

# Bluefield State University Handbook for International Students



2024-2025

Office of International Student Services  
BLUEFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY  
219 ROCK STREET  
BLUEFIELD, WEST VIRGINIA 24701  
EMAIL: [internationaladmit@bluefieldstate.edu](mailto:internationaladmit@bluefieldstate.edu)

The International Student Handbook has been designed to help new international students make the transition to studying in the USA and to serve as a reference for returning students. In the case of any differences with Bluefield State University's Course Catalog or Student Handbook, the Course Catalog and Student Handbook guidelines should be followed. Topics covered in the Handbook appear in the table of contents. Browsing is encouraged.

### **Office Hours**

The Office of International Student Services is located in Conley Hall room 203 and is open 8:00 a.m. -4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. No appointment required, but it is highly recommended.

## Table of Contents

Welcome Letter.....	p. 4
Contact Information for Selected Offices .....	p. 5
Getting Started .....	p. 6
Staying in Touch with Home.....	p. 7
Immigration Regulations and Employment .....	p. 9
Maintaining F1 Status .....	p. 10
General Information.....	p. 11
Tuition, Fees and Finances .....	p. 13
Attendance.....	p. 13
Grades.....	p. 14
Classroom Etiquette .....	p. 15
Habits to improve your English .....	p. 16
When, Where & How to Study .....	p. 17
Time Management.....	p. 18
Medical Insurance .....	p. 19
Culture Shock .....	p. 21
Security .....	p. 22
Employment .....	p. 23
Frequently asked questions.....	p. 24
American Customs and Culture .....	p. 26
Seasons .....	p. 27
Practical Information .....	p. 28
Glossary of College Terms .....	p. 32
Responsibilities .....	p. 35
Acknowledgements.....	p. 36

Office of International Student Services  
Bluefield State University  
219 Rock Street  
Bluefield, West Virginia 24701

Dear International Students:

Welcome! My name is Jennifer Johnson and I am the International Student Services Coordinator. I am a Bluefield State graduate myself and am pleased to now serve at the institution that gave me my start. I obtained my M.B.A. in 2024 from Bluefield State University and M.S.S.L. from Mountain State University in Strategic Leadership in 2004. I have been assisting international students for over twenty years. If you know me, you know my family, especially my daughter. She is the little sister of all the international students at Bluefield State and she is excited to meet you, too!

Thank you for choosing to attend Bluefield State University. We hope you will find all aspects of your stay with us to be positive, rewarding, safe, secure, comfortable, and meaningful.

Should you have any concerns or issues, academic and non-academic, please know that we are here to assist you from the application phase through your graduation at Bluefield State University. The Office of International Student Services (ISS) is the primary office on campus that addresses the needs of BSU's international students. We encourage prospective and degree-seeking students to contact our office with any questions.

BSU staff are here to help you with questions regarding educational development, personal and financial planning, cross-cultural issues, immigration rules and regulations, as well as community programs and resources.

I encourage you to engage in as many on-campus activities as you can during your academic pursuits at Bluefield State University. Your participation in the International Student Organization (ISO) will be welcomed by ISO faculty and staff advisers. Please familiarize yourself with the different SEVIS requirements while maintaining an F-1 status. Particularly within 30 days of your arrival at BSU, you are required to come by my office to complete your SEVIS Registration to maintain your F-1 status.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer A. Johnson, MBA, MSSSL, CPT  
International Student Services Coordinator/PDSO

## ***Contact Information for Campus Offices***

Primary Designated School Official	304-327-4173
Designated School Official	304-327-4287
Admissions	304-327-4065
Business Office	304-327-4047
Campus Life	304-327-4187
Counseling Center (for Tutoring)	304-327-4444
Dean of Students	304-327-4401
Institutional Computer Services Help Desk	304-327-4090
Library Services	304-327-4054
Maintenance	304-327-4195
Moodle Administrator	304-327-4591
President	304-327-4030
Provost & Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs	304-327-4161
Public Safety	304-327-4180
Registrar	304-327-4060
Student Government Association	304-327-4185
Student Health Center	304-327-4170
School of Business	304-327-4081
School of Education, Humanities, Social Science	304-327-4027
School of Nursing and Allied Health	304-327-4136
School of Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics	304-327-4120
Virtual University and Technology Division	304-327-4057 or 4578

## ***Contact information for Off Campus Departments***

City of Bluefield Police Department	304-327-6101
Princeton Police Department	304-487-5000
Princeton Community Hospital	304-487-7000

## ***Getting Started***

### ***THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU BEGIN CLASS:***

- Complete online orientation –
- Register for classes (Required)
- Attend Convocation (Required)
- Get a student ID card (Library)
- Check-in to the Office of International Student Services (Required) Bring copy of Visa & I-94
- Find out where your classes are located
- Become familiar with campus resources (International Student Services, Counseling Office, Library, Academic Success Center, Student Health Center)
- Buy textbooks in the Book Store (Student Center) or online

### ***THINGS TO DO DURING THE SEMESTER:***

- Check your MyBSU account regularly for important school information
- Meet with your Advisor
- Find out what your instructors expect from you by reviewing each class syllabus carefully and asking your professor in class or office hours for more information.
- Visit the Academic Success Center for tutoring.

## ***Staying in Touch with Home***

It's a great adventure coming to a new place to study, but be fair to yourself, your family and your friends: stay in touch. There are all sort of reasons to stay in touch with home, and all sorts of ways to do so. The United States has a well-developed network of communications ranging from traditional postal service, to international express mailings, such as Federal Express or DHL, to advanced telecommunications (each student is given an e-mail account which can be used in all on-campus computer labs). These computers also provide access to the World Wide Web.

If you accept an offer of admission, you will be expected to arrive at your college or university no later than the "report date" indicated on your I-20.

Allow enough time to say "good-bye" to friends and family.

Check on airplane tickets as early as possible; you might be able to save money by booking your flight in advance. Reconfirm your flight reservation 72 hours before departure.

Ask the airlines if there are any restrictions regarding how much baggage you can take, or if there are any size or weight restrictions to the baggage you can take with you.

If you will be bringing a large quantity of baggage, you may wish to check with transport companies regarding the cost of shipment of your belongings. It may be less expensive to ship your baggage on a transport carrier instead of a passenger carrier.

Pack a travel bag with personal articles for use in case your luggage is temporarily lost during your journey. Pack valuables and items that could leak, such as shampoo, in this bag.

Be mindful of airline's regulations regarding what you can carry on the plane.

Make a list of the important items you wish to take with you - medicines, clothing, educational aids {remember: books are heavy and generally accessible in the US}, personal items, alarm clock, favorite toy, lucky hat, favorite music, etc.

If you require medicines containing controlled drugs or narcotics (e.g., cough medicine, heart drugs, sleeping pills or stimulants), you should have all these products properly packaged and labeled.

You will not be able to have foreign prescriptions for controlled drugs filled in the U.S. without seeing a U.S. registered doctor. You should also have a statement of prescription from your doctor indicating that the medicine is being used under a doctor's direction and is necessary for your physical well-being.

**READ THE INFORMATION WE PROVIDE** so you will know what to expect once you reach the US.

Familiarize yourself with your travel documents (passport, visa, I-20 form).

If you already have health and repatriation insurance which covers you while you are in the US, bring documentation of your coverage along with the telephone number of the insurance company and the name of your insurance agent.

Contact your International Student Service Coordinator with the date and time of your arrival in Bluefield, West Virginia and we will **TRY** to make arrangements to pick you up at the Raleigh County Regional Airport or the local bus station.

Give your family a contact number, such as that of the Office of International Student Services Office **(304) 327-4173**, in case of emergency.

When you arrive in Bluefield, you should have a list of emergency contacts in the United States (if you have any) and abroad. Please hand it to your International Student Services Coordinator as soon as you arrive.

Prepare a budget of expenses before leaving home. If you actually have a written plan, you are less likely to spend money on unnecessary items. REMEMBER: Almost any item you do not wish to bring (or forget to bring) will be available in the US -- with the exception of some ethnic foods. The first month of your stay in the US will also be the most expensive.

It may be helpful to budget a small emergency travel fund to help in case of unexpected layovers or flight meals that are not edible. Credit cards are helpful as you travel across countries using different currencies.

