PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION
FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
AND SCHOLARS
Welcome to MSU

Letter from the Director
We are happy to know you have been offered admission to Michigan State University. It is challenging to begin life in a new and unfamiliar community in a culture other than your own. This brochure is intended to help you understand and plan for the most significant issues you will face during this period of transition. We hope you will read it carefully and use it to plan ahead.

The Office for International Students and Scholars is the primary contact office for all international students at MSU. Our staff has experience in the issues international students face and are prepared to help you with issues both big and small. We invite you to contact us at any time we can be of assistance to you. Our website provides comprehensive information that will be useful to you throughout your stay on campus. We urge you to refer to it often: www.oiss.msu.edu.

Best wishes for a safe trip to East Lansing.

Peter Briggs, Director

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Preparing for Travel

Required Documents
Entry to the United States requires a valid passport, a certificate of eligibility, and a valid United States visa stamp. Upon entry, you will also be given an I-94 card.

Passport: Your passport, issued by your country of citizenship, should be kept valid at least six months into the future. To obtain or renew your passport, contact your home government authorities.

Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20 or DS-2019): This immigration document corresponds to the immigration status you will use to enter the US. An I-20 is used to apply for an F-1 visa. A DS-2019 is used to apply for a J-1 exchange visitor visa. If you have dependents (spouse or children) traveling with you, they should also have an I-20 or DS-2019 to apply for an F-2 or J-2 visa stamp.

U.S. Visa Stamp and SEVIS Fee: If you are coming to MSU from outside the United States, you will need to obtain a visa stamp from a U.S. consulate or embassy in order to be admitted to the United States. Students and exchange visitors seeking an F-1 or J-1 visa will need to pay a SEVIS fee of $100 prior to visa issuance. For more information on how to pay the fee, please consult the consulate or embassy or visit: www.fmjfee.com.

Once your SEVIS fee has been paid, take your passport and apply for your visa (F-1 student visa if you have an I-20 or a J-1 exchange visitor visa if you have a DS-2019) at the nearest U.S. consulate or embassy. In addition to your passport and either the I-20 or DS-2019, the visa officer will ask for documents verifying your financial resources, your letter of acceptance from the Office of Admissions at MSU, and passport-type photographs. It is best to check the website of the U.S. consulate nearest to you to verify what is required for a visa stamp: http://usembassy.state.gov.

Canadian citizens are exempt from the U.S. visa stamp requirements. At the port of entry, Canadian citizens will need to present their I-20 or DS-2019 along with proof of payment of the SEVIS fee and adequate financial support to study in the U.S. If you
are a Canadian landed immigrant entering the United States, you are required to obtain a U.S. visa stamp. Please contact the U.S. consulate in your area for more information.

The visa is the most commonly misunderstood immigration document. It is a stamp that the United States consulate or embassy gives foreign nationals in their passports and which they must have to enter the United States in the particular classification requested (J-1 or F-1). The validity of a visa stamp pertains only to the period during which it may be used for entry into the United States. It does not indicate how long you may stay in the United States. F and J visitors may remain in the United States with an expired visa stamp as long as their certificate of eligibility is valid and the proper immigration status is indicated on the I-94 card and while in the US they maintain their status. On the visa stamp, there is also an indication of the number of entries permitted, usually one, two, or M (for multiple). If a student or scholar uses up his or her entries and wishes to enter the United States again during the same validity period, he or she must obtain a new visa.

Entry to the United States: According to United States immigration regulations, F-1 and J-1 international students are not allowed to enter the United States earlier than 30 days prior to the program start date listed on the I-20 or DS-2019.

Form I-94: You will obtain an I-94 card at the time of your entry into the United States. You should keep this card in your passport during your stay here. This is a very important document as it indicates the visa classification you are given upon entry to the United States and the length of time you may stay. It is your proof of legal entry into the United States. You will need to show the document at the SEVIS check in over at MSU. Please make sure you fill out the form I-9 correctly at the port of entry.

