

14 July 2020

To all new international students: **welcome to Illinois!**

Settling in to a new place is always a challenge, and the challenges for international students are – unfortunately – made more onerous by the immigration policies of the U.S. government. Fortunately, our current international students have helped to compile the following detailed advice about the steps you should take right after your arrival, in your first few days on campus, and in the longer term. We are all grateful to these experienced students for their help, especially: Agata Chmiel (Canada), Silvia Escanilla Huerta Kosovych (Argentina), Koji Ito (Japan), and Yuki Takauchi (Japan).

**Please note that, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the locations for some of these services may change. You will receive more information from International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) in that event.**

1. **Get your student ID card.** Take your University ID number and your passport to get it at the ID Center in the Illini Union Bookstore (1st Floor): 809 S. Wright Street, Champaign (217) 244-0135.
2. Use your NetID to get 2-factor authenticated access to **campus wifi**. You should also **set up your account with the library** so you can get books and check articles online: <https://vufind.carli.illinois.edu/vf-uiu/MyResearch/Home>.
3. **Go to the ISSS center** to register your arrival and validate your immigration status – so take your passport and all related documents sent to you by the university: I-20 or DS-2019, whatever applies, and possibly your I-94, which you can print out online (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>). ISSS is located at 432 Student Services Building, 610 E. John St., Champaign.
4. **Go to the McKinley Health Center** with your ID card and immunization records. You will also be checked for tuberculosis and other pre-existing conditions. McKinley is where you will go for physical exams and minor health issues (cold, sore throat, flu vaccine, etc.). The center is at 1109 S. Lincoln Avenue, Urbana (217) 333-2702. Later, you can register online at “My McKinley” so you can schedule appointments and refill prescriptions.

All of this can be done in one day: all of these places are centrally located on campus, so you can go from one to the other quite easily.

5. **Open a bank account.** You will need proof of residency. If you are in university housing, you can obtain this at the Orchard Downs administration building, at the entrance to the housing complex on Orchard Street in Urbana. If you are renting an apartment, you will need a copy of your lease or some other document addressed to you at that location. We recommend two local banks.

→ University of Illinois Community Credit Union is affiliated with the university and has many C-U locations, including one on campus: <https://uoficreditunion.org/>. They give you debit and credit cards, there are no foreign fees, and the APR is very low.

→ PNC Bank also has a branch on campus, inside the University Bookstore right next to the ID center. There are no annual fees for students and there are also offices and ATMs in town.

To find out **what other documentation** you might need, aside from your ID card and passport, check this website: <https://www.pnc.com/en/personal-banking/banking/student-banking/university-of-illinois.html>.

If you find that you need to **present an affidavit** to open an account, rent off-campus housing, or any other reason, you can get this verifying document for free at the student legal services office on the 3rd floor of the Illini Union. For example, when one student tried to open an Ameren (electricity/gas) account, they were asked to send an affidavit in addition to a deposit: <https://union.illinois.edu/see-and-do/other-resources/student-legal-services>.

6. Get a **U.S. cellphone** line. You will need this because the university requires a U.S. number, as do other institutions. You can get a prepaid chip at Walmart and can there free by bus (just show your I-card). The 1 Yellow North takes you from campus to Walmart Champaign, or the 1 Yellow South takes you to Walmart Savoy: <https://mtd.org/>. Later, you can consider plans and offers from other cell companies (sometimes they charge a “deposit fee” to international students because we don’t have a credit history).

7. **Register for classes:** <https://apps.uillinois.edu/selfservice/>.

8. Perform this **mandatory training:** [https://go.illinois.edu/Grad-Professional\\_TitleIX\\_Training](https://go.illinois.edu/Grad-Professional_TitleIX_Training).

9. **Update your address:** [https://iss.illinois.edu/students/f1j1/address\\_update.html](https://iss.illinois.edu/students/f1j1/address_update.html). Make sure your information is kept up to date on university websites.

10. Download your **health insurance ID** for all medical needs that cannot be met at McKinley: [uhcsr.com](http://uhcsr.com). You can also use this site to search for local medical providers.

11. Take your **original transcripts** to the Graduate College, but first take them to Shannon Croft, or graduate secretary, so that she can make copies as needed.

As noted above, **public transportation around Champaign-Urbana is convenient and free to students**. Places to go **grocery shopping** in Urbana include Schnucks (a Midwestern supermarket franchise) at 200 N. Vine Street or Walmart: both by bus. There is also an excellent locally-owned whole and organic foods market, Common Ground, on Vine Street. One can also walk from campus to the County Market for groceries, but they have higher prices: 331 E. Stoughton Street, Champaign. There is a mall in Champaign which you can get to by bus: the 1 Yellow North, which also goes to Target, for housewares and clothing. There is also a Schnucks in western Champaign and in Savoy. In addition, there are numerous **specialty grocery stores** selling ingredients for traditional Asian, African, and Latin American cuisines. There are also



numerous good and affordable Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Thai, and Indian cafes and restaurants around town, among many other serving regional cuisines.

FOR LATER ON . . . .

**Taxes in the U.S.** are usually filed by April 15<sup>th</sup> of each year, but please get your ITIN number ASAP: [grad.illinois.edu/fellowship/taxinfo/intntltax](https://grad.illinois.edu/fellowship/taxinfo/intntltax). It is very important that you request an appointment online and get your documents ready because tax preparation can be difficult and it can take some time to get this sorted out. More info can be found in these links:  
[https://www.iss.illinois.edu/students/incoming/checkin/next\\_steps.html](https://www.iss.illinois.edu/students/incoming/checkin/next_steps.html)  
<https://history.illinois.edu/academics/graduate-studies/prospective-students/information-international-applicants>.

If you would like to obtain a **U.S. driver's license**, do note that the application process requires a U.S. Social Security Number, so it can be difficult for new international students to apply during the first year. But if you are interested: <https://www.iss.illinois.edu/resources/driving.html>.

**Before you begin teaching**, which usually occurs in your 2nd year, you will need to pass the English Proficiency Interview (EPI) if your TOEFL speaking sub-section score was lower than 24 (or lower than 8 in IELTS) at the time of your admission to the program:

<https://citl.illinois.edu/citl-101/measurement-evaluation/english-proficiency-interview>.

The department will register students who need to take EPI, and then these students will receive information about the exam and its schedule. If you receive a "conditional pass," you will need to complete ESL 508 before starting to teach.

