



KENNESAW STATE
UNIVERSITY



INCM International Student Handbook



KENNESAW STATE
UNIVERSITY

Welcome

Welcome to Kennesaw State University (KSU)!

You have found yourself in the state of Georgia at a time when many people are moving to this state due to increased work opportunities and better living standards as compared to other states in the United States. Immigration and internal migration have transformed metro Georgia into a cosmopolitan area, which means that international students fit right in.

We hope this handbook serves as a convenient store for all you need to know as an international student at KSU. You will discover many things by yourself. However, this is like a tour guide that holds your hand and shows you the way until you can navigate by yourself.

KSU has a campus in Kennesaw and another in Marietta, northwest of metro Atlanta. It is the third largest university in the University System of Georgia and has nearly 43,000 students enrolled in over 180 undergraduate, master's, doctoral degree, and certificate programs.

You are now an ***Owl!***

With warmth,

Esther A.O.G. Tetteh

Nilofer Bharwani

Priscilla Adebayo

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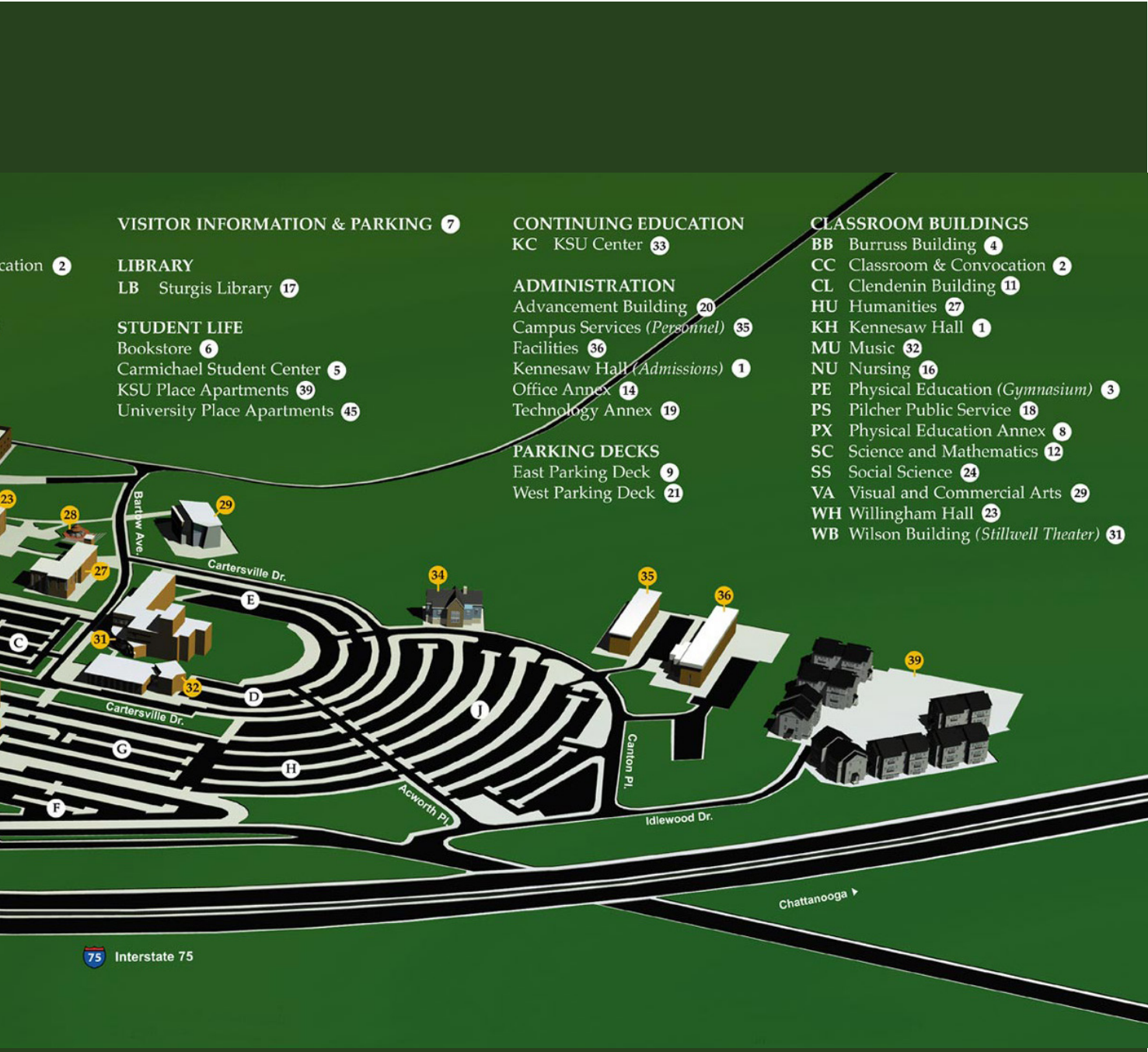
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Kennesaw Campus Map



