

University of North Carolina  
School of the Arts

# **International Student Handbook**



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## Overview

The University of North Carolina School of the Arts specializes in Visual and Performing Arts and understands that as an artistic international student you have special needs and questions. International Student Services (ISS) strives to make the resources and answers you desire easy to find. While going over this information and our website, you may have additional questions that require individual attention. If so, please contact our International Student Coordinator:

Stacy Holliday  
International Student Coordinator/  
Designated School Official (DSO)  
336-770-1471

ISS helps international students by providing support and assistance when applying for, attending, and progressing beyond their studies at UNCSA. We help international students successfully adapt to the linguistic and cultural differences they encounter while attending a school in the United States. Working with staff and faculty, ISS helps students address language and cultural barriers to help them achieve the widest possible margin of success in their artistic, academic and personal lives.

Some examples of the services ISS offers include:

- Advising by providing primary campus support for the international student body. We are here to help!
- Academic support for students whose first language is one other than English.
- A Coordinator with exceptional understanding of international students' needs both before and during their UNCSA experience.
- Assistance with cultural assimilation and integration within the UNCSA community upon the student's arrival. This includes individual advising as well as community awareness events.
- ESL (English as a Second Language) instruction, which provides additional support of the English language. These courses are non-credit and offered through the Division of Academic Programs.

## English as a Second Language Program

The ESL Instructor works to provide non-native speakers with the highest level of instruction in English as a Second Language to ensure each student's success at UNCSA. She teaches both high school and college level courses in ESL, and also works with students individually during ESL tutor sessions. Tutor sessions are scheduled according to the needs of the student and typically last between 30 – 45 minutes. The ESL instructor is also responsible for reviewing the ESL proficiency of all incoming non-native speakers, and works closely with the Coordinator for International Students in Admissions to provide the widest margin of support for our international student population here at UNCSA.

For further information about the ESL program at UNCSA, please contact the ESL Instructor:

Elizabeth Klaimon  
ESL Instructor  
232 Grey Building  
(336) 631-1515  
[klaimone@ncarts.edu](mailto:klaimone@ncarts.edu)

## High School Program

The **SLEP test** is required for admission to the High School Program. The required minimum score is **55**. Prospective students may take the SLEP test free of charge at the time of their audition. Contact the ESL Instructor to schedule a test time.

High School ESL assistance includes a high school English class in ESL and individual ESL tutoring. ESL support is provided during the academic school year to fully enrolled high school students.

## College Program

### Undergraduate Diploma & Degree and Graduate Studies

Non-native speakers of English are required to take the TOEFL test for admission. TOEFL scores may be internet TOEFL (iBT), Computer-based TOEFL (CBT) or the paper-based TOEFL. The following are the recommended minimums:

	TOEFL iBT	TOEFL CBT	TOEFL Paper
<b>Undergraduate Arts Diploma</b>	<b>59-61</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>500</b>
<b>Undergraduate Degree</b>	<b>77-80</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>550</b>
<b>Graduate Degree</b>	<b>77-80</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>550</b>

To schedule the TOEFL, contact Educational Testing Services at <http://www.toefl.org>.

**ESL 100: Academic English for Non-native Speakers.** Enrollment is by placement test and recommendation of the ESL instructor. The course covers academic skills: writing, reading, note taking, and research. Diploma students may be required to successfully complete *ESL 100* before admission to the undergraduate degree program.

**Individual ESL tutoring** is available during the academic school year for fully enrolled undergraduate and graduate students.

## FAQs

How many international students attend UNCOSA?

The School's international student population is roughly 5 percent of the total student body, with approximately 45-55 students from more than 25 countries. International students are enrolled in all five of the arts disciplines, and represent all age groups, from the high school through the graduate programs.

Is there special housing for international students?

What if I can't go home for the breaks when the residence halls close?

Special housing is not provided specifically for internationals, although some graduate and undergraduate college students may reside in the Bailey Street Apartments. These apartments stay open during the winter and spring breaks, and students living in them can remain during those breaks. The college residence halls and the high school residence halls close for the breaks, so students living there must plan to vacate their rooms during those times. A Host Family program is available to international students and many international students stay with host families or friends over the winter and spring holidays. All dorms close for the summer.

[More Information on Residence Life](#)

What kinds of activities are available on campus?

Student Activities plans a variety of events and activities for students of all ages. The Every Thursday Calendar (ETC), published on Thursdays, lists all events for that week. Yearly annual events include Fall Fest (a fall festival), Froze Arts (a winter festival) and the annual Beaux Arts festival and ball, which occurs at the end of spring term. Student Activities also provides free transportation to local shopping and movie theaters, and sponsors The What?, an on-campus coffee house for college students. [More information on Student Activities.](#)

Will I need a car to get around off-campus?

Students can take advantage of the free transportation to shopping, movies, and other events off-campus offered through Student Activities. These trips are scheduled weekly and are listed in the ETC calendar published every Thursday. Limited public transportation from the School of the Arts to downtown Winston-Salem and other outlying areas is also available. Some students, particularly those who live off-campus, find that owning a car is helpful. Residential high school students may not have cars on campus.

Do I need to take the TOEFL test to apply to UNCOSA? What TOEFL score do I need to get in?

If English is not your first language, you are required to take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) for admission to the School's college programs. TOEFL scores of 550 (paper based) and 213 (computer based), respectively, are recommended for the college undergraduate degree and graduate programs. TOEFL scores of 500 (paper based) and 173 (computer based), respectively, are recommended for the arts diploma programs.

Do international high school students need to take the TOEFL?

No. High school students who speak a first language other than English must take the SLEP (Secondary Level English Proficiency) test. A score of 55 or higher is required for admission. The SLEP test may be taken free of charge on the UNCOSA campus. It is recommended that students take the test at the time of their audition or campus visit.

What about help with English or ESL classes? Are these offered at UNCOSA?

Yes. The School offers an ESL course for non-English speakers. The course is a year long, three term, non-credit course entitled, ESL 100: Academic English for Non-Native Speakers. The course provides intensive writing, reading, and academic skills practice and prepares students for doing academic work in English. ESL 100 is offered through the division of Academic Programs and is open to college and graduate students whose first language is not English. Enrollment in the course is by placement test. Students who are admitted to the undergraduate degree program may take ESL 100 concurrently with their other Academic Programs courses. For high school students, individual ESL tutoring is available in conjunction with the high school Academic Programs program. ESL tutoring appointments are also available for college students.

Does UNCSA require health insurance for international students?

Yes. All international students attending on F-1 visas are required to have health insurance that meets U.S. federal requirements. Students are encouraged to purchase health insurance through the UNCSA international health insurance plan. The plan is underwritten by Hinchcliffe International Group Services and provides coverage for both medical expenses and medical evacuation and repatriation. Students who choose not to purchase the Hinchcliffe plan are required to provide documentation of medical coverage in English.

All students have access to the medical and health services provided by the on-campus Student Health Services.

[More information about the Student Health Services](#)

### **How am I billed for my tuition and housing?**

The Office of Student Accounts is responsible for billing for these. The office, located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Welcome Center, is open Monday – Friday, from 8 a.m.- 5 p.m. Please refer to the [Student Accounts](#) webpage.

Whom do I contact for questions regarding my student visa or I-20?

[The Designated School Official \(DSO\)](#) is responsible for handling international student visa issues.

Can I be employed while I am student?

Yes, but only under special circumstances. International students holding an F-1 visa are permitted to participate in [optional practical training \(OPT\)](#) once they have been in continuous, legal, F-1 status for a full academic year. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) defines a full-academic year as two complete semesters or nine months.

If unexpected circumstances beyond a student's control have created [severe economic hardship](#), the USCIS on a case-by-case basis, may grant a student authorization to work.

### **Can I remain in the United States after graduation for additional work experience?**

You might be able to if you have applied for [Post-Completion Optional Training](#) and are approved by the USCIS.

### **Will I be able to travel while I'm a student at UNCSA?**

Yes, you will be able to travel but you must check with the International Student Coordinator before embarking on travel outside the U.S. See [requirements for reentry into the U.S.](#)

### **Many times abbreviations are used in describing documents and for someone not familiar with the process, they are confusing. Are there definitions for all the abbreviations used?**

Yes, at least for some of them. Please follow the link to [Immigration Definitions for Students](#) for help. If in reading through the website you find other terms used that haven't been defined, please email the International Student Coordinator and we will try to add them to the list of terms.

## **Tuition and Fees**

<http://www.ncarts.edu/admissions/tuitionandfees.htm>

## Admission Instructions for International Students

- Submit your application early (March 1st.) The acquisition of student visas can be time-consuming.
- International applicants must submit the application and accompanying documentation as outlined on the Application Checklist and departmental requirements.

[Information on TOEFL/SLEP scores can be found on the ESL page.](#)

- International applicants must obtain a student visa prior to enrollment. The International Student Coordinator completes requests for student visas (I-20 documentation) after an accepted candidate has paid the advanced housing and tuition payment. Students visas are granted for the anticipated length of the applicant's chosen program of study. Any requests for financial assistance should be made directly to the department of the arts in which the student is interested.
- International high school applicants may be granted multiple-year student visas to ensure program completion.
- International students who are not permanent residents of the United States are not eligible for state or federal financial aid.

## Admissions Procedures

1. Complete an Application for Admission, either paper version or online.
2. Make sure you answer all questions on the **Questions for International Students** page.
3. Read thoroughly the **Instructions & Checklist** page following each arts program section. Check off each item to know that your application is complete.
4. Mail the completed application to the Office of Admissions with the nonrefundable application fee of \$110. The fee is payable by check or money order (U.S. dollars only) to UNCSA. The application will be returned if not accompanied by the application fee or if all questions on the application are not answered.
5. If you are admitted to UNCSA, you will be mailed a letter of acceptance and information necessary to complete your admission to UNCSA.
6. Return the Admission Acceptance form with either a check or money order (U.S. dollars) for the advance tuition deposit.
7. When we have received your Admission Acceptance Form and the advance tuition deposit, we will enter you in the SEVIS system and will mail you a Form I-20 that you will need to obtain an F-1 Student Visa.
8. After you have received the Form I-20 you must make an appointment with the U.S. Consulate to apply for an F-1 Student entry visa. You will require the I-20 form from the UNCSA at the time of your appointment. **DO NOT MAKE AN APPOINTMENT UNTIL** you have received the I-20 or are sure that you will have the I-20 in time for the appointment.
9. Carefully read and follow the procedures in [How to Apply for an Initial F-1 Entry Visa](#). Use the check list in Step 9.
10. Locate the nearest U.S. Consulate and follow its procedures.
11. After the visa is processed, make sure you got what you requested! Check your passport to be sure you obtained an F-1 visa, and that any dependents obtained an F-2 visa. **Also, be certain that the I-20 was returned to you, as you must have the original with you when you arrive in the United States. Sometimes, the document is returned to you in a sealed envelope, which must be presented to the immigration inspector when you arrive.**
12. When you come to the U.S., carry your ORIGINAL documents on your person or in a carry-on bag rather than packed in your luggage. You will have to present them to the immigration inspector upon your arrival, and you won't have access to your luggage until after you go through immigration inspection.  
Your documents may include:
  - valid, unexpired, passport (for at least six months into the future) with a valid, unexpired entry visa
  - your I-20 visa certificate, signed by the school official and by you
  - original supporting financial documents, such as personal bank statements, a financial aid award or an offer letter from your department
  - marriage license, school transcripts, medical records if applicable .
13. On the plane, a flight attendant will distribute the I-94 Arrival /Departure form to non-immigrants. You should complete the white form, NOT the green form that is for tourists from certain countries who are eligible for a 90-day visit without a visa.
14. When you arrive, you will go first to immigration inspection. The immigration inspector will need to see the appropriate visa page in your passport and the [appropriate supporting documents](#).

