

WELCOME GUIDE

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The staff of the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) looks forward to working with you during your studies at Oakland University (OU)!

This information packet is intended to help you prepare for your first days in our community.

OU is an international university that hosts over 1,110 international students and scholars from more than 65 countries.

The ISSO staff is experienced in meeting the special needs of international students. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need any assistance with your preparations.

You are about to encounter many new experiences. We offer you our best wishes for a safe and pleasant journey to Oakland University and the United States!

International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO)

Telephone (248) 370-3358

Fax (248) 370-3351

isso@oakland.edu | oakland.edu/isso

Appointments available Monday-Friday

9 a.m. - noon and 1:30 - 4 p.m.

Walk-in hours also available on Wednesdays from 9 a.m. - noon and 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

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Pre-Arrival Planning

Pre-Arrival Check List

Carefully review your I-20 or DS-2019 for accuracy upon receipt of this “Welcome and Information Packet.” Immediately report any I-20 or DS-2019 errors by email to the ISSO at isso@oakland.edu.

Pay I-901 fee.

Carefully review the entire information packet. Contact the ISSO by email with any questions at isso@oakland.edu.

Make sure your passport is valid at least 6 months into the future. We recommend you renew it before you arrive.

Be ready to purchase UnitedHealthcare Student resources health insurance upon arrival. You will receive enrollment instructions at Orientation.

Travel plans: (1) Flight to Detroit; (2) Transportation from DTW airport to OU/Rochester.

Finances: make sure to bring enough cash for your first few days before you open a bank account.

Housing: make sure to arrange your housing prior to your arrival.

Contact and coordinate plans with roommates if you know who your roommates are.

Activate your OU email.

Activate your SAIL account.

Decide if you should bring your cell phone with you or buy one after you arrive in the U.S. If you decide to bring your own cell phone, please make sure your phone carrier knows that you'll be traveling overseas.

Decide if you should bring your laptop with you or buy one after you arrive in the U.S. OU offers many FREE computer rooms for student use. Please remember that our voltage is 110, so you might need to bring or buy an adapter for your charger.

Pre-Arrival Planning (continued)

TRAVEL TO OU

IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTATION

Make sure to get your visa stamped at the U.S. Consulate in your country. Also make sure that all of the date and other details are correct and match your other documents such as your passport, I-20 for F-1 Students, and DS-2019 for J-1 Students. Also, don't forget to check the expiration date of your passport, as it must be valid for 6 months into the future at all times!

You must also complete all of your academic documents and apply for the complete transcript from your home university. You should also get all of your original certificates and mark sheets from your university. Please make sure you have certified copies of these documents. You should carry these with you when you come to the United States and bring them to the mandatory international student orientation.

The State of Michigan will allow you to drive for 6 months after your arrival using your national license accompanied by an English translation. The English translation does not need to be notarized. If you have an expired driver's license from a country other than Germany or Canada, you may receive a Temporary Instruction Permit. This permit will allow you to practice driving with a licensed adult for up to 6 months.

PRE-EMBASSY VISIT

I-901 FORM

You will need to fill in a I-901 Form with information from your I-20 or DS-2019 form and pay the required fee. The SEVIS I-901 fee went into effect on September 4th, 2004. New students and exchange visitors with a Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 issued on or after September 4th, 2004 are subject to the fee. Continuing students and exchange visitors are not required to pay the fee except under certain circumstances. For complete information on who is or isn't required to pay the fee, see the SEVP website at: www.ice.gov/sevis

For most students, the SEVIS I-901 fee is \$200 for F-1 Visa holders and \$180 for J-1 Visa holders. See the "Fee Amount" chart for more detailed information on the fee. You can fill in the I-901 form online at www.fmjfee.com and print off the receipt.