Before you leave, make sure you have your International Student Service Coordinator phone number where you can locate her in the event you run into any complications once you arrive in the US.

Depending on how early you arrive before classes begin, you may need to make arrangements for your first few nights stay in Bluefield.

While traveling, you should keep your passport, identification papers and money with you at all times. Do not lose them as it is very difficult to replace them while you are traveling!

You will go through customs after retrieving your luggage. You cannot bring in articles made from protected species, nor can you transport perishable foods such as cheese, fruit or nuts. You have duty-free allowance of \$100 in gifts, 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars or 2 kg of smoking tobacco. If you bring alcohol, you should be 21 or older. If you carry more than \$10,000 you must report this to customs officials.

Documents to bring:

- Official transcripts from secondary schools, colleges, or universities
- Medical and dental records, including certificates of immunizations and vaccinations (especially important for young children)
  - Information about medical conditions or treatments, prescriptions for medication (including generic and brand names) and eyeglasses
  - Marriage certificates
  - Birth Certificates for children and spouse
  - International driver's license

Obtain English translations of these documents and have the translations certified by U.S. educational advising center or a U.S. consulate or embassy. Retain photocopies of all original documents for your records.

Also keep in mind, not all over the counter medicines and preparations are easily available in the United States. The dispensing of birth control is not a free service in the United States. It is best to bring a supply of all drugs to cover your whole stay to avoid additional costs.

About two weeks before you are to depart, start a second "items to take" list that includes things you did not initially think of, but you are using on a regular basis -- dental floss, shoe brush, sun glasses etc. These will also be important to take with you.



## ***Immigration Regulations and Employment***

Do not be deceived into buying immigration benefits, and be aware of services that offer to file immigration documents on your behalf. If solicited by such services, inform your International Student Services Coordinator immediately.

United States immigration law is established by the U.S. Congress. It is implemented and enforced by the Department of Homeland Security. The central Department of Homeland Security (DHS) office is located in Washington, D.C., with regional offices located throughout the United States.

U.S. government regulations are subject to frequent change and revision. Recent reforms in U.S. immigration procedures affecting F-1 international students have caused some concern and confusion. Therefore, it is important that you consult the International Student Services Coordinator if you have questions concerning your immigration status. **DO NOT** rely on advice from friends, faculty, or other staff members. Unfortunately, ignorance of the law does not exempt a student from his or her responsibility to abide by DHS regulations.

Like students, BSU has certain responsibilities and obligations set forth by the U.S. Immigration Service. In return for DHS's authorization to enroll non-immigrant F-1 students, the University is required by law to provide immigration assistance and advisement, and to issue the appropriate documents needed by F-1 students to maintain their status in this country. In addition, the University must maintain records on F-1 students and provide certain types of information to DHS upon request.

The University President has assigned this responsibility to the International Student Services Coordinator, who in turn has been delegated by DHS as the "Primary Designated School Official" (PDSO) for BSU. At Bluefield State University that Primary Designated School Official is:

Jennifer A. Johnson, MSSL, CPT  
International Student Services Coordinator  
Bluefield State University  
**Phone:** (304)327-4173  
**Email:** [jjohnson@bluefieldstate.edu](mailto:jjohnson@bluefieldstate.edu)

Please be aware the DHS requires universities to keep track of all international students, their name and address changes, as well as academic, work related and judicial activities.

It is important that you keep ALL documents issued to you. You should obtain a folder (they are available in the University bookstore) and keep all your DHS records together (**with the exception of your I-20 that you are required to carry with you**). You should also make a photocopy of all documents you submit to DHS. This way, if something is lost or questioned, you have a copy of the documents and information you submitted.

## ***Maintaining Your F1 Status***

As an F-1 student, you must comply with certain immigration laws governing your stay in this country. To maintain your legal status, you must follow the rules below. If you do not abide by these laws, DHS will consider you "out of-status" and therefore in violation of the conditions of your F-1 immigration status. You will then have to apply for re-instatement and run the risk of being required to leave this country. In order to remain in status, you must:

1. Check in with the Office of International Student Services to activate your SEVIS record.
2. Academics - Enroll in 12 units or more each semester - Enrolling in less than 12 units is permitted ONLY with authorization from the ISS - Medical exception: If you experience medical problems, meet with an ISS staff member. - Attend each class session. (Remember that for many professors, late = absent!)
3. Pay tuition/fees by the due date before classes begin. - If you enroll in additional classes during the add/drop period, pay for the classes as soon as possible after enrolling.
4. Report address, cell phone, or email address changes to the ISS within 10 days.
5. Inform the ISS if you change your major or change your immigration status.
6. Keep your I-20 and passport valid for at least 6 months into the future.
7. Travel - Get a travel signature on your I-20 before traveling outside of the US.
8. Employment - Get employment authorization *BEFORE* you start working - Complete at least one semester with a 2.0 GPA or higher before looking for on campus employment. - Employment off campus must *ALWAYS* be authorized, including volunteer work. - Employment hours per week are limited to 20 during the school year (fall and spring semesters), and full time (over 20 hours) during the summer.
9. Time Departure, Transfer, or Change of Status - F1 students have 60 days from program completion to depart the US, transfer their SEVIS records to another school, or change their immigration status.
10. Enrollment - Be sure that you are enrolled full time, all tuition and fees are paid, and that you attend every meeting of the class, especially the first-class meeting. The Office of International Student Services website has specific instructions on these processes, required forms, and business hours:
11. Travel & US Re-entry Each time you travel out of the US, you need to have a valid travel signature. You can request a valid travel signature.
12. Apply for "extension of stay" BEFORE your authorized stay expires.
13. Abide by rules requiring disclosure of information and prohibition of criminal activity.

## ***General Information***

### ***Embassy Contacts***

A detailed list of embassies located in Washington, D.C. is available from [embassy.org](http://embassy.org)

### ***Storage***

If you would like to store property for winter break or the summer months, the following businesses provide the service:

Stadium Drive Self-Storage  
(304)320-2172

Cubesmart Self Storage  
(304)325-6224

Cumberland Rd Self Storage  
(304)320-7133

Twin City Storage  
(304)325-3500

Rick's Route 52 Self Storage  
(304)325-6016

### ***Student Life***

In the US, universities are more than just classes; they are a community of students that celebrate their interests through activities and groups outside of the classroom. We hope that you will participate in the many extracurricular events that BSU has to offer. This includes:

- Athletics
- Cultural Activities
- Greek Society
- Student Organizations and Clubs
- Campus Events
- and more!!!

Explore the various ways you can become involved in student activities.

### ***Driver's License***

A Driver's license is also commonly used as identification. You can Drive in the United States with your home license for one year, after that a U.S. license will be required. Please view the Motor Vehicle Administration website for international students for details on obtaining a driver's license.

### ***Transportation***

Bluefield does not have long distance transportation. If you arrive by plane, or by bus, you will have to make arrangements to be picked up at the airport. If flying into Charlotte, NC there is the option to take a hopper flight through Contour airlines [contour airlines](http://contourairlines.com) to Beckley, WV.

### ***Social Security Number***

Social Security Numbers generally are assigned to people who are authorized to work in the United States. Social Security numbers are used to report your wages to the government and to determine eligibility for Social Security benefits. Social Security will not assign you a number just to enroll in a college or school. When filling out the application, check "legal alien allowed to work." Please note: you need to wait 10 days after you initially enter to apply. With the application, you must submit a letter from the Office of International Student Services.

### ***Telephone System***

All numbers in the United States have a three-digit area code number, and a seven-digit number. To call a long-distance number, dial 1 + area code + seven-digit number.

Coin operated telephones cost 35 cents per local call. There are some numbers that can be reached without depositing money. These are:

- (0) - operator, who can help make connections and answer questions,
- (911) - emergency,
- (411) - directory assistance for local calls only,
- (800) - all 800 numbers are toll free numbers.

There are several companies specializing in long distance and international calls. These companies offer a variety of services and should be picked by students based on individual needs. After establishing an account, the company will issue a calling card and an access number for each customer; bills are issued on a monthly basis.

Telephone books are very important sources of information, and are usually divided into four parts: residential numbers (white), government numbers (blue), business numbers ("white pages") and business numbers with advertisements included ("yellow pages"). Telephone books are widely available, and provide other important information, such as area codes for the United States, time zones, directions for international calls, information on telephone companies, etc.

