

# New International Student Welcome Guide



Welcome to Drexel University!

On behalf of the entire team of International Students and Scholars Services (ISSS), I send my well wishes and take this opportunity to wish you a warm welcome to Drexel University. We especially look forward to meeting you in person upon your arrival on campus. We hope that you can join the ISSS events that will take place during Drexel University's Welcome Week.

ISSS offers a vast array of programs and services to approximately 3,000 international students, scholars, and faculty representing more than 100 countries. We are your partner during your education and are committed to supporting you in achieving your academic, professional, and personal goals while at Drexel. We provide support on multiple levels - immigration advising and programs, cross-cultural adjustment, and your student success. Please know that all of us at 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 Preparation
- Arriving at Drexel University
- Orientation
- Additional Information & Services
- Social Connections

You are always welcome to reach out to our office:

3141 Chestnut Street  
Main Building, Suite 222  
Phone: (215) 895-2502  
Email: [iss@drexel.edu](mailto:iss@drexel.edu)

Website: [www.drexel.edu/iss](http://www.drexel.edu/iss)

Office Hours: Monday - Friday: 9am-5pm

Virtual Advising Hours: Monday - Tuesday: 2pm-4pm; Friday: 9:30am-11:30am

Again, welcome to Drexel University,



Mladenka Tomasevic  
Executive Director  
International Students and Scholars Services

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## Pre-Arrival Information

### Visa Application & Interview

After receiving your I-20/DS-2019, you will need to arrange for your entry into the United States (U.S.) by obtaining the appropriate visa from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate nearest to where you live. See the [Websites of Department U.S. Embassies, Consulates and Diplomatic Missions](#) for specific instructions about visa applications.

You can also learn more about the different visa types, non-immigrant visa processing times, law and policy, visa-related news and more by visiting the [Office of Visa Services](#).

At the minimum, students need to present the following documentation to the U.S. Embassy/Consulate when applying for a visa:

- [DS-160 Visa Application Form](#)
- Valid Passport
- Form I-20 (F-1 students) or Form DS-2019 (J-1 students)
- Proof of [SEVIS I-901 fee payment](#)
- Documentation of admission to Drexel University
- Proof of financial support that matches the financial information listed in your I-20 or DS-2019

NOTE: Please make sure to check with the U.S. Embassy/Consulate if you need any additional documentation. More information about scheduling and preparing for your visa interview can be found at the [Study in the States website](#).

### Arrival in the United States

The earliest you can enter the U.S. is up to 30 days prior to, but no later than, the program start date listed on page one of your I-20 or DS-2019. Please plan your travel accordingly.

When you arrive at a port of entry to the U.S., you will present your I-20/DS-2019, along with your passport, proof of payment of the I-901 fee, and financial documents. Do not put these documents in your checked baggage. The process of crossing the border can take a long time; please be patient. If you experience any trouble at the border, it is within your right to ask Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to contact Drexel Public Safety at 215.895.2222.

Your border entry creates a record called an I-94. You can retrieve your I-94 [here](#). This is available 24-48 hours after your arrival. If you have trouble retrieving your I-94 or if the information on the form is incorrect, you need to contact CBP directly.

For additional information about entering the U.S., please consult the [Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(ICE\) website](#).

## Currency Restrictions and Transferring Funds

Before finalizing your plans to arrive in the U.S., you should be familiar with your government's regulations regarding currency restrictions and the transfer of funds. Some governments restrict the amount of money allowed out of the country; others may restrict funds until a letter from the university has been received. You can request an enrollment verification or certificate of enrollment by visiting the [Drexel Central](#) website.

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## Transportation to Drexel

Drexel's campus is easy to access from several surrounding cities and airports. Philadelphia's International Airport provides more information about [Ground Transportation](#). It is also affordable to access Drexel's campus through popular ride share apps. Be sure to have your housing address readily available to provide any ground transportation service.

New undergraduate students residing on-campus beginning in fall quarter should refer to the "Housing" section below for details regarding additional transportation options that may be available through assigned move-in programs.

## On-Campus Housing

*Undergraduate* students entering as first-year students are required to live in University housing for their first and second years. Students who are moving into residence halls should arrive on campus during their designated move-in date and time. *Transfer undergraduates* may live on-campus or off-campus in the surrounding Philadelphia neighborhoods.

*Graduate students* are not guaranteed on-campus housing. Visit the [University Housing website](#) to explore options and application instructions for on-campus housing. Otherwise, see "Off-Campus Housing" below.