**Note: The SEVIS fee and the fee paid to obtain a J visa are two separate fees but both must be paid in order to get a visa approved.*



Embassy Visit: Tips to Remember

TIES TO YOUR HOME COUNTRY

Under U.S. law, all applicants for non-immigrant visas, such as student visas, are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not. You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. Ties to your home country are the things that bind you to your hometown, homeland, or current place of residence. These "Ties" can include family, a job, investment, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, etc. If you are a prospective undergraduate, the interviewing officer may ask you about your specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other relationships, educational objectives, grades, long-range plans and career prospects in your home country.

Each person's situation is different, of course, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter which can guarantee you visa issuance. If you have applied for the U.S. Green Card Lottery, you may be asked if you are intending to immigrate. A simple answer would be that you applied for the lottery since it was available but not with a specific intent to immigrate. If you overstayed your authorized stay in the U.S. previously, be prepared to explain what happened clearly and concisely, with documentation if available.

PRACTICE YOUR ENGLISH

Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversations with a native speaker before the interview, but do NOT prepare speeches! If you are coming to the United States solely to study intensive English, be prepared to explain how English will be useful for you in your home country.

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF

Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.

If you are a minor applying for a high school program and need your parents with you in case there are questions (such as funding), they should be available in the waiting room during your interview.

KNOW YOUR STUDY PROGRAM

You will want to be prepared to state the reasons you will be studying a particular program in the United States. Make sure you are successful in convincing the Consular Officer that you want to study and NOT immigrate. You should also be able to explain how studying in the United States relates to your future professional career when you return home.

BE BRIEF

Due to the great number of applications received, all Consular Officers are under time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. Visa decisions are made largely on the basis of the initial impressions you make during the beginning moments of the interview. Keep your comments short and to the point in reply to the Consular Officer's questions. The way in which you initially answer questions and speak are critical to your success.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

If asked, you should present written documents that are brief and to the point, and be sure to clearly state their purpose. The Consular Officer must be able to quickly read or evaluate your documents. Remember that you will probably only have 2-3 minutes of interview time.

NOT ALL COUNTRIES ARE EQUAL

Applicants will have more difficulty getting visas when they come from countries that are suffering economic problems, or where many previous students received visas and remained in the U.S. as immigrants. Applicants from such countries are statistically more likely to be intending to immigrate. Such applicants are also more likely to be asked about their job intentions and opportunities at home after studying in the United States.

Embassy Visit (continued)



EMPLOYMENT

Your main purpose in coming to the United States should be to study, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. While many students choose to work off campus during their studies, such employment is secondary to their main purpose of completing their U.S. education. You must be able to clearly explain your plan to return home at the end of your program.

If your spouse is also applying for an accompanying F-2 visa, be aware that F-2 dependents cannot be employed under any circumstances. They can, however, attend school as long as they are not full-time. Be prepared to state how your spouse intends to spend his or her time while in the U.S. Volunteer work is a permitted activity.

DEPENDANTS REMAINING AT HOME

If your spouse and children are remaining in your country, you should be prepared to state how they will support themselves in your absence. If you are the primary source of income for your family, your careful answers will be especially important. If the Consular Officer concludes that your family will need you to send money home from the United States to support your family, your student visa application will almost certainly be denied.

If your family does decide to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at the same post where you applied for your visa.

Remember:

- Maintain a positive attitude!
- If you are not granted a student visa, ask the Consular Officer for a suggested list of documents that you should bring to overcome the refusal and gain approval.
- If you are denied a student visa, try to get in writing the reason that your visa application was denied.

Healthcare

VACCINATIONS

We suggest that you bring important medical records with you including a history of prescriptions for chronic conditions. We also suggest that you have taken vaccinations against major contagious diseases. Hepatitis B, Meningococcus, Varicella (chickenpox), and Tetanus/Diphtheria are the four most important vaccinations for you to receive. Your immunizations records should include:

- Tetanus within the past 10 years
- 2 Measles, mumps & rubella shots, combined as MMR on the immunization record
- A negative tuberculosis or chest x-ray within the past year

UNITED HEALTHCARE STUDENT HEALTH CARE PLAN

Medical insurance is mandatory for all international students and scholars.