[To start the application process visit the Admissions site.](#)

## Visa and Immigration Basics

### Immigration Definitions for Students

It is important that you become familiar with the following terms, as they are used frequently. It is essential that you understand these definitions, not just as you prepare to come to the United States, but throughout your stay.

### F-1 Student Visa

The University of North Carolina School of the Arts is only allowed to grant documents for students admitted with F-1 visas. The F-1 visa is for students qualified to attend full time college, university, conservatory, academic high school and any institution with language-training programs in the United States. The student must have completed the course of study required of all students entering the program and must be proficient in English. He/she should provide proof of sufficient, easily transferable funds to cover cost of living and tuition. The school must provide the student with a Form I-20 A-B. F -2 visas are given to spouse/children of an F -1 visa holder. For eligibility, they must possess a valid passport, show proof of sufficient funds to cover their stay, and must agree to depart the United States upon the termination of the foreign student's F-1.

### Form I-20 (Certificate of Visa Eligibility for Nonimmigrant F-1 Student Status)

Students who have been admitted to a school in the United States, require a student visa to enter the U.S. for study, and have documented their ability to finance their education, will receive a Certificate of Visa Eligibility (Form I-20 for F-1 status) issued by the school through the internet-based Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). They should present this at a U.S. consulate\_ (<http://usembassy.state.gov/>) abroad to certify eligibility to apply for an F-1 Student visa. This document, also known as a Visa Certificate, certifies eligibility to apply for an entry visa at a U.S. consulate abroad, and must be shown to a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official at the time of entry into the U.S. in order to enter in student status.

When traveling outside the U.S., those in F-1 status must carry either an initial or recertified I-20 (this means an ISSO officer has signed page 3 after your arrival) and financial documentation if they intend to return to the U.S. to continue their studies or practical training. The I-20 and its corresponding electronic updates in SEVIS are a permanent record of one's activities as a student in the U.S. It is your responsibility to keep all I-20's issued to you throughout your student status, no matter how long you stay in the U.S. or how many times you travel abroad. The initial I-20 used when you enter the country and stamped by the DHS is a very important immigration document. Make a copy of page 1 and page 3 to keep with your records. If you were not issued an I-20, or if you lose it, please come to the International Student Coordinator in the Office of Admissions. Under most circumstances, we can provide you with a replacement form within five working days.

### SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System)

SEVIS is a data collection and monitoring system that creates an interface between institutions of higher education, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), consulates and embassies abroad, and ports of entry. Schools are required to make regular electronic updates in SEVIS throughout each semester on the records of their enrolled students in F-1 status and their dependents. These updates include, but are not limited to enrollment status, changes in address, changes in level of study, employment recommendations, and school transfers.

### Form I-94

This small white card is a record of your legal entry into the U.S. and immigration status. You complete it on a flight to the U.S. or at a border crossing, and it is then processed at a port of entry. An immigration inspector usually staples it into your passport. Form I-94 notes your name, date of birth, country of citizenship, and the date and port of entry of your arrival in the U.S. It also indicates how long you can stay in the United States. The notation D/S signifies "duration of status" and refers to the completion date on the certificate of visa eligibility (I-20). The Form I-94 is a record of your arrivals and departures. Each time you leave the country you surrender your I-94. Only in the case of short trips to Canada, Mexico, and parts of the Caribbean do you keep this form. The I-94 is an important form; we recommend that you make two photocopies of both sides of the form, one to carry with you in your wallet and the other to keep separately in case you need to replace it.

## Immigration Status

This is often confused with "visa" but your immigration status, e.g., F-1, B-2, J-1, etc., is determined at the time of your entry into the U.S. by an immigration official and is noted on the Form I-94. You may have many visa stamps in your passport but, upon entry into the U.S., an immigration inspector will admit you in only one immigration status which is noted on the I-94 card (see above). Be sure the correct status is written on your I-94 card. Unlike your entry visa, your immigration status may be changed in the U.S. Refer to the U.S. Department of State web site at <http://travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors.html> for more information.

## Passport

Students in F-1 immigration status must keep their passports valid at least six months into the future at all times. You may obtain extensions of your passport through the nearest consulate or embassy of your country. The International Student Coordinator will provide you with any appropriate documents your government may require.

## Entry Visa

Your entry visa is issued by a United States Consulate (<http://usembassy.state.gov/>) abroad and affixed into your passport. The only purpose of an entry visa is to apply for admission to the United States at the port of entry. The entry visa itself may expire while you are in the U.S., but your permission to stay in the U.S. remains valid. All international students - with the exception of Canadian nationals - requesting F-1 immigration status are required to have a valid F-1 entry visa stamp in their passport at the time of entry into the U.S. Your visa specifies the type of immigration status you will hold, the date until which you may enter the U.S., and the number of entries you may make before you must apply for a new entry visa stamp. The length of validity of each visa type is determined by an agreement between your home country and the U.S. government and is not necessarily tied to the length of your program of study. Please refer to the State Department's Visa Reciprocity information on their website for more details. (<http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/reciprocity/index.htm>)

**NOTE THAT ALTHOUGH AN ENTRY VISA MAY BE ISSUED UP TO 120 DAYS IN ADVANCE OF A PROGRAM'S "REPORT DATE", YOU ARE NOT PERMITTED TO ENTER THE U.S. MORE THAN 30 DAYS IN AVANCE OF THE REPORT DATE IN SECTION 5 OF THE I-20.**

F-1 entry visas cannot be obtained within the U.S. Application for a new stamp generally must be made in person at a U.S. consulate or embassy outside the U.S. The validity period of your visa does not determine the length of time you may remain in the U.S. after you enter. Your length of stay is determined by the expected completion date of your program as indicated on your I-20. You are admitted to the U.S. for "duration of status" in F. This is notated as "D/S" on your I-94 card. Refer to the Duration & Extension of Stay in the U.S. section of the U.S. Department of State's website for more information. ([http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info\\_1298.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_1298.html))

## Medical Insurance

All students on F-1 visas are required to have medical coverage that meets U.S. federal requirements. Students are encouraged to purchase health insurance through the UNCSA international health insurance plan. The plan is underwritten by Hinchcliffe International Group Services and provides coverage for both medical expenses and medical evacuation and repatriation. Students who choose not to purchase the Hinchcliffe plan are required to provide documentation of medical coverage in English.

## Work Permission

Students in F-1 status may work part time (up to 20 hours per week) on campus with permission from International Student Services. Permission to work off campus based on economic need may be requested only after the first full academic year of student status [the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USISC) defines a full academic year as two complete semesters or nine months], and only under extraordinary circumstances of unforeseen severe economic need. USISC grants authorization for F-1 students to work off campus.

## Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Students in F-1 immigration status are eligible to participate in optional practical training off campus once they have been in continuous, legal, F-1 status for a full academic year. An application that has been recommended by the International Student Coordinator must be submitted to USISC. A student is required to engage in employment that is directly related to his/her stated course of study.

## **International Student Coordinator (ISC or Coordinator) Designated School Official (DSO), International Student Services (ISC)**

These terms are used almost interchangeably at UNCSA. The International Student Coordinator (ISC) is the Designated School Official (DSO) for purposes of SEVIS. The Coordinator is responsible for helping international students remain in compliance of U.S. immigration law. The Coordinator is the primary contact for International Student Services. The Coordinator's office is in the Office of Admissions, in the Welcome Building.

## **Requirements for Canadian Students**

In terms of immigration regulations, the only difference between Canadians and other international students coming to the United States is that Canadian citizens are not required to obtain an entry visa in their passports from a U.S. consulate.

Some Canadians have mistakenly assumed that other regulations that apply to international students do not apply to them. Canadians are subject to the same requirements for full-time study, same regulations regarding employment in the U.S., and all other provisions for maintaining status. It is especially important for Canadian students to be vigilant about entering the United States in proper student status as immigration inspectors are accustomed to admitting Canadian citizens as visitors.

Canadian citizens do not require an entry visa to enter the U.S. but must always present their passport, Form I-20 (F-1 status) and supporting financial documentation to the immigration inspector to enter the U.S. in student status. Canadians must be sure to complete the I-94 Admission / Departure card and have it processed for admission by the immigration officer. Otherwise, the student will be admitted in Tourist (B-2) status and will not be able to take advantage of the special benefits allowed those in Student Status, such as employment or practical training. More importantly, it is a violation of B-2 status to study in the United States. Canadian students must have an I-94 card to confirm current F-1 status.

Other than applying for a visa, it is important that you read about and abide by all other provisions relating to F-1 status.

## How to Obtain F-1 Student Status

This information is provided to help you get to the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in appropriate immigration status in compliance with the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations. U.S. government regulations require you to attend the school that issued the I-20 you use to enter the U.S. in F-1 status.

### How to Apply for an Initial F-1 Entry Visa

Carefully read and follow these procedures.

#### Step 1: Make an appointment at a U.S. Consulate to apply for an F-1 Student Entry Visa

([http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/embassies/embassies\\_1214.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/embassies/embassies_1214.html)) You will require the I-20 form from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts at the time of your appointment. DO NOT MAKE AN APPOINTMENT UNTIL you have received the I-20 or are sure that you will have the I-20 in time for the appointment. International Student Services issues I-20's in the order in which complete applications are received and is unable to rush yours because you made an appointment too early. Submit your application early (by March 1<sup>st</sup>). The acquisition of student visas can be time consuming.

Check the following websites for more information on visa appointments.

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors\\_wait.php](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors_wait.php) for information about current wait times for the appointment and for visa issuance. NOTE that the processing wait times do not include extra time that may be required for security clearances.

