

International Student Information Packet



Prepared by the International & Multicultural Student Services Office

FALL 2023

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It is very important that you read all of the information contained in this packet!

Welcome to Arkansas Tech University!

On behalf of the entire Tech campus, let me be the first to congratulate you on selecting an outstanding university to pursue your educational goals. Arkansas Tech University is committed to assisting you achieve great academic success.

An orientation program has been designed to ease your transition from your previous institution to the Arkansas Tech University campus. This fun and informative program is required for all new international students. Registration and orientation for the **Fall 2023 semester will take place on Wednesday, August 16th and continue through Friday, August 18th**. Classes will begin on **Wednesday, August 23rd**. In order to attend this mandatory orientation, please make plans to arrive in Russellville, Arkansas by **Wednesday, August 15th**. If you are unable to arrive on time you must notify the International Student Services Office (ISS) and receive special permission.

On December 11, 2002, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), formerly known as the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) or the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), published final regulations to implement the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). This system is designed to provide the federal government with instant internet access to a variety of records of those non-immigrants on F, J and M visas. Colleges and universities are required by law to report any and all visa status violations to the federal government. It is critical that you comply fully with every U.S. law. The USCIS has no tolerance for a student that fails to maintain lawful status. To assist you maintain legal visa status, included in your packet is a listing of all of the rules and regulations you will be required to comply with while you are in the U.S. Please read over these regulations carefully. It is your responsibility to comply with each and every policy. Please feel free to communicate with the ISS anytime. It is important that you keep the ISS comprised of all developments relating to your visa status, including keeping the office well informed of your local address, telephone number and email address.

I am very glad that you have chosen to attend Arkansas Tech University. I look forward to your arrival to the Tech campus!

Sara L. Chronister

Director of International Student Services

Student Visa Application Procedures

Provided below is information on how to apply for a student visa. This information was taken from the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Visa Services website:

Students are encouraged to apply early! Keep in mind that June, July and January are the busiest months in most consular sections, and interview appointments are the most difficult to get during that period of time. Students need to plan ahead to avoid having to make repeat visits to the Embassy.

- 1. If you have access to the Internet visit:**
 - a. F-1 Students - Study in the States: <http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students> and go to “Students” for information on the next steps to take.
 - b. J-1 Students – BridgeUSA: <https://j1visa.state.gov/programs/college-and-university-student> for more information on your next steps.
- 2. Make an appointment to visit the U.S. Embassy or Consulate.** This can be done by telephone, mail, over the Internet, or in person, depending on circumstances in your country. Schedule your appointment as soon as you know you need to travel to the U.S. Be sure to ask what fees are required and how they can be paid. Application fees are non-refundable and must be paid before your appointment.
- 3. Get all your documentation ready.** You will need:
 - a. A valid passport
 - b. Appropriate applications (These can be obtained through the Embassy or Consulate or at http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html)
 - c. Documents to support the application detailing employment, reason for travel and financial status
 - d. Proof of payment of fees

Remember, as in the past, the consular officer may require additional information or application forms. Students should bring the following documents:

- 1. A Form I-20 or DS-2019 obtained from a U.S. college, school or university. The form must be signed by you and the school official;**
- 2. A letter of acceptance from the institution issuing the Form I-20;**
- 3. DS-160 Online Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application;**
- 4. Transcripts and diplomas from previous institutions attended;**
- 5. Scores from standardized tests require by the educational institution such as the TOEFL, GRE, etc;**
- 6. Financial evidence that shows you or your sponsor has sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period of your intended study;**
- 7. Some consular officers may wish to see evidence that shows that you have a compelling reason to return to your home country (e.g., spouse, child, family business, etc.)**

4. **Submit your application, passport, and supporting documents** to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Your application will then be reviewed by the consular officer and, in many cases, by officials in Washington, D.C. For most applicants, the visa is issued within a few weeks. There is no guarantee of obtaining a visa.

5. **In some cases, additional reviews will be required.** Your information is submitted and checked in the world's foremost security database, which includes comprehensive information drawn from both U.S. and foreign law enforcement agencies worldwide.