All international students and scholars must purchase the university sponsored health insurance plan provided by United Healthcare Student Resources upon the start of classes. For the 2017-18 academic year, the policy cost is estimated at \$1,860 annually and will be billed to your student account within your first month after the start of classes. You can find your bill under the "eBill" tab located on your MySAIL Oakland University student account homepage. The waiver process will exempt you from purchasing the university sponsored health plan under only two conditions (listed below.) All international students and scholars *must* show proof of insurance.

The hard waiver deadline for new students and scholars to submit health insurance proof is the last day to add and drop classes.

It takes just minutes to enroll online at www.uhcsr.com and you can pay with a credit card or eCheck. The cost of this comprehensive policy is \$1,860 per year. Once you have enrolled and received your ID card, you may log into MyAccount for 24/7 access to your coverage and claims information. For students arriving for the winter semester, the winter and summer cost will be pro-rated.

As a United Healthcare plan participant, you will also have access to:

Collegiate Assistance Program: Registered nurses are available to speak with you any time and give you unbiased confidential answers to your health questions.

Scholastic Emergency Services: Whenever you are 100 miles away from your campus or home, SES is only a phone call away to help you with medical emergencies.

Dental and eye examinations are not covered. If you wear glasses, you may want to bring an extra pair with you because replacing them can be very costly here.

There is a waiver process in place that will exempt you from purchasing the university sponsored health plan under only two conditions:

- You are insured by your government-sponsored U.S. based health plan, which meets the Oakland University Health Insurance Requirements. Examples include government sponsored students from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Amideast, etc.
- You are covered under a U.S. employer based health plan as a dependent of your parent or spouse. In this case, you must purchase the United Healthcare Scholastic Emergency Services Policy (\$95).

Policies that do not meet one of the two conditions listed above will not be accepted as adequate insurance coverage. Please be advised that no other health plans will be accepted, nor will plans like PSI or ISO. We believe this is a quality health plan with areasonable premium.

Coverage under this plan is available for spouses and children and these rates can be obtained by visiting the International Students and Scholars Office.



Housing

There are two types of housing options available; on campus or off campus. If you choose to live on campus there are residence halls (mostly undergraduate students), a graduate hall and University Apartment complexes. If you choose to live off-campus (in Rochester or the surrounding communities) there are apartment complexes, duplexes, and houses. Finding a place to live in Rochester is not difficult, there are many options, however it will take time and preparation on your part. Try to get your off-campus accommodation reserved before leaving your home country by starting your housing search early.

ON-CAMPUS HOUSING

If you plan to live on campus, submit your application as early as possible. Housing is allocated on a first come, first serve basis.

OU has 6 undergraduate residence halls. This is an excellent option for undergraduate students and a great way to meet people.

George T. Matthews Apartments are available to students 20 years of age, or older, with junior standing (minimum of 56 credits). Priority is given to graduate students.

University Student Apartments are available to students 20 years of age with junior standing. They are fully furnished and accommodate 454 students with 2, 3, or 4 students to an apartment. Each student has their own bedroom and 4 bedroom apartments have 2 bathrooms. You can also be a part of the International Village living-learning community that will help to connect international students with American students. Living on campus is the best way to participate in campus life and this residence option offers students an opportunity to learn about and explore each other's culture in a dynamic, engaging environment.

TYPES OF ACCOMMODATION	APPLICATION REQUIRED
The Residence Halls	Housing contract, Student Profile/Assignment Preference Form
The George T. Matthews Apartments	Matthews Court Apartment Application, Housing Contract
University Student Apartments	University Student Apartments Contract, Preference Sheet
International Village at University Student Apartments	University Student Apartments Contract, Preference Sheet

For further information, please visit the Oakland University Housing website at <http://www.oakland.edu/housing> or call the University Housing Office at 248.370.3570

OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING

The off-campus housing searches listed below are not endorsed by the ISSO and are provided as a tool to assist you in your search for housing. There are other options that can be found by searching online for apartments near O.U.

