

IS



STEP INTO THE WORLD



INTERNATIONAL SERVICES OFFICE



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON DC



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University Policy on Equal Opportunity

The George Washington University does not unlawfully discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation. This policy covers all programs, services, policies, and procedures of the University including admission to educational programs and employment. The University is also subject to the District of Columbia Human Rights Act.



ISO

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR ADMISSION TO THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY (GW)!

All of us at the International Services Office (ISO) welcome you to GW and to Washington, DC—one of the most exciting cities in the world, and your new home! The GW community is comprised of students, faculty, researchers, and staff from every US state and over 130 countries. The presence and contributions of our international students—more than 2,000 of you at the time of this printing—are an important part of campus life. We are glad you are coming to GW and we hope that your experience with us will be enjoyable and rewarding. We look forward to getting to know you in the months and years ahead, and we are here to assist you throughout the duration of your stay. The information in this brochure will help to prepare you for your trip to GW and the US, and to guide you on what to do once you arrive. Please report to the ISO when you first arrive on campus. A personal check-in process at the ISO is required for all new international students. See the “ISO Welcome Center” on page 8 to find out more about the personal check-in process.

AGAIN, WELCOME AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING YOU SOON!

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICES OFFICE

ISO PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

The ISO offers you many opportunities to learn outside the classroom. Through programs such as workshops on finding a job to the C-3 intercultural dialogue group, the ISO seeks to provide you with fun and educational activities that will enrich your experience here at GW.

» *ISO Workshops*

ISO workshops are designed to give you in-depth information on topics that relate to your course of study. Past workshop topics have included On and Off-campus Employment topics, Tax Information, and Interviewing Skills.

» *C-3, “Conversation, Communication and Culture”*

C-3 is a weekly intercultural dialogue group sponsored by the ISO and the Multicultural Student Services Center (MSSC). This group discusses topics pertaining to American culture and the cultures of the participants, while simultaneously giving you the opportunity to continue to develop your English language skills by interacting with American students. Please check the ISO web site at: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/iso> for the location and time.

SOME GREAT THINGS YOU CAN DO AT C-3 INCLUDE...

- » Learn about US culture
- » Meet US students
- » Explore DC
- » Meet students from over 130 countries

» *3 Great Ways to Find out What is Going on at the ISO:*

- Visit the ISO’s web site at <http://gwired.gwu.edu/iso>
- Stop by ISO for the latest information
- Join the ISO group on the GW network on facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>)

ISO Services

- New student orientation
- Welcome Center
- Immigration advising
- I-20 & DS-2019 issuance
- Academic support services
- Personal and cultural advising
- Cultural adjustment workshops
- Social activities
- Cultural and educational programs
- Campus and community referrals
- Cross-cultural communication training
- Employment workshops and information
- Crisis intervention
- Information about drivers licenses, Social Security, financial aid, and more



PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION >>

OBTAINING A STUDENT VISA

As part of the admissions packet sent to you by the ISO, you should have received an I-20 or DS-2019 form from GW.

Do not enter the US with a B-1 (business visitor) or B-2 (tourist) visa, or on the Visa Waiver Program (with no visa). If you enter as a B-1 or as a B-2, you will not be able to study until your immigration status changes. If you enter on the Visa Waiver Program, you will not be able to study and you will not be able to change your status to that of a student while in the US.

Plan ahead! Obtaining a visa takes time and patience, so be sure to begin the process well before classes begin.

To obtain your US visa, contact the nearest US embassy or consulate in your country for information on application requirements, procedures, and processing time. To locate the nearest embassy or consulate, please visit <http://www.usembassy.gov>.

Requirements and procedures vary from country to country. However, be prepared to present at least the following documents to your US embassy or consulate:

- ❑ The I-20 (for F-1 visa) issued by GW, or the DS-2019 (for J-1 visa) issued by GW or your sponsoring agency
- ❑ Your valid passport
- ❑ An original letter of admission
- ❑ Original financial documentation in English, referring to US dollars (for example: scholarship awards, bank statements, etc.)

Remember to contact your consulate or embassy beforehand to determine all of the documents required by your country!

DOCUMENTS

In addition to your visa and immigration papers, we recommend that you bring the following documents with you from home to help you obtain services (such as banking and medical care) in the US.

- ❑ Drivers License
- ❑ Academic Records
- ❑ Medical Records
- ❑ Scholarship Notices
- ❑ Employment Recommendations
- ❑ Other documents that you think might be useful

You should bring English translations of these documents if possible.

CULTURAL MEMENTOS

While you are in the US, you will have many opportunities to share information about your country and culture. People will want to know about where you are from! It is a good idea to bring small souvenirs or mementos to display or use at social gatherings.

WASHINGTON, DC WEATHER

Washington has four distinct seasons: spring, summer, fall, and winter. In summer (June–August), the weather is typically hot, humid, and sticky. Temperatures range from 24–35 °C. As fall approaches (September–November), temperatures drop to 9–15 °C. Winter (December–March) brings very cold temperatures (0–8 °C) and some ice and snow. Spring (April–May) brings temperate weather (13–24 °C) and the National Cherry Blossom Festival for which Washington is famous. Bring clothing to prepare you for all kinds of weather. Dressing in layers will be helpful in adjusting to temperature changes. You can also purchase seasonal clothing once you arrive in DC. Dressing for class is generally casual. Jeans, trousers, shorts, skirts, t-shirts, and sneakers are appropriate. For some occasions you will need to dress more formally; a suit or dress is recommended for such events.



