

# Pre-Arrival Checklist for International Students

*For students starting  
Spring 2019*

ST. MARY'S  
UNIVERSITY



The Catholic and  
Marianist University

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## *Step 1: Prepare for Your Visa Appointment*

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- **Keep important documents.** Create a folder to keep all your immigration documents together and safe.
- **Verify the information on the Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status.** (Either the I-20 form for F-1 visa applicants and their dependents applying for the F-2 visa, or the DS-2019 form for J-1 visa applicants and their dependents applying for the J-2 visa.) It is important that all personal information listed on the I-20 or DS-2019 matches the information on the passports. If any information on your I-20 or DS-2019 is incorrect, email an Admission Officer for a corrected I-20 or DS-2019 form. Take note of your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) ID number (which begins with the letter N) located at the top-right side of your I-20 or DS-2019. If you lose your I-20 or DS-2019 before your visa appointment, contact an Admission Officer to arrange for a replacement.
- **Pay the SEVIS I-901 fee.** Students must submit the required SEVIS fee at least three days prior to a visa interview. Visit [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com) to submit the I-901 form electronically and pay using a debit or credit card. Print the payment receipt and bring it to your visa appointment. Note: F-2 and J-2 dependents are not required to pay the SEVIS I-901 fee.
- **Refer to [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) for visa application information and advice.** Visit [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) for visa appointment wait times and visa processing information. Please note, these are only estimated times. It is not advisable to make travel arrangements until you receive your visa from the consulate.
- **Schedule a visa appointment.** Schedule an appointment with the embassy or consulate responsible for issuing nonimmigrant visas for your area of your home country as soon as you receive your I-20 or DS-2019 form. Visa applications may be accepted by the consulate at any time and may be issued up to 120 days before your program start date. To learn how to schedule an appointment, pay the application processing fee or review embassy-specific instructions, find your embassy or consulate at [usembassy.gov](http://usembassy.gov).
- **Visa application fee.** Pay the visa application fee and any applicable reciprocity fee for yourself and dependent(s) as required by the consulate with jurisdiction for your area. Find your embassy or consulate at [usembassy.gov](http://usembassy.gov).
- **Passport.** Ensure your passport is up-to-date and valid for at least six months after your arrival in the U.S.
- **Photographs.** Get photographs taken for your visa application. For photo requirements, visit this [website](#).
- **Additional Resources:**
  - **F-1 Visa Students**
  - **J-1 Visa Exchange Visitors**

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## *Step 2: Visa Appointment*

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- Bring the following documents with you to your visa appointment at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate Office:
  - Form DS-160: The DS-160 Online is a new Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application. Some F-1 and J-1 visa applicants may be required to complete additional forms (DS-157 and/or DS-158).
  - Photographs
  - Visa fee or proof of payment receipt
  - Reciprocity fee or proof of payment receipt (if applicable)
  - I-901 SEVIS fee payment receipt
  - Valid passport
  - Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status Form I-20 or (J-1) DS-2019. (Original copy needed with your signature and Designated School Official (DSO) or (Alternate) Responsible Office (ARO/RO) signature.)
  - Proof of funding (as stated on your I-20 or DS-2019 form)
  - Evidence of ties to your home country, demonstrating your intent to return to your home country (e.g., assured employment, property ownership, etc.)
  - St. Mary's University acceptance letter
  - Test scores (e.g., TOEFL, SAT, GRE, GMAT)
  - Dependent information
- If your spouse and/or children are accompanying you, you will need a SEVIS form I-20 or DS-2019 for each dependent, evidence of their relationship to you (marriage license/certificate for spouse and/or birth certificates for children, translated in English) and evidence of sufficient financial resources to support dependents, as well as to cover funds for your studies. Note: Other relatives (e.g., parents, siblings, etc.) do not qualify for the F-2 or J-2 visa.

*Note: Upon issue of your visa, please make sure that you have received the correct visa type and that the notation, if any, on the visa indicates the correct institution name: St. Mary's University. Be sure that you receive your I-20 or DS-2019 form back from the consulate.*

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## Step 3: Travel to the U.S.

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Your visa will allow you to travel to the U.S. where you will present your immigration documents to an immigration officer. The immigration officer will decide whether or not to grant you entry to the U.S. on F-1 or J-1 visa status. If you are properly prepared for entry, there should not be any issues. Keep your passport with applicable visa, signed I-20 or DS-2019 form, proof of funding and translated academic records in a secure place in your carry-on luggage. Do not put them in your checked luggage or entrust them to anyone else. If you do and your luggage is lost, stolen or delayed, you will not be able to present the documents at the Port of Entry (POE). As a result, you may not be able to enter the U.S.

