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Dear International Student,

International Students and Scholars Services (ISSS) would like to take this opportunity to wish you a warm welcome to Drexel University and to wish you good luck in your academic career. We especially look forward to meeting you at the International Student Orientation. Attendance to this event is mandatory. ISSS will be partners in your education, assisting you in achieving your personal and academic goals at Drexel. We will advise you on immigration regulations, cross-cultural adjustment, and your academic success. Additionally, we plan special educational and cultural programs including cultural events, immigration seminars, and informal gatherings to help you get acclimated to your new life at Drexel.

We are here to help you once you arrive at Drexel. Please know that all of us at the ISSS have the expertise and experience to ensure that your time at Drexel is enjoyable and successful.

Included in this handbook you will find information on the following:

- Pre-arrival visa preparation
- Arriving at Drexel University
- Orientation
- Housing
- Helpful information regarding finances, immunizations, and employment

Again, welcome to Drexel University.

Sincerely,

Jessica Cordisco
Associate Director
International Students and Scholars Services
Student Life
Enrollment Management & Student Success
1 Before Leaving your Country

1.1 Immigration Status

1.1.1 F-1 Student Status
The F-1 Visa allows you to enter the United States (U.S.) as a full-time student at an accredited university. You must be enrolled in a program or course of study that culminates in a degree, diploma or certificate. This visa status allows you to remain in the U.S. until the completion of studies date listed on your I-20. You can bring your spouse and children to live with you in the U.S. as long as you provide proof of sufficient financial resources. F-2 spouses cannot work while in the U.S.
To maintain full-time status, undergraduates must register for at least 12 credits each quarter/semester, and graduate students must register for at least 9 credits each quarter/semester.

1.1.2 J-1 Exchange Visitor status
Under the J-1 Visa you must be a full-time student. You can bring your spouse and children to live with you in the U.S. as long as you provide proof of sufficient financial resources. J-2 spouses can work while in the U.S. but need to obtain permission from the ISSS and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).
To maintain full-time status, undergraduates must register for at least 12 credits each quarter/semester, and graduate students must register for at least 9 credits each quarter/semester.

1.1.3 School Transfer
If you are already studying at a university in the U.S. on an F-1 or J-1 visa, and you are planning to transfer to the Drexel University, you must transfer your SEVIS records to Drexel. If you do not clearly understand the transfer procedure, contact an international student advisor in the ISSS for more information.

As a transfer student, you have to begin classes within 5 months of your last date of attendance at your former program or within 5 months of your OPT end date.
1.2 Visa Application

After getting admitted and confirming your attendance to Drexel, you are required to apply for your I-20/DS-2019.

Next, you will need to arrange for your entry into the U.S. by obtaining the appropriate visa from the U.S. embassy or consulate nearest to where you live. To find the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate please check here.

You can also learn more about news or processing times regarding the non-immigrant visa by visiting the Office of Visa Services here.

As a full-time degree-seeking student you should not enter on a B-1/B-2 (tourist) visa. Please make sure to obtain the appropriate visa when you visit the embassy.

You cannot apply for your student visa more than 120 days before the program start date listed on your I-20/DS-2019.

1.2.1 Citizens of Canada and Bermuda

If you are a citizen of Canada or Bermuda, you do not need to apply for a visa at the embassy. You must present an I-20/DS-2019 form and proof of financial support at the port of entry to the U.S. Be careful to present the documents listed above at the border to avoid being given a B-1/B-2 tourist status, which does not allow full-time study or employment. Residents of Canada (not Canadian citizens) must apply for an F-1 or J-1 visa.

1.2.2 Mandatory SEVIS Fee

Before applying for your student visa, you must pay the Student and Exchange Information System (SEVIS) fee. SEVIS is a U.S. government database that tracks the immigration concerns of students and exchange visitors.

