g., the discipline of chemistry.

**Dissertation:** A formal, book-length monograph presenting the results of original study and research that is submitted to fulfill the requirements for a doctoral degree.

**Distance Learning:** Education in which students take academic courses by accessing information and communicating with the instructor, sometimes asynchronously, over a computer network.

**Endowed Chair or Professorship:** A specially funded and named faculty position for a distinguished professor who is said to hold the "Chair."

**English as a Second Language (ESL):** English language training for persons whose first language is not English.

**Evening College (or Night School):** A division of a college, designed largely for adults, to offer college studies on a part-time basis.

**Faculty:** Teaching staff of a college or university. Normally used to refer to a person or people rather than an organizational unit within a university.

**Full-time Student:** A student who is carrying a normal load of courses. Undergraduate students must take at least 12 credit hours per term and graduate students 9 credit hours at most colleges and universities to be considered full-time.

**General Education:** Courses covering broad areas of the liberal arts.

**Graduate:** Description of a post-undergraduate program leading to a master's or doctoral degree; also describes a student in such a program ("graduate student") as well as a person who has satisfactorily completed any educational program ("graduate").

**Honor Fraternity:** Organization honoring students who have achieved distinction in academic areas or service.

**Independent Study:** A method of receiving credit for study or research independent of any specific course. Such study is often part of an honors program in the student's major and is supervised by a specified professor to whom the student is accountable.

**Junior College:** a two-year institution of higher education offering liberal arts, sciences, technical and vocational training; may be under either public or private control; awards an A.A. or A.S. degree after two years or a certificate after a shorter course of study.

**Liberal Arts College:** A college that emphasizes a program of liberal arts or general undergraduate studies.

**M.A./M.S.:** Master of Arts/Master of Science degree, awarded upon completion of a one to two year program of graduate study.

**Major Field of Study (Major):** A student's primary field of study.

**Minor Field of Study (Minor):** A student's secondary field of study.

**Open Admission:** College or university admissions policy of admitting high school graduates and other adults generally without regard to conventional academic qualifications, such as high school subjects, grades and test scores. Virtually all applicants are accepted.

**Pass-Fail Grading System:** The practice at some colleges of rating students' quality of performance in their courses as either passing or failing instead of giving grades to indicate various levels of achievement.

**Ph.D.:** Doctor of Philosophy; highest academic degree in U.S. education; diploma states Doctor of Philosophy in (subject); generally research oriented.

**Postdoctoral Fellow:** A person recently awarded a Ph.D. appointment to assist the university in its research and teaching functions.

**Professor:** The title for all university faculty members, who are ranked as assistant, associate or (full) professors.

**Professor Emeritus:** An academic title generally awarded to retired faculty.

**Professional School:** Institutions that specialize in the study of business, medicine, dentistry, law, engineering, music, art or theology; offer two to seven years of training; may be independent or part of university.

**Provost:** The chief academic officer of the university, who supervises academic policies and budgets.

**Reading List:** A list of books and articles prepared by each professor for a specific course. Required and suggested texts are usually indicated as such. This list is designed to give the student an overview of the particular course.

**Reference Room:** Room in the library with reference books, such as dictionaries and encyclopedias.

**Registrar:** Official recorder of students' academic information, such as courses taken and grades received.

**Research Assistant (R.A.):** Usually an advanced graduate student who assists a professor on a research project. R.A.s may receive payment for their services in addition to a waiver of tuition charges.

**Reserve:** When a book is "on reserve," it means that the book cannot be removed from the library. This is done when the library has a limited number of copies of a book that is required reading for a particular course.

**Sabbatical:** A leave of absence granted to a faculty member, usually at the end of six years of teaching at one university.

**Seminar:** A course of study in which the class meets and decides what and how they would like to pursue their study; the class decides who will do what research; ideas and research are presented by the class members, and the professor serves as a moderator.

**Summer School:** Formal, but reduced, course offerings during the long academic vacation.

**Syllabus:** An outline of topics to be covered in an academic course.

**Teaching Assistant (T.A.):** Usually an advanced graduate student who assists a professor teaching large undergraduate classes. T.A.s may receive payment for their services in addition to a waiver of tuition charges.

**Technical Institute:** Institution offering terminal training in applied sciences and technical subjects of two to three years duration (no further degree training).

**Tenure:** The status of a permanent member of the faculty, awarded on the basis of scholarship, teaching or year of service.

**Thesis:** A formal paper presenting the results of study and research that is submitted to fulfill requirements for an advanced degree; usually refers to the Master's thesis.

**Transcript:** Official copy of a student's academic record at a particular academic institution, including dates attended, courses taken, grades, grade point average, degree(s) earned and academic honors.

**Trimester:** Usually 15 weeks, including the final examination period; there are three trimesters (September- September) per calendar year, with students generally attending class during two of the three.

**Undergraduate:** Description of a college or university program leading to a bachelor's degree; also a student in the first four years of college or university study.

**University:** An institution composed of colleges or schools of liberal arts, sciences and technology, as well as professional and graduate schools; offers bachelor's degree programs and technical and professional graduate training.

## NOTES