Foreign Embassies: If you need information on how to contact your country’s embassy or consulate in the United States, please visit: http://www.embassy.org/embassies/.
Transfer Students: If you are now attending a school in the United States and plan to transfer your visa status to MSU, you should check with the International Office at your current institution for the proper transfer procedure for notifying the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) of your change in schools.

What to Wear
The weather in East Lansing is quite variable. From September to May, temperatures range from 0˚ F to 60˚ F (-18˚ C to 16˚ C) with both rain and snow. In the summer, temperatures range from 60˚ F to 90˚ F (16˚ C to 32˚ C). It is mostly warm (often hot and humid) with generally clear skies. You will need both lightweight clothing and warm winter clothes in addition to an umbrella and raincoat. Of course, clothing for all types of weather is available in East Lansing stores, but you may find it expensive.

What to Pack
As you prepare for your trip, keep in mind that rooms in the residence halls and apartments are generally small. In order not to crowd your room (and possibly your roommate) and to avoid excess baggage charges, bring only essentials with you.

Our current international students say they consider the following items most important:

- Frequently used and favorite books
- Educational instruments and supplies (calculators, paint brushes, etc.)
- Spare eye glasses or contact lenses
- Adequate clothing (including national dress for special occasions)
- Pictures, artifacts, and other items typical of your country

How to Ship Your Belongings
If you want to ship items from overseas, you should know that all shipped items must be cleared through U.S. customs at a U.S. port of entry. You can arrange to have a freight-forwarding company or customs broker
take your baggage through the customs inspection and forward them to East Lansing, or you can take them through inspection yourself at the airport.

**Canceling Your Plans**
If your plans change and you cannot attend MSU or if you have to defer your enrollment to a different semester, please contact the Office of Admissions at (517) 355-8332 or msuadmis@msu.edu.

**Your Arrival in East Lansing**

**How to Get to East Lansing**
There are no direct international flights to the Greater Lansing area, so you will have to arrange a connecting flight from a major airport such as Detroit or Chicago to the Lansing Capital City airport. We recommend flying to Lansing. Taxi service is available from the Lansing airport to the university. Bus and train service to East Lansing from other U.S. cities is available on Michigan Flyer, the Greyhound line and Amtrak, respectively. (See the Useful Web Resources section at the back of this brochure for web addresses). Please do not hesitate to contact your nationality club for possible airport pick-ups: http://www.oiss.msu.edu/students_clubs.php.

**When Should I Arrive in East Lansing?**
Students who plan to live in MSU residence halls should refer to correspondence sent from the Office of Admissions or the University Housing Office for move-in dates. For more information about university and off-campus housing, please refer to the housing section of this brochure. Remember, immigration regulations state that international students are not allowed to enter the United States earlier than 30 days prior to the start date listed on the I-20 or DS-2019.

**The City of East Lansing**
MSU is located in East Lansing, which is part of the Greater Lansing area. East Lansing, a city of about
50,000 people, is a strong community of close-knit neighborhoods, excellent public schools, extensive neighborhood parks, and exceptional leisure time recreational facilities. The city's public library is one of the finest in the state and is used regularly by students to study and do internet research.

Students also use the city's many recreation facilities including the outdoor family aquatic center, biking and hiking trails, and championship soccer and softball fields. The East Lansing Hannah Community Center provides fitness facilities and a pool that many students use regularly. The Hannah Center can be reached via CATA bus service or a short walk from north campus. East Lansing's downtown is a bustling social and commercial center where students mingle with residents, shop, dine and have fun.

One of the city's biggest assets is the MSU campus. It is a giant arboretum whose beauty can be enjoyed year round. The university offers students and residents a rich cultural life of symposia, concerts, theater, museums, and, of course, sports. The city works hand-in-hand with the university to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students. For more information, please visit the City of East Lansing's homepage at: www.cityofeastlansing.com.

