



Mount Mary
UNIVERSITY

**International Student
Supplemental Handbook**

Academic Year 2019-2020

Welcome from the Vice President for Student Affairs

Welcome!

On behalf of Student Affairs, I would like to welcome you to Mount Mary University! We are very excited that you have chosen Mount Mary to be your “home” for the next few months or years. We are here to assist you in your personal, academic, and cultural transition to the University environment. Our University staff provides:

- 1) Orientation sessions and programs which specifically assist you in your transition to living and/or to being a student at Mount Mary University;
- 2) Assistance with personal or academic issues and referrals to appropriate offices or resources when needed; and
- 3) Assistance in engaging in the vast resources available within the campus community and in the Milwaukee area.

I strongly encourage you to become a member of the Mount Mary International Club this year. Being a member of the Club will give you the opportunity to meet students from all around the world, interact with upper-class international students who have already made the transition to Mount Mary, and to share your culture with others!

I hope you will take the time to review the contents of this International Student Handbook. It will answer many of your initial questions about the academic and personal matters you may encounter as an international student here. I feel confident that you will find it a useful resource throughout your stay in the U.S. Again, please let us know how our office can assist you during your stay at Mount Mary, and I look forward to getting to know you!

Sincerely,

Sarah Olejniczak
Vice President for Student Affairs

The University and International Programs

International Programs

For over 100 years, Mount Mary University has been helping young women like you achieve their highest aspirations. By discovering your place in our supportive community, you will find the path to realizing your dreams.

Mount Mary University recognizes the importance of international education. Mount Mary University has a special responsibility and commitment to promote international education and to provide students with opportunities to learn more about the world around them through study abroad programs and other international educational opportunities. It is also committed to providing the proper academic support for its international students studying here in Milwaukee.

Various staff members do the following:

- advise international students on immigration matters;
- serve as a liaison with federal agencies on matters related to immigration;
- provide international student assistance;
- coordinate study and research exchange programs.

We are here to answer your questions and help you with any problem that you may have.

International Club

The International Club is open to all students, faculty, and staff of the University who are interested in international issues and cross-cultural experiences. As an international student, you will likely find that it is a friendly support group while you are away from home. The club provides an opportunity for you to share your culture with others, and you might want to bring pictures, a flag, traditional clothing or anything else that represents your culture. You can also get involved in planning events and get to know other students outside of the classroom. The club members will also be good contacts for you in getting adjusted to life at Mount Mary and in the U.S.!

Staff advisor: Antje Streckel, streckea@mtmary.edu

American Culture – An Introduction

Time

Americans see time as limited. They put great emphasis on being “on time.” It is important to be on time to classes, social events, public events, and appointments. Americans generally feel that time spent waiting is wasted and will resent having to wait. If you must miss an appointment or if you will be late, it is polite to call the person you were supposed to meet to cancel or delay your meeting. Americans also generally prefer to complete one task before beginning another task. Americans resent it when people ask them to do more than one thing at a time. In American culture, it is considered rude to interrupt someone when they are doing something. It is better to let an American know you have arrived, and then politely wait until he or she has finished what he/she is doing.

Informality

Although in some places the atmosphere is quite formal, in others, it is very informal. Treating guests informally is not being rude, but rather a way of taking you into the intimate circle of family and friends. For Americans, being asked to “help yourself,” or to serve yourself, is a great honor. Although Americans frequently address each other by first name rather than family names, at first meeting, it is best to use a person’s title (Doctor, Professor, Mister, Mrs. or Ms.) unless invited to do otherwise.

Directness

Being open and direct in expressing your desires, preferences, and feelings, or in discussing issues, events, and most ideas is considered proper in the United States. If you feel uncomfortable about something you are asked to do, make your feelings known. For example, if you are asked to speak in front of a large group and would prefer not to do so, it is polite to decline the invitation to speak (except in classes, which are small). Most Americans, however, are generally hesitant to discuss religion, political beliefs, age, weight, or salary.

Competitiveness

Americans place high value on achievement and success, and this leads them to compete with each other. You will find both friendly and not-so-friendly competition. Although competing is natural to many Americans, they also have a good sense of “teamwork” – cooperating with others toward a common goal.