ISO

TRAVELING TO THE US

WHEN TO ARRIVE

As of the printing of this brochure, F-1 and J-1 visa holders are not permitted to enter the US more than 30 days prior to the report date listed on their I-20 or DS-2019. This report date is located in item number five on your immigration document. Therefore, we usually recommend that you arrive in Washington, DC two to three weeks before classes start. Finding housing can be particularly challenging and may take a lot of energy (see page 16 for housing information). In addition to arriving early to find housing, you are also required to attend the ISO's "International Student Orientation," where you will learn important information about maintaining your legal status in the US, academics at GW, and meet your fellow international students. Please see our web site for the orientation dates.

WHEN TRAVELING

Keep your money, credit cards, travel and original immigration documents with you at all times in your carry-on luggage. Also, we highly recommend that you keep several copies of each of your documents in your checked luggage.

AT THE PORT OF ENTRY

It is important that you enter the country in the proper visa type (F-1 or J-1). To do so you must present the following to an immigration officer at the port of entry:

- 1 Your passport
- 2 Your US F-1 or J-1 visa stamp for The George Washington University
- 3 Your I-20 or DS-2019

If you enter as a B-1 (business visitor) or as a B-2 (tourist), you will not be able to study until your immigration status changes. If you enter on the Visa Waiver Program (with no visa), you will not be able to study and you will not be able to change your status to that of a student while in the US.

If you forget an immigration document, the immigration officer may issue you a form I-515 (A), which is a temporary 30-day admission. If this occurs, please come to the International Services Office as soon as possible during normal business hours. When you come to the ISO, please bring all of your immigration documents, including the form I-515 (A) issued at the port of entry, to help us advise you properly.

TRANSPORTATION IN DC

The Metropolitan DC subway system, Metro, is a safe and inexpensive method of transportation in the city (see page 27 for Metro map). The Orange and Blue Line trains lead directly to the Foggy Bottom/GWU Metro Station, the heart of The George Washington University campus and where the ISO is located. MetroBus is another popular public transportation option, with stops throughout the city. In addition, taxis are widely used throughout the metropolitan area.

ABOUT DC'S AIRPORTS

Washington, DC is served by three major airports. Please read the following information to help determine into which airport you wish to fly. Unfortunately, GW is unable to provide airport pick-up. However, Travelers Aid or information desks within the airports are extremely helpful in providing information on-site.

To the right is an overview of airports near GW and the most economical transportation options from each.

Ronald Reagan National Airport (DCA)

<http://www.metwashairports.com>

DCA is the closest airport to GW's campus (6 mi., or 9 km away). Transportation is available through:

- Metro (Blue Line)
- Taxi

Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD)

<http://www.metwashairports.com>

IAD is located in Virginia, about 20 mi. (30 km) from downtown Washington. Transportation is available through:

- **Washington Flyer** The Coach Service will take you to the West Falls Church Metro Station (Orange Line). (<http://www.washfly.com>)
- **Super Shuttle** It can be used for door-to-door service.
- **MetroBus 5A** It operates between the L'Enfant Plaza Station (Blue and Orange Lines) and Dulles, with stops at the Rosslyn Station (Orange Line) and Herndon-Monroe Park and Ride.

- Taxi (this option will be expensive)

Baltimore Washington International Airport (BWI)

<http://www.bwiairport.com>

BWI is located in Maryland, about 33 mi. (53 km) from Washington. For transportation to DC, the following are available:

- **The MARC Train** Take the Penn Line to Union Station, located on the Red Line of the Metro. MARC Train service operates on Monday through Friday only. (<http://www.mtmaryland.com>)
- **Amtrak Train** (<http://www.amtrak.com>)
- **The B30 MetroBus** from BWI to Greenbelt Metro Station (Green Line).
- Taxi (this option will be expensive)



ISO

UPON ARRIVAL AT GW

IMMIGRATION CHECK-IN PROCESS AT THE ISO WELCOME CENTER

One of the first things you will need to do upon arrival to the United States is come into the Welcome Center at the ISO to legally check in. **You are required to do this as soon as possible upon entering the United States.** During this time, the Welcome Center staff will collect your immigration documents to ensure that you are legally ready to begin your studies. In addition, a file will be created for you that will be maintained throughout your studies at GW to help you maintain your legal immigration status in the US. The Welcome Center will also provide you with important information and resources to acquaint you with the city. More detailed information about International Student Orientation will be available at this time as well.

The Welcome Center is located in the International Services Office, 2033 K Street NW, Suite 310 (third floor). Please be aware that the entrance to the office is actually on 21st Street, not on K Street, and that there are no signs on the building to tell you there is any connection to GW. The Welcome Center is open Monday-Friday, 9 am to 5 pm. You can reach us by phone at 202-994-4477.

The following documents are required when you check-in at the ISO. Please have them ready when you arrive.

- ☐ Your valid passport with valid visa
- ☐ Your I-94 stamped by the US Immigration Inspector (also called an Arrival/Departure Record)
- ☐ Your GW I-20 (F-1) or DS-2019 (J-1)
- ☐ Your local address and telephone number (if you know them at the time of check-in)

Transfer students may be required to bring additional documents. Please refer to our web site for updates and further information.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORIENTATION

All new and transfer international students, both graduate and undergraduate, are required to attend International Student Orientation in addition to any orientation organized by your academic department. Orientation will provide you with important information for your stay at GW, including:

- immigration requirements
- academic policies
- social and cultural opportunities
- health insurance
- local resources, and much more!