Locate the nearest U.S. Consulate: [www.usembassy.gov](http://www.usembassy.gov) and follow its instructions for applying for a visa (including links to required forms). Make a list of documentation required for the interview. Note procedures for paying the visa application fee and any visa issuance fees, if applicable.

#### Step 2: Check your form I-20 for completeness and correctness!

Your I-20 indicates that we have created a record for you in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System). Your unique assigned SEVIS ID number is in the upper right corner of page 1. Check to see that all information is correct and that your expected completion date is in the future. If you have informed us that your dependents (husband, wife, or children under the age of 21) will come with you to the U.S., each of them will receive their own "dependent" I-20 needed for applying for their F-2 visas and entering the U.S. in F-2 status. If your family name is different from your dependents, be prepared to show documents that prove your relationship.

#### Step 3: Make sure your passport is valid.

When you apply for a visa or enter the U.S., your passport must be valid for at least 6 months into the future. Some countries are exempt from this requirement and have their passports automatically extended for 6 months which means that you can use your passport up until the written expiration date. This rule applies to subsequent entries to the U.S. while traveling as a student. Refer to the [list of countries exempt from this rule](#).\_\_\_ (<http://foia.state.gov/masterdocs/09fam/0941104x1pdf>)

#### Step 4: Pay the SEVIS fee (\$100) and print the receipt.

Go to the web site <http://www.fmjfee.com> and follow the instructions. You will need the I-20 available because the SEVIS number is required. Print copies of the receipt - you will need one with you for the visa interview and you should keep one for your own records. You can only access the receipt at the time of payment so be sure your printer is working before paying the fee. If you have been a student in the U.S. and are transferring schools or beginning a program at a new level of study, it is possible you may not have to pay the SEVIS fee. Refer to information posted at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/faq.htm>.

## Step 5: Complete all required Department of State application forms

DS-156 (<http://evisaforms.state.gov/>)

Everyone applying for a non-immigrant visa must complete this form. COMPLETE THIS ELECTRONIC FORM ONLINE and take a printed copy with you to the interview.

DS-158: Contact Information and Work History. For all F and J applicants.

DS-157: Supplemental Non-Immigrant Visa Application Form. Required for male applicants between the ages of 16 and 45.

## Step 6: Refer to step one and follow instructions for paying any visa fees required in advance of your appointment.

Procedures may vary from country to country, and even post to post within the same country. Note that application and issuance fees are based on reciprocity ([http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/reciprocity/reciprocity\\_3272.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/reciprocity/reciprocity_3272.html)) and generally reflect your country's policies in granting visa privileges to visiting U.S. students.

## Step 7: Bring a passport-size photo less than six months old.

Check ([http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info\\_1287.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_1287.html)) for details.

## Step 8: READ! Prepare for your interview appointment by learning what to expect.

You will be applying for an F-1 student visa, a non-immigrant classification. According to U.S. immigration law, "Every alien shall be presumed to be an immigrant until he establishes to the satisfaction of the consular officer, at the time of application for admission, that he is entitled to a non-immigrant status." This means you need to establish that you have no intention of staying in the U.S. permanently, but are coming here for a temporary purpose, i.e. to pursue your education. While the consular officers are aware that it may be difficult for students to demonstrate strong professional and economic ties to their home countries, you should still bear this in mind as you prepare for your interview.

In advance of your interview, please read the following: Obtaining a U.S. Visa: Published by Dept of State <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/pdfs/gettingavisa.02.03.pdf>

Applying for a Student or Exchange Visitor Visa: Published by Education USA, a division of the Department of State. [How to Apply for an Initial F-1 Entry Visa](http://www.educationusa.state.gov/usvisa.htm)

<http://www.educationusa.state.gov/usvisa.htm>

See You in the USA: EJournal published by DOS. Note article "On the Other Side of the Visa Window", by a U.S. visa officer in Cairo

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps/0905/ijpe/ijpe0905.htm>

## Step 9: Checklist of what to take with you to your visa interview:

- \_\_\_ A passport valid for at least six months
- \_\_\_ Form I-20 (sign the form under Item 11)
- \_\_\_ School admission letter
- \_\_\_ Completed visa applications (DS-156, DS-158, and, if applicable, DS-157) Remember to complete the DS-156 electronically and take a printed copy with you. Consulates have advised that the electronic version will speed up the process.
- \_\_\_ A photograph in the prescribed format (see Step 7)
- \_\_\_ A receipt for the visa application fee
- \_\_\_ A receipt for the SEVIS fee. If you have not received an official receipt in the mail showing payment and you paid the fee electronically, the consulate will accept the temporary receipt you printed from your computer. If you do not have a receipt, the consulate may be able to see your payment electronically if your fee payment was processed at least 3 business days before your interview.
- \_\_\_ Financial evidence that shows you have sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period you intend to study.
- \_\_\_ Any information that demonstrates your intention to return to your home country after finishing your studies in the U.S. This may include proof of property, family, or other ties to your community.

## Step 10: After the visa is processed, make sure you got what you requested!

Check your passport to be sure you obtained an F-1 visa, and that any dependents obtained an F-2 visa. Also, be certain that the I-20 was returned to you as you must have the original with you when you arrive in the United States. Sometimes the document is returned to you in a sealed envelope, which must be presented to the immigration inspector when you arrive.

### Canadian Citizens

Canadian citizens currently do not require an entry visa to enter the U.S., but DO require an I-20.

To enter the U.S. in F-1 student status, Canadians require a passport, an I-20 and proof of payment of the SEVIS fee. To pay the SEVIS fee, go to <http://www.fmjfee.com> and follow the instructions. Be sure to make a copy of the receipt for your own records.

At the port of entry, Canadian students must present the Form I-20 and supporting financial documentation to the immigration inspector to be admitted into the U.S. in F-1 status. You will be given an I-94 Admission/Departure card to complete. Be sure to look at your I-94 card before you leave the inspection area to ensure that it has the notation "F-1, D/S" written on it. Canadian students must have an I-94 card to confirm current F-1 status. If not, you are considered to be in Visitor (B-2) status, which doesn't permit study in the U.S.

Some Canadians have mistakenly assumed that regulations that apply to international students do not apply to them. Students from Canada are subject to the same regulations regarding employment in the United States, requirement for full-time study and all other provisions for maintaining status. It is especially important for Canadian students to be vigilant about entering the United States in proper student status, as immigration inspectors are accustomed to admitting Canadian citizens as visitors.

## Currently in F-1 Status at Another Institution and Transferring to UUNCSA

Students enrolled in another U.S. school under F-1 immigration status who are planning to enroll at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts must complete a process in which the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is notified of this change. The transfer procedure begins with your current school "releasing" your SEVIS record to UNCSA and qualifying for an UNCSA I-20, and is NOT complete until you report to the International Student Coordinator within 15 days of the program start date on your I-20.

## Continuing Students in F-1 Status at University of North Carolina School of the Arts

If you are completing one program at UNCSA and are planning to pursue another degree or program here, DHS must be notified. The International Student Coordinator (ISC) needs to issue you a new I-20 for the new program within 60 days of your completion date on your current I-20 or within 60 days of completion of your program, whichever is earlier. Contact the ISC about qualifying for and obtaining a new I-20.

## Potential Delays in Visa Issuance and at Ports of Entry

Heightened security measures instituted since September 11 have sometimes resulted in delays in visa issuance abroad. Security checks and visa interview requirements may cause delays. The Department of State's information on non-immigrant visas at its link to individual consular posts may be a good source of current information. [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/temp\\_1305.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/temp_1305.html)

The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has a useful Information Sheet entitled "Arrival at a US Port of Entry... What a Student or Exchange Visitor can Expect" highlighting the necessary steps and procedures you will face. <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students/index.htm>

- **Sevis Requirements**

The I-20 form for F-1 visa applicants is processed and issued through the internet-based Student and Exchange Visitor System (SEVIS). Visa officers are required to verify your record—and that of any dependents—in the SEVIS system before a visa can be approved.

- **Name Check by DOS and DHS**

The "name check lookup" is conducted by the State Department at the time of visa application and by the Department of Homeland Security at the port of entry—irrespective of whether the visitor holds a valid visa. This name check has recently resulted in unexpected and severe problems for non-immigrants—some arising from previous overstay(s), others from discovery of a record of illegal activity in the United States, and others because of mistaken name matches with listings in the database.

- **Special Registration Procedures for Certain Foreign Nationals**

Since September 11, 2002, certain non-immigrants are required to be fingerprinted and photographed at U.S. ports of entry and to make physical appearances to the local United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office at specified intervals during their stay in the United States.

Currently, the published registration rule applies without exception to nationals or citizens of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Sudan. This list is subject to change at any time, and registration may be required of any non-immigrants of any nationality who are deemed by a consular officer or inspections officer to require closer monitoring.

If you undergo Special Registration when you arrive, you will be given written information on exit procedures. Failure to comply with these requirements has severe consequences.

## Arrival at a U.S. Port of Entry

### What to Have with You

**C**arry your ORIGINAL documents on your person or in a carry-on bag rather than packed in your luggage. You will have to present them to the immigration inspector upon your arrival, and you won't have access to your luggage until *after* you go through immigration inspection.

Your documents may include:

- valid, unexpired, passport (for at least six months into the future) with a valid, unexpired entry visa
- your I-20 visa certificate, signed by the school official and by you
- original supporting financial documents, such as personal bank statements, a financial aid award or an offer letter from your department
- marriage license, school transcripts, medical records if applicable

On the plane, a flight attendant will distribute the I-94 Arrival /Departure form to non-immigrants. You should complete the **white** form, NOT the green form that is for tourists from certain countries who are eligible for a 90-day visit without a visa.

### IMMIGRATION INSPECTION

Upon arrival, you will go first to immigration inspection. The immigration inspector will need to see the appropriate visa page in your passport and the appropriate supporting documents.

- Present your passport with an F-1 entry visa with University of North Carolina School of the Arts noted on it (if it is your initial entry in F-1 status).
- Form I-20 that has been signed by both a UNCSA Designated School Official (DSO) and you, and the I-94 form that you completed on the plane.
- You should have funding documents available if requested.
- The inspector will keep part of the I-94 Arrival/Departure form, and return the bottom portion to you. In addition to the date and place of entry, the inspector will add a written notation that says "admitted as F-1 for D/S". D/S signifies *duration of status*. If all is in order, you should NOT be admitted 'until a specific *date*', but rather for D/S.
- Your form I-20 should get stamped in red ink.

### Canadian citizens:

Although exempt from the visa requirement, Canadian students must present

- Form I-20 to be admitted in F-1 status
- Obtain an I-94 card. It is essential that you be issued an appropriate I-94 card. If this does not occur, you will be considered a tourist and will not be able to enroll in classes or be able to change to student status while here in the United States.

### Dependents:

If you are coming with your spouse and/or children, then the same attentiveness to how their admission is processed applies. Dependents of F-1 students should enter as "F-2 for D/S".