It is generally appropriate to call someone at home between 10:00 am and 9:00 pm. If you are using someone else's phone to make a call, it is polite to ask for permission first, especially before calling any long-distance numbers.

### ***Tuition, Fees & Finances***

International students pay the same tuition and fees that US students from other states pay. This is nonresident, or “out-of-state”.

Full payment is due by the Friday before classes begin. If you register for additional classes during the Add/Drop period, you should pay when you register for the class(es). If you drop from a class before attendance verification, you will receive a full refund. If you drop a class after you have been verified as attending the class, you are still responsible for the class charges since you took up a seat in the class.

If you totally withdraw from the University after attendance verification, the refund will be pro-rated based on the amount of the class attended. Generally, refunds take a minimum of six weeks to process. No refunds will be made because of a reduction in credit hours. Refunds for students who receive federal or state grant, scholarship, or load assistance will be paid to those accounts first. Any amount of refund which exceeds the students financial aid awards will be refunded to the student unless the student has unpaid institutional charges, or the student owes a repayment of his/her financial aid cash balances for the refund term.

All students enrolled for their first semester at Bluefield State University (freshmen or transfers) will be refunded according to the pro-rata schedule required by the 2006 Amendments to the Federal Higher Education Act printed below. Other refund schedules shown below will apply after the first semester of enrollment is completed. Samples of documents used to compute refunds for federal financial aid recipients may be secured from the Financial Aid Office. Pro-rata refund regulations permit the University to subtract from the calculated refund amount an administrative fee not to exceed the lesser of five percent of the student’s institutional charges or \$100.00

#### **Academic Year (Semester) First-Time Students**

During first and second weeks	90% will be refunded
During third week	80% will be refunded
During Fourth and Fifth weeks	70% will be refunded
During sixth week	60% will be refunded
During seventh and eighth weeks	50% will be refunded
During ninth week	40% will be refunded
Beginning the tenth week	NO REFUND

#### **Summer Terms and Non-Traditional Periods First-Time Students**

During the first 14% of the term	90% will be refunded
From 15% to 20% of the term	80% will be refunded
From 21% to 30% of the term	70% will be refunded
From 31% to 40% of the term	60% will be refunded
From 41% to 50% of the term	50% will be refunded
From 51% to 60% of the term	40% will be refunded
After 60% of the term is completed	NO REFUND

#### **Academic Year (semester) Non-First-Time Students**

During first and second weeks	90% will be refunded
During third and fourth weeks	70% will be refunded
During fifth and sixth weeks	50% will be refunded
Beginning the seventh week	NO REFUND

#### **Summer Terms and Non-Traditional Periods Non-First-Time Students**

During the first 13% of the term	90% will be refunded
From 14% to 25% of the term	70% will be refunded
From 26% to 38% of the term	50% will be refunded
After 38% of the term is completed	NO REFUND

Refund checks due students who withdraw totally from the University will be mailed within 30 days of the date of the completed and duly signed Permit to Withdraw from the University form is received in the Business Office. Refunds to institutional federal financial aid accounts will be deposited within the 45-day federal limit. Bluefield State refund amounts will be computed according to the above schedule. Refunds to federal aid programs will be computed according to the federal requirements. Samples of federal refund calculations may be obtained in the Financial Aid Office.

### ***Managing Finances***

Managing your finances is one of the most important and challenging aspects of a successful and enjoyable academic experience. Dealing with a new currency and cost of living are the beginning of the challenge. When you are admitted to a US institution, take a close look at the I-20 that will accompany the letter of admission and the budget you prepared for yourself based on estimated expenses. Use the list below to help you think about all the possible expenses you may have.

- Tuition
- Fees
- Rent
- Meals (often called "Board")
- Health Insurance
- Books
- Transportation
- Communications
- Clothes
- Personal Expenses
- Family Expenses
- Recreation
- Travel
- Taxes

The estimate that appears on the I-20 is usually accurate, and international students are expected to have funds to cover the full amount shown. It is not possible to arrange for more financial aid once you arrive at an institution. If you will receive a scholarship or fellowship, determine ahead of time what portion is taxable and include the necessary taxes in your budget.

You will need to transfer large amounts of money for your expenses for the year. The best ways to transfer money are:

- A bank draft (also called a cashier's check) drawn on a U.S. bank in U.S. dollars.
- A "wire transfer" from your bank at home to a U.S. bank (Wire transfers cannot be made directly to Bluefield State University).
- You can pay your university bill at the cashier's office, (304) 327-4450, by personal check, money order, or credit card.

### ***ATTENDANCE***

It is your responsibility to attend all class meetings of each course in which you are enrolled. It is especially important to attend the first two meetings. After an absence, check with your instructor about completing missed assignments.

### ***GRADES***

When you register for a class, you will have the option of choosing to take the class for a letter grade (A, B, C, D, F) or pass/no-pass (P/NP). You should not take a class in your major as Pass/No Pass (P/NP). You should check with a counselor before choosing other required transfer classes on a P/NP basis. Classes taken on a P/NP basis do not affect your GPA.

Grades are represented by the following symbols:

<b><i>Symbol</i></b>	<b><i>Definition</i></b>
A	Excellent
B	Good
C	Satisfactory
D	Passing, less than satisfactory
F	Failing
P	Pass (= C or above)
NP	No Pass (= D or F)
I	Incomplete (See below)
W	Withdrawal (class dropped between week 3 and 12 of a 16-week class)

### ***INCOMPLETE GRADES***

An incomplete grade is given to a student who has not completed a class due to unforeseen circumstances (such as illness). When a grade of 'I' is given, a contract must be completed by the instructor. The contract will list the conditions for removal of the 'I' grade. Students must make up an 'I' grade within one semester or the default grade will be recorded on the transcript.

### ***WITHDRAWALS (DROPS)***

It is your responsibility to drop any class that you no longer plan to attend. If you do not officially drop a class, you may receive a grade of F. Check the drop deadline by contacting the Registrar's Office. **DO NOT ASSUME THAT THE INSTRUCTOR WILL DROP YOU! DO NOT** drop a class if it will result in you being below 12 units unless you have received authorization from the counselors and from International Student Center (ISC).

### ***REPEATING COURSES***

A course may be repeated when student receives a grade of D, F, or NP. After successful completion of a repeated course with grades A, B, C, or P, the original course and grade will automatically be disregarded from the cumulative GPA.

## ***Classroom Etiquette***

### ***Classroom Expectations***

- Always attend the first day of classes
- Arrive to class on time, be prepared, and do not leave early
- Notify your instructors when you will be missing class (ahead of time)
- Ask for help or clarification when needed
- Participate in class by asking questions, contributing to the discussion and/or group work
- If you need extra help, go to your instructor's office hours
- Be responsible for your own work
- Gain motivation for learning, not just because you want to pass or earn the highest grade
- Do not text, listen to music, or surf the Internet during classroom time

### ***Academic Integrity***

Every country has its own ideas about cheating. In the U.S., we have a high standard for academic integrity. Your professor will expect you to complete your work on your own and that you will appropriately cite your sources of information. As a student in the U.S., it is in your best interest to be aware of and abide by these rules in order to be successful academically. There are two common types of academic dishonesty:

***Cheating*** – using unauthorized sources or assistance on a test, in a paper or other assignment; examples include:

- Using lecture notes during a closed-book test
- Working with other students on an individual assignment

In a learner-centered classroom, students are expected to express their own opinions, free of influence of others including their friends and classmates. In some countries, students often share notes, papers, data, and resources. In the U.S., there are appropriate and inappropriate times to share information and ideas.

***Plagiarism*** – using the ideas and words of another person without giving proper credit to the author; examples include:

- Copying (in whole or in part) texts from the Internet without giving the source
  - Representing an idea, you got from reading a book/article as your own idea in an essay
- In the U.S., an individual is thought to own original ideas, words, and knowledge. This means that students must carefully give credit to the authors of sources they cite. What is already written must be cited, including written sources in books, journal articles, unpublished manuscripts, and the Internet. There are also cases when spoken words, such as a formal speech, must be cited.