Orientation also offers you a great opportunity to meet students, administrators, and faculty before the semester begins.

International Student Orientation is required for all international graduate and undergraduate students. Please refer to our web site, <http://gwired.gwu.edu/iso> for more information on specific dates.

Many academic programs organize separate orientations focusing on policies and services specific to their school or program. Please check with your academic department for the time and location of such orientations.

Note to Undergraduate Students

International undergraduate students are also required to attend Colonial Inauguration (CI), GW's undergraduate orientation program. CI will address concerns specific to your status as an undergraduate. To register for CI, visit their web site at <http://ci.gwu.edu>. If you do not have access to the Internet, please contact the ISO and we will assist you in registering for CI.

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Placement (formerly English as a Foreign Language or EFL Placement)

At GW, the TOEFL score is used to determine whether international students are required to complete EAP coursework in order to build English academic research and writing skills. According to university regulations, if your TOEFL score was 100 or below (Internet-based test), 250 or below (computer-based test), or 600 or below (paper-based test), you must do the following:

Undergraduate students: You must register for EAP 1015. You do not need to take the EAP Placement Test.

Graduate students: You must take the EAP Placement Test. To register for the test, contact GW's Language Center at 202-994-6333, language@gwu.edu, or visit Phillips Hall 216. You will not be allowed to register for your classes until you have taken the EAP Placement Test.

Please check the Language Center's web site for further information about EAP placement, schedule, registration, and course offerings at <http://www.gwu.edu/~language>.



MAINTAINING LEGAL STATUS

IMMIGRATION STATUS: KNOW THE LAW

Although US immigration regulations are complex, international students are expected to be familiar with the rules governing their stay. **Ignorance of the law is not considered an acceptable reason for disobeying it.** We at the ISO want to help you keep your legal status. To help you do so, we provide an abundance of useful written and electronic information, group workshops, and electronic notifications of regulation changes, as well as individual advisors available to help you understand the regulations.

No immigration case is exactly the same. We at the ISO recommend that if you have questions or concerns, you come into our office and ask an advisor, and not rely on your friends, family, or faculty members about how to maintain your legal status.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment for international students and scholars is strictly regulated in the US. If you are considering working to complement your studies at GW, we strongly recommend you first attend an employment workshop offered at the ISO, or speak to an ISO advisor. Beginning

work without authorization can result in severe penalties, including revocation of your visa.

Illegal employment is one of the most serious violations of US immigration law. Never work without authorization from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and/or an ISO advisor. For more information about definitions of employment, ISO Employment Workshops, and other employment information, visit our web site at <http://gwired.gwu.edu/iso>.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

Social Security numbers (SSNs) will NOT be issued to anyone who cannot show that they have a job. In order to get a SSN, please come to the ISO to obtain a letter of eligibility. F-1 students must have proof of an offer of employment, either on or off campus, before requesting a social security letter from the ISO. If you are a J-1 visa holder who is not sponsored by GW, you will need to request a letter of eligibility from your sponsor. To locate a Social Security office near you, visit <http://www.ssa.gov>.

EVIDENCE OF LEGAL STATUS

By law, all non-US citizens are required to carry their registration documents "at all times." For non-immigrants, Form I-94 is the registration document. Laws are enforced strictly, so students, scholars, and their dependents are advised to carry copies of their immigration documents at all times when in the metropolitan DC area, and original documents when traveling outside of Washington. Your documentation should include:

- 1 The biographic page and the US visa page of your passport
- 2 Form I-94
- 3 Appropriate immigration status document (I-20 or DS-2019).

DRIVERS LICENSES

International students can apply for a drivers license from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in their US state of residence. To apply for a drivers license or a US identification card, a passport, I-94 card, I-20 or DS-2019, and proof of residency are required.

DC, Virginia, and Maryland all have different requirements for obtaining a drivers license. To find out exactly what each state requires, you should contact the DMV in your state of residence.

» *Virginia:* <http://www.dmv.state.va.us>

» *Maryland:* <http://www.mva.state.md.us>

» *DC:* <http://dmv.dc.gov>



HEALTH & ACCIDENT INSURANCE >>

To be able to reach your educational goals, you need to take care of your health—mental and physical. GW strongly suggests that you purchase private health care insurance in addition to utilizing the Student Health Service medical facility on campus.

US Law requires J-1 exchange visitors and their J-2 dependents to have medical insurance for the duration of their program. The regulations require that any insurance obtained must meet the approval rating that has been set forth in the Exchange Visitor Program. If the exchange visitor fails to maintain insurance, it will cost a loss of their status and the termination of their program. The insurance must meet the following minimum coverage:

- 1 Medical benefits of at least **\$50,000** per person per accident or illness.
- 2 Repatriation of remains in the amount of **\$7,500**.
- 3 Expenses associated with medical evacuation in the amount of **\$10,000**.
- 4 Deductible must not exceed **\$500** per accident or illness.