All Drexel residence halls are co-ed, meaning that males, females, and non-binary live in the same building. Generally, they cannot reside in the same room or suite. Drexel also offers [Gender-Inclusive Housing](#). Drexel residence halls offer single and double occupancy rooms, suites, and apartments. Residence hall rooms come with furniture and have kitchen access. You will need to supply your own sheets, towels, and utensils, which are easy to purchase at and/or near Drexel.

## Off-Campus Housing

Off-campus housing is typically rented through leases, meaning you agree to live in a unit for a stated duration. 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 security deposit is often required in addition to the first and last month's rent. Usually, your deposit is returned when you move out as long as you abide by your lease. Read the lease carefully and understand all of the obligations before signing. For more information and a neighborhood guide, please visit the [Off-Campus Housing](#) website.

Note of caution: please be aware of housing scammers. You should always be mindful and vigilant before providing anyone with your personal information or sending payment of any kind. Please consult the Drexel Off-Campus Housing page for [tips on how to avoid scams and fraud](#).

## Temporary Accommodations

If you arrive in Philadelphia before your move-in date, you will need to find temporary accommodation. There are several hotels and temporary housing facilities nearby. Housing is not always available, so be sure to make arrangements before your arrival.

## Health Insurance & Immunization

All incoming international students are required to complete the [immunization requirements](#) prior to arrival. Students need to upload their completed immunization form to their DrexelOne Portal. Do not upload this form until all of the requirements are complete. Any student who has not complied with the immunization policy by the deadline will have a hold placed on their record. This will prevent registration for classes, which may affect your visa status.

*Undergraduate* students automatically enroll in the university sponsored health insurance plan and the cost will be placed on your account. This plan meets all requirements and covers students domestically and internationally. The only coverage accepted in place of Drexel Health Insurance is embassy-sponsored coverage.

*Graduate* students are required to have health insurance coverage. However, they have the option to 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 and be in effect for the full academic year.

Visit the [Office of Counseling and Health Services](#) to learn about enrolling in the Drexel Student Health Insurance or waiving it by providing verification of your own health insurance coverage (if permitted). This must be done by the "compliance deadline" listed on their website.

## ISSS Orientation

In order to prepare you for your studies in the U.S., ISSS offers unique information on what you can expect during your time at Drexel and provides information about visa-related topics. You are required to complete the [mandatory ISSS New Student Orientation](#) via the [Blackboard Learn \(BBLearn\)](#) portal. During this virtual orientation (which is asynchronous), ISSS will introduce immigration regulations on maintaining your student status while studying at Drexel. Other sessions are available throughout Welcome Week.

## DragonCard & Dragon Dollars

The DragonCard is the official university ID for students that provides access to buildings and services at Drexel. Always carry your DragonCard while on-campus. It is the property of Drexel University. No one else may use your card.

Collection of your DragonCard is available during Welcome Week. Be sure to bring your passport in order to obtain your DragonCard. We suggest obtaining it prior to attending Welcome Week.



[Click here to start the process of applying for your card!](#)

DragonDollars provide students with a convenient and safe way to manage expenses. It also offers families a way to provide funds to their student. You can [charge your card](#) in various ways and use it at different [vendors](#) around campus.

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## Additional Information

- **Academic Advisors**

Every Drexel student receives an academic advisor dedicated to assisting you throughout your studies. 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 and reviewing My Success Team.

- **Billing and Finance: Drexel Central**



Drexel Central provides answers to all billing and financial inquiries. For more information, visit the [Drexel Central website](#). International

- **Expected Expenses**

It is not advisable to carry large amounts of cash upon arrival or during your stay. However, you will need access to personal funds within the first few days of being in the U.S. and throughout your stay to cover the following:

- Tips/gratuity for taxis and servers in restaurants, which is customarily 10% - 20% of the bill.
- 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 meanwhile temperatures during the summer can exceed 90°F / 32°C in July and August.
- Personal and household items.



## Banking

Several banks are conveniently located near Drexel main campus where you can open accounts and exchange money. To open an account, you will need to bring your passport and I-20/DS-2019.

U.S. bank loans are not available for international students unless you have a U.S. citizen who will co-sign for the loan.

## Social Security Number

Social Security numbers (SSNs) generally are assigned to people who are authorized to work in the United States. Social Security numbers are used to report your wages to the government and to determine eligibility for Social Security benefits. The Social Security Administration (SSA) **will not** assign you a number just to enroll in a college or school, get a credit card, or cell phone, etc. If you do not have a paid job, then you cannot apply for a Social Security number.



Please refer to the [Social Security Administration \(SSA\) website](#) for more details. For more information about obtaining a SSN as an international student, visit the [Study in the States website](#).

