



NATIONAL
LOUIS
UNIVERSITY

PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE

Practical information about studying in the United States







FROM THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AND SCHOLAR SERVICES

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Dear Students,

Welcome to National Louis University! You are beginning a journey that will impact the rest of your life. The friendships you will make, the new experiences you will have living in Chicago and your time at National Louis University will prepare you to graduate ready for the world.

This pre-departure booklet contains important information that will help you prepare for your departure and arrival in your new home, Chicago.

As an international student, you'll get the support you need from our faculty and staff. Many of us have experience working and living abroad. If you have questions before your arrival or while you are on campus, please do not hesitate to ask us. Student support is one of our greatest strengths, and we hope you take advantage of our services.

We look forward to welcoming you to campus!

Sincerely,

The National Louis University International Team

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



- See your doctor, dentist and have a vision exam
- Make sure you have secured accommodations in Chicago
- Make your banking arrangements
 - > Visit your bank and let them know you are studying in the U.S.
 - > Ask your bank which of your debit and credit cards will work in the U.S.
- Remember important documents, including passport, I-20 or DS-2019 and original financial support documents

TIP: You should not pack these documents in your checked luggage.

Clothing

- At least one business formal outfit
- Casual clothing for all weather (average temperatures from -6°C to 30°C)

TIP: Chicago has cold and snowy winters, and you will need a thick coat, waterproof boots, hat, gloves and a scarf.

Electronics

- The U.S. uses a Type B outlet and alternating current (AC) 110/120
- You should pack electrical adapters and/or transformers if necessary



If applicable:

- Valid driver's license or international driver's permit
- Prescription Medications

TIP: Our recommendation is to bring at least a 3 month supply of your prescription medications in original bottles with signed prescription from your doctor.
- Prescription eyeglasses





Degree-seeking students must apply for an F-1 visa. If you are participating in a study abroad program, you must apply for a J-1 exchange visitor visa.

Applying for your Visa

Once you receive your I-20 or DS-2019:

1. Pay SEVIS Fee.

The SEVIS fee must be paid at least 3 business days before visa appointment. Go to fmjfee.com for payment options. Print out your payment confirmation as a receipt, and bring it to your visa interview.

TIP: You should keep this receipt as proof of payment even after your visa interview.

2. Make an appointment at the nearest U.S. embassy.

Go to usembassy.state.gov to find the U.S. embassy/consulate nearest you. Check their official website for information on their specific procedures and required documents.

TIP: Consulates recommend appointments be made no more than 90 days in advance. Wait times may be longer in June, July and August, as well as during the American holiday season in late December/early January. You can find information on embassy wait times here: travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/general/wait-times.html

3. Bring all necessary documents to the visa interview:

- A passport valid for at least six months after your program start date
- Form I-20 or DS-2019 sent by National Louis University; make sure to sign at the bottom of the first page
- National Louis University admission letter
- Two 2x2 inches (51x51mm) photographs
TIP: Go to usembassy.state.gov to learn more about the photo requirements.
- Receipts of SEVIS and Visa fee payment—you should have two receipts
- DS-160 new nonimmigrant visa application or DS-156, DS-157, and DS-158 (DS-160 combines all applications in one)
- See your specific embassy website for further instructions

TIP: Be prepared to provide your transcripts, test scores and proof of financial support. Perhaps bring documents that show you will return to your home country after finishing your studies, such as property deeds or examples of ties to your family or community. They may ask how your U.S. degree will help your career in your home country.



ARRIVING IN THE UNITED STATES



Important Travel Documentation

Carry the following documents with you on the plane and do not pack them in your checked luggage.

1. **Your passport**
2. **SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019**
3. **Acceptance Letter from National Louis University**
4. **Original Bank Balance Statement and Confidential Statement of Support**
5. **Original Transcripts if required by your National Louis University International Enrollment Advisor**
6. **SEVIS receipt I-901**
7. **Name and contact information for your National Louis University International Enrollment Advisor**

For information on studying, traveling and arriving in the U.S. as a student, visit studyinthestates.dhs.gov.

TIP: You may not arrive more than 30 days before the program start date on your I-20 or DS-2019.

U.S. IMMIGRATION

Visitors entering the U.S. must state their reason for travel and their final destination. You should tell the immigration official that you are a new student at National Louis University.

The immigration officer will stamp your passport and write "D/S" for duration of status and your visa type: F-1 or J-1. It is important that you enter as an F-1 student or J-1 exchange visitor, and not as a tourist.

TIP: Please double check your passport before you leave customs.

You should report to National Louis University on your scheduled orientation date. If you cannot attend orientation, you must contact your National Louis University International Enrollment Advisor and the Office of International Student and Scholar Services.





TRANSPORTATION

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O'Hare International and Midway International Airports both have easy public transportation to the city.

CTA Rail (the L)

- The Blue line train has a stop at O'Hare International Airport located in terminal 2, on the lower level. The Blue line trains run 24 hours.
- The Orange line train has a stop at Midway International Airport in the transportation center. You can purchase tickets at the station. The Orange line train does not run between 1:00am and 4:30am.