### Document Processing - Update of SEVIS Record

In addition to processing the I-94 card, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will access the SEVIS student record that corresponds to your unique SEVIS ID number and update the record with information on your entry. The University of North Carolina School of the Arts is notified electronically of your arrival through your SEVIS record.

### BE PREPARED!

It is to your advantage to know what to expect and to be mindful of what occurs at the port of entry. Immigration inspectors see many people in the course of a day, and mistakes can be made. Some inspectors may be less familiar with student documents than others. Having your documents processed properly at the time you arrive is extremely important.

## **The I-94 card does not appear significant, but is the most important immigration document you will possess.**

It is the only document with a record of the *status* in which you were admitted to the United States, the date on which you entered, and at which port of entry. The I-94 is an important form. We recommend that you make two photocopies of both sides of the form; one to carry with you in your wallet, and the other to keep separately in case you need to replace it.

Often, the immigration officer will staple it into your passport. Be aware that if you don't get a red immigration stamp on your I-20, it may present difficulties when applying for a Social Security number (SSN) or a NC State driver's license.

## **Dependents**

### **Dependents of F-1 students**

In the language of immigration regulations, the individual in F-1 status is the "principal alien". Your dependents - spouse or unmarried, minor (under age 21) children - come to the United States in a derivative status, F-2. That means their primary purpose for being in the United States is to accompany you. Their F-2 status is completely dependent on your valid F-1 status.

Each F-2 dependent will receive his or her own SEVIS-generated I-20 form, with a unique SEVIS ID number. However, it is the F-1 principal who signs the I-20.

The F-1 student has to provide documentation showing the availability of funds in excess of his/her own cost of living expenses to obtain a dependent I-20. Currently, it is \$800 per month for a spouse, and \$400/month per child. In addition, each dependent must provide a copy of his or her passport.

Federal regulations do not allow individuals in F-2 status to be employed in the United States, or to enroll in courses of study. At the post-secondary level, an F-2 who wants to work needs to find an employer to sponsor him or her in an employment-based status, such as H-1B. An F-2 who wants to enroll in a course of study would need to be admitted to a full-time course of study and change to F-1 status.

### **Pre-Departure for the U.S. Information Resources**

The Department of State provides support to a network of Educational Advising/ Information Centers around the world. In addition to advising prospective international students on higher education in the United States, they can provide you with pre-departure materials and may conduct pre-departure orientation programs for students from your country or region who are going to the United States to study. Some programs offer participants the chance to meet fellow students who have recently spent time in the United States.

Contact your nearest center well in advance of your departure for their program schedule and to reserve a place. Some centers may charge a fee for these programs. For more information, refer to <http://educationusa.state.gov/centers.htm>.

Another helpful website is the Department of State's "*Living in the U.S.*" at <http://educationusa.state.gov/life.htm>.

## Arriving at Piedmont Triad International Airport

**M**ost international students who attend UNCSA end up flying into the Piedmont Triad International Airport, which is located in Greensboro, NC (Piedmont Triad International Airport). It is a small airport, and you will probably find it very convenient in terms of retrieving your luggage and finding your way around.

### Transportation to Winston-Salem

The airport is located approximately 30 minutes from the UNCSA campus. You have several options in terms of transportation from the airport:

#### [PART Shuttle](#)

If you arrive between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, you have the option of taking the PART shuttle that leaves from the airport outside the lower baggage claim area. Although the shuttle runs on regularly scheduled times, you will need to call the PART Hub at 336-883-7278 if you're departing from the airport to request a pick up.

You will be transported to the PART regional hub, where you will transfer to a PART Express Winston-Salem bus that will take you to the transportation terminal in downtown Winston-Salem. You will need to take a taxi from the terminal to the UNCSA campus or your place of residence. PART's fare is \$2 for the general public, and \$1 for students, disabled or elderly.

#### [Airport Taxi and Shuttle Service](#)

There is also a regular shuttle/taxi service that operates on the ground floor of the terminal. Tickets can be purchased for the shuttle at the kiosk that is located approximately in the middle of the terminal. A one-way fare to the UNCSA campus ranges from \$35 to \$40, depending on the type of transportation and number of riders.

### Hotels

#### *PTI Airport/Greensboro*

If you will be arriving late in the evening, you may want to spend the night in the Greensboro area. There are several hotels located near the PTI Airport. Most of these hotels provide shuttle service to and from the airport.

#### [Greensboro Marriott Airport](#) (costly)

1 Marriott Drive , Greensboro, NC  
(336) 852-6450  
(located across the street from the airport terminal)

#### [Best Western Deep River](#) (average)

800 National Service Road , Greensboro, NC  
(336) 454-0333

#### [Comfort Suites](#) (average)

(336) 882-6666  
7619 Thorndike Road , Greensboro, NC

#### [Super 8 Motel](#) (economy)

(336) 855-8888  
2108 W. Meadowview Road, Greensboro, NC

#### [Motel 6](#) (economy)

(336) 668-2085  
605 South Regional Road, Greensboro, NC

Days Inn (best price)

336-668-0476

501 Regional Road So., Greensboro, NC,  
(popular with international students)

### *Winston-Salem Hotels*

Holiday Inn Express

336-788-1980

2520 Peters Creek Parkway

Quality Inn and Suites (economy)

336-765-6670

2008 S. Hawthorne Road

Hawthorne Inn and Conference Center

336-777-3000

420 High Street

Comfort Inn (economy)

336-721-0220

110 Miller Street

Embassy Suites

337-724-2300

460 North Cherry Street

Brookstown Inn

336-725-1120

200 Brookstown Avenue

Please refer to the [Admissions / Area Accommodations](#) section for additional Winston-Salem hotels.

Make sure to ask if there is an UNCSA rate available. Many hotels have discounts if University of North Carolina School of the Arts is mentioned when making reservations.

*Note: Please inquire about the hotel's age policy when making your reservation. Some hotels will not register guests under twenty-one who are not accompanied by an older adult.*

## Arrival on Campus

Reporting to the International Student Coordinator

### SEVIS Registration Requirement

One of the first things that you should do after you arrive on campus is to check in with the International Student Coordinator (ISC) in the Office of Admissions with your documents. The Coordinator must update your SEVIS record with a Winston-Salem address and change your status from "initial" to "active". When you come to the office, please bring the following documents with you so that photocopies can be made for your student file:

- Passport
- I-20 form
- I-94 card
- Proof of current medical insurance

This is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT and must take place within 30 days of your program start date, or your SEVIS record will be automatically "terminated" and you will be out of status.

All prospective students coming to study have been issued the needed documentation through SEVIS. Schools are required to make regular electronic updates in SEVIS throughout the academic year on the records of their enrolled students and their dependents. Information to be updated includes, but is not limited to, enrollment status, changes in address, changes in level of study, employment recommendations, and school transfers.

When you arrived at the U.S. port of entry (POE), the immigration inspector updated your SEVIS record with information about your arrival and UNCSA received an electronic notification of your arrival. Your status in SEVIS is "initial" at that point but must be changed to "active" within 30 days of the program start date in order for your SEVIS record to remain valid.

## Maintaining Lawful Student Status

**U**nder United States immigration law, it is your personal responsibility to maintain lawful F-1 student status. By following the guidelines listed below, you should be able to maintain lawful F-1 student status with little difficulty.

You must maintain lawful student status if you wish to enjoy the benefits associated with it, such as on-campus employment, optional practical training, and the ability to re-enter the United States when you travel. If you have any questions, please come to International Student Services. We will be happy to answer your questions and discuss your concerns.

The International Student Coordinator will schedule orientation sessions for high school and undergraduate/graduate/professional artist certificate international students shortly after your arrival.

Attendance at these sessions is mandatory.

### Guidelines for Maintaining Student Status

If you follow the guidelines listed below, you should be able to maintain student status. It is your responsibility to maintain your legal status.

**1. Keep an unexpired passport valid for at least 6 months into the future.**

Contact your country's consulate in NY or embassy in Washington DC for instructions if you need to extend your passport while in the U.S.

**2. Notify the International Student Services of your address when you arrive and any time you change addresses.**

Upon your *initial* arrival in the U.S. to study at UNCSA, you must notify International Student Services in the Office of Admissions of your local address in person. Thereafter, you must notify ISC of any change in address within 10 days of moving. The ISC is responsible for updating your address electronically in the SEVIS record.

**3. Maintain full-time enrollment and normal, full-time progress toward your degree or certificate.**

You are expected to maintain full-time registration and make normal progress toward your degree. The rate of normal progress is the rate at which the average full-time student in your school or department advances toward the degree or certificate objective. Working to finish an "incomplete" course or project does **not** fall within the definition of making "normal progress".

If you are enrolled in a program which lasts more than one academic year, you are ordinarily permitted an annual vacation period, during which time you are not required to register for courses. Only one vacation period per year is permitted and for most programs, this takes place during the **summer semester**.

**4. Obtain PRIOR authorization from International Student Services (if eligible) BEFORE dropping below a full course of study.**

There are very limited exceptions to the full-time requirement, so you must consult the International Student Services in advance of any drop below full-time, or you will be in violation of your status.

**5. Do not accept any employment, either on- or off-campus, without written permission from the International Student Coordinator and, if necessary, authorization from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).**

Working without proper authorization is considered by the DHS as the most serious violation of its regulations. If you refer to your form I-94 card, you will see the statement, "Warning: a nonimmigrant who accepts unauthorized employment is subject to deportation." It is most important, therefore, that you consult with the International Student Coordinator before you accept an offer of employment or begin to work. We will advise you whether it is possible for you to work and assist you with the appropriate procedures. It is illegal to begin to work while waiting for authorization; you must have the appropriate authorization first. Students in status are allowed to work on-campus for UNCSA for a maximum of 20 hours per week during the academic year (unlimited during vacation periods) but **MUST** complete an I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification form at the International Student Services.

**6. Make timely transfers of your supervision if you enroll at UNCSA after attending another school in the United States.**

DHS regulations specify that you must use the Visa Certificate of Eligibility (I-20) issued by the school you are attending (or plan to attend) when entering the U.S. Consequently, make sure that you use UNCSA's Certificate of Eligibility. You are required to report to the International Student Coordinator shortly after your arrival and no later than the beginning of the semester.

**7. Obtain extensions, as needed, of your permission to stay in the U.S. before your Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20) expires.**

If you have valid academic or health reasons for requiring more time to complete your program than that which is authorized on the UNCSA I-20, you must request a program extension through International Student Services. Come to International Student Services as soon as you know that you will need an extension and at least 30 days before the completion date noted on your I-20 in order to have enough time to obtain any necessary documents.