6. **A visa allows you to travel from your country to a port of entry in the U.S.** In many cases, that port of entry will be the airport where you land. On the airplane you will be asked to complete a short arrival/departure form. When you deplane, follow directions for non-citizen entry. At the airport, a U.S. official will interview you and verify all of your paperwork. Once admitted, you will receive an immigration stamp and proceed to baggage claim and U.S. Customs.

The previous pages were modified from the U.S. Department of State website to assist you and to serve as a guide for visa application. For more complete and up-to-date information, you are strongly encouraged to visit The Department of Homeland Security's webpage: Study in the States:

<http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students> for F-1 students and BridgeUSA:

<https://j1visa.state.gov/programs/college-and-university-student> for J-1 students.

SEVIS Fee Requirement

Beginning September 1, 2004, the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requires F-1, M-1, & J-1 visa applicants to pay a one-time fee to supplement the costs of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

To help you understand the SEVIS fee requirement, please see the questions below:

Who pays the SEVIS fee?

Prospective students applying for an "initial status" F-1 or J-1 visa from outside the U.S. are required to pay the SEVIS fee. In other words, all new international students who will be seeking an F-1 or J-1 visa to study in the U.S. will pay the fee. F-1 students will pay \$350 and J-1 students will pay \$220.

When do I pay the SEVIS fee?

You must pay the fee prior to submitting your visa application at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Can I pay the SEVIS fee at the Consulate or port-of-entry?

No. At this time, the SEVIS fee can only be processed by the Department of Homeland Security via mail or the internet online.

How do I pay this fee?

The fee can be paid to the Department of Homeland Security by mail or online. More information can be found online at <http://www.fmjfee.com/>. NOTE: Students from Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria or Gambia CANNOT pay online and must pay by money order, Western Union Quick Pay or certified check drawn from a U.S. bank.

To pay by mail:

1. At this time, students from Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria or Gambia cannot pay online and must pay by money order or Western Union. Please see <https://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/wu-instructions> for more information.
2. Complete the I-901 at <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html>.
3. Prepare a check or international money order drawn on a financial institution in the U.S. and payable in U.S. currency. The check needs to be made payable to "I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee" in the necessary amount.
4. Mail the completed I-901 and payment to:
**I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee
1005 Convention Plaza
St. Louis, MO 63101
United States**
5. You will receive a paper receipt in the mail for your payment. This process could take several weeks, so please make plans accordingly.

To pay online:

1. Complete Form I-901 online at <http://www.fmjfee.com/>
2. Choose the credit card or debit card payment option
3. After submitting your Form I-901 and supplying credit or debit card information, a payment receipt will be generated and you will receive an email.
4. Print out the receipt. Please make sure you keep this receipt in a safe location. You must present this receipt with your I-20 at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate when you apply for the F-1 or J-1 visa. If you do not have this receipt, you will not be allowed to submit your visa application. Keep this receipt with all of your important documents. You may need it beyond the visa interview.

How can I show the consular officer that I have paid the SEVIS fee?

You will need to submit a copy of your fee receipt when you apply for the visa.

Where can I get additional information?

There are two websites designed to answer questions about the SEVIS fee:

<http://www.fmjfee.com/> and <http://www.ice.gov/sevis>

Arrival information

At the U.S. Port Entry

When you arrive in the U.S. at the port-of-entry, be prepared to present your passport, visa, evidence of financial support, and the I-20 to the immigration official.

Arrival Dates, Lodging and Transportation to Campus

The I-20 you have been issued indicates that you must arrive in the U.S. no later than **August 23rd**, which is the first day of class. However, you should plan to arrive in the U.S. a few days earlier to attend mandatory orientation and registration (**beginning at 9:00 a.m. August 16th**) for new international students.

If you have contracted to live on-campus, you should contact the Housing Office, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., at 479-968-0376, prior to your arrival to make arrangements for check-in or you will need to arrange for temporary housing at a hotel. It is suggested that you reserve a hotel room before you leave your country to avoid some inconveniences.