Source: https://catalog.kennesaw.edu/mime/media/9/158/campus_map.jpg





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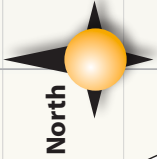
A B C D E F G H I J K L

Main Entrance
 1000 Chastain Road
 Kennesaw, GA 30144

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- East Parking
- Faculty/Staff Parking
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KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY
Kennesaw Campus



visit the website at
www.kennesaw.edu/mobile

Kennesaw State University is a
Smoke/Tobacco-Free University

Nine Miles South To Marietta Campus

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Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw State may be an unfamiliar university, so we recommend that you explore the campus and meet your professors early in your journey. Most classes and professors' offices are located in Building 59, located at 3201 Campus Loop Road, which is also known as the Peace House. Here, you will find a small kitchen with a microwave, a refrigerator, a sink, a computer lab with printers, and a sundeck outside. This will be the main building during your time in the program, so please make yourself at home.

Be sure to visit the Sturgis Library, the Carmichael Students Center, the Commons, and the Student Recreation and Fitness Center. The campus maps should help you find where these are located.

Eating lunch at the Commons on Thursday is a part of the KSU experience; try the southern fried chicken along with traditional macaroni and cheese. Also, we recommend buying KSU gear at the bookstore on Mondays after the football team wins because many items will be discounted. KSU campus is very student friendly with a variety of flora and walking around campus will allow you to enjoy its natural beauty. We also encourage you to exercise at the Student Recreation and Fitness Center. There are many group fitness classes and intermural sports clubs, a variety of weightlifting and cardio equipment, including an indoor track, two swimming pools, and a rock-climbing wall.



Resources

This is a one-stop page of KSU Resources, Policies, and Services that come in handy at the beginning of your journey at the university.

You will need the Big Owl Bus (BOB) to find your way around campus if you do not own a car, just as much as you will need to get acquainted with the Writing Center to help sharpen your academic writing skills. Everything in between the first and last resources provided are for your benefit.