If you require an extension because you will be starting a new program at UNCSA (for example, if you are moving from a bachelor's degree to a master's degree program), you must apply for a new I-20 to begin a new program within 60 days of the completion of the first program.

**8. Once you have completed your studies and any practical training that is authorized, you must leave the U.S. or change to another immigration status within the appropriate time allowed.**

This means that you are allowed to stay for the period of time to complete a program of study plus academic or practical training and a grace period. Those in F-1 status have a 60 day grace period in which to depart the U.S. or change to another status.

**9. Carry a copy of your I-94 card with you at all times.**

When traveling outside the Winston-Salem area, you should bring the original I-94 card, I-20, and passport with you.

**10. If applicable, comply with Special Registration Procedures- Certain Foreign Nationals.**

Since September 11, 2002, certain non-immigrants are required to be fingerprinted and photographed at U.S. ports of entry. Special Registrants are also subject to departure procedures from ports of entry specifically designated for departure control. Currently, the published registration rule applies without exception to nationals or citizens of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Sudan. This list is subject to change at any time, and registration may be required of any non-immigrants of any nationality who are deemed by a consular officer or inspections officer to require closer monitoring.

If you undergo Special Registration when you arrive, failure to comply with exit requirements has severe consequences.

## **Re-entry to the United States**

**Students should consult the International Student Coordinator (ISC) prior to traveling.**

You must have a current SEVIS Form I-20 endorsed for travel and the ISC needs to be able to verify that your SEVIS record is accurate and up-to-date.

In order to re-enter the U.S. after a temporary absence of 5 months or less, a student must have the following documents:

1. **A passport that will be valid for at least 6 months into the future on the day you return from your trip abroad** (except Canadians returning from Canada).
2. **Unexpired F-1 entry visa in your passport, valid for further entries.** (Note that Canadian citizens do not have a visa requirement). Others should check the expiration date, and the number of entries allowed on their visa. An "M" under entries means "multiple", i.e. there is no limit to the number of entries during the period of its validity.

If your visa is expired or the entries allowed have already been used, you will need to apply for a new entry visa abroad—it cannot be renewed in the U.S. An exception to the requirement for an unexpired visa exists for travel to Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean as described below under [\*Special Considerations\*](#).

If your visa is expired or the number of allowable entries have already been used, refer to [Obtaining a New Entry Visa](#) below.

3. **A valid, unexpired, and recertified I-20 (F-1).**

A recertification signature for travel signifies to an immigration inspector that you are maintaining your status. Only staff at International Student Services are authorized by the DHS to sign these documents. The signature is valid for a year.

In order for your I-20 to be recertified, the International Student Services must ascertain that you have maintained full-time student status and have financial resources to cover all expenses for one year for both you and any accompanying dependents. First-year students will already have provided financial documentation for the current year, but others may need to update their funding documents. Request recertification of your I-20 from the International Student Services at least five business days before you plan to leave.

**Additionally, you are advised to:**

4. **Travel with current financial documentation.**

An immigration inspector may want to verify your ability to fund your stay.

5. **Bringing your most recent I-94, Departure Card, will facilitate your reentry, if reentering through a land Port of Entry. If you are flying, the airline will collect your I-94 prior to departure and you will complete a new one upon reentry**

## **Obtaining a New Entry Visa**

You must have a valid F-1 entry visa in your passport to enter the U.S. after a trip abroad. (Possible exceptions apply under Special Considerations, below).

If your entry visa is no longer valid, you must take your passport, I-20, and current financial documentation to a [U.S. consulate](#) to apply for a new one. It is best to apply for a visa in your home country. Plan for processing delays if you apply at a third country.

If you have ever overstayed your immigration status in the U.S., you may not be allowed to apply for an entry visa in any country except your country of citizenship or permanent residence. If you have overstayed since issuance of your last entry visa, your entry visa is no longer valid and you are required to obtain a new one in your country of citizenship or residence.

You should travel back to the U.S. with all your documentation, including financial documents, as it is possible that the immigration inspector will want to review it at the port of entry. Issuance of a visa may take longer than it did when you obtained one previously, so try to find out as much about the processing time and making an appointment in advance of your departure from the U.S.

## **Special Considerations: Automatic Revalidation and Extension**

### **Travel to Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean (except Cuba and Bermuda)**

If you are traveling only to Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean (except Cuba and Bermuda) for fewer than thirty days, you may return to the U.S. with an expired entry visa in your passport. To qualify for this privilege, you must:

1. Be in lawful F-1 status.
2. Have an unexpired I-94 card with you indicating your status. Do not surrender the I-94 card when you leave the U.S. If you do, you will need a valid unexpired entry visa to reenter the U.S.
3. Have a current I-20 in your possession.
4. Have a passport valid at least six months into the future on the day you return to the U.S.
5. Travel only to one of the destinations named above and for fewer than thirty days. For example, you cannot use automatic revalidation to enter Canada, depart to another country, return to Canada, and then return to the U.S. within 30 days.
6. Not apply for a U.S. visa while in Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean. If you apply for a U.S. entry during your visit to one of these destinations, you must wait for it to be issued before you return. If your visa application

is denied by the American consulate, you are not allowed to use "automatic revalidation" to return to the U.S. and must travel to your country of citizenship to apply for a new visa.

7. Have an F-1 (expired or valid) in your passport.
8. Be a citizen of a country other than Syria, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, North Korea, Cuba, or Libya (these countries have been designated by the U.S. government as state sponsors of terrorism. If you are a citizen or national of one of these countries, you do not qualify for the privilege of automatic revalidation. You are required to present all documents described under General Information, above, including a valid, unexpired visa for your current immigration status).

### Canadian Citizens

Canadian citizens do not need an entry visa to enter the U.S. but to enter the U.S. in student status they must always present the following documentation to the immigration inspector:

- Passport
- Form I-20
- Supporting financial documentation

Canadians must be sure to complete the I-94 Admission / Departure card and have it processed for admission by the immigration officer. Otherwise, the student will be admitted in Tourist (B-2) status and will not be able to take advantage of the special benefits allowed those in Student Status. More importantly, it is a violation of B-2 status to study in the United States. Canadian students must have an I-94 card to confirm current F-1 status.

## Other Travel Matters

### Canadian Visas

Students from many countries are required to obtain a Canadian entry visa when entering Canada from the U.S. See the Canadian Visa Bureau website for additional information.

<http://www.visabureau.com/canada/canadian-visa.aspx> Consult the Canadian Consulate General for visa regulations concerning your country before making travel arrangements.

### Mexican Visas

Tourist cards or visas may be required for travel to Mexico. The following website has information on visa requirements and Mexican Consulates. <http://www.mexonline.com/mexcustoms.htm>

### Travel within the U.S.

In general, special permission is not needed to travel within the continental U.S. However, we recommend that you carry with you your passport, I-94, and I-20 when you travel any distance from home.

## Employment

### On-Campus Options for Students in F-1 Status

Students may engage in on-campus employment if they are carrying a full course of study and as long as the work is limited to part-time (less than 20 hours per week) during the fall, winter and spring semesters when school is in session or full-time (20-40 hours per week) during the summer or when school is officially not in session. Work is limited to employers who are located on-campus and provide direct services to students. This does NOT require special authorization from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Employment may be in any field and is not restricted to your academic major. In order to become employed you will need to apply for a [social security number](#) and go through the I-9 employee verification process as instructed by your employer.

### Paperwork Requirements

#### Employment Eligibility Verification (Form I-9)

Within the first three days of beginning work, you and your employer must complete a form entitled Employment Verification (USCIS FORM I-9). This form will be kept on file by your employer and must be updated each time you receive a renewal of your work permission.

#### Social Security Numbers

If you plan to work in the U.S., you will need a valid Social Security number. Please refer to the following website for more information: [www.ssa.gov/ssnumber](http://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber)

### Off-Campus Options for Students in F-1 Status

Off-campus work is possible only after you have been in the United States in valid student status for at least one academic year. Such work authorization always requires the written permission of the Coordinator and may require USCIS approval as well. To acquaint you with the options, here is an overview.

#### Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

CPT is defined as an employment option available to F-1 students where the practical training employment is considered to be an integral part of the curriculum or academic program. This employment may be an internship, cooperative education job, a practicum, or any other work experience that is either required for your degree (as defined in the course catalog) or for which academic credit is awarded. To be eligible for curricular practical training, you must have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year, your employment must be an integral part of your degree program or requirement for a course, and your job offer related to your major or field of study. You must have an offer of employment offering work that qualifies as curricular practical training. The time you spend on curricular practical training will not be deducted from the twelve months of allowable optional practical training UNLESS you use 12 months or more of full-time curricular practical training. The Designated School Official will update the student's record in SEVIS as being authorized for curricular practical training that is directly related to the student's major area of study. The DSO will indicate whether the training is full-time or part-time, the employer, location, and the employment start and end date.

#### Optional Practical Training (OPT)

OPT is defined as "employment related to one's field of study." It offers you valuable opportunities to supplement your education through work experience in your field of study. Students in F-1 status have a total of 12 months of OPT eligibility per degree level, which can be used part-time during the academic year, full-time during summer vacation periods, and following completion of all degree requirements. If you use any OPT before the completion of your program, it gets deducted from the 12 month total after the completion. The International Student Services office must process an OPT recommendation through SEVIS on your form I-20 as the first step of the student's application to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for employment authorization.

### Unforeseen Financial Hardship

If, after one academic year in student status, a student experiences extreme financial difficulties which were unforeseen when beginning the academic program, he or she may be able to apply for off-campus work permission from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). If granted, it is possible to work up to twenty hours a week during the academic year and full-time during the summer and vacation periods.

In your application, you must establish and document the fact that unforeseen changes that severely affect your financial resources have occurred since you initially qualified for F-1 status by demonstrating funding available for at least the first year.

## Tax Issues for International Students

All international students in F-1 status are required to file at least one tax form by April 15th if present in the U.S. at any time in the previous calendar year—even if they had no U.S. income. One thing you'll want to be aware of soon after you arrive is that it is a good idea to keep all receipts for educational expenses such as books, as you might need to refer to them in the spring when filing tax forms. Each spring, there will be a tax-filing workshop conducted by international tax experts.

For complete U.S. tax information you can check the Internal Revenue Service site ([www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)) for complete U.S. tax information, publications and forms. For North Carolina State tax information/publications/forms, go to <http://www.dorn.com/>

## OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR F-1 STUDENTS

### Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

#### **Eligibility Criteria:**

F-1 students are eligible to participate in curricular practical training (CPT) once they have been in continuous, legal, F-1 Status for a full academic year. (The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service [USCIS] defines a full academic year as two complete semesters or nine months.) Your employment must be an integral part of your degree program or requirement for a course and your job offer related to your major or field of study. You must have an offer of employment offering work that qualifies as curricular practical training. The Coordinator can authorize curricular practical training for you if it can be clearly documented that the proposed employment meets one of the following conditions:

1. The training employment is required of all degree candidates in the program and is necessary for the awarding of the degree.
  - Graduate students in their first year of study may be eligible for curricular practical training in this category.
  - Undergraduates are not eligible in their first year of study.
2. The training employment will result in the awarding of academic credit, at least preponderantly, if not solely, on the basis of the training experience, such as:
  - Employment for a course specifically designed to award academic credit for an employment experience
  - Employment that will result in the award of at least one course credit for an independent study
  - In both of these cases you must be registered for the course during the period that you are working under curricular practical training authorization.