Hotels Located Near Arkansas Tech University

Econo Lodge	Hampton Inn	Days Inn	Best Western
2200 N Arkansas	2304 N Arkansas	109 E Harrell Dr	Highway 7 N
479-968-4400	479-858-7199	479-280-1940	479-987-1000

You should arrange to fly in to the Little Rock National Airport, which is the closest airport to Russellville, Arkansas, home of Arkansas Tech University. The International Student Services Office (ISS) cannot provide transportation from the airport. Please see <https://www.atu.edu/imssso/newstudentinfo.php> for information on private, taxi, and Uber transportation from the airport.

Housing Information

On-Campus Housing

When it comes to campus living, Arkansas Tech University offers the best! Choose private bath, suite-style bath, or community bath, share your living space with one friend or with three. As a first year student, you have the chance to live in any of Tech's residence halls. For transfer students and upperclassmen, your choices include any of the 15 residence halls, or the University Commons Apartments. Special programming, provided by the Resident Assistants, helps ease the transition to college, focusing on skills ranging from time and stress management and relationship building, to providing a fun atmosphere with outdoor concerts and pizza parties. The Office of Residential Life guarantees that the residence life experience will enhance your college years like you never imagined. Over the academic year, you'll participate in a full calendar of Tech events.

The goal of Residential Life is to provide a healthy atmosphere for an optimal living and learning environment. You will find the residence halls to be a great place to meet a variety of students from diverse backgrounds. Please visit the Office of Residential Life website at <http://reslife.atu.edu/> for more information. Remember, if you are interested in living on-campus, please apply early. You may send the application for housing online via the website listed above. Please note all housing contracts consist of a 9 month period from August to May (If you apply for housing for the spring semester, the contract will consist of a 5 month period, from January to May). The housing contract is a binding agreement and should not be entered into lightly.

The room rates for double rooms for the 2022-2023 academic year for each semester:

Brown Hall	\$1,916	Nutt Hall	\$2,601	<u>Apartments on Campus:</u>	
Caraway Hall	\$1,860	M Street Hall	\$2,601	University Commons	
Turner Hall	\$1,916	Tucker Hall	\$2,102	4 Bedroom	\$3,214
Wilson Hall	\$1,978			2 Bedroom	\$3,965
Paine Hall	\$2,601				
Baswell Hall	\$2,601				

If you live on-campus, you will also be required to purchase a meal plan (University apartments are exempt from this requirement). The meal plan prices for the 2022-2023 academic year for each semester:

Tech Platinum 1 - Unlimited meals + \$100 declining balance	\$1,842
Tech Platinum 2 - Unlimited meals + \$175 declining balance	\$1,917
Tech Gold 1 - 210 Meals per semester + \$100 DCB	\$1,678
Tech Gold 2 - 210 Meals per semester + \$175 DCB	\$1,753
Tech Silver 1 - 10 Meals per week + \$100 DCB	\$1,571
Tech Silver 2 - 10 Meals per week + \$175 DCB	\$1,646

All Room Rates and Meal Plan prices are subject to increase each academic year

Off-Campus Housing

If you have a family or if you are exempt from living on-campus, the following information should assist you as you begin to search for housing off-campus. It is strongly recommended that you make all housing arrangements prior to your arrival.

List of Realtors in the Russellville Area

<u>Name of Realtor</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Telephone Number</u>
River Valley Realty	800 East Main	479-886-2222
Ford Property Management	500 West Main #110	479-968-5158
Moore & Company Realtors	103 W Parkway Dr #2A	479-968-3300

List of Real Estate Apartments

<u>Name of Real Estate Apartments</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Telephone Number</u>
Vista Place Apartments	821 E. O Street	479-967-2977
Spring Lake Apartments	922 N. Sidney	479-858-7079
Shadow Lake Apartments	2601-A West 12th St	479-967-5584
Parker Place Apartments	1401 N Parker Place Rd	479-880-1888
Cumberland Square Apartments	401 N. Cumberland Ave	479-968-4301

In addition to these numbers, you may also access the website of the local newspaper, The Courier, at www.couriernews.com, and check the classified listings for available apartments.