GW STUDENT HEALTH SERVICE

Student Health Service (SHS) is an outpatient clinic staffed by physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants who can evaluate and treat a great deal of the medical problems encountered by students. For treatment that cannot be provided at SHS, the staff can refer you to a specialist. Visits should be arranged by appointment; urgent problems can be seen on a walk-in basis as necessary. **Charges incurred for visits, lab work, medication, and supplies both in SHS and for referrals to outside providers are your responsibility.** SHS provides a variety of health education and outreach programs throughout the year. For more information on these programs, and about Student Health Service, including their hours of operation, please visit their web site at <http://gwired.gwu.edu/shs> or call 202-994-6827.

Student Health Service is provided by the University for registered full or part-time GW students only, and does not treat spouses, children, or other dependents not enrolled. It is recommended that you find a private practitioner if you bring dependents with you. (Services are available to non-degree seeking students currently enrolled for 12 credit hours.)

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers services to help you with a wide range of academic and personal concerns that you may encounter during your studies. Services offered by UCC include:

- short-term individual therapy
- group therapy
- crisis assistance
- academic skills assistance and workshops
- career decisions workshops and career counseling

UCC also offers a 24-hour hotline service, referral information, and mental health outreach programs. For more information, please visit their web site at <http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel> or call 202-994-5300.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

For serious emergencies occurring when Student Health Service is closed, students may go to the Emergency Room of the GW University Hospital for treatment. **All charges incurred for services provided are your responsibility.** If you are on campus during an emergency, GW's Emergency Medical Response Team (EMERG) is available for immediate assistance. For EMERG services, call the GW Police Department (GWPD) emergency line at 202-994-6111.



HEALTH & ACCIDENT INSURANCE, CONTINUED

IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

The District of Columbia Immunization of School Children's Act requires that all students under the age of 26 have a record on file with the Student Health Service documenting vaccinations to Measles, Mumps and Rubella (two vaccinations with the initial dose given after the first birthday or positive titers), Varicella (Chickenpox—by vaccination, documented history of disease or positive titers), and a current Tetanus/Diphtheria booster (within 10 years prior to the beginning of the semester). Effective August 2009, the following immunizations are also required:

- One Polio (All students under 18 years of age)
- Three Hepatitis B vaccinations
- One Meningococcal vaccination -OR- Meningitis waiver

Students being admitted to GW for the fall semester should submit health forms to SHS by August 1. Students being admitted for the spring semester should submit forms by January 1. Students who do not comply with this DC Law will be prevented from registering for subsequent semesters by placement of an internal "hold" on their account.

These requirements apply to all students regardless of their degree status or program of study.

Immunization forms are sent out by your academic program. If you did not receive this form, you can download it from the SHS web site at <http://gwired.gwu.edu/shs>. In addition to the required immunizations, SHS recommends Tuberculosis (TB) screening. Student Health Service is able to provide all of the above mentioned inoculations on a fee for service basis. For further information or questions, you can call Student Health Service at 202-994-6827.

A special physical exam is not required for entry to GW. However, if you have a health problem, please ask your physician to provide you with all pertinent information related to your condition. Bring a copy of this information to SHS so it can be included with your patient record.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Disability Support Services (DSS) provides and coordinates accommodations and other services for students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled due to injury or illness. To be eligible, a student must provide DSS documentation that proves the need for such services, in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Services provided without charge may include

registration assistance, readers, interpreters, scribes, learning specialist services, adaptive materials and equipment, assistance with note taking, laboratory assistance, test accommodations, and referrals. DSS does not provide content tutoring, although it is available on a fee basis from other campus resources. The University does not pay for personal attendant care. DSS is located on the second floor of the Marvin Center and is open from 9 am to 5 pm weekdays. Please visit their web site at <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss> for further information.

HEALTH AND ACCIDENT INSURANCE

Although health insurance coverage is not required in order to be seen at Student Health Service, all students are strongly advised to have adequate health insurance coverage. Insurance coverage for emergency care, specialty care, and hospitalization is essential.

The GW Student Health Insurance Plan

The University offers a health insurance program developed especially for GW students. The GW Student Health Insurance Plan, managed by Aetna, is a comprehensive plan designed and endorsed by the University to meet the needs of students, as well as the federal regulations that are required for J-1 students. To obtain information and/or enroll in the GW Student Health Insurance Plan, visit <http://gwired.gwu.edu/shs>. The deadline for enrolling in the Student Health Insurance Annual Plan is mid-October. There is also a semi-annual premium payment option available for those students arriving in the spring or summer.

WHY SHOULD I GET HEALTH INSURANCE?

- » The US Government does not have a national health plan. Most health care in the US is provided by private doctors, dentists, and hospitals and is very expensive.
- » Arranging and paying for medical care is YOUR responsibility.
- » Purchasing private health insurance will help to protect you and your family from excessive costs.
- » Although you may be in excellent health and may not expect to need medical care, no one can predict when or where someone will become ill or have an accident.
- » It is more expensive to NOT have health insurance. For example, if you become sick or injured and need to stay in the hospital, the cost of one night's stay without health insurance is at least \$1,000.00. With health insurance, 80% of most costs are covered, so you would only pay approximately \$200.00.
- » Many doctors and hospitals will refuse to treat you if you do not have health insurance.



HOUSING

Finding a place to live is an immediate challenge for the majority of new international students. The following suggestions may help you in your search.