APARTMENT NAME	CONTACT INFORMATION
Auburn Ridge	2610 Davison Avenue Auburn Hills, MI 48326 1-248-377-2680
Auburn Hills Apartments	2760 Patrick Henry Drive Auburn Hills, MI 48326 1-248-209-1913
Beacon Hill	2617 Beacon Hill Drive Auburn Hills, MI 48326 1-248-373-5080
Bloomfield Square Apartments	3161 Bloomfield Lane Auburn Hills, MI 48326 1-248-852-4377
The Boulevard	2651 Greenstone Drive Auburn Hills, MI 48326 1-248-716-5365
Pine Ridge	2800 Overlook Drive Rochester Hills, MI 48307 1-248-853-4160
River Oaks of Rochester Hills	3200 River Oaks Blvd Rochester Hills, MI 48309 1-248-370-0500
Roanoke Apartments	6 Roanoke Lane Rochester Hills, MI 48309 1-248-876-0583
Rochester Square Apartments	676 Main Street Rochester Hills, MI 48307 1-248-652-0543
Northridge Apartments	1204 Sherwood Court Rochester Hills, MI 48307 1-248-266-2706



Finances

MONEY MANAGEMENT

Don't carry around too much cash while traveling. There are different methods of carrying around your money with you. You may use Traveler's checks, but many banks and credit unions do not accept this as form of payment, and if they do, there are usually higher conversion fees.

You can use your ATM/Debit card from your banking institution at home. Often you will get some of the best exchange rates this way. (Check with your bank **before** you leave your country to see if this is possible.)

We recommend that you have around \$500 in cash when you arrive for emergencies or miscellaneous items. While you can use debit or credit cards to pay for tuition, you can also use Flywire which is a medium for making international education payments. By using Flywire, you're able to pay in your home country and avoid unexpected fees. Visit www.flywire.com for more information.

Remember to have funds for books, school supplies, setting up your residence, and other items!

EXPENSES

For undergraduate students, the cost of tuition alone can reach \$9,900 or more (per semester) depending on the number of classes you take. For graduate students, the cost of tuition can reach \$8,300 or more (per semester) depending on the number of classes you take and your field of study. Textbooks are NOT included in the cost of tuition.



Initial expenditures could be quite high (\$3,500 or more) because you have to pay for the initial expense of the following:

- Setting up your residence hall room or university apartment (furniture, towels, sheets (linens), etc.)
- Setting up your apartment including telephone, electricity, and/or cable installation.
- 1st month's rent + security deposit (deposit is usually equal to or more than ½ of a month's rent)
- Furniture for the apartment (bed, chair, desk, etc.), Household items (pots, pans, cooking utensils)
- Oakland University Health Insurance: approximately \$1,860 for 12-month coverage
- Books, notebooks, etc.
- A bus pass, winter clothing, and other items you will need to purchase upon arrival.

Once you are settled, these will be your estimated monthly expenses:

- Rent - \$450 to \$700 (IF you share an apartment)
- Food and groceries - \$150 to \$200
- Utilities and other expenses - \$80 to \$100
- Miscellaneous - \$150

Remember:

- Creating a budget is a smart way to stay on top of your spending and keep track of your finances.
- If you cannot find a bank or credit union you'd like to open an account with, just remember that Oakland University has its own credit union and you can open an account in the Oakland Center.
- Renting books online or buying them used is a good way to save money for the rest of the semester..

What to Bring - How to Pack

CLOTHING (ESPECIALLY FOR CHANGES IN WEATHER)

Michigan weather is well known for its sudden changes and its extreme temperatures. During the summer, the temperature averages close to 80° F (29° C). In the winter months, you will see a beautiful snow covered campus with temperatures averaging around 30° F (-1° C). The winter weather starts by November and continues through March.