- a. Big Owl Bus (BOB)
KSU bus (<https://www.kennesaw.edu/parking/big-owl-bus/index.php>)
- b. Care Services
Provide access to food, temporary housing, and other supportive services such as emergency financial assistance programs to uphold a student's academic or professional life (<https://www.kennesaw.edu/dean-of-students/care/index.php>)
- c. Career Planning and Development
Helps you find and prepare for part-time and full-time jobs, on-campus positions, internships, volunteer experiences using resources like the Handshake Career Management System (<https://www.kennesaw.edu/careers/>)
- d. Counseling and Psychological Services
Offer a variety of counseling services free of charge for currently enrolled KSU students like 24/7 Mental Health Support (<https://www.kennesaw.edu/wellbeing/counseling/>)
- e. Driver's License
Find how to obtain a Georgia driver's license from the Department of Driver Services (DDS) from Kennesaw or Marietta (<https://www.kennesaw.edu/global-education/international-student-scholar-services/resources/drivers-license.php>)
- f. Global Education
Responsible for all international programs at KSU, while supporting international students and conducting study abroad programs (<https://www.kennesaw.edu/global-education/index.php>)
- g. Health Services
Student Health Services are in three locations on campus such as House 3215 located at 3215 Campus Loop Road. They provide primary care services year-round between 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday.
Call 470-578-6644 to schedule an appointment. You need to have active health insurance or pay from pocket to access health services. There are free on-campus flu shots, STD testing and mental health counseling (<https://www.kennesaw.edu/student-health/index.php>)
- h. Istart Service
The international Student and Scholar Services Office (ISSSO) has an iStart portal for Kennesaw State University to help you request documents or authorizations like I-20 or travel permits (<https://istart.kennesaw.edu/istart/controllers/start/StartEngine.cfm>)
- i. KSU Human Resources
Houses the Student Employment Handbook and other resources to guide students through the hiring process and much more (<http://hr.kennesaw.edu/>)

- j. KSU Policy Portal
This portal serves as a single repository for all University-level policies (<https://policy.kennesaw.edu/>)
- k. Off-Campus Housing
Find off-campus housing here (<https://www.kennesawoffcampus.com/>)
Shared apartments are also available on hotpads. You can visit the website at <https://hotpads.com>
- l. Student Codes of Conduct
As a student, you are responsible for knowing the information, policies and procedures in the KSU Codes of Conduct (<https://www.kennesaw.edu/dean-of-students/scai/codes-of-conduct.php>)
- m. Student Organizations
There are over 400 student organizations to choose from on campus. Here is a list (<https://owllife.kennesaw.edu/organizations>)
- n. Student Resources
Easy access to several important sites for a student like the KSU mail, virtual platform for all courses (D2L), Talon card (KSU ID card), and on-campus debit card—Kcash and may more (Current Student Information - Kennesaw State University)
- o. Talon One Service Center
A customer service hub for all questions concerning Campus Services like your ID card (talon card), parking services, etc. (<https://taloncard.kennesaw.edu/>)
- p. University Information Technology Services (UITS)
For all your technology needs including internet connectivity concerns, reach out to UITS (<http://uits.kennesaw.edu/>)
- q. University News
Stay up to date on all KSU news with this link (<http://news.kennesaw.edu/>)
- r. Writing Center
To help fine-tune your academic writing skills visit (<https://writingcenter.kennesaw.edu/index.php>)

Your Student Status

Think of your passport as a vital lifeline to your continued stay in the United States. At no time should your status as a student be compromised. This means your passport or visa cannot expire while studying at KSU. In addition, the rules that govern your studentship cannot be taken for granted. These are what lead some international students to go “out of status.”

There are immigration regulations for international students besides receiving an I-20 that help maintain your status as an F-1 student. You could lose privileges such as student employment and become subject to arrest and deportation when you are out of status. Depending on the type of violation, it is possible to even be banned from returning to the United States for several years if the immigration regulations are not followed.

According to the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) some important things to keep in mind are:

- Register full time every semester (9 hours per semester for graduate students, excluding summer unless summer is your first or last semester). The registration tab on Owl Express can be accessed after you log in via this link Sign In (kennesaw.edu).
- Always maintain a current passport (valid for at least 6 months into the future).
- Request authorization from the ISSS office before dropping below a full course load.
- Report all changes in address to ISSS@kennesaw.edu within 10 days.
- Report all name changes, as well as changes in dependents and status, through the ISSS office.
- Request transfer to another school in a timely manner (student must fill out a transfer out form attached with an acceptance letter from their prospective institution).
- Report a change in your program of study (such as changing from one major to another) to the ISSS office and request a new I-20 reflecting the change.
- Request travel signatures at least two weeks prior to traveling.
- Request an I-20 extension at least one month before your I-20 expires.
- Provide the ISSS office with any updates regarding passport extensions and visa renewals.
- Become familiar with immigration rules for students <https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment>
- Check your Kennesaw State University email account regularly for communication from the International Student and Scholar Services advisors & for KSU news. Note that federal laws and policies change frequently but ISSS keeps up and tracks changes in federal immigration laws and polities.
- Be sure to update your Owl Express account when necessary.
- If or when your international passport expires, you would have to visit (in person) your country embassy for a passport renewal in the United States, whichever is closest to you. Note that most countries have their embassies in New York and/or Washington DC.
- Some embassy locations can be found using this link: <https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/mayor-s-office/executive-offices/office-of-international-affairs/consular-and-trade-offices>