OVERNIGHT LODGING/HOTEL INFORMATION

If you arrive at the airport late at night and do not yet have a place to stay, find the nearest information desk and ask for hotel information. Usually there is a telephone provided to make calls to hotels, although you may have to use a pay phone. When choosing a hotel, be sure to take into consideration the following tips:

- Does the hotel provide a shuttle service from the airport to the hotel? (This will save you money on taxi fares, as the shuttles are normally free!)
- Is there a student discount?
- Is the hotel Metro or MetroBus accessible? (Knowing this will help you plan to get to the ISO for check-in!)
- Is there a minimum number of nights you must stay to obtain a room?
- Are there weekly rates available or any special deals for extended stays?

If you would like to arrange your hotel before you arrive, below are a few of the many options available:

ADAM'S INN

Phone: 1-800-578-6807 or 202-745-3600

Email: adamsinn@adamsinn.com

Web: <http://www.adamsinn.com>

CARLYLE SUITES

Phone: 1-866-468-3532 or 202-234-3200

Email: info@carlylesuites.com

Web: <http://www.carlylesuites.com>

2424 PENN (FORMERLY DC SUITES)

Phone: 202-331-5000

Web: <http://www.2424penn.com>

INTERNATIONAL GUEST HOUSE

Search for "bed and breakfasts" in DC

Phone: 202-726-5808

Web: <http://www.bedandbreakfast.com>

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY INN

Phone: 1-800-426-4455

Web: <http://www.gwuinn.com>

HOSTELLING INTERNATIONAL WASHINGTON, DC

Phone: 202-737-2333

Email: reserve@hiwashingtondc.org

Web: <http://hiwashingtondc.org>

HOSTELS.COM

List of all hostels in Washington, DC

Web: <http://www.hostels.com/us.dc.html>

RIVER PLACE APARTMENTS

Furnished apartments available for short term lease

Phone: 301-951-4111

Email: info@executivehousing.com

Web: <http://www.executivehousing.com>

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HOUSE

Phone: 202-232-4007

Email: info@ishdc.org

Web: <http://www.ishdc.org>

ONE WASHINGTON CIRCLE HOTEL

Phone: 202-872-1680

Web: <http://www.thecirclehotel.com>

THOMPSON-MARKWARD HALL

Exclusively for women ages 18-34

Phone: 202-546-3255

Web: <http://www.ywch.org>





HOUSING, CONTINUED

ON-CAMPUS HOUSING

Undergraduate Students

If you are an undergraduate in your first or second year of study (freshman or sophomore), you are required to live in an on-campus residence hall. Additionally, a large number of juniors and seniors (third and fourth year students) choose to take advantage of the comfort, convenience, and safety of living in a residence hall, even though it is not required.

Living in a residence hall provides an excellent opportunity to improve your English language skills, meet new students, and be close to campus activities and facilities. The median cost of a room for the academic year (NOT including winter break or summer) in the past ranged from \$8,000 to \$11,000 per person. The price varies depending on the hall and how many roommates you live with. Please be aware that housing prices change nearly every year.

ON-CAMPUS HOUSING

Graduate Students

GW Housing Programs does offer a limited number of rooms for graduate students in three buildings—HOVA (Hall on Virginia Avenue), The Aston, and Columbia Plaza Housing Program. All three of these options are extremely popular, and the rooms fill quickly! For more information on GW Graduate Housing options and the latest information, contact GW Housing Programs (with the contact information provided below), or visit the Living @ GW web site at <http://living.gwu.edu/halls/graduatehousing>.

For information about on-campus housing, contact:

GW Housing Programs

John Quincy Adams House
2129 I St., NW
Washington, DC 20052

E-mail: gwhouse@gwu.edu

Web: <http://living.gwu.edu>

Phone: 202-994-2552 • *Fax:* 202-994-1422

PERMANENT OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING

Most graduate students, as well as third and fourth year undergraduate students who choose not to live in residence halls, find apartments to live in off-campus in the Metropolitan DC area. Metropolitan Washington, DC includes areas of the District of Columbia, Northern Virginia, and Maryland. Students living off-campus commute to campus by taking the Metro and/or MetroBus. It can be difficult to locate off-campus housing, so we recommend you arrive two to three weeks before orientation to begin your search for a suitable apartment. Immediately before orientation and once classes begin, there is more competition, as well as less time to look for accommodations or to obtain help in your search. The following resources are recommended for assistance in your housing search:

- *Off-Campus Student Affairs:*
<http://gwired.gwu.edu/offcampus>
- *Washington City Paper's classified ads and web site:*
<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com>
- *The Washington Post classified ads and web site:* <http://www.washingtonpost.com>
- *Roommatefind:* <http://www.roommates.com>
- *Craigslist web site:*
<http://washingtondc.craigslist.org>

HOUSING DURING WINTER BREAK

If you live in an on-campus residence hall and need to stay in the area during winter break (time off between semesters), you can submit a request to GW Housing Programs to remain during that time. For an additional charge, residents may be able to remain in an on-campus room. You are not guaranteed the ability to stay in your current assignment, as only a few of the residence halls remain open throughout the break. Contact GW Housing Programs for more information on obtaining on-campus winter break housing.

HOUSING DURING SUMMER BREAK

Summer housing is available to individual students attending GW Summer School or participating in a structured experience (e.g. internship, employment, research) for the summer months.



MONEY MATTERS

INITIAL EXPENSES

The Washington, DC area is one of the most expensive in the United States. Please keep in mind you will be expected to pay initial costs to establish your residence here such as initial rent and security deposits (often equal to two months rent or more) as well as tuition.