You must pay the SEVIS fee, and include the payment receipt with your visa application. Your fee payment must be accompanied by form 901, which you can download from the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) SEVIS I-901 Fee processing website or obtain by phone at 800.870.3676 (inside the U.S. only). You can pay the fee by mail or on-line. Please be aware that this fee will not be refunded if your visa application is denied.
You must carry your SEVIS Fee receipt when you enter the US. A copy of your SEVIS Fee receipt can be found at: www.fmjfee.com

1.3 Going to the Embassy

1.3.1 What to take with you to the embassy

When you apply for a visa, you must prove your intent to return to your country. These are some examples of intent: close family ties in home country, organizational memberships (including religious or social groups), business or real estate owned by you or your family, and proof that you intend to return to your home country and continue your professional career. It is also important for you to prepare your study plan so that the visa officer knows that you are a serious student.

The visa only allows you to enter the US. The forms I-20 and DS-2019 allow you to stay. You must always have a copy of your I-20, and you should keep your old I-20s for your records. If you lose or damage your I-20, please contact ISSS.

2 Arrival

International students who are moving into dorms should make every effort to arrive on campus during their designated move-in time for their hall.

You are also expected to know your residence hall location and go there during your assigned move-in time. If you arrive on campus outside your move-in time and are unsure where to go, go to the Towers Hall (101 North 34th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104), where someone at the front desk can assist you. Drexel University Public Safety (215.895.2822) can always be called and used as a resource.

First-year Undergraduate students for Fall 2016 can learn about Welcome Week through the First Year Experience website.

2.1 Entry to the United States

When you arrive at a port of entry in the U.S., you will be required to present your form I-20/DS-2019, along with your passport and financial documents. Keep these documents with you while
you travel. Do not put these documents in your checked baggage. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will gather your arrival/departure information automatically. Your border entry creates a record called an I-94. You can retrieve your I-94 by visiting this [website](#). This will be available after 24 hours of your arrival in the U.S. If you have trouble retrieving your I-94 or if the information on the form is incorrect please contact ISSS by email.

Immigration laws allow you to enter the U.S. no earlier than 30 days before the program start date listed on your I-20/DS-2019.

We encourage you to arrange your travel schedules so that you can arrive at least one week before classes begin. This will give you time to settle into housing, open a bank account and become acquainted with the campus, local neighborhoods and the city. Also, it’s important to come early to attend the mandatory international student orientation that is given each term.

2.2 Transportation from the Philadelphia International Airport to Drexel

You can always use the following options to get to Drexel from the Philadelphia International Airport (PHL). More information can also be found at the [Ground Transportation](#) webpage of the PHL.

Please read this document for [detailed information about traveling to Drexel from area airports](#).

3 Housing

3.1 Temporary Accommodations

If you arrive to Philadelphia before the move-in date for your on-campus housing or plan on looking for off-campus housing when you arrive, you may need to find temporary accommodations. Unfortunately, there are not early move in dates for dormitories. There are several reasonably priced hotels and temporary housing facilities close to Drexel. You can find more information about temporary accommodation [here](#).

You can also look into the International House (3701 Chestnut Street) for temporary accommodation. International House is located close to University City Main Campus and often gives new Drexel students a lower rate. Inquire about this when you make your reservation.

Temporary housing is not always available, so call before you arrive in Philadelphia.
(+1.215.387.5125, ihousephilly.org/student-housing.) Only students are permitted to stay at International House.

**3.2 Drexel University Housing (On-Campus Housing)**

Drexel University Housing offers on-campus housing in one of our ten residence halls. Undergraduate students are required to live in university approved housing for their first and second years. First-year undergraduate students are required to live in a University Housing residence hall; second-year students will have a variety of options to choose from. Transfer undergraduates may live on-campus or off-campus in the surrounding Philadelphia neighborhoods.

All Drexel residence halls are coed, which means that men and women live in the same building. Generally, females and males cannot live in the same room or suite. Drexel does offer Gender-Neutral Housing. Please visit the [Gender-Neutral Housing site](#) for more information. Drexel residence halls offer single (priority) and double occupancy rooms, suites and apartments (with kitchens), which house 4 to 6 people. Friends will often live on the same floor or share an apartment or suite. Drexel residence hall rooms are furnished with 2 beds, 2 desks, 2 chairs, 2 lamps, and 2 closets with drawers. There is a full kitchen on every floor, and small refrigerators and microwaves are allowed in rooms. **You will need to supply your own sheets, towels, cookware, and utensils.**

For more information about the University Housing please visit their website [here](#).