The “American Culture” and Culture Shock

America has its cultural norms that could come off as a complete surprise to a student from a different country. There are varied customs in the U.S. as norms are different per geographical location. It is impossible to discuss the “American culture” because one homogenous culture does not exist. However, we can enumerate some things that could be helpful as you integrate into this new way of life in Georgia, and at KSU.

Curiosity

Many people are curious about foreigners and would like to ask about your home culture — the language, food, people, religion, etc. Most of these enquiries are from people who are genuinely interested in knowing what other places of the world are like.

Food

An everyday meal is simple and quick, such as a sandwich, salad, or pasta. There are festive occasions or special occasions like Christmas, 4th of July, or Thanksgiving where families and friends get together for a more formal or elaborate meal. Keep in mind that an everyday meal is not an elaborate dish served with diverse kinds of meat and fish, soup, or stew and fruits, or vegetables.

Tips

Tipping is expected in the United States for services like deliveries, uber, and restaurants. Though the tip amount is dependent on how happy you are with the service provided, it is considered rude not to tip. A tip could range anywhere from 5% for a poor service to as much as 20% of the cost of service or delivered item when you are pleased with the service.

Greetings

Greeting is done with the shaking of hands and verbal salutations. Americans do not kiss or hug as a way of greeting between people who are not very closely related or close friends.

Maintain eye contact when speaking with all persons including adults or supervisors as looking away may be misconstrued as being untruthful.

Punctuality

Being a habitual latecomer to class, work, or some social events could cost you. Your grades or reputation could be negatively affected by lateness. Punctuality is highly valued in the United States.

Dressing

Students at KSU mostly dress in jeans, t-shirts, sweaters, and informal clothes for class. Formal clothes are seldom worn on the University’s campus except for class presentations, job interviews and other

occasions when students may be asked to dress more formally. For special events, like work gatherings, you should ask the host of the event about appropriate attire.

Individualism

Americans project the individual more than groups. There is therefore an emphasis on personal rights and freedom to pursue dreams for success. There is the belief that anyone can become successful if they work hard enough, irrespective of their backgrounds.

Same Sex Partners

Amorous relationships are not only between males and females in the United States. It has become increasingly common to find or hear of couples that are same sex. Although it may still be unusual to see many same sex partners in Asian or African cultures, it is legally accepted in many states, including Georgia.

Religion

The U.S. believes in the separation of church and state. Many people therefore choose not to follow organized faith. However, there are many local places of worship, on and off-campus, see <https://diversity.kennesaw.edu/resources/religion-spirituality.php>



The Kennesaw Hurdle- Housing

It is exciting to have received a Graduate Assistantship for the International Conflict Management (INCM) Ph.D. Program as an international student. You feel the greatest hurdle is behind you since you got your visa and made it to the United States. However, the city of Kennesaw can give you a rude awakening. Housing in and around Kennesaw is not only expensive, but also inaccessible without a pay slip that proves an income three times the cost of your rent by yourself or with a co-signer (someone with a good credit rating who signs together with you).