Note:

- International bank drafts are acceptable, but funds may take longer to become available.
- Foreign currency can be exchanged immediately at any of the airports in the Washington area and at most large banks. Please note we don't recommend that you carry large amounts of cash.
- Banks in the area charge service fees for cashing foreign checks.
- Traveler's checks or major credit cards will be accepted at a majority of locations.

Please visit the following web sites to check updated cost of living estimates:

- **Graduate students:** <http://www.gwu.edu/apply/graduateprofessional/costshousingfunding>
- **Undergraduate students:** www.gwu.edu/apply/undergraduateadmissions/payingforcollege

TUITION PAYMENT

Tuition is due in full by the due date on the invoice. Please check with the Office of Student Accounts if you have any questions about your tuition payment: You can visit them online at <http://colonialcentral.gwu.edu> or by calling 202-994-9000.

GWORLD CARD

The GWorld Card is a student ID card that is issued to all official students, faculty, and staff members. In addition to serving as your campus ID, the GWorld Card is used when making Colonial Cash purchases. Colonial Cash is a declining balance, flexible spending program, accepted at dining and retail options, both on campus and at various locations throughout DC. The GWorld Card also allows you access to campus buildings and your own residence hall. For detailed information about the GWorld Card and Colonial Cash, please visit the GWorld web site at <http://gworld.gwu.edu>.

FINANCIAL AID

Studying in the United States can be an inspiring, exciting experience, but it can also be difficult to finance. Education is very expensive in the United States; US students and their families pay a higher proportion of the cost of education compared to those in most other countries. The cost of living can also be high relative to that of other countries. International students seeking financial assistance must be persistent because the search can be long, tedious, and sometimes unrewarding.

The links provided below should be able to guide you to more appropriate contacts to utilize in your search of financial aid.

<http://www.gwu.edu/~fellows>

<http://gwired.gwu.edu/finaid>

NOTE: Since federal student aid can usually only be secured for US citizens, many international students apply for assistantships or scholarships from other sources. However, please do not rely on University assistance unless it has already been offered to you. You are expected to support yourself throughout the full term of your program with the funds you certified as part of your admissions process.

BANK ACCOUNTS

We recommend you open a bank account as soon as you arrive. Using an international bank will facilitate wiring money from your home country. Service charges and interest rates vary. Foreign checks may require 4 - 6 weeks before funds become available at a US bank. Traveler's checks are the best way to make initial deposits. Two pieces of identification are generally required to open an account. For more information on banks in the GW area, please visit our web site:

<http://gwired.gwu.edu/iso/NewlyAdmittedStudents/helpfullinks>

WIRING MONEY FROM OVERSEAS

After opening a bank account in the United States, you may make arrangements to transfer funds from foreign banking institutions. Wire transfers may take up to 48 hours and require a fee. Speak with a bank representative for more detailed instructions on wiring money from overseas or visit the University Cashier's Office web site at <http://colonialcentral.gwu.edu>. To speak to someone in the Cashier's office about wiring funds, you can call their office at 202-994-9000.



US CULTURE

American culture has been enriched by the values and beliefs of people from all parts of the world. This is evident in the vibrant and international city of Washington, DC. Learning how to adapt to such a diverse environment is best achieved through experience; however, we offer the following information to help you transition more smoothly.

CULTURE SHOCK

“Culture Shock” is the name given to the feeling of discomfort and confusion that usually occurs when someone is immersed in a new and different culture. Unfamiliar social customs, values, weather, changes in diet, and loss of usual support systems can all contribute to physical ailments and emotional turmoil. Accepting this as a normal process of cultural adjustment helps to ease the transition. To combat your feelings of disorientation, we encourage you to become involved in activities, groups, and workshops in order to meet new friends and to learn more about US culture.

Perhaps the greatest strategies for successful cultural adaptation are the maintenance of a strong sense of personal identity and a sense of humor. With time and effort you will gain an increased understanding of yourself and your new home.

If you would like to read further material on Cultural Adjustment, please visit the following web sites:

http://www.internationalstudent.com/study_usa/way-of-life/culture-shock.shtml

<http://www.uwec.edu/counsel/pubs/shock.htm>

Culture shock is part of the adjustment process! If you continue to feel overwhelmed or have trouble adjusting to your new environment, please talk to an ISO Advisor, or contact the University Counseling Center at 202-994-5300 to help you enjoy your stay at GW.

TIME AS A RESOURCE

In general, American culture values time as a resource, placing great emphasis on punctuality and the ‘spending’ of time almost as if it were money. Social and business engagements generally begin at the stated hour, so it is important to arrive on time. If you are delayed or must cancel an appointment, social etiquette indicates that you call the person to inform them of your delay.

INFORMALITY

Most interactions in America are informal. If you come from a formal society, you may feel that this type of interaction is disrespectful of authority. For example, American bosses generally ask their employees to call them by their first names rather than addressing them with a title of Mr. or Mrs. However, it is polite to address someone with a proper title (Dr., Dean, Professor, Ms., Mr.) until invited to do otherwise. Additionally, Americans tend to greet one another with an informal, “Hi. How are you?” rather than a more formal, “Hello” or “Good morning/afternoon.” Remember, in the US informality is not intended as an insult, but rather as a compliment!

SOCIAL ETIQUETTE

When you are invited to a home where food will be served, it is best to let your host know if you have dietary restrictions. If you would rather not eat or drink what is served, it is acceptable to decline politely by saying “No, thank you.” Polite directness in expressing preferences, opinions and feelings is valued, although one should be cautious about discussing certain topics that are considered sensitive. These may include politics, religion, sex, salary, and the cost of personal items.