Inquisitiveness

Americans generally have a strong sense of curiosity. American education encourages inquisitiveness and asking many questions. Try to be patient when an American asks you a question about your country, even if the question seems silly. This is your chance to educate them about your culture. You will also learn a great deal about the United States by asking questions to other students.

Equality

Americans are taught from childhood that “all people are equal.” This is called “egalitarianism,” and is a high social value. There are (and have been) many “equal rights” movements among minority groups. In general, Americans try to treat women and men,

members of different racial and ethnic groups, and the LGBTQ community equally. American society is very “pluralistic.” Very few other countries have so many different kinds of people living together in relative peace. Americans are very proud of the diversity of people who live here.

However, like all societies, the United States has many people with rigid and prejudicial ideas about people, food, customs, and proper ways of living. For example, the role of women in the United States is changing. Women’s movements aim to ensure that women have opportunities equal to those of men. Women play a very visible role in this country. You will find women business leaders, police officers, professors, and political leaders. Most people believe that one day the United States will have a woman president. People of different races, religious beliefs, and national origins have full, legal, and equal rights. Most members of the academic community will not tolerate racial or religious insults or jokes, and you could get into trouble if you make these types of comments.

Social Relationships

Friendships among Americans tend to be different from those among people from some other cultures. Americans may have a few very close friends, but they also develop many less intense social relationships with people. Americans tend to have many “friends” – people with whom they have work, class, or social relationships. The American concept of friendship can be difficult to understand. Many international students feel some frustration in their attempts at forming and maintaining friendships with Americans. This is not meant to discourage you from making friends with Americans; it is only intended to make you aware that behavior between American friends might be different from what you are accustomed to at home.

Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships may seem very different from your own country. Dating is acceptable between people, and is usually arranged with an informal invitation. Accepting or offering a “date” does not necessarily mean that you are interested in marriage, or a serious or sexual relationship. People often get together to go to movies or dinner, have a good time and get to know someone. Most Americans will date many people and regard them as friends. In the United States, marriage normally happens only after a person has had several romantic relationships. Only the two people in the relationship can make decisions about carrying the relationship further: family members – including parents – typically have very little influence in any marriage decisions in the United States. Sexual relationships are common when two people become romantically involved, but must be consensual by both parties.

Your Name

Your name is a very important part of you. Be patient while others learn how to say your name correctly. Some international students will choose an “Americanized” version of their name to make it easier for others to remember, but this is a matter of personal choice. You should not feel that you have to do this yourself, though you can if you would like. Americans can learn to say your name properly, if not perfectly.

Cultural Adjustment

Moving to a new culture is a learning experience. Each day at Mount Mary, you will be learning many things outside and inside the classroom. You will learn how people of another culture view the world and their lives. There is value in experiencing and understanding a way of life different from your own. You will even learn things about your own culture that you never thought about before. This is a rare opportunity to not only broaden your views but to mature and establish your values. You will also be able to educate others about your culture. The best way to find out about something you do not understand is to ask questions. Do not hesitate to ask questions -- even if the questions seem trivial or you think your English is not good. People are generally helpful, but they can't guess what you need to know. Ask questions!

Culture Shock

What is it? *Culture shock* is the name given to the feelings of confusion that occur when a person leaves a familiar place to enter an unfamiliar one. You may not be able to convey your thoughts in English. Your family and friends are far away. There are academic and social symptoms of *culture shock*, and people experience *culture shock* in varying degrees.

You may find that you...

- Become nervous and unusually tired.
- Want to sleep often.
- Write many letters home.
- Send emails several times a day.
- Feel frustrated and hostile toward your host country.
- Become excessively angry over minor irritations.
- Associate only with people from your own country.

Here are some suggestions to cope with culture shock that may be helpful:

- Evaluate your expectations. Your reactions are products of the way things are here and the way you expected them to be. If you find yourself being confused or disappointed about something, ask yourself: What did I expect? Was my expectation reasonable?
- Keep an open mind. Try to understand that Americans are acting according to their cultural values. Avoid evaluating their behaviors by the standards of your country.
- Learn from the experience. You are here to explore a new way of life. You do not have to change your own values, but you should respect those of other people.
- Meet with an advisor when you have questions or need to speak with someone who will try to help you as you adjust to your new environment. You can discuss any problems that you are having with making your adjustment. Students can also be a resource for each other in coping with life in a new culture.