For international students, searching for housing while adjusting to life in the United States and taking classes at the same time can be daunting. On-campus housing is largely insufficient for the over 42,000 student population at KSU. If you have arrived on campus at the beginning of the school year, then you are going to be on the application waitlist with no assurance of getting a place even after paying the non-refundable application fee. Applications for on-campus housing open in January for Upperclassmen although most international students arrive in Kennesaw between July and August for the Fall semester. This puts international students at a disadvantage with on-campus housing applications.

To find housing, the greatest resource is speaking to colleagues from the INCM department and other international students who have been through this process. You may be able to use what worked for them and adapt it to what works best for you. In the past, some students were able to bunk out in the house of U.S. nationals who had the space to host them for a short while till they found housing to rent.

“Only those who confront unusual challenge can flaunt unusual success.”

— Vincent Okay Nwachukwu

Transportation

Georgia, unlike other states in the U.S. cannot boast of a robust transport system where many citizens commute by buses and trains. To get by, most Georgians own their own cars, carpool, or use ridesharing services such as taxis or uber. There are few state transport buses, but these are woefully limited in the areas they reach in town. It is advised that you live close to campus or its environs (Kennesaw, Acworth, or Marietta) in your first year, especially if you do not have a car.

The Big Owl Bus (BOB) is available to shuttle on campus and between the Kennesaw and Marietta campuses and environs (like the grocery store). You will need your talon card to ride on the bus. Shuttle routes and the bus tracker can be found on the KSU Resource page in this manual.

If you are not a big walker, you should look out for the “BOB” or speak with colleagues about joining them in their car or rideshare to campus and in/around the city.

International students can also apply for a driver’s license at a fee of approximately \$20 after 30 days of living in the state of Georgia from the Department of Driver Services (DDS). You should present your Out-of-Country license to receive a Georgia license. Your license will be returned when you receive the Georgia license unless it is a commercial license or permit. Remember you will have to take a computerized test on road signs and driving rules and a practical in-car driving exam. Applicants must provide a vehicle for the road test and present the car insurance and registration. You will need your Social Security Card and other documents listed below to apply for a driver’s license:

- A Social Security Card if you have one, or an ineligibility Letter from Social Security (if you do not have a Social Security Card- mostly applicable for F2 visa holders)
- Visa
- Valid passport
- I-94
- I-20 (F1/F2) or DS 2019 (J1/J2)
- Support letter from the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS)

•Proof of Residency: You must provide two separate documents as evidence of your current home address such as:

- School record or transcript
- Bill that shows current address such as cell phone bill, water, or electric bill
- US Bank Statement that shows your current address
- Employment Authorization (EAD/I-766/OPT only) - if applicable and on OPT



Parking

Be advised that parking in the U.S. is not free at every open space. Read instructions carefully on signages whenever you want to park on or off campus. You will need a parking permit to park in certain designated areas on campus. It costs between \$40 and \$95 for a permit per semester and your license plate needs to be registered as it will serve as your virtual parking permit. Students who park in the wrong place even if they have a paid parking permit will receive a citation of \$35 up to \$110 for parking in a handicapped space. Read more here <https://www.kennesaw.edu/parking/parking-information/rules-regulations.php>.

“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only a page.”
– Saint Augustin



Banking and Finance

Banks offer full banking services, including checking and savings accounts for international students. To open an account, you will need your passport, visa, I-20/DS-2019, your local address and at least \$25.



You may want to open an account soon after you arrive in the United States so that you may use a personal check or debit card with your name, address, and account number to pay bills and make purchases.

Fifth Third Bank operates four ATMs on campus. They are at Madison Place, Student Center, Convocation Center, and KSU Stadium. Other full-service banks around KSU include Bank of America, Chase Bank, and Wells Fargo.

Credit System in the United States

As you might already be aware, the U.S. operates a credit system that allows you to purchase goods and services on credit with the option to pay later (using credit cards). Read up more about the U.S. credit system here: <https://ulinkremit.com/us-credit-system-explained/>

Upon opening an account at your choice bank, you should inquire whether you are qualified to receive a credit card that would be used to build your credit history. If you do not immediately qualify, you would mostly qualify after a few months of responsible usage of your bank account. You can also apply for credit cards from companies like Discover, CapitalOne etc.