**A date-specific job offer is required to request CPT.**

If the above eligibility requirements are met, CPT can be requested and authorized by the Coordinator.

1. You must fill out a CPT form requesting permission to work off-campus. Forms must be signed by the dean of your individual school.
2. The time you spend on curricular practical training will not be deducted from the twelve months of allowable optional practical training UNLESS you use 12 months or more of full-time curricular practical training.
3. Employment for 20 hours or less per week while you are enrolled for classes is considered part-time curricular practical training. The employment authorization page of your CPT I-20 will specify permission to engage in part-time training and you must limit your work to no more than 20 hours per week. There is no limitation upon the length of time you may participate in part-time curricular practical training cumulatively, but you must be simultaneously enrolled as a full-time student in order to maintain lawful F-1 status.
4. Employment for more than 20 hours per week is considered full-time curricular practical training, regardless of whether you are enrolled full-time or part-time for classes. The employment authorization page on your I-20 will specify permission to participate in full-time training.
5. There is no limitation upon the length of time you may participate in full-time curricular practical training, however if you participate in twelve months or more of curricular practical training you will not be eligible for post-completion practical training.
6. A student may begin curricular practical training only after receiving his or her Form I-20 with the DSO endorsement.

### Optional Practical Training (OPT - Pre-Completion of Degree Program)

Pre-Completion OPT is OPT authorized to be worked before the student's program end date.

#### **Eligibility Criteria:**

F-1 students are eligible to participate in optional practical training (OPT) once they have been in continuous, legal, F-1 status for a full academic year. (The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service [USCIS] defines a full academic year as two complete semesters or nine months.) Permission to participate in the OPT program is granted by the USCIS. An F-1 student is eligible to receive a total period of 12 months of OPT for each successive degree that is completed. (For example, a student who completes both a bachelor's and a master's degree would be eligible to receive a sum total of 24 months of OPT.)

- A student has maintained, and is currently maintaining, a full-time program of study.
- A student is maintaining valid F-1 status.
- A student must intend to work in a job directly related to the student's course of study.

#### **A job offer is not required to request OPT.**

If the above eligibility requirements are met, OPT can be requested and recommended by the Coordinator and authorized by the USCIS as follows:

1. Processing an OPT application can take three to four (3-4) months. All students are strongly encouraged to submit your applications well in advance of your graduation end date. The Coordinator will hold a seminar in the Winter Term to help with this process.
2. During the academic year, OPT can be authorized for 20 hours per week. The period authorized will be deducted from the 12-month total at a rate of one half month for each month authorized.
3. During the annual vacation periods, OPT may be authorized either part-time or full-time.
4. After completion of all course requirements for a degree, OPT may be authorized for either part-time or full-time (depending on the situation).
5. A student may file for OPT up to 90 days before he or she completes a full academic year. If the student has already completed a full academic year, he or she may apply for OPT up to 120 days in advance of the requested employment start date.

Once OPT has been approved, it cannot be rescinded or cancelled after the begin date of the work authorization. A student may want to wait until a job offer has been made to guarantee usage of OPT. The time approved, whether a student works or does not work, is deducted from the 12-month total. Employment authorization will begin on the date requested or the date the employment authorization is adjudicated, whichever is later.

A student cannot file for combined pre-completion OPT and post-completion OPT. There are differences in the application process and in the requirements for maintaining employment.

## Optional Practical Training (OPT - Post-Completion of Degree Program)

Post-Completion OPT is OPT authorized to be worked after the student's program end date.

### Eligibility Criteria:

- A student must be in valid student status for at least one academic year (minimum of 9 months).
- A student has maintained and is currently maintaining a full-time program of study and valid F-1 status.
- A student has completed or is about to complete a course of study/degree program and intends to work in a job directly related to his or her course of study

### A job offer is not required to request OPT.

1. During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment.
2. A student who has completed a course of study may apply for permission to pursue full-time employment.
3. OPT students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial post-completion OPT authorization.
4. OPT must end 14 months from your completion of study's date. Completion of study date can either be the graduation date or the date a student (usually graduate student) completes the degree requirements.
5. OPT may be authorized for any period up to the maximum amount allowed (12 months) or the time remaining (other OPT deducted from 12 months). For example, if a student did not use OPT during his course of study, the student will have 12 months available; or, a student may have used only 6 months of OPT and saved the other 6 months for completion of another degree program; or, if a student has used several months of OPT before the completion of the degree program, the remainder of months not used can be requested.

**Please Note:** Regulations prohibit a student from working full time and studying (even part time). Example: Working at a company for 40+ hours and taking graduate courses for a new degree program is prohibited.

## Application Procedures – Pre- & Post- Completion OPT

Applying for OPT, pre or post-completion, is a three-step process:

1. You must first obtain the OPT package from the International Student Coordinator
2. Make an appointment with the Coordinator for an OPT information session.
3. Please complete the forms included in the packet. Bring them with you to a final appointment with the International Student Coordinator. The Coordinator will also copy the information to your file. The following is required to file the OPT application:
  - A letter from the academic advisor stating that student has completed the program on a particular date or is about to complete all requirements for the degree on a particular date; student has been a full-time student; and, the advisor recommends the student be granted the OPT (before or after completion of program). For before completion of program OPT, the academic advisor should state student has been full-time, progressing toward the degree and recommends the OPT).
  - [Completed I-765 with signature card.](#)
  - [Completed ER-750.](#)
  - [Two passport size photos.](#) On the back of each photograph, in pencil, print your name and your I-94 number.
  - Bring all copies of I-20s to the appointment.
  - Copies of passport bio data page, U.S. entry visa and I-94.
  - Check for \$340 made payable to USCIS.

The Coordinator will review the above information. If all is correct, the Coordinator will complete the appropriate forms and issue a new SEVIS I-20 with the recommendation for OPT. The letter from the advisor is retained in the student's file. A copy of the I-20, along with all copies of all I-20s (pages 1 and 3) is sent with the completed application (above forms) to the USCIS Service Center servicing either the area of the school the student attended or the student's place of residence. The original I-20 is returned to the student.

**IMPORTANT NOTE FOR POST-COMPLETION OPT APPLICATIONS.** A student will be able to file his or her I-765 application for a Post-Completion OPT up to 90 days prior to his or her program end date, and up to 60 days after program end date.

## Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card)

The EAD is a small card with your photo, fingerprint, signature and authorized dates of employment on it. It is issued by the USCIS. Your employer will need the EAD to hire you.

## Employment Beginning and End Dates

- **Beginning Date:**  
When you apply for OPT, you are allowed to choose a beginning date for your period of employment. The earliest date you may begin is the date when all academic requirements for your course of study have been completed. The latest date is 60 days after the completion date on the I-20.
- **Beginning Employment:**  
You are not allowed to begin employment until the beginning date listed on the EAD card. The USCIS has stated that it is illegal for a nonimmigrant to perform a period of unpaid "volunteer" employment if the employer has the intention of employing the nonimmigrant at a later date as a paid employee.
- **End Date:**  
All employment must stop on the end date listed on the EAD card. The nonimmigrant may remain in the U.S. for a 60 day period following the end date of the OPT, but no employment may be performed.
- **Beyond OPT:**  
If you have the intention of remaining in the U.S. after you have completed OPT, you will need to file for a change of status prior to the expiration of your OPT. For most nonimmigrants, the next step is to apply for and obtain an H-1B visa for a specialty occupation. If you plan on pursuing this, you will need to find an employer who is willing and able to sponsor you for the H-1B visa.

## Non-Cancellation of OPT

If you apply for OPT and then decide that you would like to cancel or change the dates of your application, you will need to have the Coordinator inform the USCIS **before** your application has been adjudicated. **Once your application is approved and an EAD card issued, there is no way that you can cancel or change the period of OPT for which you applied**, meaning that unexpected delays such as completing degree requirements, inability to find an appropriate job and loss of a job may result in loss of otherwise eligible time to work. Once permission to work for 12 months has been granted, it is gone.

**Exception:** If you receive the EAD card before the work is to begin, you might be able to cancel the OPT. But once the OPT approval date has begun, you cannot cancel the OPT.

## Lost EAD Card

If you lose your card you will have to submit a new I-765 application and filing fee in order to receive a replacement card. When you receive your card from the USCIS, make sure you make a copy for your records.

## Processing Times

Processing times vary widely depending on the time of year, but the USCIS can take up to 90 days to process this type of application. Approval is NOT guaranteed, and you may not begin employment unless you have received written approval from the USCIS. Written approval will come in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card.

Once you have received a Receipt Notice from the USCIS, you may monitor the status of your application [online](#). This is an important document and should be placed in a secure location. Should your EAD not arrive in a timely manner, this is the only proof that you have that a petition was submitted to the USCIS.

If you have not received a response from the USCIS and it has been close to or over 30 days since your application was submitted, please contact the Coordinator as soon as possible.

If your EAD card does not arrive within 90 days of the date listed on the receipt notice, you are eligible to apply for an interim EAD card that will be valid for an initial period of 6 months. The Coordinator can help you with the application process.

## Off-Campus Employment due to Severe Economic Hardship

This F-1 employment benefit is intended to address situations where a financial need beyond the student's control arises which was unforeseen at the time the student applied to UNCSA and after all other potential employment opportunities have proven to be insufficient, i.e. on-campus employment. The student needs to provide justification why this employment is necessary due to severe economic hardship caused by circumstances beyond his or her control that arose after obtaining F-1 status. Employment is limited to 20 hours per week during the academic term. It can be full time during the summer vacation period or other official term breaks.

Employment does not need to be related to the student's major, it can be any type of job. Employment does not affect eligibility towards OPT. Students do not need a job offer to apply for this type of work permission. Once the application is received by the USCIS it could take up to 4 months before it's approved. Employment may not begin until the student has received the EAD and the dates are valid.

Off-campus employment authorization may be renewed by the USCIS only if the student is maintaining status and good academic standing.