The Adjustment Process

The stages and symptoms of the adjustment process are described below. Although individuals differ, it is important to know the stages and recognize symptoms.

Honeymoon Period: As a newcomer, you are interested and excited by the new surroundings. Although you may be nervous, your excitement outweighs anxiety or concern.

Culture Shock: You feel overwhelmed by new problems and behaviors: Housing, transportation, food, language, and loneliness.

Step One-Initial Adjustment: Soon, you find that everyday activities such as housing, meals, and transportation are no longer big problems for you.

Step Two-Mental Isolation: After you make the initial arrangements and adjustments for daily living, you will begin to look for personal relationships. Although you may be able to express basic ideas and feelings in a second language, you feel you cannot express yourself as well as you can in your native language. You feel like you have little or nothing in common with most people around you.

Step Three-Acceptance and Integration: A routine (work, school, social life) is established. You have accepted the customs, habits, food and characteristics of the friends, associates, and language of the U.S.

Language, Dialects and Slang

Spoken English may sound very fast to you. If you have trouble understanding a person, ask them to slow down or repeat what they said. Do not hesitate to ask questions. There are a number of spoken dialects in the United States. In Milwaukee, you may hear people speaking with two or more dialects. Americans who are not used to communicating with international students may behave strangely. Particularly, they may speak louder, move their arms and hands quickly, and in fact seem “angry.” This is usually not the case. Remember, Americans are very inquisitive, and are often eager to learn about your country and culture. Speaking loudly and moving the body is a natural human reaction to misunderstanding.

During your first few weeks at Mount Mary, you may not be comfortable communicating in an all-English environment, and it is most likely that Americans will not be able to communicate with you in your native language. In addition, English taught in non-English speaking countries is quite different from the actual spoken language of the U.S. Americans, particularly students, use a great deal of “slang,” which is a trendy, culturally-oriented, or informal way of speech. Often, slang cannot be understood without an explanation. If you don’t understand a word or phrase, ask what it means and how it is used. Most Americans will be amused by your attempt to understand, and will happily help you. Learning some slang will help you understand American culture better, and bond with your friends, roommates, and classmates. Americans often abbreviate words and use lots of phrases. For example: Biology is referred to as “Bio,” and English as a Second Language is referred to as “ESL.”

A surprising amount of jargon and slang is part of the spoken English language – and some of these are unintelligible between parts of the U.S. or between Americans of different ages. A teenager from New York City and an elderly man from San Francisco may not fully understand each other, even though they are both speaking English!

Return Anxiety, Reentry Shock, Reintegration

You may experience “Reverse Culture Shock” when you return to your home country. You will have to readjust to life in your home while assimilating the things you learned at Mount Mary and in U.S. culture. Anytime you feel that you need to talk to someone about your cultural adjustment to Mount Mary University and the USA, you can make an appointment with the Dean for Student Affairs. She is available to listen to your needs. For cultural adjustments that are more serious and involve long-term depression or anxiety, you should make an appointment with a University counselor in the Student Success Center.

Resources

Transportation

Milwaukee's modern *General Mitchell International Airport* is located approximately 20 minutes from the campus and offers more than 165 daily departures to 46 non-stop and 40 direct destinations. Air transportation to Mitchell is provided by many major commercial carriers. Chicago, which is located approximately 90 miles from Milwaukee, offers *O'Hare International Airport*, one of the largest airports in the world. Milwaukee is also served by an excellent highway system and major bus and rail terminals.

Whether you want to get to *O'Hare International Airport* or just want to see America by land, odds are there's a bus leaving Milwaukee that is just right for you. Daily departures leave from the *Milwaukee Intermodal Station*, 433 W St. Paul Ave, Ste 150, Milwaukee, WI 53203. *Greyhound Bus Lines* has direct routes to *O'Hare International Airport*, Chicago, Minneapolis, Stevens Point, and Eau Claire. *Badger Bus* and *Wisconsin Coach Lines* provide in-state service. *Amtrak* has several departures daily, with trains headed to all four corners of the country. *Amtrak* provides passenger service to all parts of the U.S. and Canada from the Intermodal Station.