US CULTURE, CONTINUED

GW OFFERS MANY SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE WITH ADJUSTMENT TO US CULTURE, INCLUDING:

- » ISO workshops, programs and activities, such as C-3 (pg. 3)
- » Books and reading materials available at the ISO
- » ISO staff
- » University Counseling Center staff
- » Student Health Service staff

CULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

Informality, student/teacher dialogue, and student participation are found in most US classrooms. Many international students are initially surprised and unaccustomed to this interactive learning style. As you begin your studies, remember that US professors expect students to ask questions and to voice their opinions, even if they disagree with the professor. Class participation and questions are perceived as interest and involvement, not disrespect. Additionally, do not hesitate to visit your professor during his or her office hours if you are not clear about an assignment or material. Unless you speak up, professors will assume that you understand.

Professors like talking to you; utilize their office hours to gain more information or explanation on a topic or assignment.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Every culture has certain ways of standing and gesturing to convey unspoken meaning. In English this is called “body language.” Body language and the meanings it conveys may be different in the US from that to which you are accustomed. For example, Americans generally prefer to look at each other directly when speaking; this is considered a form of attention and sincerity. In some cultures, it may be considered rude to look someone in the eyes. Many Americans do not like to stand as close to a person when talking as is customary in some cultures, and they employ less touching and gesturing in conversation than some other cultures. After you have spoken to a number of Americans, you may note the differences in comparison to your own culture. Do not be offended by behavior you consider odd; instead, seek to understand cultural practices.

Engaging in conversations with American students is the best way to help you learn true American culture, customs, and communication styles, so don't be afraid to make new friends!

20 STEPS TO A SMOOTH TRANSITION

If you have questions before you arrive, contact your school or academic department (contact information is provided in your admission letter) or the International Services Office. You can reach us by phone **202-994-4477**; fax **202-994-4488**; or email **iso@gwu.edu**. We look forward to meeting you when you arrive!

- Find a temporary place to live while you are looking for an apartment (pg. 16)
- Come to the International Services Office (ISO), 2033 K Street NW, Suite 310 and complete your mandatory immigration check-in (pg. 8)
- Create a GW email account prior to or immediately after check-in to receive important updates from the ISO, professors, and other important university information
- Attend the required International Student Orientation (pg. 8)
- Arrange to take the English placement test before registration, if required (pg. 9)
- Set up a GW G-1 account to access GW public computers in Rome Hall of the Academic Center (801 22nd Street NW), Room B-103
- Meet with your academic advisor to plan your course of study
- Determine your class schedule and register for classes
- Obtain your GWorld (student ID) card at the GWorld Card Office (Marvin Center, Suite 501) (pg. 20)
- Update your US local address in GWeb
- Pay your tuition and fees (pg. 20)
- Buy textbooks and supplies after you have registered for classes
- Open a bank account at a local bank (pg. 21)
- Apply for private health insurance (pg. 15)
- Check with Student Health Service (2141 K Street NW, Suite 501) to verify your immunization record
- Take a campus tour
- Learn where classrooms are located
- Tour the library
- Apply for a local drivers license or identification card (pg. 11)
- Optional: If you have a car, register your car and obtain a sticker to park on campus; check with Parking Services (2211 H Street, NW • 202-994-7275) for details



ISO

FREQUENTLY USED DEPARTMENTS

Bookstore, GW

Marvin Center, Ground Floor
800 21st Street, NW
202-994-6870 • 1-800-582-0777
<http://www.gwu.bkstr.com>

Campus Recreation, Office of

Learner Health & Wellness Center
2301 G Street, NW
202-994-6251
<http://gwired.gwu.edu/gwellness>

Career Center

1922 F Street, NW (Old Main)
202-994-6495
<http://gwired.gwu.edu/career>

Colonial Central (Student Financial Assistance, Student Accounts, Office of the Registrar and the Cashier)

Marvin Center, Ground Floor
800 21st Street, NW
202-994-9000
<http://colonialcentral.gwu.edu>

Dean of Students and Dean of Freshmen, Offices of

Rice Hall, Suite 401
2121 I Street, NW
202-994-6710
<http://gwired.gwu.edu/dos>

Disability Support Services

Marvin Center, Suite 242
800 21st Street, NW
202-994-8250 [V/TDD]
<http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss>

Gelman Library

2130 H Street, NW
202-994-6558
<http://www.gwu.edu/gelman>

GradLife

Student Activities Center
Marvin Center, Suite 427
800 21st Street, NW
202-994-6555
<http://gradlife.gwu.edu>

GWorld Card Program

Marvin Center, Suite 501
800 21st Street, NW
202-994-1795
<http://gworld.gwu.edu>

Housing Programs, GW

John Quincy Adams House
2129 I Street, NW
202-994-2552
<http://living.gwu.edu>

International Services Office

2033 K Street, NW, Suite 310
202-994-4477
<http://gwired.gwu.edu/iso>

Language Center, The

Phillips Hall, Suite 216
801 22nd Street, NW
202-994-6333
<http://www.gwu.edu/~language>

Mail Services, GW

2025 F Street, NW, Suite L101
202-994-6725
<http://living.gwu.edu/ressvcs/gwmail>

Mount Vernon Campus Life

Academic Building 115
2100 Foxhall Road, NW
202-242-6673
<http://gwired.gwu.edu/mvcl>