Orientation
The international student orientation is a special program for you. It takes place before the fall semester. Shorter and less extensive orientations are offered at the start of spring and summer semesters. International students have found the orientation program to be valuable for making new friends as well as understanding the academic requirements and support services available at MSU. Students will also receive important immigration information that will help them maintain legal status while they are in the United States. We urge you to participate in the orientation.

Many current MSU students serve as orientation volunteers and assist with introductions to the campus and community. The orientation program also gives you
a good opportunity to become acquainted with some of the students and staff with whom you will associate during your stay here. Please visit the orientation website at: http://www.oiss.msu.edu/students_orientation.php

**Reporting to OISS**

After you arrive in East Lansing, you **must** check in with OISS. This process usually takes place during orientation. If you fail to attend orientation, make sure you check in at the OISS within 15 days of your arrival. Bring the following documents with you:

- Passport
- I-94 Card
- I-20 (for F-1 visa-holders)
- DS-2019 (for J-1 visa-holders)

MSU is **required** to check those documents to confirm your status in the United States. Failure to do so could result in loss of your legal status in the United States.

**English Language Testing**

The MSU English Language Test (MSUELT) is administered every semester during the international student orientation. It is required for students provisionally admitted to an academic program. At the international student orientation check-in, students will be guided through the MSUELT sign-up process.

For more information about English language testing, call (517) 353-0800 or visit: [http://elc.msu.edu](http://elc.msu.edu).

**Advising and Registration**

Advising on course selection, graduation requirements, and registration is done by academic advisors. Graduate students and undergraduates with declared majors will have an academic advisor assigned to them. Undergraduates who have not declared a major can obtain academic advising from staff in the Student Academic Affairs Office of the University Undergraduate Division: [www.msu.edu/~uud](http://www.msu.edu/~uud).
Student Number

**PID/PAN:** This is your MSU Personal Identification Number (PID). For degree-seeking students, your PID is included in your MSU admissions letter.

**PAN:** This is your secret Personal Access Number (PAN) that authorizes your network access. For newly-admitted undergraduate students, your PAN will be included in your admissions letter. Graduate students should expect to receive their PAN from their department or college. If you are a noncredit student, you will receive your PAN with your PID on the notification mailed from the Computer Lab.

Note: If you lose your PID or PAN, contact the Virtual University Help Desk at: (517) 355-2345 or (800) 500-1554 (toll-free).

Email Account

As a student of Michigan State University you will utilize various electronic resources and e-mail. Students MUST activate their NetID and email account at: [help.msu.edu/newstudent](http://help.msu.edu/newstudent) prior to their arrival at MSU. It is very important to do this even if you already have another e-mail account. Messages regarding immigration and federal regulations will be sent to your MSU email account only. If you use another email service, please forward your MSU emails to that account so as not to miss information that can affect your legal status in the United States.

Driving in Michigan

If you plan to drive a car in Michigan, you should possess a valid Michigan driver’s license. However, for the first 6 months of your stay, it is possible to legally drive if you have a driver’s license from your home country and an accompanying English translation. The International Driver’s License is not valid in Michigan, however it can serve as the English translation of your home country driver’s license. If you do not have an International Driver’s License, please make sure you have your home country driver’s license translated to English before your arrival.
Though it is possible to drive with your driver’s license from home when you first arrive, we strongly recommend that you obtain the Michigan driver’s license as soon as possible if you plan to drive more than once or twice per week. The cost is low ($25) and having a Michigan driver’s license can make it easier and cheaper for you to buy a car, rent a car, or buy car insurance.

You may apply for a Michigan driver’s license at a Secretary of State branch office. The East Lansing office is located at 400 Albert St, Suite C. You must first pass written, vision, and road skills tests before your license will be issued. You can go to the branch office and pick up a booklet that will help you pass the written test. For more information call (517) 334-6410 or visit: www.michigan.gov/sos.