The Milwaukee County Transit System, MCTS, provides public transportation in the Milwaukee area. The Mount Mary campus is accessible by public transportation. If you choose to use Milwaukee's public transit system, many buses go right past Mount Mary, on 92nd street. Get details at <http://www.ridemcts.com/>.

Drinking and Driving

The minimum drinking age in the United States is 21. To be served alcoholic beverages in restaurants or bars, or to purchase them at the store, you will be asked for identification to prove that you are at least 21 years of age.

Drinking alcohol and driving a car is extremely dangerous and illegal in the United States. If the police stop you, and you have been drinking, you will be arrested, will have to go to court, and will have to pay a heavy penalty. Most importantly, Driving Under the Influence (DUI) convictions can be deportable offenses according to the State of Wisconsin.

Additionally, if you have been drinking and you have an accident in which someone is killed, the law considers it a form of murder. It is possible that you could go to prison for up to twenty years if you kill a person while drunk. If you are out with a group of people, make sure that one person doesn't drink any alcohol. We call this person the "designated driver." He/she is responsible for making sure everyone gets home safely.

Electricity

The electrical system in the United States uses 110-120V, 60Hz (cycles). If you are planning to bring appliances from home, they may be designed for the European electrical system (220V), in which case you will need a transformer and plug adapter that can handle the wattage of the particular appliance. We advise you to purchase any small appliances you may need in the United States.

Measurements

The United States does not use the metric system. You will need to familiarize yourself with the U.S. measurement system. For example, to easily convert miles to kilometers, multiply the miles by 1.6. To convert kilometers to miles, multiply the kilometers by 0.6.

U.S. System	Metric system
1 inch	2.54 cm
1 foot (12 inches)	0.304 m
1 yard (3 feet or 36 inches)	0.914 m
1 mile	1.61 km
1 pound	0.454 kg
1 pint	0.473 liters
1 gallon	3.784 liter

In addition, the U.S. uses the Fahrenheit scale for temperature rather than Celsius. To convert Fahrenheit to Celsius, use this equation: $F = (1.8 \times C) + 32$. To convert Celsius to Fahrenheit, use this equation: $C = 5/9 (F-32)$.

Useful Places Near Campus

You are fortunate to attend a University that is in such a wonderful location. Not only does Mount Mary have a gorgeous campus with a lot of land and trees, but we are located in one of the nicest neighborhoods of Milwaukee, just outside of the suburb of Wauwatosa.

- There are restaurants on North Avenue (to the south of us), on Burleigh (to the north), and on Mayfair Road (to the west).

- The closest grocery stores are Sentry on 92nd and Lisbon (within walking distance) and Meijer Foods (Burleigh and Hwy 100). Even closer is the Speedway gas station on 92nd and Burleigh, but they don't carry everything and prices tend to be higher.
- Nearby Mayfair Road has Mayfair Mall (considered by many to be one of the best shopping centers in the Milwaukee area) and many other stores, banks, offices and restaurants.
- Milwaukee has several international stores:

Asian International Market, located in the near south side of Milwaukee

Location: 3401 W. National Avenue Milwaukee, WI 53215

Phone: 414-383-4188

Indian Groceries & Spices

Location: 10633 W North Ave Milwaukee, WI 53226

Phone: 414-771-3535

Vietnam Super

Location: 3515 W National Ave Milwaukee, WI 53215

Phone: 414-687-9474

Brennan's Market

Location: 19000 W Bluemound Rd, Brookfield, WI 53045

Phone: 262-785-6606

El Rey

Location: 3524 W Burnham St, Milwaukee, WI 53215

Phone: 414-643-1616

Outpost Natural Foods

Location: 7000 W State Street, Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Phone: 414-778-2012

There are many churches of a variety of faiths all over the Milwaukee area. For a listing and/or recommendation, please see Campus Ministry, 154 Caroline Hall.

If you wish to attend Catholic Mass, see below.

