

**W**elcome to Murray State University

Whether you're applying as a student, scholar, or visiting faculty member, this handbook is designed to provide you with information on:

immigration regulations governing your visit

community and university resources available to you

This handbook has been prepared by the staff of Murray State University's Institute for International Studies (IIS). We ask that you read this handbook with all other materials included in this package.

### **The Institute for International Studies (IIS)**

One of the primary goals of our office is to insure that new students and scholars are welcomed and well informed during their stay at the university. We want you to feel as if IIS is your home away from home. Two of our staff members are the international student advisers. Their job is to assist you with immigration procedures, to help you



The American health care system is very expensive. Health insurance is absolutely necessary to protect against extreme costs due to accident or illness.

Federal regulations regarding insurance coverage for J-1 visitors also apply to their dependents. **You must meet the full federal requirements for insuring all J-2 dependents.** Again, IIS can offer you several examples of

extreme costs due to accident or illness.

It is strongly recommended that F-1 students purchase health insurance coverage for all F-2 dependents. Medical expenses in the U.S. can be extraordinarily expensive! Carefully consider any form of insurance provider and **purchase insurance coverage for all F-2 dependents**. Insurance is not retroactive. That is, you cannot apply for insurance to help with the birth of your child AFTER your wife becomes pregnant.

### Documents

The following documents are important to you not only for entry into the United States, but also throughout your program of study. Check them for accuracy (current degree program, etc.) and validity (the dates of expiration). Bring your form I-20 and passport to IIS whenever you plan to make changes in your program. Be especially careful to take valid documents with you each time you travel outside the USA.

#### **You must have these documents upon your arrival at Murray State:**

- **Passport.** Check the expiration date! If you need to renew your passport, consult your home country's embassy in the U.S. several months in advance. IIS can provide you with embassy addresses and phone numbers.
- **Visa.** Check the expiration date and the number of entries allowed. If you have "maintained your status" (see that section), you may remain in the U.S. with an expired visa. However, if you travel abroad on an expired visa, you will need to reapply at a U.S. embassy abroad for a new visa.
- **I-94.** Check the immigration classification (F-1) and period of stay. D/S means "Duration of Status" or the amount of time approved for the completion of your program as indicated on your most recent I-20. Also, check to be sure that the 11-digit admission number matches any notations on your I-20.
- **Form I-20.** Check the accuracy of information defining your program: the school you are authorized to attend, the level of education, the major or field of study, the date of completion of study. **Keep all I-20 forms ever issued to you.** This is especially true when you transfer. You will need them. When you change your major or level of study (graduate/undergraduate), you should acquire a new I-20. You must keep copies of all I-20s on file at IIS. Every time you leave the U.S. to travel or return home, you will need to have the back of the I-20 endorsed by a designated school official. Don't forget to do this.

### Employment

F-1 students may seek employment on campus only. During those periods when school is in session, students may work only 20 hours or less per week. During academic breaks, including summer, students may work up to 40 hours per week on campus. F-2 dependents are NOT allowed to work at all. Only F-1 students may be employed.

### Practical Training

Practical Training (OPT) is available for F-1 students. It allows you to work in the U.S. for a limited period of time. You must apply for OPT at least 90 days before the end of your program. You must also have completed at least one semester of full-time study in the U.S. before you can apply for OPT. You must also have completed at least one semester of full-time study in the U.S. before you can apply for OPT.

### Period of Stay in the U.S.

## Community Activities

If you are bringing your family, they may be worried about how to keep themselves busy while you are studying. This is a very natural concern.

There are many activities in the community for children. If your children are in the public schools, they will soon discover that the schools themselves have “after-school” activities which they can join. These may be sports activities, school clubs that represent the arts, music, theater or language training, or school teams in academic areas that compete against teams from other schools. In the community, children can find athletic groups to join as diverse as swimming, soccer and Tae Kwon Do. Preschool age children have several different preschool facilities to choose from.

Spouses will find many of the local community groups to offer them a place to meet friends, participate in a diverse array of arts programs and improve their English skills. Many of the community service organizations depend upon volunteer help and would welcome a visitor from abroad. Many of the local churches provide activities and English instruction free of charge for non-English speaking visitors. Dependents can also enroll in the ESL program here at Murray State University, though this service is not free.

## Living off Campus

### *Eligibility*

- All undergraduate students who are “freshmen” or “sophomores” (the first two years of undergraduate study), and who are under 21 years of age, **MUST** live in the residential colleges.
- If you are over 21, married, or at least a “junior” (the third year of undergraduate study) in college, you may choose to live in an apartment off campus.

### *Benefits of living off campus*

- You have more freedom. You can determine your own hours and rules.
- You can cook your own food. College Courts campus apartments provide stoves, but the residential colleges do not.
- You have more privacy and quiet.

### *Drawbacks to living off campus*

- It costs more. Not only will the monthly rents be higher than campus housing, but you will be responsible for monthly charges for electricity, water, sewage and garbage pickup. You will have to pay for phone installation and all charges.
- It is not always convenient. Off-campus apartments are available within walking distance, but not nearly enough to satisfy all students. If you live in nicer and more expensive housing, it may be far enough away to require a car to get to campus for classes. **Public transportation is not available in Murray.**
- Most **apartments off campus are not furnished** with anything except a kitchen stove and refrigerator. You will have to buy bedroom furniture, sofas, tables and chairs.

in your request on the residential college applicat

**BRING:**

**A driver's license from your home country or an international driver's license.** It is easier and quicker to obtain a Kentucky driver's license if you have one from abroad already.

**Some cash in U.S. dollars.** Plan to arrive in Murray with at least \$800 in USD. This is a small community and having your currency changed into dollars is not speedy! You can do this at the Nashville airport if you do not have the opportunity before your arrival.

**VISA, Mastercard or American Express credit cards.** The university will accept these three major credit cards for university tuition and fee payment. The university will not accept Diner's Club cards!

**Cirrus system or PLUS system ATM cards** are useful in this area.

**Bank drafts, traveler's checks in USD** are useful when setting up bank accounts. Money can be wired from home, but most banks here will not accept wired funds until you have established an account! Since you will need funds for fee payment

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**Cloting**

***ACRONYMS & DEFINITIONS:***

**IIS:** Institute for International Studies

**ISA:** International Student Advisor

**I-20:** Immigration document for F-1 students

**DS-2019:**