⚠**Drexel does not guarantee on-campus housing for graduate students. Please look at the Off-Campus Housing in this handbook.**

**College of Medicine Students**

Arrangements have been made for you to live at Stiles Alumni Hall for your first year. Stiles Hall is located on the Center City campus at 325 N. 15th St. in Philadelphia. For more information for Center City campus on-campus housing please visit this [website](#).

Also, note that Drexel offers a free shuttle service between the University City campus and Center City campus and Queen Lane campus. For more information, please review the section under the Drexel Shuttle Services in this Handbook.
3.3 International (Global) Learning Community

Drexel University offers the opportunity to continue your learning outside the classroom by giving students the option to live in a College Learning Community. For international students, ISSS would like to recommend the option of living in the International Learning Community.

The International (Global) Learning Community provides a living and learning environment for international students and American students alike who are interested in study abroad, foreign languages, international studies, and multiculturalism. This community will allow residents to meet and live with students from all over the world while deepening their understanding of identity and diversity. The community will provide multicultural activities and learning opportunities, such as touring Philadelphia’s Italian Market and Chinatown, events to promote international student success, cross-cultural gatherings, as well as have culturally relevant items in the communal kitchens so students may prepare their own meals if they wish. This International Learning Community in Kelly Hall is the on-campus residence for Drexel’s global citizens. Questions about the program should be directed to Marin Fuhrmann (mrf75@drexel.edu).

3.4 Off-Campus Housing

Most housing is rented on a contract or lease basis, meaning you agree to live in the unit for a stated period of time, usually 12 months. Some landlords will allow month-to-month renting. When you sign a lease you are legally responsible for all rent payments, whether you live there or not. When you rent an apartment, a deposit (often called a security deposit) equal to at least one month’s rent is almost always required, in addition to the first month’s rent. Be prepared to have money available for this. Usually, your deposit is returned to you as long as you have given your landlord sufficient notice and have not damaged the apartment. Read the lease or contract carefully and understand all of its rules and obligations before signing it. Keep a signed copy of the lease for your records.

For more information please visit the Off-Campus Housing website at
offcampushousing.drexel.edu. You can also find a Neighborhood Guide and learn about the important keywords when looking to live off-campus, under the Resources of the Off-Campus Housing website (you have to sign up using your Drexel Email address to use the Resources for free.)

4 I-20/DS-2019 Registration

According to immigration regulations, as an F-1 or J-1 student you are required to register with ISSS upon arrival to the U.S. or shortly after being approved for a change of status (COS) to F-1 or J-1. After you enter the US, you are expected to complete the following steps within 30 days in order to have your I-20/DS-2019 registered. You cannot complete your I-20 registration prior to your arrival in the US. You will be emailed instructions to complete this process early in September.

Failure to complete your I-20/DS-2019 registration within 30 days of your arrival will result in termination of your immigration visa status.

5 New Student Orientation

International Students and Scholars Services will hold a mandatory orientation for all new undergraduate and graduate international students before classes begin. During the mandatory session, ISSS will introduce you to immigration regulations, information regarding work authorization, and other ISSS services.

Fall 2016 Undergraduate Welcome Week Schedule

Fall 2016 Graduate Student Orientation Schedule

For undergraduate student in Welcome Week, there will be a number of other sessions hosted by ISSS. We will focus on transitions to American classroom, success in your health and wellness as an international student, and adjusting culturally and physically to life on-campus and in Philadelphia. We will also offer tours of campus for those who are visiting for the first
6 Academic Advising

If you are an undergraduate student, your academic advising will take place in your college. If you are a graduate student, you must look at the Graduate Admissions Office website and find your designated advisor. It is mandatory to speak with your academic advisor before registering for classes.

You can find the contact information of your Academic Advisor by logging into your DrexelOne account.

7 Health Insurance

All undergraduate international students must purchase the university sponsored plan. This plan meets all of the requirements for students on J-1 Visas, and all recommendations for international students on F-1 Visas. The policy covers students in our local area as well as worldwide. Undergraduate Students will be default enrolled into the Drexel Dragon Health Insurance coverage and the premium amount will be placed on the student account. If a student would like to upgrade their policy to the Preferred Plan please visit our office when you arrive to the University. The only coverage accepted in lieu of the Drexel Health Insurance is Embassy Sponsored coverage. Verification of this coverage must be brought to our office immediately upon arrival to the University.