Mass and Prayer Schedule

- Mount Mary's chapel is open 24/7 for individual or group prayer and reflection.
- Mass is held every Wednesday at noon in Our Lady Chapel. There are other Masses offered throughout the semester like Mass of the Holy Spirit, All Saint's Day, Ash Wednesday, and more.
- Mount Mary is a Catholic university but we welcome students from all religious and spiritual backgrounds. The Campus Ministry department offers programming throughout the year for all students interested in exploring their faith.

Campus Mailroom

Students who reside in Caroline Hall are assigned a mailbox for each academic year. Please visit the mailroom director to receive your mailbox lock combination, once you arrive on campus. Mail is picked up and delivered during the week, but not on weekends or holidays. Stamps can be purchased in the Mailroom. Packages can also be shipped and received through the Mailroom. To receive mail, please use the format below:

Name

Mount Mary University
Mailbox Number
2900 N. Menomonee River Parkway
Milwaukee, WI 53222

Please contact the Mailroom for further assistance.

Health Care

Basic Information

Health care in the United States is very complicated – and often expensive. Health care can be so expensive that many people cannot afford it, unless they have health insurance.

There are three basic places to obtain health care: public clinics, private physicians, and hospitals. Public clinics offer services for low or no cost, but services are very limited, and often require long waits.

Private physicians offer most services, but the price can be high. Most private physicians accept health insurance for payment. Normally, you must make an appointment to see a private physician.

Hospitals provide advanced health care services, including emergency medical service. Hospital services are very expensive. In cases of emergencies, you can go to any hospital, and they must treat you – even if you cannot pay. All hospitals will accept health insurance.

Health Insurance

Mount Mary University requires that all non-immigrant international students have health insurance while studying in the U.S. A health insurance program is available through the University at an additional cost. Questions regarding this health insurance option should be directed to the Student Affairs, Caroline Hall 149. Students must complete an enrollment or waiver form to verify other coverage or to enroll into a plan.

Emergencies

In the event of a sudden illness or a need for emergency care, students should contact the University Public Safety. Officers will help in obtaining emergency care. The student will be responsible for any charges for services rendered off campus and are not covered under the insurance plan. Campus security officers are CPR certified and trained in basic first aid.

Urgent care clinics near Mount Mary University:

- *St. Joseph Outpatient Center:* 201 N. Mayfair Road, (414) 259-7361
- *Advanced Healthcare Mayfair Rd. Clinic:* 3289 N. Mayfair Road, (414) 771-7900
- *Aurora Health Center - Mayfair:* 10400 W. North Avenue, (414) 479-2520
- *Plank Road After Hours Clinic:* 1155 N. Mayfair Road, (414) 456-5990

Housing

On-Campus Housing

On-campus housing in Caroline Hall is available for all female Mount Mary University students. All full-time, traditional first-year students entering Mount Mary University directly from high school who are not living at home with their parents or immediate family members are required to reside in Caroline Hall. Housing in Caroline Hall is provided to Mount Mary students in accordance with official dates published in the Residence Life calendar. The Residence Life calendar has been created in accordance with the Mount Mary University academic calendar. Caroline Hall closes during break periods but limited housing will be made available for students as necessary.

During the semester winter break, students continuing in the residence hall for spring semester may leave their personal items in their current room and are not expected to completely move out of the residence halls. Access to the halls during the break is limited, so students may not have access to items left in their rooms.

During the summer break periods, students must completely vacate the residence hall and move all personal property out of the hall, or to the student's summer room assignment if they are continuing to live on campus.

Off-Campus Housing

Though it is more complicated than getting housing on-campus, and offers less support and protection, some students prefer to live off-campus for various reasons. Whatever your reasons are, remember that you are choosing to take complete responsibility for yourself when you live off-campus. If you don't do something (like paying your bills), it won't get done.

Several types of housing are available for rental on a monthly basis. Often, utilities such as gas and electricity are not included in the rent, so you must pay for them separately. Telephone service is never included in the rent, and so you will have to get phone service yourself. Rentals will almost always have heaters, ovens, and usually refrigerators. In some areas, refrigerators are not always included, so be sure to find out ahead of time.