Multicultural Student Services Center (MSSC)

2127 G Street, NW
202-994-6772
<http://gwired.gwu.edu/mssc>

Police Department, GW

Woodhull House, 2033 G Street, NW
Foggy Bottom
202-994-6110 non-emergency,
202-994-6111 emergency

Mount Vernon Campus

202-242-6110 non-emergency,
202-242-6111 emergency
<http://gwired.gwu.edu/upd>

Student Activities Center (SAC)

Marvin Center, Suite 427
800 21st Street, NW
202-994-6555
<http://gwired.gwu.edu/sac>

Student Health Service

2141 K Street, NW, Suite 501
202-994-6827
<http://gwired.gwu.edu/shs>

Tax Department

44983 Knoll Square
Enterprise Hall, 2nd Floor
Ashburn, VA 20147
703-726-8313
<http://www.gwu.edu/~tax>

University Counseling Center

2033 K Street, NW, Suite 330
202-994-5300
<http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel>

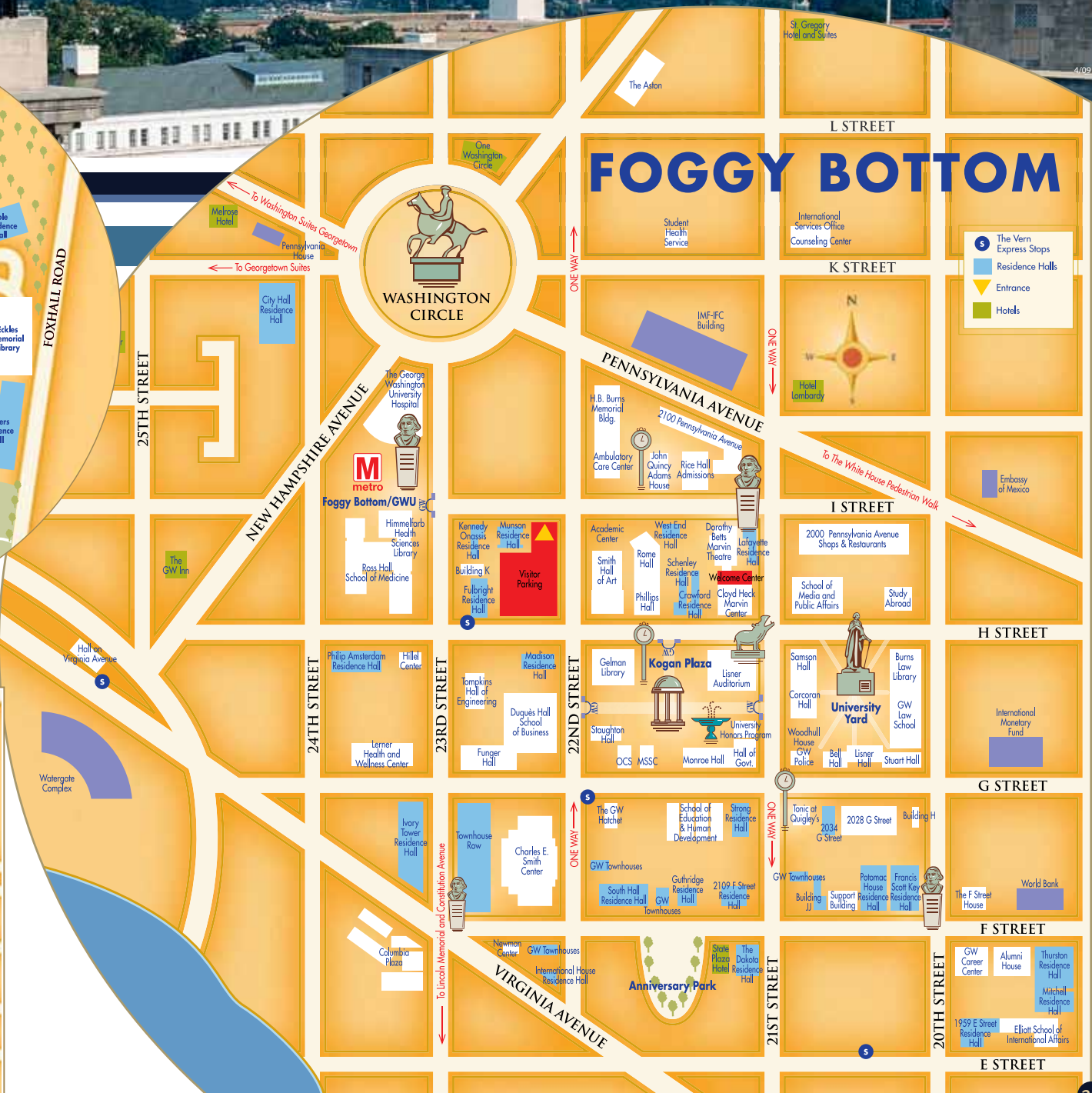
Writing Center

Gelman Library
2130 H Street, NW, Suite 103
202-994-3765
<http://www.gwu.edu/~gwriter>

METRO MAP

For more information on Metro visit <http://www.wmata.com>





<http://gwired.gwu.edu/iso>



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

“Being a student at GW allowed me to explore my career path in depth and discover opportunities which I never dreamed possible. Everything was made so simple for me from day one at the ISO to the last day when I walked at graduation. I can truly call GW my home away from home!”

-Karan Panwar, Class of 2008