International Transfers

Gone are the days when you could only transfer international funds through the traditional banks or Western Union that charge high transactional fees. In recent times, apps like world remit, sendwave, wise.com and other online platforms now guarantee charge-free and interest-free international fund transfers to over 100 countries of the world. Download the world remit app or visit wise.com to read more details about how these platforms operate.



Shopping in Kennesaw

International students have peculiar shopping needs, especially in the choice of food and clothes. While shops like Walmart and Aldi have a wide range of products that are relevant to such needs, there are yet other items that are obtainable only from international markets.

The Suvridha Indo-Pak Groceries is about a 10-minute drive away from the Kennesaw Campus and carries a variety of Asian and African food. Different meats, seafood, and other tropical groceries are available for bulk purchase in shops known as International Farmers Market. Many of such shops are within 10 to 30 minutes' drive from the Kennesaw Campus.

Also, RACS Tropical Food Mart is an international grocery store located in Kennesaw, at 3655 Cherokee St NW #13, Kennesaw, GA 30144. It is about 5 minutes' drive from the Kennesaw Campus and offers a variety of African foods and groceries like suya, palm oil, rice, beans, plantain, pepper, local groceries, meats, fish, etc.

Affordable and internationally size-friendly clothes can be purchased from Burlington and Ross Dress for Less. The Town Center Mall also has several shops that serve the clothing needs of international students.



Restaurants

Chastain Road, the road right in front of the Kennesaw campus, has several great restaurants like Rico Tropical, Seoul Food, Chipotle, and Taziki's where you can get some ethnic or tropical food. Located on Cobb Parkway is also Chioma's Restaurant, an African restaurant with a variety of African and Italian dishes.

At Carmichael Student Center, right on campus, you can buy food from Panda Express, Chick-fil-A, and Moe's Southwest Grill.

The Commons is KSU's dining hall. There is everything to love with the diversity of food you will find here by purchasing "dining dollars". See how <https://www.kennesaw.edu/dining/index.php>

"Wisdom is like a baobab tree; no one individual can embrace it."

-Akan Proverb

Work Opportunities

Graduate Research/Teaching work opportunities are open to international students. Students may apply through their department by filling out an application form for graduate assistantship. Typically, students can work 20 hours or less, depending on the work tier available. Student workers need a Social Security card to be able to work in the United States (see ISSS website for info on how to obtain a Social Security Number). It is important for you to plan to arrive in Kennesaw at least a week before school opening to enable you apply for your social security card early enough as you cannot start your on-campus work without obtaining the SSN.

Work authorization from KSU Human Resources (HR) is also required before work commences. Once your hiring paperwork has been received by HR, which could take several days, you will be contacted by the Program Coordinator for Student Employment, with instructions on how to complete new hire paperwork and mandatory onboarding. Screening includes background checks and drug screening.

Kindly note:

- The Graduate Assistant must process through HR with all paperwork completed at the beginning of the month otherwise the stipend for that month cannot be processed. Your stipend will be pro-rated once you start work.
- You may not begin working until all onboarding tasks have been completed and written work authorization has been provided by Human Resources.



International Students' Advice

Hear what some International Students have to say...

"Don't underestimate how much people here rely on cars. If you don't plan to have a car, make sure you get housing that is within walking distance of campus. You will probably end up buying a car at some point, so plan for it if you can.

Health care in the US is expensive... The mandatory student health insurance is pretty good, but a policy from your home country may be a better deal. If you do decide to get your own insurance, you will have to apply for a "health insurance waiver". Make sure the insurance is "ACA compliant". Check the ISSS website (<https://www.kennesaw.edu/global-education/international-student-scholar-services/resources/insurance.php>) for information on health care and requirements for a health insurance waiver. It may be annoying, but this is time and effort well spent."