Financial Information

It is very important that you carefully plan your budget to meet all your anticipated educational and living expenses. The first few weeks in a new community can be the most expensive period of your stay in the United States. A number of items must be purchased and several one-time deposits are due at the start of the academic year. We recommend that you bring sufficient funds for immediate expenses. For your own protection, do not bring cash. Bring traveler’s checks in U.S. dollars as they can be purchased at most banks around the world.

If you bring a bank draft from your country to open an account in a local bank, you may not withdraw funds from the account until the check has been approved for collection. Since this process generally takes about 10 to 15 days, do not rely upon a bank draft for immediate cash. If you have money wired directly from your home bank to an East Lansing bank, you may draw upon it immediately after establishing an account.

Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) are located on campus and throughout the community. You may be able to use your own bank card in these ATMs but we recommend that you check with your home bank,
including the possibility of additional charges.
Funds from home can be transferred in your name to MSU. If you plan to do so, please contact the Student Accounts and Cashier Services at (517) 355-3343 or visit their website at: www.ctlr.msu.edu/studrec.

Housing

Students admitted to MSU are eligible to live in university residence halls or university apartments. To pursue housing at MSU you must submit the appropriate application along with the application fee. Housing and food service information was sent to you with the admissions package. For more information contact the Housing Assignments Office at: (517) 355-9550 or (800) 678-4679 or email: housing-info@uh.msu.edu.

Residence Halls

The University Housing department at MSU operates the largest residence hall system in the country, with 24, including the new University Village apartment complex, undergraduate halls, one graduate hall, and two apartment villages on the 2,200-acre park-like campus. Each residence hall is a unique living community, typically housing about 1,000 male and female students with continuous food service from 7am to 7pm weekdays and 24-hour-a-day reception desk service.

Each hall has laundry facilities, fitness centers and many part-time employment opportunities so you can work where you live. Available in each room is cable hook-up for television featuring MSU’s Channel 12, where you can see recent-release movies; ethernet hook-up for your computer for fast internet service; and voice mail service for all those friends who call while you’re away. Also available in selected halls are Sparty’s Convenience Stores for quick-stop shopping.

University Apartments

University Apartments provide a unique housing option that offers the convenience and affordability
of campus living in a quiet academic setting. More than 1,800 apartments are available in two villages on campus, all owned and operated by Michigan State University. Each village has a distinctly communal feel, with a diverse mix of people from around the world, and on-site staff to attend to problems and coordinate a wide range of social activities.

In many respects, University Apartments are ideally suited to students with children. University Apartments offer a clean comfortable environment, with a wide range of family activities and support services. Please note that University Housing cannot guarantee furniture in the apartments. Some furniture is available but you need to request it on the apartment application. See the OISS website for more information and suggestions for obtaining furniture. To be eligible to live in University Apartments the following requirements must be met:

- You must be enrolled in a degree granting program
- During the fall and spring semester you are required to be enrolled in
  - At least 4 credits as a graduate student
  - At least 8 credits as a undergraduate student

NOTE: These requirements are different from the enrollment requirements of your student visa.

- The academic year begins during the fall semester and ends at the end of summer. To be eligible you must be enrolled in two out of three semesters.
- Your student account must be in good standing. This means no holds and no outstanding balance.

If you are not a student, you must hold an appointed position as a visiting scholar at MSU to be eligible for on-campus housing. For more information, including floor plans and rental rates, please visit the University Housing website at: www.uh.msu.edu

**Off-campus Housing**

Students who want to live off-campus have many choices. Apartment buildings close to campus offer one
and two bedroom apartments for about $500 to $700 per month. For more information about living in East Lansing and the surrounding area, visit The ELmanac’s website at: www.elmanac.msu.edu.

Temporary Accommodations for Early Arrivals
Temporary accommodation may be available if you arrive on campus before the residence halls open. For more information, please contact the University Housing Office at (517) 353-9300.