Tips when searching for an apartment off-campus:

Be sure to ask how close the apartment is to the Tech campus. Some apartments are close enough to walk to the campus, for others you will need to purchase a car.

Ask if the apartment is furnished or unfurnished.

Ask if the air conditioning/heating is provided by central heat/air or through a window unit.

If you want a pet, ask whether pets will be allowed in the apartment.

Ask about the type of lease, month to month or 6 month contract.

Ask whether utilities (water, electricity, gas, etc.) are included in the price or separate.

Ask if a refrigerator, washer and dryer are available in the apartment or nearby.

Be sure to call a few different realtors to compare prices.

Hints on Packing

What you bring with you to the U.S. will be a matter of personal needs and preference. However, listed below please find some useful suggestions and hints on how to pack for your trip to the U.S.:

WHAT TO BRING:

Clothing

In general, campus wear is very casual. Jeans, slacks, casual shirts, T-shirts and jackets are common. Winters (November - February) in Russellville often bring very cold weather that requires a heavy coat. Clothing is readily available in a wide price range in the U.S. and many of your clothes may be purchased after you arrive. You may want to bring some of your native clothing as well for international celebrations and programs.

Books

Take books, manuals or journals that you think may be difficult to obtain in the U.S. Specific and general information about your country will be helpful to share with new friends.

Contact

Take the name, address and telephone number of the individual at Arkansas Tech University who should be contacted in case of a travel delay or an emergency. Also, take the name, address and telephone number of a contact person at home.

Medicines

If you take medication regularly, bring a sufficient supply along with a copy of the prescription. If you wear glasses, it is a good idea to bring an extra pair and your prescription, if possible. You may feel more comfortable using non-prescriptive medicines you are familiar with for headaches, colds, upset stomach, etc. However, aspirins, ointments and remedies are widely available in the U.S.

WHAT TO LEAVE BEHIND:

Electrical

The U.S. uses a flat parallel two-pin plug on a 110 to 120 volt power supply, not commonly used in other countries. Many of your electrical goods will not work without a suitable adapter. Many electrical goods such as hairdryers, cassette players/radios, irons, etc. can be purchased in the U.S. at a reasonable price.

Bedding

Bulky items of bedding can be purchased inexpensively in the U.S. If you live on-campus, you will need to purchase twin size sheets and comforters. If you live off-campus in a furnished apartment, please check with the real estate agency to determine the proper size of bedding.



Checklist of Basic Needs

This page was created to provide you with a list of suggestions for what to bring with you to campus. Depending on whether you live on-campus or off-campus will determine what specific items you will need to bring.

Items to bring with you to campus:

- _____ ID/Passport/I-20/Visa/
Financial Documents/Letter of
Acceptance
- _____ Money/Traveler's Checks for Tuition
Payment
- _____ International Driver's License
- _____ Clothes
- _____ Toiletries
(Toothbrush, Toothpaste, Shampoo,
Soap, etc.)
- _____ Towels
- _____ Native Language - English Dictionary
- _____ Necessary Medications
- _____ Eye Glasses

Items that are nice to have but not necessary:

- _____ TV
- _____ Stereo
- _____ Camera
- _____ Computer
- _____ Small Refrigerator
- _____ Iron/Ironing Board
- _____ Microwave Oven

Items you might want to buy after arriving to campus:

- _____ Bed Linens
- _____ Cell Phone
- _____ Backpack
- _____ School Supplies
(Notebooks, Pens, Tape, Highlighters, Calculator, etc.)
- _____ Kitchen Supplies
- _____ Alarm Clock
- _____ Umbrella
- _____ Laundry Supplies
- _____ Cleaning Supplies
- _____ First Aid Kit

Make sure that you are aware of the baggage allowances of the airline prior to departure.

The number, size and weight of your baggage may limit how much you can bring.

Although each airline's rules vary slightly, generally you will be allowed to check two standard shaped bags which do not exceed 64 inches, and one small bag that can be carried on to the plane. Some airlines are stricter on weight allowances than others although the average is 50 pounds per checked item.