You may want to compare the costs of clothing, as winter clothing may be cheaper in your home country. If you are planning to carry clothes from home, you may want to bring the following: Sweaters, shirts, jackets, caps, and gloves.

ELECTRONICS (CELL PHONE, LAPTOP, ETC...)

Electronic devices such as laptops and cell phones can be purchased in the United States or brought along with you.

If you bring your own cell phone, please ensure that you have international data and calling so that you are not charged a high fee for using the service overseas.

If you plan to bring your own laptop or desktop computer, please be aware that standard U.S. voltage is 110V so you may need an adapter for your charger or power cord.



Arriving In The United States

ENTERING THE UNITED STATES

Be sure to have all of your paperwork with you in your carry-on luggage! This paperwork includes:

- I-20 or DS-2019
- Passport
- Visa Stamp
- Immunization record (if required from your country)

When entering the United States from Canada, **DO NOT** enter as a Tourist. You **MUST** enter the country using either your I-20 or DS-2019. Be sure that you are able to present financial verification, and be prepared to present your I-20 or DS-2019 as well as your passport to the Immigration Inspector upon your arrival at the border.

STUDENTS WHO ARE CANADIAN CITIZENS

Students coming from Canada entering the U.S with either the F-1 or J-1 immigration status **DO NOT** need to go to the U.S. Embassy or Consular's Office to obtain a United States Visa Stamp.

STUDENTS TRANSFERRING FROM A U.S. SCHOOL

If you are currently studying at another educational institution within the United States and intend to transfer to Oakland University, you must complete a transfer form and submit it to the admission offices. You must also have your current university release your I-20 record in SEVIS. Once that is done, email the ISSO at isso@oakland.edu to inform us that your SEVIS record has been released so that we may generate your new I-20. Be sure to inform whether you want to pick up your new I-20 or have it mailed to you in the email that you send.



Remember:

- Immigration officers have the right to ask you about the purpose of your stay (to obtain a degree and return home) and about the items on your entry document (proof of sufficient funds).
- Many students leave home without preparing for travel stress. Some students find it useful to keep a travel journal of their experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

Arriving In The United States (continued)

IMPORTANT TRAVEL TIPS

Ensure that before you purchase your airline ticket to arrive in Detroit (DTW), you schedule time after your arrival to move in and explore the Oakland University campus before the International Student Orientation program begins.

Be sure to check the baggage requirements and restrictions of the airline you will be flying with so that you can ensure all of your belongings will arrive safely.

You can also apply for and obtain an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) before you come to the United States. It can be used as an ID card before obtaining a Michigan Driver's License or State ID, and you can use it to receive discounts on flight tickets, transportation, lodging, museums, food, entertainment and much more.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHILE TRAVELING

Always carry your important documents (passport, I-20 or DS-2019, admission and financial aid letters, certificates, etc.) on your person. **DO NOT** leave them in your luggage. Keep copies of these documents in the luggage and note all of the details (luggage description, visa number, ticket number, passport number and emergency contact numbers) in a card and keep it in your pocket.

Keep some change (\$1 bill, 25¢ coins) with you. This will be helpful if you want to buy food in vending machines. Carry most of your money on your credit or debit card. You may need to only carry around \$500 in cash.

ARRIVAL IN DETROIT

Detroit is Michigan's largest city and has the largest airport in the state. The Detroit airport is about a 1 hour drive from Rochester. Upon your arrival at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport, keep your belongings with you at all times. Bring only what you can carry conveniently. If a porter assists you with your luggage, you are expected to tip \$1.00 per bag.

Ask about ground transportation at an information desk. You will be directed to a location where you can get a taxi. Metro Cab and Metro Cars Services are available on location. Taxi service is the more efficient mode of transportation between Detroit Metro Airport and Oakland University in Rochester.