Graduate Students are required to have health insurance coverage, however, they can purchase the Drexel plan or show proof of other insurance coverage. If you are purchasing your own plan it must meet the minimum requirements set by the University. The plan must also be in effect for the full academic year. Information on these requirements may be found on our website www.drexel.edu/healthservices. Please be aware that the health insurance purchased in your country to cover you while you are a student in the U.S. may not be accepted by Drexel’s insurance office. For more information please see the Health Insurance Policy for International Students here.
8 Immunization

Drexel University requires all incoming full-time undergraduate and graduate students and all international students to complete the immunization requirements. You can find the requirements by clicking here.

There is a University processing fee which must be paid by all students regardless of where the student receives vaccinations, the exact amount for the fee can also be found on the website. This fee will be placed on your student account.

All international students must have their PPD test (Tuberculosis skin test) in the U.S. upon their arrival to Drexel. Students may go to the Student Health Center (3401 Market Street) to have this test performed. Students may also satisfy this requirement by having a QuantiFERON or TSPOT blood test in their country, however, the results of this test must be in English. The immunization form must be completed by the deadline listed on the Health Insurance and Immunization website. If the deadline is not met, a hold will be placed on the students’ accounts, and they will not be able to register for winter term classes. Students will need to upload their completed immunization form to their Drexel One Portal. Please do not upload this form until all of the requirements are complete.

9 Billing and Finance: Drexel Central

Drexel Central is a one-stop location for students and families to receive answers to all billing, financial aid, and registration inquiries. Drexel Central houses all of the services offered through the Bursar, the Financial Aid/Student Resource Center, and the University Registrar in one comprehensive department. For more information please visit the Drexel Central website.

You can find additional financing resources for international students by clicking here.

10 Finances, Banking, and Related

Always be prepared for additional expenses. Do not count on receiving financial aid, scholarships, or assistantships once you are here. Educational loans are not available for international students unless you have a U.S. citizen who will co-sign for the loan. We suggest that you bring with you a minimum of $1,500-2,000 USD (in addition to tuition and living
expenses for the year) to cover items such as the first month’s rent and required housing deposits, temporary accommodations, household expenses, insurance payments and other necessities.

The following expenses are often overlooked:

- Overnight temporary lodging when you first arrive.
- Tips for taxis and servers in restaurants.
- Eating meals in restaurants until you get your own apartment or are on a Drexel meal plan.
- Clothing for the different types of weather in Philadelphia especially the winter (It can get as cold as 10°F (-12°C) in January and February.) You may need to purchase warm clothing once you arrive, such as: a winter coat, gloves, scarves, waterproof boots, raincoat, and warm blankets for your bed.
- Personal and household items. Even if you rent a furnished apartment, you will have to buy linens, towels, kitchen utensils, etc. These items can be purchased easily at a reasonable price in Philadelphia and we suggest you buy them once you are here.
- State and local sales taxes of 8% added to the price of many items, except clothing and food (excluding food purchased at restaurants).
- Security deposit and first and last months’ rent when renting an off-campus apartment, which may be equal to up to 3-months-rent total.

10.1 Banking

There are several banks that are close to each of the Drexel campuses where you can open accounts and exchange money. To open an account, you will need to bring your passport and I-20/DS-2019. If you choose to open an account after school starts, a Drexel University ID and/or social security number is preferred.

10.2 Currency Restrictions and Transfer of Funds to the United States

Before finalizing your plans to study in the U.S, you should become familiar with your government’s regulations regarding currency restrictions and the transfer of funds out of the country. Some governments restrict the amount of money that can be taken out of the country. Others may restrict funds until a letter from the University has been received confirming enrollment (this letter can be obtained through Drexel Central.) Also, find out before leaving
home if any letters are required from Drexel University that will facilitate the authorization of the transfer of funds.