Russellville Arkansas and the Russellville Community

Arkansas prides itself as being "The Natural State" because of its many natural wonders and beautiful landscape. Vacation choices in the state of Arkansas abound year round, from camping, hiking and fishing to golfing and shopping. The state is filled with beautiful mountains, lakes, streams and rivers. Arkansas has appealing attractions for everyone.

The city of Russellville is ideally situated between the mountains of the Ozark National Forest and those of the Ouachita National Forest. The city is located in the northwest portion of the state between two of Arkansas' cities, Little Rock and Fort Smith. On the southwest of the city lies Lake Dardanelle, covering approximately 43,000 acres. A variety of outdoor and recreational activities are available nearby. Within the city limits is Bona Dea Trail, a natural walking/jogging trail with exercise stations for a complete workout. Also, located just a few minutes from Russellville is Long Pool, a swimming area created by the Big Piney River and Mt. Nebo, a great place for hiking.

While being called home to a population of approximately 27,000 people, Russellville still retains a small-town setting with a friendly community. Entertainment can be found in the form of shopping, numerous restaurants, a bowling alley and movie theater.

Weather in Russellville, Arkansas

Arkansas experiences four distinct seasons and each one can be subject to dramatic change. As is true anywhere, it is very difficult to predict the weather. Arkansas' climate is temperate most of the year, especially in spring and fall; however, hot and humid dates are typical of late summer. Winter temperatures occasionally dip into the teens or below, although such outbreaks usually last for short periods.

The average maximum temperature for each month is listed below:

Winter

December	52°F	11°C
January	50°F	10°C
February	54°F	12°C

Spring

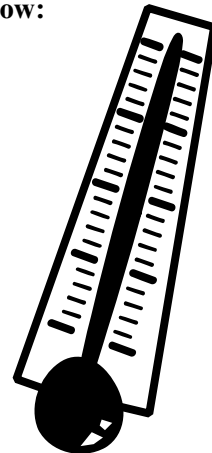
March	63°F	17°C
April	73°F	22°C
May	80°F	26°C

Summer

June	88°F	30°C
July	91°F	32°C
August	90°F	32°C

Fall

September	85°F	28°C
October	75°F	23°C
November	62°F	16°C



Immunization Requirements

All Arkansas Tech University students born after January 1, 1957, are required to provide proof of two immunizations for Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR). International students are also required to be tested for tuberculosis upon arrival to the Arkansas Tech University Campus. Please remember any medical certificates obtained overseas must be translated into English and certified as a legitimate translation. If you have not received the MMR vaccination or cannot obtain a copy of your medical record for the vaccination, you may have the injection at the Health and Wellness Center located on campus. MMR injection is \$96 for students. **The tuberculosis test must be conducted in the U.S and will cost \$70.**

Medical Insurance Requirements

All international students at Arkansas Tech University are required to purchase medical insurance through a policy adopted by the institution. Students will pay for six months of coverage at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters. The insurance rate is \$108 per month. This rate is subject to change. You will pay for your medical insurance in addition to your tuition and fees. **There are no waivers given for this requirement.** If you have medical insurance from your home country, you may use this coverage in addition to your Tech insurance, but not in place of the Tech policy.

Placement Exam for Math and English

Undergraduate Students Only

If Arkansas Tech University has not received official ACT or SAT scores from you prior to your arrival, you will be required to take the ACCUPLACER exam before you enroll in classes. The ACCUPLACER exam is a placement exam for reading, writing and math.

The ACCUPLACER exam is administered at the Tech Testing Center. The exam will be administered during new student orientation or prior to this time if you arrive to campus early. The cost of the exam is currently \$35. The exam will last approximately 3 hours.

You may be exempt from taking the ACCUPLACER exam if you are transferring from a U.S. college or university and have already completed the basic courses in English and math. Please contact the International Student Services Offices (ISS) to inquire about exemptions or to schedule a time to take the exam.