### ***What Happens if I Cheat or Plagiarize?***

Consequences may include:

- A mark of zero for your assignment
- A grade of “F” for the class in which the cheating/plagiarism occurred
- Suspension or expulsion

### ***Where Can I Get Help?***

All of these consequences can have a serious impact on your student visa. Not knowing how to properly cite your sources is not a valid excuse for plagiarism – all students are responsible for learning how to properly cite sources. The staff at the Student Success Center can advise you on how to correctly cite your sources. For additional resources on how to cite your sources, visit the [writing lab](#).



## **6 Great Habits for Improving your English**

Studying at an American College/University can be challenging if English is not your first language. Every student wants to make the most progress in the shortest time. What habits can help you learn English faster and get better grades?

### **1. Learn Every Day**

Even when you are very tired or have lots of homework in your classes, learn something new – vocabulary, sentence patterns, ideas – every day. Even 10-15 minutes a day can make a big difference. Never miss a chance to increase your knowledge. Language is the key that will open many opportunities during your college career.

### **2. Be Motivated**

What is your goal at BSU? How will improving your English help you reach your goal? Do you want to work in a business field? Improve your writing so that you can create effective business plans. Art or design? Develop the spoken and written skills to sell your concept to clients. Health care? Develop communication skills to take effective notes and communicate with patients and colleagues. You get the idea. You are learning because you want to achieve something. When you get there, your life will be better. Always remember your goals, even when learning or using English makes you feel tired.

### **3. Record New Vocabulary**

To learn a new vocabulary word really well, you have to remind yourself of it hourly, daily, and weekly. Research shows that you need to review a new word at least 6 times to remember it. Write down all your new vocabulary in a little book that you can always carry around with you. Or keep a record on your cell phone – you always have that with you, don't you? And when you learn a word, remember it in a sentence, practice pronouncing it, and learn synonyms and antonyms of the word (Synonym – words that have similar meanings, and antonym – words that have opposite meaning. Remember: Use it or lose it!

### **4. Read and Watch!**

Read in English things that you like, not boring things. Watch programs that are interesting. These should stretch your language abilities, too. Notice new grammar patterns and important vocabulary. The more you read and watch, the quicker you progress – it's as simple as that.

### **5. Be Brave**

Don't worry about small mistakes! No one minds! When you learn new vocabulary or grammar, try to use it as soon as possible. Don't always hang out with friends from the same background as you. Grow your friendship circle to include friends that you have to speak English with. Campus clubs are a GREAT way to meet new people and become a part of the campus. Go to your professors' office hours to ask questions. Practice makes perfect!

### **6. Use Technology (wisely)**

Listen to podcasts of native speakers. Do online practice to check your level and knowledge. Watch the news in English. Comment on articles you read online (in English) and interact with blog authors. Record yourself speaking with free audio software. Make your own flashcards with online flashcard generators. Play games in English...so many opportunities!

**Remember that no one can improve your English for you.**

**But if you develop the right habits, you can reach your study goals faster.**

## ***When, Where, & How to Study***

### ***WHEN TO STUDY***

- Plan two hours of study time for every hour you spend in class.
- Study difficult subjects first.
- Take breaks when needed.
- Be aware of the aware of your best time of day. Some people study better at night; some during the day.
- Review class notes as soon as possible, and get help with the parts you do not understand.
- Use waiting time wisely. Whether it's between classes, at lunchtime, or when waiting for an appointment, you can find time to study.

### ***WHERE TO STUDY***

- Study in the same place as much as possible. Have a routine.
- Study in an upright chair. Do not study on a comfortable couch or in bed.
- You know the best place to study (i.e., library, park, or in your room).
- Avoid studying in a room with distractions, like TV, radio, or phone.
- Study in a well-lit and orderly room.

### ***HOW TO STUDY***

- Study every day. Keep up with your assignments.
- Make notes of what you read, using your own words. This works better than underlining because it makes you think about what you read.
- Anticipate exam questions based on class work and assignments. Prepare answers to help you review.
- Use the college library for reference, research, and quiet study.
- Review class notes as soon as possible.
- Use 3x5 index cards as informational flash cards.
- Learn to say NO to distractions
- Begin papers and projects early so you can write, revise, type, and proofread. Spelling errors, poor grammar, or late work will lower your grade.
- Form or join a study group with classmates. Research shows this is the best way to study.

## ***Time Management***

Before choosing your classes, take time to consider the following: How much time will you need to spend on your studies as a college student? Being a successful college student requires not only the time you spend in the classroom but hours of study outside of class as well.

Each class has a unit value. Generally, one unit of credit equals one hour of class time. Most classes are three units, so they meet about three hours per week. Plan on studying 2 – 2 ½ hours per week for each hour in class. But keep in mind that some classes that involve a heavy reading load, like Art History or Business Law, or extensive lab or project hours, like Architecture or Health Sciences, will require even more time outside of class. If English is not your first language and you have not taken a full load of classes in English before, you might need twice as much study time as a native speaker student to get the same results.

Calculate your semester work load like this

12 units (3-4 classes)

<b>Enroll in</b>	<b>Study:</b>	<b>Total time needed:</b>
12 units (3-4 classes)	24-30 hrs/wk	36-42 hrs/wk
16 units (4-5 classes)	32-40 hrs/wk	48-16 hrs/wk

### **Full-time load = 12 units, or 36-42 hours/week!**

Use a weekly planner like the one below to arrange your hours during a regular school week. Consider the following:

- Class time and study time for all of your classes
- Other commitments (family/friends, eat, sleep, travel to and from school, etc.)
- Time for yourself (exercise, social life)
- Plan realistically! You might want to start with fewer classes during your first semester. This way you can get used to the demands of being a US college student. Evaluate your situation at the end of the semester in order to make necessary adjustments for the future.

## ***Medical Insurance FAQs***

### **1. DO I NEED HEALTH INSURANCE?**

Yes. All students holding an F-1 Visa are required to carry medical insurance with medivac.

### **2. WHY DO I NEED HEALTH INSURANCE?**

International Students attending BSU are mandated to purchase a medical insurance policy. Medical care in the United States is very expensive, as well as complicated. When an unforeseen accident or illness occurs, it is important that you have insurance to cover the high costs of medical treatment. When used in accordance with the guidelines, the insurance policy the college provides is designed to cover 100% of medical treatment that a student receives and 50% of medication costs that are prescribed.

### **3. WHAT IS A CO-PAYMENT?**

A co-payment is the amount of money you pay your provider (doctor/hospital) each time you receive medical care. These fees are non-refundable.

\$\$ Saving Tip: If you plan to see a doctor for a non-urgent matter, see the Health Center.

### **4. WHAT IS A DEDUCTIBLE, AND DO I HAVE ONE?**

A deductible is the amount of money you must pay out of pocket for your medical services before the insurance company starts paying. Each medical policy is different please refer to your individual policy for specific information.

### **5. WHY DOESN'T THE INSURANCE COVER VISION AND DENTAL CARE?**

Dental and vision are typically recognized as separate plans. Refer to your individual policy for specific information.

### **6. WHAT IF I DON'T RECEIVE MY INSURANCE ID CARD IN THE MAIL?**

If you've paid your health insurance fees and do not receive your insurance ID card in the mail within about three weeks, call to request a duplicate ID card. Always report a change of address to the insurance company. Carry your Insurance ID card with you at all times. You may also download a copy of your insurance ID card from your company.

### **7. WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I NEED TO GO TO THE DOCTOR?**

Go to the Student Health Center first, if the Student Health Center cannot treat you or is closed, go to one of the urgent care centers approved by your Insurance Plan. Please note that use of an urgent care center instead of a hospital emergency room may decrease your out-of-pocket expenses.

### **8. HOW DO I FIND A DOCTOR?**

The Student Health Center can give you a referral to a local doctor. Be sure to know the following information when visiting a doctor.

- 1.) Download your medical insurance ID card.
- 2.) Review your insurance plan benefits and coverage dates/status.
- 3.) Download claims forms and instructions if applicable to your plan.
- 4.) Translate medication names, medical phrases and terms.

### **9. WHAT IF IT IS AN EMERGENCY, SUCH AS AN ACCIDENT OR LIFE-THREATENING SITUATION?**

In the case of an emergency go to the nearest hospital or call 911. Review your individual plan co-payments.