### Eligibility Criteria:

Off-campus employment is a case-by-case exception made for students who have completed one full academic year in F-1 status. The USCIS will only consider severe economic hardship that is due to unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control. These may include:

- Loss of financial aid or on-campus employment if not the student's fault
- Large increases in tuition or living costs
- Substantial decrease in the relative value of currency the student depends on to pay expenses
- Unexpected changes in the financial conditions for his or her sources of financial support
- Unexpectedly large medical bills not covered by insurance
- Other substantial, unexpected expenses

## Application Procedure for Severe Hardship Application

1. The student should make an appointment to meet with the Coordinator to discuss his or her situation.
2. The student should write a cover letter thoroughly explaining his or her personal situation and assemble documentation to demonstrate severe economic hardship. Documentary evidence might include such items as:
  - medical bills
  - letters from family about loss of support, an illness in the family, political or natural catastrophe
  - bank statements
  - newspaper, magazine publications or verification from bank indicating a significant devaluation of home country's currency
  - statements concerning loss of financial aid or sponsorship
3. Economic Hardship Application for employment authorization on [I-765 with signature card](#), with the required fee.
4. SEVIS Form I-20 with the employment page demonstrating the Designated School Official's comments and certification

The USCIS will adjudicate the application for work authorization based upon severe economic hardship on the basis of Form I-20, Form I-765, and any additional supporting materials.

1. If employment is authorized, the USCIS will issue an EAD.
2. If the application is denied, no appeal is possible from this decision.
3. The employment authorization may be granted in one year intervals up to the expected date of completion of the student's current course of study.

## Renewal of Employment Authorization for Severe Economic Hardship

Employment authorization is granted in increments of one year at a time. Authorization ends if the student transfers schools and/or completes his degree. Continuing students can reapply each year to renew this work authorization if they meet the eligibility requirements. Authorization is automatically terminated whenever the student fails to maintain status. You cannot file for a renewal EAD more than 120 days before the original EAD expires.

## Social Security Number

A nonimmigrant student in F-1 status is not eligible to obtain a Social Security number (SSN) in the U.S. unless they can prove that they are employed. This proof is established through a letter from an employer. If you are not employed in the U.S., you do not qualify to receive a SSN. You must have a social security number if you are employed either on or off campus.

In order to obtain a social security number (SSN), you will need to have the following items with you when you go to the local Social Security Administration office:

1. Form I-20
2. Passport
3. Form I-94 (small white card received upon US entry)
4. Letter from the Coordinator that verifies your enrollment status here
5. Proof of employment

Social security numbers will only be issued to students who are trying to lawfully gain or already have employment. Proof of employment can be a letter from your employer, an employment authorization document issued through the USCIS, or current payroll stubs.

Do not attempt to apply for a social security number until 10-15 days after your arrival date in the US (the Social Security Administration uses an online database to verify your status with the USCIS and it usually takes 10-15 days for your information to be transferred to this database).

You do not need a social security number to open a bank account or have utilities turned on in your home. You do need to have one in order to secure a cell phone account.

F-2 visa holders are not eligible to receive a social security number.

Social Security Administration  
5205 University Parkway  
Winston-Salem, NC 27106  
(red brick building located at the northern end of the shopping center)  
336-722-1132

Monday – Friday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

## **TAXES**

In general, F-1 students who have been in the U.S. for less than five years are exempt from social security taxes (also known as F.I.C.A. tax) and Medicare taxes. You should be sure to notify your employer because many employers are not familiar with this provision of the tax laws. The information is in Tax Publication 519.

F-1 students authorized for practical training employment are subject to all other taxes that may apply: federal, state and local. However, you can treat the entire period of practical training as an extended business trip and reduce your federal taxes by deducting "travel expenses" (amounts for food, housing and transportation) from your income. You should consult an accountant or tax attorney for more information.

## **Employment Eligibility Verification (Form I-9)**

**An I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification** form is required of everyone employed in the U.S., including American citizens. You need to complete this form no later than the day you begin employment. Bring your immigration documents to the International Student Coordinator who will help you through this process. Return the completed form to the hiring department.

On-campus employment is subject to U.S. taxation. You may, however, be able to benefit from any tax treaty provisions that may exist between the U.S. and your home country that will allow you to reduce or eliminate the amount of taxes on any relevant earnings. In order to determine whether an applicable tax treaty provision exists, you should consult IRS Publication Number 901, *U.S. Tax Treaties*, and IRS Publication Number 519, *U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens*. These publications are available on the [IRS website](#). If you determine that there is a tax treaty provision relevant to your on-campus employment, you should also file IRS Form 8823 with the ISC at the same time you complete Form I-9.

## Travel Outside the U.S. while on OPT

F-1 students who have been authorized for OPT, may travel outside the U.S. if they have the necessary documents:

- A form I-20 endorsed by International Student Coordinator within the last six months
- A valid U.S. visa stamp
- The Employment Authorization Document (EAD) issued by USCIS or the receipt notice
- Proof of employment.

If you do not have these documents, you may not be allowed to reenter the U.S.

- A student with an **approved** period of OPT who leaves the country prior to finding a job will not be eligible for reentry after a temporary absence. You cannot reenter without a written job offer.
- If your OPT application is pending, you may reenter to look for employment.
- If you exit and then reenter the U.S. in another nonimmigrant visa category, your remaining period of OPT will be cancelled immediately upon receipt of the new visa classification.
- If you remain outside the U.S. for a period of time that exceeds 5 months, you will lose current F-1 status along with any period of OPT that was approved prior to your departure.

If your F-1 visa stamp has expired, you will need a new one to reenter the U.S. As this may be difficult to do in some instances, you are urged to consult with the International Student Coordinator before making your travel plans. For more detailed information about traveling outside the U.S., please refer to the [ICE Student and Visitor Exchange](#) website.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COORDINATOR  
AT  
336-770-1471.

## Housing and Student Needs

### What You Will Need

#### Room Furnishings

**R**esidence hall rooms are furnished. Each student has a bed, desk, dresser and bookcase. You will need to bring your own sheets, pillows, blankets and wash towels.

School-owned apartments are also furnished with beds and basic furniture but you will need to provide your own cooking utensils, cutlery, dishes and glassware.

Once you have arrived, you can decide what additional items will make your stay more comfortable and home-like. There are several large stores in Winston-Salem where you can buy needed items at a reasonable price. Items can be purchased in Winston-Salem or online.

- Target
- WalMart
- JC Penney

Craig's List is a website that lists classified ads for a wide variety of items including used furniture, electronic equipment, cars, etc. It has been a helpful source to many people. <http://winstonsalem.craigslist.org/>

#### Clothing

Winston-Salem has a temperate climate with four distinct seasons. Newcomers to Winston-Salem enjoy its mild winters and moderate year-round climate. Located roughly halfway between Washington, DC and Atlanta, GA, the average annual rainfall is about 42 inches and snowfall accumulations are rare. January is the coldest month of the year, with an average high temperature of 36.7° F. (2.6° C.) and average low of 27.3° F. (-2.6° C.). July is the hottest month, with an average high temperature of 86.9° F. (30.5° C.). Moderate temperatures occur in the fall and spring. Every building in Winston-Salem has central heating and air conditioning.

You will need to bring clothing appropriate for this climate. There are many excellent stores in Winston-Salem where you can purchase additional needed items. They include the stores listed above as well as the many stores at Hanes Mall, which is only a few minutes away from the UNCSA campus.

## Transportation

### Public Transportation

**W**inston-Salem has a public bus system that services major areas of the city. The system is fairly reliable and tends to run on time. For a complete outline of all bus routes, times, and fares, contact the Winston-Salem Transit Authority or visit the main bus terminal located downtown.

*Winston-Salem Transit Authority*  
100 W. Fifth Street  
Winston-Salem, NC 27101

336-727-2000 (schedule information)

<http://www.wstransit.com/schedules.htm#routes>

### Bicycles

If you decide to bike around Winston-Salem (whether for exercise or transportation), please be careful! American drivers are not used to sharing the road with cyclists. Always wear a helmet and assume that the drivers of cars do not see you.

Lock your bike up, as they are easy to steal. And remember that as a cyclist, you must follow the same traffic laws that cars do.

### Personal Vehicle

If you decide to purchase a car while you are in the United States, there are a few things that you need to keep in mind.

- You must have a driver's license to drive a car, whether it is your car or someone else's. A license from your country is usually acceptable, but remember that police officers are not used to seeing them. Double check to make sure your country has a driving agreement with the United States before you use your home-country license.
- You must have proof of car insurance, even if you do not yet have a car. If you do not yet have a car you will purchase what is called a "Non-owner's policy". If and when you do purchase a car, you must call your insurance company immediately to inform them of the changes. There are many companies in Winston-Salem that sell car insurance. Among the most popular are Allstate, State Farm, and Nationwide. Also, check with fellow students, staff and faculty for their recommendations.
- Make sure you are comfortable driving before you tackle the whole city. Just because you passed the road portion of the driving test does not mean that you are ready for the interstates and highways (or the other crazy drivers!). Practice a bit in areas with less traffic first. Ask a friend to ride with you for support and advice.
- Make sure your car is roadworthy! Buying a car that is falling apart or in any way unsafe should be avoided at all costs!
- Do not drink and drive.
- If you see a police car behind you with the lights flashing, pull over immediately. Stay in the car and keep your hands on the wheel unless otherwise directed by the police officer.

## How to Find a Car

You will probably be looking for a used vehicle rather than a new car. Ads for used cars are in the classified section of the Winston-Salem Journal every day. On Saturdays, the paper has a special section on vehicles. All new car dealers also carry used vehicles, although their prices tend to be higher. There are also dealers that carry only used cars.

A word of advice – Have any used car you want to purchase inspected by a qualified mechanic **before** you buy it. Most of the larger gas stations have reputable mechanics. Again, ask for recommendations for car dealers and mechanics from fellow students, faculty and staff.

## North Carolina Driver's License

Provided below is a summary of what you will need to obtain a North Carolina driver's license. Please also refer to the North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles (NCDMV) website:

<http://www.ncdot.org/DMV/>

Before you are eligible to receive a North Carolina driver's license, you will need to have one of the following:

1. Social Security Card
2. Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN)
3. Valid visa and I-20 and a letter from the Coordinator.

You will also need to provide the following:

4. Proof of identification by showing two of the following:
  - Driver license from another state
  - Social Security card
  - Unexpired passport
  - Unexpired documents issued by the USCIS
5. Proof of residency by providing one of the following:
  - Any document issued by the state of North Carolina
  - Preprinted bank or other corporate statement
  - Correspondence on preprinted business letterhead
  - Apartment lease
  - Utility bill
  - School records
6. Proof of insurance by showing one of the following:
  - Form DL-123 from your insurance agent
  - Copy of the insurance policy with your name on it and the issue and expiration date
  - An insurance card with your name, the policy number, and issue and expiration date
7. Payment of fees.
  - Licenses are issued for a period of 5-8 years depending on your age. Ages 18-53 will be issued for 8 years; ages 54 and older will be issued for 5 years. The cost and any endorsements will be computed based on the yearly charge of \$4.