### Travel Arrangements

- To avoid unnecessary expense and difficulties, do not make unchangeable travel arrangements until you have received your visa from the U.S. Consulate. There may be unanticipated delays in the processing of your documents.
- Submit an **Arrival Confirmation Form** no later than **Thursday, Dec. 20, 2018**.
- Confirm living arrangements, both permanent and temporary, prior to arriving in the U.S. (If you will need temporary accommodations or hotel reservations, please plan these prior to your arrival. St. Mary's will not provide emergency or temporary facilities.)
- Pack the following important documents:
  - Passport
  - Visa
  - I-20 or DS-2019
  - Financial documents
  - Admission/Acceptance letter
  - Official admission documents (i.e., test scores, transcripts, etc.)
  - Medical records and/or immunization records
  - Money
  - U.S. residential address
  - Dependent documents:
    - Passport
    - Visa
    - I-20 or DS-2019
    - Child(ren)'s birth certificate(s) (translated to English)
    - Marriage certificate (translated to English) for spouse dependent

### Important Notes

- **Prohibited items.** The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) website provides a **list of prohibited and restricted items**. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) **website** lists additional items that are prohibited on airline flights for security reasons. Check with your airline before you leave for the latest information about prohibited items for travel to the U.S.
- **Place all valuables in carry-on bags.** If you choose to lock your luggage, you must use TSA-approved locks only. TSA screeners will then have tools to open and re-lock your luggage, avoiding damage, should physical inspection be required. If you do not have TSA-approved locks, the TSA screeners will break your locks to open your luggage for inspection, and your luggage will not be locked for the remainder of the trip.

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## Step 3: Travel to the U.S., Continued

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### Arrival in the U.S.

- **U.S. Port of Entry (POE).** The POE is the international airport or land-border crossing where you first enter the U.S. You will go through an immigration and customs checkpoint and will be asked to present the following:
  - A valid passport with a valid F-1 or J-1 visa (Note: Canadian citizens do not require a visa.)
  - Your original, signed I-20 or DS-2019
  - Your admission/acceptance letter
  - SEVIS I-901 fee receipt
  - Funding information supporting the amount documented on your I-20 or DS-2019 form
  - Customs Declaration form
- **Customs Declaration Form.** You will receive a Customs Declaration Form, which you must complete and present to the CBP officer, who may ask to inspect your luggage. For more information on required documentation as well as procedures to expect, visit the **CBP website**.
- **Questions to expect.** The CBP officer will ask for your reason for visiting the U.S. You will also be asked to provide information about your final destination (i.e., your school). It is important to tell the CBP officer that you will be a student or exchange visitor. You must also travel with proof of financial resources and your academic records for verification.
- **Fingerprinting.** You will be fingerprinted and photographed as part of the US-VISIT program. Learn more about US-VISIT on the program **website**.
- **Completed customs and immigration inspection.** Once you have completed your inspection, you will receive:
  - Your original I-20 or DS-2019 stamped for duration of status (D/S) for F or J visa holders. (Note: Some CBP officers may not stamp the I-20/DS-2019. They may stamp your passport and/or document of arrival electronically.)
  - If there are any errors in the notations, let the CBP officer know right away. It is much easier to correct the problem at the Port of Entry than it is later.

### Additional Situations at the Port of Entry

- **Secondary inspection.** If the CBP officer at the Port of Entry cannot initially verify your information, or if you do not have all of the required documentation, the officer may direct you to an interview area known as “secondary inspection.” Secondary inspection allows inspectors to conduct additional research to verify information without causing delays for other arriving passengers. If the CBP officer asks you to contact the Center for International Programs, call 1-210-431-5091.
- **Form I-515.** If the CBP officer believes your immigration documents might not be completely satisfactory, you may receive a form I-515 with an instruction sheet. If you do, visit the Office of International Student and Scholar Services as soon as you arrive on campus. Do not send any documents anywhere before consulting with one of our staff members, as the address provided for mailing the I-515 varies. The form I-515 gives you **only 30 days to remain in the U.S. legally** and provide proof of your visa status. Do not delay.

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## *Step 4: Arriving in San Antonio*

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- Attend the Mandatory International Student Check-In:

**Monday, Jan. 7, 2019**

**9 a.m. to noon**

**University Center, Conference Room A**

Bring the required documents below:

- I-20 or DS-2019
  - Passport
  - Visa
  - Dependent documents
  - U.S. address information (temporary or permanent)
  - I-94 arrival/departure record
    - White card received if traveling by car into the U.S.
    - Online printout if arriving by plane, which can be found on the **I-94 website**
  - I-901 SEVIS fee receipt
- Attend orientation to meet with your adviser, register for classes, obtain a Rattler student ID, etc.
  - The Student Health Center has specific immunization and health insurance requirements for international students that must be met prior to the first day of class. To view these requirements, please visit the **Student Health Center webpage**.
  - Pay tuition or make payment arrangements with the St. Mary's University **Business Office**.
  - Participate in St. Mary's Welcome Week events and programs offered to assist you when you first arrive. Check your St. Mary's email for more activities to participate in throughout the year.