**10. WHAT IS A PPO?**

PPO stands for Preferred Provider Organization. It is the network of all doctors, specialists and hospitals that accept the insurance plan. All of those listed are available to you for consultation and treatment. Always check that they are still participating providers.

**11. WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING WITH ME FOR A SCHEDULED VISIT WITH A PHYSICIAN OR HOSPITAL?**

Always bring your insurance ID card, a referral from the Health Center if applicable, and photo identification.

**12. HOW DO I KNOW MY CASE IS CONFIDENTIAL? WILL THE HEALTH CENTER TELL MY PARENTS OR GUARDIANS ABOUT MY CASE?**

Every case is treated confidentially by Health Services and Personal Counseling on campus. No information will be released without your expressed written consent.

## ***Culture Shock***

Cultural Shock is the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone who is suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture as a result of visiting a new country, a move between social environments, or simply change to another type of life-style. One of the most common causes of culture shock involves individuals moving to a foreign environment.

### ***FOUR STAGES OF CULTURAL SHOCK***

**1. HONEYMOON:** During this period, the differences between the old and new culture seem exciting. Individuals are fascinated by the new food, the different music, customs and life-style of the new culture. But eventually this stage ends.

**2. NEGOTIATION:** After some time (around three months, depending on the person), differences between the old and new culture become apparent and this may create anxiety. Excitement may eventually give way to unpleasant feelings of frustration and anger as one continues to experience language barriers, limited food accessibility and other cultural differences which may heighten a sense of disconnection from surroundings.

**3. ADJUSTMENT:** Usually after 6 to 12 months, one grows accustomed to the new culture and develops routines. One knows what to expect in most situations and the host country no longer feels all that new. One becomes concerned with basic living again, and things become more “normal”. One starts to develop problem-solving skills for dealing with the culture and begins to accept the culture’s ways with a positive attitude. The culture begins to make sense, and negative reactions and responses to the culture are reduced.

**4. MASTERY:** In the mastery stage, individuals are able to participate fully and comfortably in the host culture. Mastery does not mean total conversion; people often keep many traits from their earlier culture, such as accents and languages. It is often referred to as the bi-cultural stage.

### ***Dealing with Culture Shock***

**1. KEEP AN OPEN MIND** Try not to make judgments about the way people in the U.S. do things. Try to remain positive and accept people for who they are.

**2. EXPERIENCING ANXIETY IS NORMAL** Learning to function in a new environment is not easy. It is natural to feel anxious or frustrated sometimes. The key is to remind yourself that these feelings are normal and are likely to be situational and temporary.

**3. DON’T BE TOO HARD ON YOURSELF** Don’t expect your English to be perfect on the first day, and don’t worry if you find that you struggle with things that would be easy in your home country. Give yourself a break and take the time you need to adjust.

**4. BE PATIENT** Don’t try to understand everything immediately. The process of adjusting to a new culture requires time. It may also require a different amount of time for different areas of adjustment. Try to remind yourself to be patient with this experience and not be overly critical of yourself.

**5. GET INVOLVED** The more people you know and activities you take part in, the more you will feel a genuine part of this new environment. In general, Americans are very accepting of people from other cultures. Meet as many people as you can and really make yourself part of the community.

**6. VISIT YOUR COACHES, COUNSELORS AND JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORGANIZATION** Always remember, you are not alone and we are here to help you. Make an appointment to meet with your coaches, counselors, and staff in the ISC for any questions you may have.

**7. KEEP A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOR** The ability to laugh at yourself in uncomfortable situations can go a long way in making your life less stressful. Go into each new situation knowing that making mistakes is okay. Learning to laugh at yourself is a great skill.

**8. TAKE CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH** Be mindful about keeping a healthy diet and getting enough exercise and rest. Try to find an activity that you enjoy and make it part of your routine. Being physically active can help reduce your stress level.

**9. STAY IN CONTACT WITH YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS FROM HOME** Of course, you will miss family and friends from home. Stay in touch via phone, Skype, and email. They understand you, and their encouragement will help you a great deal.

## ***Security Off Campus***

The following information has been prepared for your protection so that you will not take unnecessary risks. By taking a few simple precautions, you can reduce the risk to yourself, and also discourage those who commit crimes.

### ***TIPS FOR PERSONAL SAFETY IN PUBLIC AREAS***

- Carry a cell phone in case of emergencies – dial 911
- Walk in lighted areas
- Reduce the time you spend alone
- Do not walk alone at night
- If you think someone is following you, go to a public area such as a bank, restaurant, or store
- Try not to use an ATM at night and be aware of other people around you when using an ATM

### ***TIPS FOR PROTECTING YOUR PROPERTY***

- Never leave your belongings unattended – bring them with you or ask a friend to secure them for you
- Don't leave possessions visible in your parked car – put it away in your trunk
- Do not carry large amounts of cash or valuables with you – leave it at the bank or at home
- Use a U-lock instead of a cable lock to secure your bicycle
- Keep your personal information in a secure place – do not carry them with you – in case you lose your wallet
- Keep your immigration documents in a secure place, such as a safe deposit box at your local bank.

## ***Employment***

Employment is a benefit granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to eligible F-1 visa students who have been in good academic standing and have not violated any F-1 status rules and regulations. You should always consult an International Student Advisor first to check your eligibility before searching for a job.

### **1. On-Campus Employment**

You may accept on-campus employment at BSU without prior approval from USCIS. However, you need approval from the Office of International Student Services. To get approval for on-campus employment, you need to:

- A. Have completed 12 or more units at BSU
- B. Be currently enrolled in 12 or more units
- C. Have a 2.5 GPA or above

On-campus employment is limited to part-time (maximum 20 hours per week) when school is in session (i.e., Fall and Spring Semesters) and full-time (maximum 40 hours per week) during summer vacation and winter/spring breaks. Some on-campus sites where international students have worked in the past include the Academic Success Center, Student Life, Library, Admissions, Title III, and Athletics.

### **2. Off-Campus Employment**

There are different types of off-campus employment opportunities available to international students.

A. **Practical Training** Practical training is defined as work experience in the student's major field of study that can be conducted off-campus. Two types of practical training are available to international students:

1. Curricular Practical Training (CPT) available before completing their studies. CPT must be a class requirement.
2. Optional Practical Training (OPT) available before or after completing their studies. For example: vacation and post-completion optional practical training.

Students interested in doing practical training should prepare the paperwork with the international student services coordinator. Prior authorization from the ISC and USCIS is required before engaging in employment.

B. **Economic Hardship** Student must have been in F-1 status for one full academic year. Must prove to USCIS that employment is needed due to SEVERE Economic Hardship caused by circumstances beyond student's control. Must apply to USCIS for approval and show proof of hardship.

C. **VOLUNTEERING** Many international students are interested in volunteering their time during their stay in the United States for a variety of reasons, such as to serve others or to help strengthen their transfer application. You may wish participate in a campus club service event, to help out in a food bank, or volunteer in a company in your field, perhaps to "shadow" or observe to gain real-world experience. While the issue of volunteering may seem clear-cut ("I'm not getting paid, therefore I am not working"), it is actually complex and involves immigration regulations and labor law. Some of these activities are legally acceptable, and some are not. Generally, any type of volunteer work that is related to a campus club activity is approved. Volunteering off-campus might not be approved. To avoid problems with your visa, please check with the ISS before engaging in volunteer activities that are not connected with a student club or a charitable organization.



## ***Frequently Asked Questions***

### ***VISA QUESTIONS***

1. What should I do if I have an expired Visa? An F-1 visa acts as a key that allows you to enter the U.S. Once in the country, it is not a problem if your visa expires. However, if you leave the U.S. and try to re-enter, you will need a valid F-1 visa. This means you must first apply for a new visa at the U.S. embassy/consulate in your home country. It can take between 2 weeks to 3 months to process, so be prepared for an extended visit.
2. What should I do if my Passport expires? If your passport expires, go to the consulate of your government in the U.S. to obtain a new one. Don't let it expire. You must always have a valid passport. Plan ahead and apply at least 6 months prior to expiration.
3. As an International Student, when can I start working? Obtaining permission to work can be difficult and requires permission from the Office of International Student Services and in some cases, USCIS. To work on campus, you must be in status, have completed 12 units, and have a GPA of 2.5 or higher. This means you must wait approximately 5 months to apply for work on campus. For other work options, please see the PDSO/DSO.
4. What must I do before I can take a trip? If you are traveling within the United States, you do not need to make any special preparations and do not need to have any documents signed. However, if you are traveling outside the country, you must have a valid travel signature on your I-20 before you travel. Visit the Office of International Student Services and bring the following: your Passport, your Visa, your current original I-20.