Lending Center
The Lending Center is a place where students and faculty from other countries can borrow items such as lamps, dishes, and household goods. A small fee is collected to cover the cost of cleaning and/or repairs. Please be sure to return all items before leaving MSU so others may use them. MSU Lending Center is located at 802 Cherry Lane (Basement).

MSU Student Food Bank
The MSU Student Food Bank is an organization whose mission is to provide supplemental food and necessities to students and families who are in need of the type of support. Generally during the academic year, the MSU Food Bank is open bi-weekly on Wednesdays, from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm in the Olin Health Center Dining Room (West Entrance).

Students are asked to check in at the front table with their MSU Student ID’s and then have a short interview. This interview allows the student to choose which products are most useful for them, and not receive products for which they have no use. The amount of food that students are given will be adjusted according to the number of family members or roommate the student has.

To receive food, students must present their MSU student identification every time. At the beginning of each semester, students must present a proof of current enrollment that includes their name, MSU ID
number, and number of credits (bill stub, schedule, etc.) All clients are eligible to come to the Food Bank on each distribution date, call the Food Bank and listen to the outgoing message at (517) 432-5136. For more information or to volunteer to work a distribution night as a service project, email: foodbank@msu.edu.

Employment

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has strict regulations about the employment of international students. Students holding F-1 visas are allowed to work on campus for up to 20 hours per week during the school year and more than 20 hours a week during vacation periods. Current U.S. immigration rules require prior authorization by OISS for off-campus employment in your field of study. Students on J-1 visas must also have authorization from OISS to work either on or off campus.

Family dependents of students holding F-1 visas are not allowed to work under any circumstances. Family dependents of students who hold J-1 visas may apply to the DHS for permission to work. Please consult with OISS with any questions.

Health Care and Insurance

A complete overview of health care and insurance information may be found at: www.oiss.msu.edu/health.php.

Student Heath Insurance

All international students are required to carry health insurance as a condition of enrollment at Michigan State University. The insurance premium for student coverage is included on the tuition and fee statement every fall and spring semester. Graduate assistants and teaching assistants receive student health insurance at no cost. If you will purchase health insurance in your home country that will cover you in the U.S., it is possible to waive out of the mandatory insurance policy if your coverage is equivalent. Bring an English version or English translation
of your policy information.

**Dependent Heath Insurance**

Given the high cost of medical care in the United States, MSU advises you in the strongest possible terms that all accompanying family members carry health insurance at all times. **The U.S. government does not subsidize any health care costs for foreign visitors.** If an uninsured family member needs medical care for any reason, your family could end up with an unmanageable financial burden.

You may purchase health insurance for your dependents through the MSU Benefits Office, however it may be possible to find a lower-cost health insurance option in your home country or through an internet search.

For additional information on MSU’s health insurance policy provided by the Chickering Group, please visit: [www.hr.msu.edu/hrsite/benefits/students/healthcov](http://www.hr.msu.edu/hrsite/benefits/students/healthcov) or contact the MSU Benefits Office at (517) 353-4434 or studentinsurance@hr.msu.edu.

**Health Care**

MSU’s Olin Health Center provides medical, dental and health education services for students during their enrollment at Michigan State University. Olin Health Center is staffed with board-certified physicians and other certified health care professionals. Medical clinics include: Primary Care, Urgent Care, Gynecology, Orthopedics, Psychiatry and Sports Medicine.

Other services available at Olin include: pharmacy, laboratory, physical therapy, and radiology. Health Education services include: nutrition counseling; fitness testing; HIV/AIDS counseling, testing and education; outreach programming for student groups; and a variety of resources online at: [www.olin.msu.edu](http://www.olin.msu.edu). Additional services include the Pharmacy Delivery Service, and the 24 Hour Phone Information Nurse. Olin also provides a courtesy van that picks up and returns students who live in campus residence halls, University Apartments, or within one mile of the campus.
Students with Disabilities

Michigan State University provides accommodation to students with documented disabilities for access to university programs, activities, and services. If you have a disability and need accommodations, contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at MSU at (517) 353-9642 to make an appointment to meet with a Disability Specialist. For more information, please visit their web site at: www.rcpd.msu.edu.