**If you plan on using a wire to transfer money, please be familiar with the process and make sure that your family, or whoever is assisting you in your home country is also familiar with the process. You can visit your bank to ask questions about the wire transfer process to ensure you receive your payments in a timely manner.**

### 10.3 Social Security Number

A Social Security Number (SSN) is number issued by the Social Security Administration to those working in the US. As an international student, you will be required to apply for a Social Security Number if you are working. In order to apply, please visit or email ISSS with your job offer letter.

If you have been awarded a scholarship or an assistantship that includes a stipend, you will not be able to receive your first stipend check until you document that you have been awarded a social security number. You cannot apply for a social security number until you have registered your I-20 and have been in the U.S. for at least 10 days.

It takes approximately 2-3 weeks to receive a social security number after you submit the application. When you apply, you will receive a receipt that you have applied for the SSN and some employers will allow you to work with this receipt while you wait for your number. For more information applying for a social security number, please visit [ssa.gov/phila](http://ssa.gov/phila).

### 11 Employment

As an F1 or J1 Student, you primary responsibility while in the US is to be studying, not working. Employment in the U.S. is very strictly controlled and limited for F1 visitors. Permission to be employed is available only in very certain circumstances. **While part-time, on-campus/Drexel employment is permissible,** there are a limited number of jobs available on campus. **You should not plan on earning money while working on campus to even partially pay for your expenses.** If the funds for the I-20/DS-2019 purposes are not available to you, the University cannot assist you in obtaining alternative funding.
Undergraduate and graduate students with J-1 status may be eligible for academic training during and/or after completion of studies. For more information, speak with a representative of the U.S. Department of State at the U.S. embassy or consulate in your country before you leave. You are permitted to work either on-campus or off-campus with permission from your J-1 sponsor. The ISSS offers a variety of workshops throughout the academic year regarding F-1 and J-1 off-campus employment. You are strongly encouraged to attend them if you have questions regarding employment.

12 Privacy and Releasing Information to Parents (FERPA)
All education records related to students is protected under the Drexel's FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) policy. This means that unless a student gives a family member permission to access information from the school (including some health/health insurance information, academic records, F1/J1 visa status information, etc.) the family member cannot access this information. To learn more about this policy please click here. You can review the information on this website to study what type of information is or is not granted to be viewed by your parents.
You may grant FERPA authorization rights to individuals by filling out the FERPA waiver form in DrexelOne.

13 Drexel Shuttle Services
Drexel University provides transportation across its three campuses- University City Campus, Center City Campus and the Queen Lane Campus. Students are permitted unlimited use of this service at no charge. The bus service includes three fixed routes (Blue & Gold, Dragon and Queen Lane) and operates Monday through Friday. Weekend shuttle service is available to students only on the University City Campus. You must have your DragonCard to ride the shuttle. You can find more information about the bus routes and schedule by visiting this website.
Drexel University has a reciprocity agreement with the University of Pennsylvania allowing Drexel students to ride the University of Pennsylvania fixed route campus bus service, free of charge.
14 Safety On-Campus

Drexel University’s Department of Public Safety takes a holistic approach to providing “best in class” preventive and protective services to the Drexel University community. The department provides and administers many community-oriented services and programs which exist to maintain a secure environment and to enhance the quality of life on our campuses (University City Main Campus, Center City Hahnemann Campus and the Queen Lane Medical Campus).

Click here to find a list of Offices and Locations
Click here to find a list of Emergency Contact Numbers for Campus Public Safety

14.1 DrexelALERT and Drexel Guardian

Drexel has two cellphone based alert systems for on-campus emergency and weather notifications. Please visit the websites for the DrexelALERT and Drexel Guardian for registration or download instructions.

14.2 Security Officers

While on campus you will often see Drexel Public Safety in the area. Drexel Public Safety can be found patrolling campus on foot, by bicycle or by car. If you have a question or an emergency, you are welcome to approach a security officer.

In addition to Drexel-specific introductory training, officers receive basic, specialized, and in-service training; including, proficiency in First Aid/CPR/AED, customer relations, patrol practices, terrorism awareness, and customer service.

14.3 Walking Escort

Upon request, Drexel Public Safety security officers provide walking escorts for Drexel students within our patrol boundaries. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For more information and to request a walking escort:

- Call Public Safety at 215-895-2822.
- Use one of the many building and blue-light emergency phones located across campus.
- Ask any Public Safety Officer on patrol or inside a building.