COSTS FOR GROUND TRANSPORTATION

In addition to the services listed above, Uber is also an affordable transportation service which provides rides around the area to help you get conveniently from one place to another. It is used in many countries around the world and is gaining popularity in Michigan. Uber drivers use their own unmarked cars to drive you to your destination.

You can use it by registering online and downloading the app to your phone. Uber allows you to attach a credit card to your account so that you do not have to pay with cash and drivers are available 24/7.

From the Detroit airport to OU in a basic Uber car, the estimated cost is \$48-\$63. Visit [uber.com](https://www.uber.com) to learn more.



International Orientation

YOU MUST ATTEND THE ORIENTATION FOR THE SEMESTER YOU FIRST BEGIN YOUR CLASSES

DATES AND TIMES

SUMMER SEMESTER

Date: May 3rd, 2018
Time: 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Place: Lake Superior B of the Oakland Center
Classes Begin: Monday, May 7th, 2018

FALL SEMESTER

Date: August 30th, 2018 and August 31st, 2018
Time: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Place: 1050 Human Health Building
Classes Begin: Wednesday, September 5th, 2018

WINTER SEMESTER

Date: Wednesday January 2nd, 2019
Time: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Place: TBD
Classes Begin: Thursday, January 3rd, 2019

IMMIGRATION PROCESSING

The orientation is structured to give you a great understanding of Oakland University, the education system of the US, and many other aspects of the culture of the United States. Throughout the day(s) you will learn about employment, how to open a bank account, the Oakland University campus, resources and services available on campus, register in SEVIS, receive your I-20 with travel endorsement and so much more.

The staff of the ISSO will also introduce themselves so that you may get to know the people you will be working with for the next few years. They will walk you through the basics of the ISSO, how it operates, how appointments work, and give you the lay of the land before the semester begins.

Not only will you learn about the ISSO and how it operates, you will also be receiving academic advising and be taught how to register for classes.

You will also receive information on a number of topics that first time international students might have questions about such as U.S. healthcare and health insurance, on-campus and off-campus employment, housing, and many others.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

During orientation, students will consult with academic advisors as well as register for classes for their upcoming semester.

Be sure to review vocabulary such as "major" courses, "minor" courses, and "electives" with your academic advisor. Keep in mind that some classes have conditions or limits that are strictly enforced:

- Many courses are offered only in either the fall or winter semesters, but not both.
- Registration for courses with listed pre-requisites is possible only if pre-requisites have been completed or waived by the department.
- Conditionally admitted students must meet the terms of the conditions at the beginning of your academic study.

If you need English as a Second Language, a letter in your packet that you receive from the ISSO explains the procedure for your arrival at Oakland University. **You are required to take the online placement test PRIOR to ESL orientation!**

Payment due dates and current charges for a specific semester can be found in the Schedule of Classes. All tuition and charges are assessed at registration and are payable in U.S. dollars. Late payment penalties are assessed if payment is not received by the published bill due date. NO refunds of tuition and charges will be made for non-attendance or withdrawal after the published drop deadline. Failing to drop classes by the published deadline and non-attendance may result in failing grades on the student transcript.



Arrival Planning

Post Arrival Check List (After You Arrive at Oakland)

Attend the mandatory ISSO Orientation (F-1 and J-1 students).

Purchase health insurance through United Health Student Resources.

Obtain your OU Student Identification Card.

Open a bank account (savings, checking, etc.).

Know the deadline for **tuition payment**. *(Pay your bill before this date or your classes will be automatically dropped and you may not be able to re-enroll into them.)*

Set your apartment up by installing utilities, telephone, cable (if desired), furniture, etc.

Shop for a cell phone if you didn't bring one with you.

Acquire Driver's License or Michigan ID card (ISSO organizes an annual on-campus application session).

Purchase books for classes (you can rent books online).

Meal Plan: Oakland University offers a variety of flexible meal plans to suit the needs of each student for both on and off campus residence.