Information for Families

Public School Information

All children in Michigan between the ages of 6 and 16 must attend school by law. Children may begin attending public Kindergarten at age 5. Public schools are free of cost and books and supplies are provided. Children younger than age 5 may attend preschool. However preschool is not free – be prepared to pay tuition if you wish for your child to attend preschool.

To enroll your child in public school, you must provide information about your child’s health, including immunization records. By law, the school must have an immunization record in English for each student. If such a record does not exist for your child or is inadequate, you will be asked to have the child immunized before he or she attends school. The school may also request that your child have a physical exam prior to enrollment. In addition, please be prepared to show your child’s birth certificate, prior school records (if any) and/or passport.

Each school district is required by law to provide free and appropriate education for all children. If you have a child who is handicapped or who needs special consideration, contact the Special Education section of the East Lansing School District at (517) 333-7459 or: scnc.elps.k12.mi.us. This office will find the right program for your child and provide whatever help he or she needs. Education is the right of every child.
Family & Child Care
The MSU Family Resource Center assists staff, faculty, and students in their search for quality child care (or elder care) services on campus or in the surrounding areas. The staff is available to consult with you about your particular child care needs. For more information on family services, please visit the Family Resource Center website at: www.frc.msu.edu.

Useful Web Resources

MSU CONTACTS

Academic Advising (Undergraduate)
www.msu.edu/dept/uud

Admissions & Scholarships
www.admissions.msu.edu

Associated Students of MSU (ASMSU)
www.asmsu.msu.edu

Disability Services
www.rcpd.msu.edu/

English Language Center
www.elc.msu.edu

Graduate Employees Union
www.geuatmsu.org

Human Resource Benefits Office
www.hr.msu.edu/hrsite/benefits

International Student Clubs
www.oiss.msu.edu/students_clubs.php

Office of the Registrar
www.reg.msu.edu

Office for International Students & Scholars
www.oiss.msu.edu

Olin Health Center
www.olin.msu.edu

Student Accounts and Cashier Services
wwwctlr.msu.edu/studrec

Student Health Insurance
www.hr.msu.edu/hrsite/benefits/students/healthcov
Testing Office
www.testingoffice.msu.edu

University Housing (On and Off-Campus)
www.hfs.msu.edu/uh

LODGING
Candlewood Suites
www.candlewoodsuites.com

Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center
www.hfs.msu.edu/kellogg

The Marriott, East Lansing
www.marriott.com

Super 8 Motel
www.super8.com

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION
Amtrak Train Station
www.amtrak.com

Capital Area Transit Authority (CATA)
www.cata.org

Capital City Airport
www.flylansing.com

Greyhound Bus Services
www.greyhound.com

Michigan Flyer Bus Services
www.michiganflyer.com

Are You Ready?
We hope this brochure has helped you plan your trip to the United States. If you have additional questions, you can email or call us at the International Students and Scholars office. We will be glad to answer any further questions when you arrive.

Have a safe and pleasant trip and we look forward to meeting you.
Departure Checklist

☐ Valid passport

☐ Valid travel visa (Canadian citizens exempt))

☐ Certificate of eligibility (form I-20 or DS-2019)

☐ Proof of financial support for course of study

☐ Sufficient funds in U.S. dollars to cover tuition, expenses, and settling-in costs for the first semester for you and family members accompanying you

☐ Medical records including record of immunizations (in English); evidence of adequate insurance coverage (if you or your dependents are already insured)

☐ Valid driver’s license and certified English translation (if you plan to drive in the U.S.)

☐ Housing arrangements, including a place to stay the night of your arrival if on-campus housing is not open

☐ Transportation from airport to campus

☐ Setup your MSU email account

☐ Review dates for the international student orientation and make plans to attend

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