For more information visit the Walking Escort webpage.
14.4 Residence Hall Security

Residence hall main entrances are staffed 24 hours per day. During late night hours, building access is monitored by uniformed Public Safety security officers.

Please note the following important security information:

- Access to residence halls is only permitted through the main entrance.
- Reception desks are the access control point for all residence halls.
- Residents gain access by using their Drexel ID cards.
- Reception desks are staffed 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.
- Emergency assistance can be obtained quickly through the reception desk.
- Residents are responsible for their visitors at all times.
- Residents should be alert for tailgaters and propped doors.
- Residents’ rooms should always be locked.

15 DragonCard

The DragonCard is the official University ID card for students, faculty, and staff, which also provides access to many buildings and services on the three Drexel University campuses.

The DragonCard must be carried at all times while on University-owned property. It is property of Drexel University and is governed by the rules and regulations set forth by the University. The DragonCard is not transferable and is not permitted to be used by anyone other than the issued cardholder.

15.1 Obtaining a DragonCard

A valid photo driver’s license, passport, or state-issued photo ID is required in order to receive a DragonCard. The DragonCard will be distributed during the New Student Orientation or New Students Day just prior to the start of the Academic Term.

Reminder! You need a DragonCard to attend the ISSS Mandatory Orientation Session!

Click here to start the process of applying for your card!

15.2 Dragon Dollars

Dragon Dollars provide students with a convenient and safe way to manage expenses. It also offers families of students with a worry-free means to provide funds to their student. You can
charge your card in various ways (for more information on how you can add DragonDollars please visit here.) You can use these DragonDollars for various purchases. You can find the list of vendors here.

16 Social Connections
There are many ways to connect with students on campus. ISSS hopes that the following information can help inform you about options to meet domestic and international students while you prepare your arrivals.

16.1 Student Organizations
There are many international student organizations that are active on campus. Individual groups meet, hold special events, and offer friendship and support to fellow international students from their native countries. Currently, there are student groups that represent almost every ethnic group at Drexel. For more information and to view a complete list of student organizations visit the Office of Campus Activities (OCA) website.

Once you arrive to campus, and especially in your first two weeks at Drexel, you will have many the opportunities to engage with different students groups and organizations. You can start to browse organizations through DragonLink. This online tool can help you get a sense of all the great things to be involved with at Drexel.

16.2 Fraternities and Sororities
Our fraternity and sorority community is composed of students who are dedicated to the spirit of the University and committed to making their college experience unique. Membership in a fraternity or sorority enhances your personal development through a commitment to the ideals of scholarship, leadership, and service. Fraternities and sororities look for students who share similar goals and values while respecting your individuality. Members of the fraternity and sorority community benefit from membership because they have the opportunity to work closely with students who have different interests, beliefs and attributes, while forming lifelong friendships.

Check out the website for more information about Fraternities and Sororities at Drexel.

16.3 Dragons to Dragons Mentorship
All incoming undergraduate first year and transfer students have been enrolled in the Dragons to Dragons mentorship program. You should have, or should be receiving an email from your mentor welcoming you to campus. All correspondence is sent to your Drexel email. You mentor can serve as a guide for your arrival to campus. Your mentor is not only available while you prepare your arrival to campus, but your mentor is available to you for information throughout the year.

16.4 ISSS Events and Activities
ISSS holds activities throughout the year for students to participate in. ISSS presents on cultural topics as well as immigration related topics. Please follow the ISSS Facebook page, and check the ISSS newsletters for information about upcoming events.

16.5 Outside Resources
There are a number of resources to help you discover Philadelphia. Here are two websites that students have found very useful in the past:
Uwishunu: http://www.uwishunu.com/
Campus Philly: http://campusphilly.org/

17 Contact ISSS
For more information and get further assistance, please contact us at the International Students and Scholars Service.

3210 Chestnut Street
Creese Student Center, Suite 215

Monday - Friday: 8 am – 5 pm
Phone: +1 (215) 895-2502
E-mail: isss@drexel.edu
Website: www.drexel.edu/isss