### ***ACADEMIC QUESTIONS***

#### Registering for Classes

5. How do I find out what classes I should take? As a new student to BSU, you will be assigned academic counselor who will help you to select and register for classes you need.
6. What is a unit? A unit is the amount of college credit given for a course based on the number of hours the course meets weekly.
7. How many units do I have to take each semester? A minimum of 12 units are required for all international students during the Fall and Spring semesters
8. How do I find out my registration date and time? Registration dates are listed online in the [college calendar](#), be sure to review these dates.
9. How do I meet a course prerequisite? If the course prerequisite requires a placement test, you must take the test in the counseling center before registering for the course. If you have passed the prerequisite course at BSU, MYBSU will automatically clear you for the next course sequence. If you have met a prerequisite by taking a course at another college, you can get your prerequisite clearance by having your official transcripts sent to the registrar's office and evaluated.
10. How often do classes meet? There is a wide variation in how many times a course meets per week. Courses may meet once per week for approximately three hours or twice a week for approximately one and a half hours to two hours. However, classes such as lab science and math may meet one to five days per week. Short term classes are less than 16 weeks long.
11. What do I do if the class I want to take is closed? Once the class is full, you may register online for a space on the Waitlist. If space becomes available, you may receive an email with instructions on how to activate the class. You must respond within 48 hours of receiving the email. You need to check your BSU email account daily.

12. I have just registered for my classes, when do I have to pay? Payment dates are listed in the [college calendar](#)
13. Who is “Staff” in the schedule of classes? At the time the class schedule was created, an instructor had not yet been designated for the class. An instructor will be assigned to the class before the beginning of the semester.
14. What does “Permission” or “Restricted” mean on the online schedule of classes? “Permission” and “Restricted” classes are reserved for special programs. You will not be able to register for the class unless you are in that special program.
15. What does “TBA” mean in the schedule of classes? To Be Arranged. This usually means that class hours are flexible and will be arranged with the instructor.
16. How do I contact an instructor? You can find an instructor’s contact information on the class syllabus or in the BSU [online directory](#)
17. How do I know which textbooks to buy? The Bookstore will list the instructor and required text for each course. You may purchase your books before school starts or you can wait until after the first-class meeting when the instructor confirms which books are required. Used textbooks can be purchased at a reduced price. You can also order your books online at the [Big Blue Bookstore](#).
18. How do I get final semester grades? Final semester grades are available online approximately fourteen days after the end of each semester. Login into MYBSU and go to the card labeled student resources once there click the link named view grades.
19. Will an instructor automatically drop me if I stop attending a class? Although your instructor may drop you, you should never assume that you will be automatically dropped from a class. Always initiate a drop yourself by visiting the registrar’s office. Remember to drop classes by the drop deadlines listed in the academic calendar in the Schedule of Classes. Do not drop below 12 units during the Fall and Spring semester
20. What drop deadlines am I responsible for meeting every semester? The drop deadline of each course is different. This information can be at [Big Blue Events](#).
21. What is BSU’s refund policy? *See page 13*
22. Can I repeat a placement test? Placement tests may be repeated after a waiting period. However, if you have already begun the sequence of your Math or English, you may not retest.
23. How do I receive credit for coursework taken at another college? Send an official transcript to the Office of International Student Services. An evaluation of credits will be sent to you from the Registrar’s Office.
24. How do I receive credit for coursework taken in another country? Your international college transcript must be evaluated by an approved private evaluation agency. The evaluation is then reviewed by BSU.
25. How do I receive credit for AP (Advanced Placement) test scores? Bring a copy of your scores to the counseling center.
26. How do I change my major? First, you must see your advisor to get a new Educational Plan. Second, take your new Ed Plan to the Counseling Center to change your major. Third, take your new Ed Plan and your I-20 to the Office of International Student Services so a new I-20 displaying your new major can be issued.
27. How long will it take me to graduate or transfer? The time it takes to graduate or transfer depends on the number of units completed each term. The average time it takes most students to transfer is 4 to 5 years.
28. Where do I find the academic catalog and Class Schedule? The [academic catalog can be found here](#). The [Class Schedule can be found here](#).

29. How do I get my student ID card? You can get a BSU ID once you have registered into classes. The BSU ID desk is located in the library.

30. Is there an ATM on campus? No, there are several banks available in the local area.

31. Does BSU have student housing? Yes. Visit [residence life](#) for additional information.

32. Are there copy machines and computers on campus for student use? Computers are available in the William B. Robertson Library, in Dickason Hall rooms 115 & 117, Mahood Hall room 312, 310 & 309, Basic Science Building room 108, and the Student Center game room. Copy machines are located in the William B. Robertson Library.

33. How do I get a Social Security Card? You can only get a Social Security Card for employment purposes. Once you are able to work, the Office of International Student Services will write a letter for you to take to the Social Security Office to obtain the Social Security Number.

37. How do I get a West Virginia Driver's License? You can get a West Virginia Driver's License by first visiting the [WV DMV online](#) to obtain the latest Driver Handbook, forms, and instructions.

## ***American Customs and Culture***

### ***Monetary Units***

The U.S. monetary system follows the decimal system. The basic unit is the dollar, the symbol for which is "\$." The most widely used bills are in denominations of \$1, \$5, \$10 and \$20. Occasionally, a bill of \$2, \$50 or \$100 may be seen.

Each dollar can be divided into 100 cents. Currency in the form of a coin is: 1 cent (penny), 5 cents (nickel), 10 cents (dime) and 25 cents (quarter). There are some other coins, such as the 50-cent coin or the Susan B. Anthony silver dollar coin, but they are rarely seen.

\*Be prepared that your first month in the United States is likely to be the most expensive, since you will not be able to take everything you need, and might forget some things. The first month might be twice as expensive as the others. \*

### ***Sales Tax***

Most states in the United States charge a sales tax on tangible personal property and services, such as clothing, restaurant and fast-food restaurant meals, services (haircutting), newspapers, books, toiletries etc. Sales taxes vary from state to state, but average 5% or 6% in most places. Sales taxes are added at the cash register, so be prepared for your bill to be more than the price tag on an item. For West Virginia, the state sales tax is 6%.

### ***Cultural Hints***

**Greetings:** Americans are very friendly. They tend to greet each other with a smile, sometimes a handshake, and a friendly "Hello, how are you?" (Which is not a question about your health) or "What's up?" Such a greeting is very common, and does not always require an answer. If an American friend greets you with "Hi, what's going on?" and walks away, do not feel offended, it is a popular way of greeting. Also, the common phrase "See you later" is not an invitation for a visit, but a way to say "Good bye." Americans are also very informal, and address each other by their first names from the time they meet, even with elders and people of authority. Do not feel uncomfortable when someone asks you to use his/her first name, it is customary. If you are in doubt about how to address someone, you should first use the formal name and wait for them to suggest that you use the first name.

**Gifts:** As a rule, gifts are given to relatives and close friends. They are sometimes given to people with whom one has a casual but friendly relationship, such as a host or hostess, but it is not necessary or even common for gifts to be given to such people. Gifts are not usually given to teachers or others who hold official positions. The offering of gifts in these situations is sometimes interpreted as a possibly improper effort to gain favorable treatment from that person.

**Body Language:** Keep in mind that unspoken signals by others may not mean what you think. Various gestures are automatic and vary from culture to culture. For example, burping after a meal in America is something that one needs to excuse himself/herself for doing. While in other countries, burping may be seen as a complement to the cook. If a person's words and gestures do not seem to match, it would be wise to ask the individual.

**Dress:** Casual dress is appropriate for the classroom. Students will, however, dress more formally for certain class presentations. Casual dress is also appropriate for visits in people's homes, shopping or movie theatres. You might dress more formally for a special dinner or a special event at the University.

**Personal Hygiene:** To most Americans, personal hygiene is very important. They shower and wash their hair daily, and wear freshly cleaned clothes each day. Natural body odors are considered unpleasant and offensive, so deodorants, colognes and other toiletries are used often.