Maintenance of F-1 Status

Important Information

Once a student is admitted to the United States in F-1 status, he or she must meet certain obligations in order to maintain status. **Failure to maintain the terms and conditions of nonimmigrant status is a ground for removal (deportation) from the United States under 8 U.S.C. 1227 § 237(a)(1)(C)(i).**

In order to maintain nonimmigrant status, the student must:

- Report to Sara L. Chronister, Director of International Student Services/Primary Designated School Official (PDSO), for Initial Registration in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) upon arriving at the school and for each subsequent semester. This must be completed within 30 days after the start date of each semester.
- For the first entry to the U.S. for initial school attendance, the school listed on the visa and on the I-20 presented at the port-of-entry must be the same. This is the school that the student must intend to attend.
- Pursue a “full course of study” at the school listed on the currently valid I-20 during every academic session or semester except during official school breaks, or unless approved under a specific exception, in advance, by Sara L. Chronister, PDSO. For undergraduate students, you must maintain 12 credit hours. For graduate students, you must maintain 9 credit hours. If you have a graduate assistantship, you are allowed to take 6 credit hours. You must notify me of your graduate assistantship. *Do not drop any courses without visiting with the ISS prior to dropping below 12 hours or 9 hours respectively.*
- Make normal progress towards completing the course of study, by completing studies before the expiration date on the program completion date on Form I-20.
- Do not allow your I-20 to expire.
- Keep I-20 valid by following proper procedures for change in educational levels or programs of study.
- Keep I-20 valid by following proper procedures for transfer of schools.
- Abide by the F-1 grace period rules, including remaining in the U.S. for no longer than 60 days after completing a full course of study, unless prior to completing the course of study the student has followed procedures for applying for practical training, moving education levels or school transfer. There is no grace period following an unauthorized withdrawal or termination of studies or status violation.

- Report a change of residence to the ISS within 10 days of the change.
- Abide by rules requiring disclosure of information and prohibition on criminal activity.
- Abide by any special requirements, such as Special Registration requirements.
- Not work, either on or off-campus, unless specifically authorized under the regulations at 8 C.F.R. §214.2(f)(9) or §214.2(f)(10).
- Abide by the aggregate unemployment rules while on post-completion OPT.
- Students taking on-line or distance learning courses may only count one of those, 3 credit hours, toward the total required to maintain a full course of study. Other courses must be traditional, campus-based courses. Note: You are not limited to one distance learning course, but no matter how many you take, only 1 (3 credit hours) counts toward a full course of study.
- Make sure your passport is valid and has not expired.

An F-1 student is admitted to the United States for “duration of status”, defined in the regulations as the period during which the student is “pursuing a full course of study at an educational institution approved by USCIS for attendance by foreign students, or engaging in authorized practical training following completion of studies, plus 60 days to prepare for departure from the United States. The student is considered to be maintaining status if he or she is making normal progress toward completing a “full” course of study.” [8CFR 214.2(f)(5)(1)]

Taken from the Advisor’s Manual of Federal Regulations Affecting Foreign Students and Scholars, 2008 Edition, NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

For more information visit: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/>

Orientation and Registration

Orientation and registration for the **Fall 2023 semester will take place on August 16th and continue through Friday, August 18th.** Classes will begin on **Wednesday, August 23rd.** This is our chance to finally meet and get to know you. Orientation and registration is designed to ensure that you complete the registration process, obtain important immigration information and give you an opportunity to meet the staff at the ISS. Please remember that orientation and registration is mandatory for all new students. You should bring your passport and I-20 with you when you come to orientation and registration.

As part of orientation and registration, you will: meet other new and returning international and U.S. students, complete all immigration paperwork, take placement exams, meet with your academic advisor, complete your registration for classes, pay tuition, fees, and medical insurance, obtain a post office box, tour Arkansas Tech University, and HAVE FUN!



Should you have any questions, please contact:

Judy Crouch, International Admissions Officer
jcrouch@atu.edu

Sabrina Anwar, International Student Services Specialist
sanwar@atu.edu

Sara L. Chronister, Director of International Student Services
schronister@atu.edu