If you receive a **scholarship or assistantship** that includes a stipend, you will not be able to receive your first stipend check until you apply for an SSN. You cannot apply for a social security number until you have registered your I-20/DS-2019 (completed during the mandatory ISSS New Student Orientation). Once your I-20/DS-2019 is registered, visit the [ISSS – Social Security](#) webpage for additional information.

If you have obtained **paid on-campus employment** and need an SSN. Please read this [SSN Application Instructions \[PDF\]](#) for guidance. Email your job offer letter that includes the name of your employer, number of hours you will work per week, and employment start date to [iss@drexel.edu](mailto:iss@drexel.edu) to request an SSN support letter as part of your application.

If you already have an SSN from a previous status or time in the U.S., you cannot apply for a new one. They do not expire.

## U.S. Tax Compliance

You will be required to file a U.S. tax return with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) each year that you are present in the U.S. For more detailed information, please consult the [Office of Tax Compliance Website](#). If you have any tax related questions, please send them to [nonresident\\_tax@drexel.edu](mailto:nonresident_tax@drexel.edu)

## Working in the U.S.

When you applied for and received your F-1 or J-1 visa, you agreed that your primary objective while in the U.S. is to study, not work. Employment in the U.S. is strictly controlled and limited for international students. Part-time on-campus **work** is permissible though there are a limited number of jobs available on-campus. You should not plan to earn money to subsidize your expenses.

Drexel is unique among U.S. universities as we often require students to participate in employment as a requirement of the curriculum, referred to as **Cooperative Education**, or Co-op. As an F-1 student, for your Co-op, you will apply for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) employment authorization. Your Academic Advisor or Career Advisor and ISSS will assist you through this process once you reach this point in your academic plan.



## Privacy and Releasing Information to Parents - FERPA

Drexel's Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act or FERPA, protects all student records. This means no one has access to your information unless you give explicit permission to that person. To learn more about this policy and the information it protects, click [here](#).

You may grant FERPA authorization rights to individuals by filling out the FERPA waiver form in DrexelOne.

## Safety & Security On-Campus

While on campus, you will see Drexel Public Safety. They patrol campus on foot, by bicycle, and by car. If you have a question or an emergency, you are welcome to approach a security officer.

[Click here to find a list of Offices and Locations](#)

[Click here to find a list of Emergency Contact Numbers for Campus Public Safety](#)

### Walking Escort

Upon request, Drexel Public Safety security officers provide walking escorts within patrol boundaries. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For more information and to request a walking escort, use the blue light system located throughout campus (pictured here), call Public Safety at 215-895-2222, or visit the [Walking Escort webpage](#).

### Residence Hall Security

Residence hall main entrances are staffed 24 hours per day. Please note the following important security information:

- Reception desks are access control points for all residence halls.
- Residents gain access by using their DragonCard.
- Emergency assistance can be obtained quickly through the reception desk.



## Social Connections

There are many ways to connect with students on campus. ISSS hopes that the following information can inform you about options to meet domestic and international students.

### Student Organizations

Many international student organizations are active on campus. Individual groups meet, hold special events, and offer friendship and support to fellow international students.

Drexel has numerous organizations related to hobbies, academics, and personal interests. For more information and to view a complete list of student organizations visit the [Student Life](#) website. You can also browse organizations through [DragonLink](#). This online tool can help you get a sense of all the great things to be involved with at Drexel.

### Fraternities and Sororities

Drexel's 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. Members benefit because they have the opportunity to work closely with students with different interests, beliefs and attributes, while forming lifelong friendships. [Check out the website for more information about Fraternities and Sororities at Drexel.](#)



### ISSS Events and Activities

ISSS holds cultural events throughout the year for students to participate in. To connect with other international students and stay informed on current and future ISSS and Drexel events, please follow us on [DragonLink](#) and [Instagram](#).

### Outside Resources

There are several resources to help you discover Philadelphia. Here are websites that students have found very useful in the past:

#### International House Philadelphia

IHP supports the international students and scholars studying in the Greater Philadelphia region by providing programming, events, and resources that connect them to each other and the city of Philadelphia. IHP provided various international, cultural and immigration related events throughout the year. Follow [IHP](#) at [@ihousepilly](#) on Instagram for more event information.



## **Campus Philly**

Campus Philly fuels inclusive economic growth by empowering diverse college students and recent graduates to explore, live and work in Greater Philadelphia. Campus Philly connects college students with local restaurants, shops, and vendors and offers student discounts, food reviews, Philadelphia events, and more! Follow [Campus Philly](#) @campusphilly on Instagram for more information.

## **Uwishunu**

The go-to resource for things to do in Greater Philadelphia for both locals and visitors who want to explore like locals.