There are two tests that must be taken for drivers applying for a license for the first time. One is a road test which includes you driving with a Department of Motor Vehicles' Instructor. The second is a written test that proves you understand basic road rules and safety regulations. A study guide for the written test can be found online at:

<http://www.ncdot.org/dmv/driver%5Fservices/drivershandbook/>

The state of North Carolina does not recognize what is called an “international driving license.” However, the state does recognize most other country’s licenses. If you have a driving license in your country, you may be able to use it in our country (provided there is an agreement between our countries). Please keep in mind that our police officers are not accustomed to seeing driver’s licenses from other countries and may question the validity of it.

For additional information about obtaining a license and driving regulations in North Carolina, see the NC Department of Motor Vehicles website:

[http://www.ncdot.org/DMV/driver\\_services/drivingpublic/applying.html#Step2](http://www.ncdot.org/DMV/driver_services/drivingpublic/applying.html#Step2)

## Registering Your Car

When you purchase a car, North Carolina requires that the car be registered in your name. This means that you will need to have the title transferred to you. This is a simple and straight-forward process, but it does involve paying a one-time “Highway Use Tax” and other licensing and registration fees at the time you apply for a new title.

1. When you purchase a car, you will receive a signed title from the previous owner. You too will need to sign this title in the presence of a Notary Public. **DO NOT SIGN THE TITLE IF A NOTARY PUBLIC IS NOT PRESENT.** If you do, the title is invalid and the owner will have to file for a new title and that can take up to 3 weeks to receive.
2. Once the title has been signed and authorized by a Notary Public, you will take it to the North Carolina Vehicle Registration Office. There are two locations in Winston-Salem:

1127 Silas Creek Parkway Parkway Plaza Winston-Salem, NC 27127	336-725-2796  Hours: Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm
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667 Peters Creek Parkway (behind Volvo car dealership) Winston-Salem, NC 27103	336-725-7060  Hours: Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm
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3. You will be asked to provide a driver’s license and proof of current insurance. A title transfer will not be carried out without this proof. Proof can be provided by showing one of the following:
4. In addition to the “Highway Use Tax,” you will have to pay a number of other fees. The “Highway Use Tax” totals 3% of the book-value of the car (not necessarily what you paid for it). The more expensive the car, the more tax you can expect to pay. Here is a schedule of fees that are charged:

• Certificate of Title	\$35.00
• Instant Title	\$50.00
• License Plate Registration Fee for Private Passenger Vehicle	\$20.00
(License Plate Registration Fee for Private Truck under 4,000 lbs.)	\$21.50
Regional Transportation Authority Registration Tax for Vehicles Registered in Wake, Durham, and Orange Counties (if applicable)	\$ 5.00
• Transfer of Plate	\$10.00
• Highway Use Tax (Based on Vehicle’s Purchase Price or Value)	3%

5. Once you have paid the necessary fees and taxes, you will receive a new license plate and registration sticker. A new title will be mailed to the address that you used on the application form. It usually takes between 2-3 weeks for the new title to arrive.
6. Also, all motor vehicles registered in North Carolina must be inspected annually for mechanical safety and pass an emissions test. Most auto facilities (car dealerships, auto repair shops, etc) can perform this service.

You will receive a sticker to be placed in the left bottom corner of your front windshield. Having an out-of-date or otherwise invalid inspection sticker will cost you \$250.

For more information concerning vehicle registration in North Carolina, please visit <http://www.ncdot.org/dmv/>.

## Banking in the United States

**T**here are many banks to choose from in Winston-Salem. Among the largest banks with the most branches are Bank of America and Wachovia. The closest bank to the UNCSA campus is Bank of America which is located at the intersection of Sprague Street and Old Lexington Road.

In order to open an account at a U.S. bank you will need either a passport or a Social Security card.

### Checking Account & ATM/Debit Card

Most students end up opening a checking account when they arrive in the U.S. With this type of account you are able to deposit and withdraw funds directly from your account. You can withdraw funds from your account either by

- Writing a paper check for a designated amount to pay for goods or services
- Use an ATM/Debit card

#### **Checking**

Most banks charge a nominal monthly service fee for most checking accounts. The fee varies according to the type of account. You will need to speak to a bank official to determine which type of account best fits your needs.

If you write a check and don't have enough funds in your account to cover the amount of the check, you will be charged an expensive service fee for a "returned" check. You may avoid this by opening an account that has "overdrawn" protection.

You should keep careful track of all your financial transactions to avoid any unnecessary fees or fines.

If you lose your check book, you should notify the bank immediately.

#### **ATM/Debit Card**

With an ATM/Debit card you can make cash withdrawals from an automated teller machine (ATM). If you make a withdrawal from an ATM that is not affiliated with your bank, you will probably be charged a small fee.

If you lose your ATM/Debit card, you should report it immediately to your bank. If the loss is reported to the bank within 24 hours, you will only be responsible for an amount that shall not exceed \$50 of the total amount that occurs due to fraudulent use.

When you apply for an ATM/Debit card, you will be assigned or asked to choose a personal identification number (PIN). Do not choose one that is normally found in your wallet, i.e. your birthday.

### Credit Cards

Most students discover that it is not long before they begin to receive solicitations from credit card companies in the mail. If you have no credit history in the U.S. and you apply for a card for which you have not been pre-approved, you might be denied. Don't be discouraged as most students are eventually able to obtain a card after several applications and phone calls. A credit card can be a very convenient thing to own but you should keep in mind:

- You will need a Social Security number to be eligible to apply for most credit cards.
- There is a large fee for late payment of your monthly bill.
- Shop around and look for a credit card that offers the best financial terms for your personal needs.
- Don't use a credit card to live beyond your means. Annual interest rates charged by most credit card companies exceed 19%. Try to pay off the entire bill each month to avoid finance charges.
- It is generally considered safe to use your credit card to make purchases over the Internet as long as you are dealing with an established merchant that uses recognized encryption software. (Look for a closed lock at the top of the page.)
- Any loss or theft of your card should be reported immediately to the credit card company.

## Basic Healthcare

**H**ealth care is extremely expensive in America. To help protect you, the University of North Carolina School of the Arts requires that you have health insurance while you are registered here. The school even provides you with that coverage through the NC Association of Insurance Agents, Inc. The amount is \$540 per year and is billed to your account. If you have questions about health insurance, please contact [Health Services](#).

Health Services is located in the Wellness Center in the Student Commons.

Phone number: 3288 (to call from off-campus: 770-3288)

Hours of Operation:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday	8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Wednesday	8 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Health Services can help with check-ups, colds, prescriptions and a variety of other services that you may require while attending the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

In case of a serious medical emergency, you should call an ambulance by dialing **911**. This number is the Emergency Service Network and can be used throughout the entire U.S.

Questions regarding dentists and other specialized care should also be directed to Health Services. You need to inform your Coordinator any time you visit a hospital or if some other emergency arises.

## Grocery Guide

### **Supermarkets**

**Lowe's** – several locations. The closest store to UNCSA is at 5034 Peters Creek Parkway.

Traditional American grocery store featuring food staples, fresh vegetables and meats, paper and cleaning products, and personal care items.

**Harris Teeter** – several locations. The closest store to UNCSA is at 2281 Cloverdale Ave.

Traditional American grocery store featuring food staples, fresh vegetables and meats, paper and cleaning products, and personal care items.

**Food Lion** – several locations. The closest store to UNCSA is at 3197 Peters Creek Parkway

Traditional American grocery store featuring food staples, fresh vegetables and meats, paper and cleaning products, and personal care items.

**Whole Foods Market** – 41 Miller Street

An upscale grocery that features a wide selection of health food, organic food and products, cheese, wine and other European and American foods.

**The Fresh Market** – 3285 Robinhood Road

Wide selection of cheeses, wines and other European specialty items. [www.thefreshmarket.net](http://www.thefreshmarket.net)

**Aldi Market** – 2715 Peters Creek Parkway (next to Pizza Hut)

Cheapest grocery store in Winston-Salem. Carries all the usual fare of an American grocery store, but with a reduced selection.

### **International Food Stores**

**Oriental Oasis** – 1347 Lockland Avenue

Asian food.

**Oriental Shoppette** – 4001 Country Club Road

Asian food.

**La Esquina Latina** – 1351 Lockland Avenue

Mexican, South American.

**Golden India Restaurant/Grocery** – 2837 Fairlawn Drive

Indian food.

**Acropolis Market-Mediterranean** – 3068 Trenwest Drive

### **Farmers' Markets**

Outdoor markets are not nearly as prevalent in the U.S. as they are in most other countries. Winston-Salem has 2 outdoor markets that have scheduled open times.

**Downtown Farmers' Market** – 6<sup>th</sup> and Cherry St., in the downtown Arts District

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., May through October.

**Winston-Salem Retail Farmers' Market** – Dixie Classic Fairgrounds, 421 West 27<sup>th</sup> Street

Saturdays from 6 a.m. – 1 p.m., year-round

## Winston-Salem Related Links

[City of Winston-Salem Website](#)

[Convention and Visitors' Bureau](#)

[The Winston-Salem Journal](#) (newspaper)

[Craig's List](#) (website containing classified ads of all types)

## Winston-Salem/Triad Entertainment Links

[Go Triad](#) – entertainment in the Triad

[Smitty's Notes](#) – Winston-Salem happenings

## Restaurants in Winston-Salem and Nearby

Smitty's Notes has a very good list of restaurants in the Winston-Salem area. Please follow the link to learn about fine dining options in this part of North Carolina. <http://www.smittysnotes.com/restaurants.html>

## Other Helpful Web Links

[www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services web page has valuable information about visa classifications, citizenship, laws and regulations. There are also many forms available for you to print and send to the respective government agencies.

[www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

As an international student you are unfamiliar with the Social Security numbers that Americans live by. Social security numbers are an important part of identification that Americans use for opening bank accounts, purchasing cell phones or renting apartments. As an international student you will not likely have a social security number. As an international student you will need a social security number if you choose to work on or off campus. If you are interested in accepting employment, please see the International Student Coordinator for more information.

[www.irs.ustreas.gov](http://www.irs.ustreas.gov)

As a non-resident, you are required to file taxes with the International Revenue Service (IRS), even if you were not employed. This form is called 8843. If you have been employed in the US as an F-1 student, in addition to the 8843, you will also file 1040-EZ form which is for your income tax return. International Student Services holds a tax seminar for international students prior to the April 15th deadline for filing taxes. However, this seminar does not replace professional advice, and you are advised to use a professional tax service to assist in your filing process. You may also call 1-800-829-1040 to speak with an IRS representative. Please be sure to tell the representative that you are a non-resident for tax purposes.