U-Pass

All undergraduate full-time students (12 quarter hours or more) taking 8 or more credits on the Chicago campus, and all master's full-time students (6 quarter hours or more) taking 6 or more credits on the Chicago campus, will be charged the non-refundable Ventra U-Pass fee. The Ventra U-Pass is active beginning the first day of each academic term, and provides unlimited rides on CTA for approximately 3 months. The Ventra U-Pass provides low cost transportation to students in the Chicago metropolitan area by providing unlimited rides on CTA buses and trains. For more information, go to www.transitchicago.com.

Public Buses

- There are many bus lines at the Midway Transportation Center. You can find a full list of bus routes in the CTA section of the official Midway International Airport website.
- O'Hare Airport is not accessible by city buses.

TIP: Go to transitchicago.com to learn more about rail and bus service

Taxis

Taxi stands are outside the baggage claim at both airports.

TIP: Remember to tip your taxi driver 15-20% of your total bill.

Rideshare

Uber or Lyft can pick up passengers from both O'Hare and Midway Airports. You should request your ride after you have picked up your luggage. Be aware that there is an extra fee on rides from the airport.

Private car, limousine, shuttle bus or rideshare service

You can find a list of private transportation companies online.

TIP: You should never accept a ride from anyone advertising within the airport. The official taxis operate from the taxi stands and legitimate private transport companies require reservations.



ACCOMMODATIONS IN CHICAGO



National Louis University offers luxury high-rise living in the heart of downtown Chicago at the University Center, just four blocks away from the Michigan Avenue campus. This convenient location known as the South Loop of downtown Chicago is within walking distance to the public bus and train systems, lakefront trail, theatre district, and the city's best attractions, like Millennium and Grant Parks and Museum Campus. With all of the amenities students expect from high-end living, the University Center provides a stylish interior providing a comfortable, secure setting so you can focus on what is most important- your academic goals.

The University Center includes an on-site dining center, student lounges, fitness center, computer lab, professional on-site management, and 24-hour secure access to the building. Students are offered private single bedrooms within a shared 4 bedroom, 2 bathroom apartment. For additional privacy all personal bedrooms within the apartment have keyed access.

Housing is limited, and is given on a first-come-first-served basis. To learn more about National Louis University Housing, you can visit: www.nl.edu/studentservices/campushousing.



Renderings are an artist's conception and are intended only as a general reference. Features, materials, finishes and layout of subject unit may be different than shown.



Student Life

The Office of Campus Life and Student Experience at National Louis University offers student organizations and activities designed to foster an inclusive community, grow as leaders and explore a variety of cultural experiences. Student-led organizations create captivating learning activities and social events for all students. Active participation in student organizations cultivates new friendships and makes the college experience positive and enjoyable.

The Office of Campus Life and Student Experience also hosts a variety of events and activities to engage with students in and out of classrooms. Our location in the third largest city in the United States allows for National Louis University students to explore local activities and savor Chicago's greatest cuisine. The Office of Campus Life and Student Experience organizes amusement parks trips, sporting events, theaters, and more!

Be involved on campus and immerse yourself in the National Louis University community.

Classroom Culture

In the U.S., attendance and class participation will have a large impact on your grade. Additionally, it is common for your classes to have daily homework as well as exams.

National Louis University has a strict academic integrity policy. We prohibit the following dishonest academic behaviors:

- Cheating
- Fabrication
- Plagiarism
- Verbatim Copying
- Ghost Writing
- Stealing another student's work with or without their knowledge

For a full definition of these terms and more information on academic integrity, please review the Academic Catalog.

National Louis University English Language Services

Our staff are specialized English language professionals with years of experience teaching writing and communications skills to students from around the world. We provide services in writing, presentations, public speaking skills; fluency development; proofreading and more. Visit <https://nl.edu/admissions/international-students/english-language-services> for details.

Tuition Payments

Tuition, fees and housing are charged at the beginning of each term. Payment is due by the first day of class each term. You may make a payment via PeerTransfer, e-check or credit card.





Banking

Establishing a local bank account is a safe and convenient way to keep track of your money. A basic checking account comes with a debit card; you can use this at ATMs and to shop. Be sure you understand the terms and conditions before you open a bank account. When choosing a bank, you may want to consider how easy it will be to transfer money to between your home country and the U.S.

Cell Phones and Plans

In the U.S., it is common to sign a phone service contract for a year or more. The most common companies are AT&T, Sprint and T-Mobile. Check their websites for more details on contracts and conditions. Pay-as-you-go plans are available. Remember that in the U.S., both incoming and outgoing calls are charged to you unless otherwise stated in your plan.

Shopping

Department Store

Large stores that sell clothing, accessories, home furnishings and appliances, such as Barneys, Bloomingdales, Macy's, Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom, Saks Fifth Avenue and discount stores like Marshall's, Target and TJ Maxx.

Supermarket

Supermarkets are large stores that carry a wide variety of food items and services. Examples include Mariano's, Trader Joe's and Whole Foods.