**Time:** Americans are very time conscious and place high value on promptness. Busses, trains, meetings and classes generally start on time. If you are going to be more than five or 10 minutes late for a meeting or an appointment, you should telephone to let the other party know you will be late

### ***Seasons and Clothing***

Southern West Virginia and southwest Virginia enjoy four distinct seasons:

*Spring (March 21 – June 20):* Typical weather – wintry, rainy, windy, and occasionally sunny with temperatures ranging from 40 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. You may still need a jacket.

*Summer (June 21 – August 30):* Warm but temperatures rarely above 90 degrees Fahrenheit with occasional heavy rainfall and flooding. Most Americans wear shorts and short sleeve shirts.

*Autumn (September 1-October 20):* Mild temperatures, occasional heavy rains. Clothing may be similar to what you might wear during the spring. Sometimes, wintry weather occurs.

*Winter (October 21 – March 20):* Very cold, occasional heavy snowfall, windy. You will definitely need warmer clothing along with scarves, gloves, a thick winter coat, hats (toboggans), and boots with good soles.

You may want to bring your own traditional national clothing to showcase your nations and cultures on *United Nations Day* in October and during *Agora – A Celebration of Creative Expression*, in April.

## **PRACTICAL INFORMATION WHILE LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES**

### ***TIME***

**THERE ARE FOUR TIME ZONES IN THE CONTIGUOUS United States** (Eastern Standard, Central, Rocky Mountain, and Pacific Time), each an hour's difference from the neighboring time zone. Alaska and Hawaii are on a separate time zone (four hours earlier in Alaska and five hours earlier in Hawaii than Eastern Standard Time).

Time in the U.S. is measured on a twelve-hour basis. Time is expressed in a.m. (Ante Meridian) and p.m. (Post meridian). The hours 24:00 to 11:00 are expressed as 12:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

The hours 12:00 to 23:00 are expressed as 12:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. For example, 2:00 would be 2:00 a.m. and 14:00 would be 2:00 p.m.

Daylight savings time is also practiced. Most of the regions in the U.S. turn back their clocks one hour on the last Sunday of October, and turn their clocks forward one hour on the first Sunday of April.

Standard hours of business are from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., in the local time zone. Rush hour is generally from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and from 3:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

### ***FEDERAL HOLIDAYS***

Banks, government offices, and public schools are closed on the following holidays:

Labor Day	First Monday of September
Columbus Day	Second Monday of October
Veteran's Day	November 11
Thanksgiving Day	Fourth Thursday of November
Christmas	December 25
New Year's Eve	December 31
New Year's Day	January 1
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Third Monday in January
President's Day	Third Monday in February
Easter	A Sunday in Spring
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May
Independence Day	July 4

Stores and restaurants may be open for fewer hours on some of these days. Public transportation often follows a limited schedule on federal holidays.

**ADDITIONAL HOLIDAYS OBSERVED IN THE U.S.**

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur	Mid-September through Mid-October
Halloween	October 31 <sup>st</sup>
Election Day	First Tuesday of November
Hanukkah	Eight days of December Presidential
Inauguration Day	January 20 <sup>th</sup> , every 4 years
Groundhog Day	February 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Valentine's Day	February 14 <sup>th</sup>
Saint Patrick's Day	March 17 <sup>th</sup>
April Fools' Day	April 1 <sup>st</sup>
Passover	Eight days in April
Mother's Day	Second Sunday in May
Flag Day	June 14 <sup>th</sup>
Father's Day	Third Sunday in June

**TEMPERATURE**

In the U.S., temperature is measured in degrees Fahrenheit. To convert Fahrenheit to Centigrade (Celsius), subtract 32 and divide by 1.8. To convert centigrade to Fahrenheit, multiply 1.8 (9/5)

<i>Degrees Centigrade</i>		<i>Degrees Fahrenheit</i>
0	Freezing point of water	32
10	A warm winter day	50
20	A mild spring day	68
30	Quite warm-almost hot	86
37	Normal body temperature	98.6
40	Heat wave conditions	104
100	Boiling point of water	212

**LENGTH**

U.S.	Metric	Multiply by
Inches	Millimeters	25
Feet	Centimeters	30 (1 foot = 12 inches = .3048 meters)
Yards	Meters	9 (1 yard = 3 feet = .9144 meters)
Miles	Kilometers	(1 mile = 1.6 Kilometers)

**MASS**

U.S.	Metric	Multiply by
Ounces	Grams	28 (16 ounces = 453.59 grams)
Pounds	Kilograms	.45 (16 ounces = 453.59 grams = 1 pound = 2.2 kilograms)

**LIQUID VOLUME**

U.S.	Metric	Multiply by
Ounces	Millimeters	30
Pints	Liters .47	1 pint = 16 ounces = .47 liters
Quarts	Liters .95	1 quart = 32 ounces = .95 liters
Gallons	Liters 3.8	1 gallon = 64 ounces = 3.8 liters

**CLOTHING SIZE: WOMEN**

**Blouses and Sweaters**

U.S.	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	
British		34	36	38	40	42	44	46
Continental	40	42	44	46	48	50	52	

**Coats and Dresses**

U.S.	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	
British		30	32	34	36	38	40	42
Continental	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	

**Shoes**

U.S.	5-5½	6-6½	7-7½	8-8½	9		
British		3-3½	4½-5	5½-6	6½-7	7½	
Continental	36	37	38	39	40		

**Stockings**

U.S. & British	8	8½	9	9½	10	10½	
Continental	0	1	2	3	4	5	

**CLOTHING SIZE: MEN**

**Shirts**

U.S. & British	14	14½	15	15½	16	16½	17
Continental	36	37	38	39	41	42	43

**Shoes**

U.S.	7	7½	8	8½	9	9½	10	10½
British		6½	7	7½	8	8½	9	9½
Continental	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46

**Socks**

U.S. & British	9½	10	10½	11	11½	12	12½
Continental	39	40	41	42	43	44	45

**Suits and Coats**

U.S. & British	34	36	38	40	42	44	46
Continental	44	46	48	50	52	54	56

### ***WATER & ICE***

Water from public sources is treated for human consumption. In general, most people in the U.S. drink tap water and drink bottled water for the sake of taste or purity. Any cold beverage you order at a café, fast food or regular style restaurant will be served to you with ice unless you request otherwise.

### ***FOOD/MEAL TIMES***

In the U.S., meals are usually served at the following times:

Breakfast:           between 6:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.

Lunch:                between 11:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

Dinner:              between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

If you live in a residence which has a kitchen and you plan to cook your own meals, then the above information does not apply to you.



## ***Glossary of College Terms***

**Accredited** – Official recognition that a college or university meets the standards of a regional or national association.

**Advisor** – A faculty member who helps purely on academic matters and advises students about courses and other internships.

**Affidavit of Support** – Official document providing adequate funding from an individual or organization to cover an international student's educational and living expenses while enrolled at a U.S. university.

**Articulation Agreements** - Guides to check which courses are accepted or equivalent between BSU courses and independent colleges and universities. See the Transfer equivalency guide on how courses transfer or Registrar's office for agreements. Articulation agreements between BSU and universities can be found online at [articulation agreements](#)

**Assistantship/Internship/Work-Study** – An assistantship is a financial aid given to students in return for certain services like teaching assistant, laboratory supervision or research assistant. An internship is a practical training that students take generally after one year of college. Work-Study is a program run by the federal government where students can work part-time on campus and earn to manage their finances at the university.

**Associate of Science Degree (A.S)** - Degrees are awarded after satisfactory completion of graduation requirements.

**Bachelor of Arts or Science Degree (B.A. or B.S.)** - Degree awarded after satisfactory completion of a four- or five-year program of study at the university.

**Catalog**- The college catalog describes college programs, services, degrees, majors, graduation and transfer requirements, academic policies, and descriptions of courses taught throughout the year. Available online

**Closed Class** - A class that has reached enrollment capacity. Register for a place on the Waitlist.

**Cohort** – A group of students working through a curriculum together towards the same degree.

**Commencement** – A formal graduation ceremony that celebrates recent graduates.

**Co-requisite** - A course that must be taken together with another course during the same term.

**Course Load** – The number of courses or credits a student takes during a specific term.

**Course Number** - The number immediately after a course title (i.e., English 102).

**Credits** – Units that schools use to record the completion of courses with minimum passing grades to attain an academic degree.