Timo, Germany

"Go out there and make connections. Do not isolate yourself!"

Iye, Nigeria

"The U.S. is a culturally rich and diverse country, so take this opportunity to learn from people of various backgrounds and perspectives. Immerse yourself in the local community, join student organizations, and engage in campus activities to make new friends and create a support network...remember to balance academic pursuits with self-care and well-being."

David, Brunei

"It will take some time to adapt to the new culture. You will get culture shock, but you will do alright after you understand the new way of life. Don't be too hard on yourself if you are not accepted by everyone you meet."

Amos, Ghana

"The educational system is different, but professors and colleagues understand your situation and are always willing to help. Don't hesitate to ask for help or clarification."

Heyam, Jordan

Acknowledgements

Writing the International Students Handbook began as part of Esther A.O.G. Tetteh's GRA project under the supervision of Dr. Darlene Rodriguez- Schaefer in the Summer of 2023.

Thank you to Dr. Darlene Rodriguez- Schaefer for seeding the idea to build on a manual for Peace Corps students. The invaluable guidance received from Dr. Rodriguez and Nilofer Bharwani provided the road map to produce this work. It is also worthy of note that important sections of the handbook were written by Priscilla Adebayo.

To all our course mates from the International Conflict Management Ph.D. program and those who shared some advice to be included in this handbook, we are so grateful.

Dr. Amos Tetteh (Esther's husband) was very supportive and shared his experiences as an international student in the United States to inspire the chapter on "American Culture' and Culture Shock". We are so grateful for his input and for helping edit this handbook.



Addendum

INCM Ambassadors

Qualifications

An INCM Ambassador:

1. Must be enrolled as a PhD student in the INCM program.
2. Shall be in the second to fourth year of the PhD program.
3. Shall willingly volunteer to take on the role of an INCM Ambassador through an official application to the INCM student body, stating why you want to be an INCM ambassador.
4. Shall attend monthly meetings of INCM ambassadors.

Duties Of the INCM Ambassadors

As an international graduate student ambassador, your duties may include:

1. Organize welcome event: INCM ambassadors would jointly be responsible for organizing a welcome event for every new INCM cohort. At the event, ambassadors would share personal experiences in the program, and answer questions about the INCM program, life as a PhD student, and other questions new students may have.
2. Orientation and Academic support: Ambassadors will serve as mentors and resources for incoming students, especially international students, offering guidance on campus resources, academic success, course selection, research opportunities, and other aspects as necessary.
3. Welfarism: Ambassadors will be responsible for helping international students settle in terms of housing, obtaining SSN, taking driving tests and obtaining driver's license etc.
4. Airport Pick-up and hosting: Ambassadors shall coordinate and volunteer to pick-up new international students from the airport upon arriving in Atlanta.
5. Cultural and social support: Ambassadors will help international graduate students adjust to life in a new country by organizing cultural events, social activities, and networking opportunities. This can include hosting gatherings, coordinating outings, and facilitating connections between students from different cultural backgrounds.
6. Advocating for graduate student needs: Ambassadors will represent the interests and concerns of international graduate students to university administrators, faculty, and staff. This can involve participating in meetings and committees to provide input on policies, programs, and support services that are relevant to INCM students.
7. Supporting career development: Ambassadors may assist international graduate students in their career development by organizing workshops, networking events, and job search resources. This can help students navigate the job market and explore career opportunities both within and outside academia.
8. Fostering relationships: Ambassadors shall establish and maintain relationships with the INCM alumni body for professional/employment benefits of INCM students and advancement of the INCM program.

Sample Volunteer Form for INCM Ambassadors

1. Name _____

2. Year in the program _____

3. Why I want to be an INCM ambassador (100-word limit) _____

Multiple horizontal lines for writing the answer to question 3.



4. What I will do if I am appointed as an INCM Ambassador (100-word limit)

Lined area for writing the answer to question 4.



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