Convenience Store

Limited food and personal care items are available at convenience stores. Examples include CVS, 7-Eleven and Walgreens.

Pharmacy

Pharmacies are stores that specialize in pharmaceutical and personal care items. Examples include CVS, Jewel-Osco and Walgreens.





Tipping

In the U.S., tips are given to people who work in the service industry, like restaurant servers, hairdressers, taxi drivers and food delivery services. Generally, it's recommended that you tip 15-20% of the total price before tax.

An automatic tip or gratuity may be added for room service or large groups at a restaurant. Tipping is not expected in fast food restaurants.

Do not tip government employees or officials such as police officers or service employees such as bus drivers, sales people, receptionists, theatre ushers or elevator ushers.

Transportation around Chicago

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) offers 8 train lines (subways and elevated trains) and a network of city buses, making Chicago one of the most convenient cities in the U.S. to get around by public transportation. The Red and Blue line trains offer 24 hour service.

National Louis University will provide you with a U-Pass that provides unlimited rides aboard CTA buses and trains while classes are in session.

Go to transitchicago.com to learn more.

Safety and Security

911

911 is the telephone number to call for any emergency requiring the police, fire department or medical services. The emergency operator will assist you and send help as needed based on the situation. This service should be used only for an emergency.

Local law enforcement

In the U.S., the police are here to help you in an emergency situation. You should not hesitate to ask police officers for help if an emergency situation arises.

U.S. Laws

While in the U.S. you must follow all laws and know the rules and regulations regarding your visa. The legal drinking age in Illinois is 21. You must have an ID to drink and buy alcohol. Possessing, selling, buying or using illegal drugs is a criminal offense.

Names

Most Americans use first (given) names when addressing people. In more formal or business situations, you may need to introduce or greet the person with Mr., Mrs., Miss, Dr., etc. When talking with someone older than you for the first time, use their title and family name. Example: Hello, Mr. Lake.

Introductions

When meeting someone for the first time, most Americans, both men and women, generally shake hands. Shake with your right hand and with a firm grip.

Body language and space

Americans make eye contact when speaking to each other but leave at least 1 meter of space between themselves. If you bump into somebody, it is polite to say, "Excuse me" or "I am sorry."

Greetings

Americans will often smile and greet each other on the street with a simple, "Hi, how are you?" even when they don't know you. They don't necessarily want to stop and talk — simply reply, "Hello, I'm fine, thank you" and continue on your way.

Smoking

In Chicago, smoking is not allowed in public places. This includes bars and restaurants. At National Louis University, there are designated smoking areas. Always check for designated smoking areas before you smoke.

Holidays

The following is a selected list of holidays celebrated in the U.S. This list includes government, religious and traditional holidays.

- New Year's Day – January 1
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – 3rd Monday in January
- Valentine's Day – February 14
- Presidents Day (Washington's Birthday) – 3rd Monday in February
- St. Patrick's Day – March 17
- Easter – March or April
- Passover – March or April
- Mother's Day – 2nd Sunday in May
- Memorial Day – Last Monday in May
- Father's Day – 3rd Sunday in June
- Independence Day – July 4
- Labor Day – 1st Monday in September
- Columbus Day – 2nd Monday in October
- Veterans Day – November 11
- Halloween – October 31
- Thanksgiving – 4th Thursday in November
- Hanukkah – November or December
- Christmas – December 25





Health Insurance in the U.S.

National Louis University requires all international students to have health insurance. You are automatically enrolled in National Louis University's health insurance plan. If you wish to use your personal health insurance, it must meet certain requirements and you will need to submit a waiver before the start of the quarter. Contact the Office of International Student and Scholar Services to learn about important deadlines and more information.

To see which health services the National Louis University health insurance plan covers, please refer to the explanation of benefits. Please note that this insurance plan does not cover vision or dental costs. Coverage begins the first day of classes. If you are planning to be in the U.S. before this date, you may want to purchase a short-term health insurance policy to cover you before classes begin. Your local travel agency or airline may sell short-term healthcare policies.

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

- Food portions are really big – order small sizes in restaurants
(Trang - Vietnam)
- Try to attend social events and make lots of friends
(Nik - Malaysia)
- Buy a good winter coat (Jeremy - France)
- The Office of International Student and Scholar Services is a great resource. Ask them questions if you need help.
(Madeleine - Argentina)
- Living expenses will be different from your home country. Plan your budget accordingly. (Jorge - Mexico)
- Chicago is a diverse and vibrant city with many cultures. Come with an open mind. (Jorge - Mexico)
- It is common in the U.S. for students to receive homework after each class session. (Charlotte - France)
- Practice your English before you arrive. Sign up for conversation class with your local language school. Watch movies. Become familiar with the American accent. (Yashwin - India)
- Talk to locals. (Anna - Russia)
- Don't be afraid to ask your teachers questions.
(Eudes - France)
- Spend time walking around the city to get to know it.
(Margeaux - France)
- Don't forget to keep in touch with your family back home!
(Alex - Costa Rica)





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