**CRN (Course Reference Number)** - The five-digit number used to identify a particular class in a given semester. For example, each section of English 101 meets at a different place or time and has a specific CRN. The CRN is used to register and is found in the Schedule of Classes.

**Curriculum** – A program of study made up of a set of courses offered by a school.

**Curricular Practical Training (CPT)** – A paid off-campus internship/opportunity directly related to an F-1 students' field of study.

**Dean** – The head of a department in a university.

**Degree** – A diploma or title awarded to students by a college or university after successful completion of a program of study.

**Department** – A division of a school made up of faculty and support staff, that gives instruction in a particular field of study, such as the history department.

**Dismissal** - Termination of a student's eligibility to attend BSU after being on probation and failing to attain a satisfactory cumulative GPA

**Drop** - Withdrawing from a class you no longer want to attend. It is **YOUR** responsibility to drop a class. If you do not officially drop, you may receive an "F". Always confirm your drops by going online to check your schedule.

**DSO** – An on-campus official who has the duty to record information on international students in the university. Everything gathered is reported to SEVIS the student exchange visitor information system.

**Elective** - A course that is not specifically required for your major or general education but may be taken to meet unit requirements for graduation.

**Enroll** – To register or enter a school or course as a participant.

**Exempt** – Not required to do something that other students may be required to do.

**Extracurricular activities** – Optional activities, such as sports, that students can participate in outside of academic classes.

**F Visa Status** – A non-immigrant who is pursuing a full course of study to achieve a specific educational object at a U.S. institution.

**Faculty** – A schools teaching and administrative staff who are responsible for designing programs of study.

**Fees** – An amount of money charged by colleges and universities, in addition to their tuition, to cover costs of services such as libraries and computer technology.

**Fraternity** - The society for male students in a college or university.

**Freshman Status** - Students who have completed less than 30 units.

**Full-time Status** - Enrollment in 12 or more units per semester. International Students are required to enroll in at least 12 units in the Fall and Spring semester.

**General Education** - A group of courses, usually outside your major, which must be completed in order to graduate.

**Grade Point Average (GPA)** - The weighted average of all grades. Determined on a four-point scale in which an A is 4.0, B is 3.0, C is 2.0, D is 1.0, F is 0.

**Grade** – A score or mark indicating a student’s academic performance on an exam, paper or in a course.

**I-20** – A government form used for F-1 students and their dependents.

**I-94** – An arrival/Departure Record upon arrival to the U.S. by air or sea.

**Incomplete Grade** - A grade given to a student who has not completed a class due to unforeseen circumstances. All coursework must be completed and a final grade assigned within one semester.

**Junior Status** – A student in the third year of study.

**Letter of recommendation** – a letter written by a student’s teacher, counselor, coach or mentor that assesses his or her qualifications and skills.

**Major** - A group of courses required for your area of study.

**Matriculate/Registration** – To enroll in a program or course at a university.

**Midterm exam** – An exam given after half of the academic term has passed and that covers all material studied in a course until that point.

**Minor** – Secondary area of study beyond a major.

**Optional Practical Training (OPT)** – OPT provides off-campus work authorization either during their degree program or after for F-1 students. Most students participate in OPT once they have completed their degree.

**Part-time Status** - Enrollment in less than 12 units per semester.

**Pass/No Pass Grading** - A type of course grading in which a grade of P (Pass) or NP (No Pass) is given instead of a letter grade. P is equivalent to letter grades of A, B, or C. NP is equivalent to D or F.

**Plagiarism** – The use of another person’s words or ideas as your own, without acknowledging that person.

**Prerequisite** - A requirement that must be met before enrolling in a course (usually a placement test or prior course). Prerequisites are listed in the catalog and schedule of classes.

**Probation, Academic** - A student is placed on academic probation when their grade point average falls below 2.0 after attempting 12 or more units.

**Provost** – The senior academic officer of a college or university who typically oversees all academic policies and curriculum related matters.

**RA (Resident Assistant)** – A student leader who works in campus dormitories and supervises issues and activities related to dorm life.

**Registration** - The process of enrolling in classes each semester.

**Schedule of Classes** - The schedule is published each semester and lists the descriptions, days, hours, location, and instructor for each class offered.

**Scholarship** – Can be earned as an award for high scores in academics, personal achievements or sports ability.

**Semester** - The fall or spring term. Each semester is 16 weeks long. Summer are five to twelve weeks long.

**Senior Status**– A student in the fourth year of school.

**SEVIS** – Student Exchange and Visitor Information System. Tracks information on F, J, and M visa holders. Immigration data is entered into this federally-managed database. The University’s DSOs manage the student data as a representative of USCIS.

**Sophomore Status** - Students who have completed 30 or more units.

**Sorority** – The society for female students in a college or university.

**Syllabus** - An outline of the instructor’s expectations for the course (i.e., attendance, assignments, test dates, grading methods, instructor’s contact information). This outline serves as a contract between the instructor and the students and is usually given to the students on the first day of class.

**Transcript** - An official record of your academic work. Official transcripts can also be ordered online at

<https://bluefieldstate.edu/resources/registrar-office/electronic-transcript-ordering>

**Transfer** – When a student moves from one university to another to complete a degree.

**Transfer Credit** - Classes that are accepted for credit.

**Unit** - The amount of college credit given for a course based mainly on the number of hours the course meets each week. One unit generally represents one hour of class per week.

**USCIS** – United States Citizenship and Immigration Services is the government agency responsible for administering immigration benefits for eligible foreign nationals in the U.S.

**Visa** – A visa is a “ticket” for entry to the country upon arrival. International students and scholars may be in the U.S. with an expired visa, but they may not return to the United States until they present a valid visa, valid passport, and I-20 or DS-2019 endorsed within the previous year.

**Wait List** - A list created once a class is full. See definition of Closed Class.

**Withdrawal** - Formally removing yourself from all classes in which you are enrolled. Deadlines to withdraw from classes varies. You must report to the Office of International Student Services (ISS) before dropping from all classes.

### ***International Student F-1 Visa Responsibilities***

I understand that I am responsible for maintain my visa status by following the US government regulations related to the F-1 visa. **I agree to maintain my status by:**

- Signing the second page of my I-20 after reading and understanding it.
- Maintaining a full-time academic load (at least 12 units) during fall and spring semester.
- Keeping my passport and I-20 valid at all times.
- Reporting any changes in my residence address, phone number, email, major, or other changes within 10 days.

Initial Here: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that if I do any of the following **without prior approval from the Office of International Student Services**, I risk losing my F-1 status and may be required to file for reinstatement and pay the related fee and/or may be required to leave the country immediately:

- Working on or off campus without prior approval from the Office of International Student Services and/or the United States Citizenship & Information Service.
- Dropping below 12 units during the fall or spring semester.
- Enrolling in more than one 3-unit online class.
- Enrolling in classes at another college.
- Maintaining a GPA below 2.0 (Average Grade “C”).
- Being found guilty of cheating or plagiarism.

Initial Here: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that I also have a responsibility to follow the BSU policies and procedures below to maintain my status and good standing at the college:

- Purchase international student Medical Insurance and maintain the policy at all times
- Register for classes on registration dates. I must have 12 units before the semester begins. Schedule an appointment with ISS staff before I stop attending or drop a class.
- Regularly check MYBSU and/or personal email account for important notices from the ISS
- Report to the ISS within 3 working days of receiving an email from the ISS requiring immediate attention
- Obtain a travel signature from the ISS before buying an airline ticket for travel outside of the US

Initial Here: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand if I leave the United States for any reason there is no guarantee that I will be able to return. I further understand that if I violate any of the above, I may be subject to dismissal from Bluefield State University and that my dismissal will be reported to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Student’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

**THE CONTENT OF THIS HANDBOOK IS ADAPTED FROM DATA AVAILABLE IN THE WEB PAGES OF BLUEFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY, THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-RIVERSIDE, CONCORD UNIVERSITY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-MERCED, US DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, AND EDUCATIONUSA.**

**UPDATED VERSIONS OF THIS HANDBOOK WILL BE POSTED ANNUALLY BY The Office of International Student Services.**