Some rentals will include furniture, but most do not. Apartments for rent are listed in all of the local newspapers and also online.

Renting an Apartment

Most landlords require tenants to sign a lease, which is a legally binding agreement or contract outlining the conditions which both the landlord and the tenant agree to meet. Leases are often for one year, although it is sometimes possible to arrange a lease for a shorter period of time. They may also run a credit report. If you do not have American credit, do not worry. Some landlords will simply ask for double the security deposit.

Once you sign a lease, you are legally obligated to pay the full amount whether you occupy the apartment or not. Landlords will often require a security deposit, which is usually equal to another month or two of rent. The security deposit will be returned to you when your lease has ended, provided that there has been no damage to the property. Any existing damage when you move into the apartment must be documented in writing by the landlord, so that you will not be penalized for it.

Suggested Questions for Landlords:

- How much is the monthly rent?
- How much is the security deposit?
- What is included in the rent? Utilities? If not, what is the average monthly cost of utilities?
- Is it furnished?
- Can I use the kitchen?
- Will I share the room with anybody?
- How many people are sharing the house? Are they all males or females?
- Is smoking permitted?
- How far is it from the house (or apartment) to the bus stop?
- Monthly Lease: Is it renewable automatically?
- Early Lease: Is it renewable automatically?
- Is there any laundry facility available?
- What notice is required to terminate the agreement?
- Parking: Is there a lot? A garage?
- On-Street Parking? Are spaces assigned?
- Is there any additional charge for parking?

Government Regulations

The following summary of U.S. immigration is provided to give you basic information about your non-immigrant visa status. Be sure to carefully read the sections below that apply to you. Please remember that it is your responsibility to know and follow the regulations under which you may study, work, or stay in the U.S.

If you have any questions about your visa status, contact the Designated School Official registered with the U.S. Government (DSO), Mary Karr, in the Registrar's Office, Notre Dame Hall Room 153, at karrm@mtmary.edu. She will answer your questions or refer you

to the appropriate office or agency for information. Friends, faculty advisors, and others may be well intentioned in their advising on visa information, but the DSO is the one point person for your information which is crucial to your stay in the U.S.

Your Passport

Your passport is an international travel document issued to you by your government. The U.S. government expects you to keep your passport valid at all times. Check the expiration date on your passport. If you have less than six months remaining on the passport, you should request an extension. If needed by your embassy, the Registrar will provide, at your request, a letter to affirm your student status. If your U.S. visa is still valid and you are being issued a new passport, you should request the return of your expired passport. By keeping both, expired and new passports together, the valid visa can be used for reentry to the United States. Otherwise you will need to apply for a new visa the next time you leave the country.

Your Visa

This is a stamp or seal placed in your passport by a U.S. Consular officer abroad. The visa notes the purpose of your visit, the last date you can enter the United States, and how many entries you will be allowed. The visa is a permit to enter the United States. The visa does not indicate how long you will be permitted to stay and a visa does not have to be valid in order to remain in the United States. A visa can be obtained ONLY at U.S. Consulates outside the United States. The exception to this is for individuals who have adjusted their status to H-1 while in the United States. There are many different categories of visas. The type of visa is determined by the purpose of the visitor's entry into the U.S. Most of Mount Mary's international students are on F-1 student visa.

Your I-94 (Arrival/Departure Card)

What is the I-94 form?

- Previously, the Form I-94 was a small, white card often stapled into the passport. It serves as evidence of a lawful admission and "alien registration" for foreign nationals. Those entering by land may still receive the paper card.
- Form I-94 will now be available electronically, rather than in a paper format.
- Form I-94 lists the person's immigration category, the port of entry, the date of entry into the U.S., the expiration of their stay, and a unique 11-digit identifying number on top.
- You will have the convenience of being able to access your own I-94 electronically at www.cbp.gov/I94 and will be able to print a new copy if one is lost, or to print multiple copies if needed. Use your biographical information, date of entry and class of admission to locate your electronic I-94 card.
- When you plan to travel outside the U.S., it is a good idea to print your I-94 and keep it with your passport, visa, and Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Status". Those who fly back to the U.S. will receive a new passport stamp with entry/admission information, and those who drive in will be processed according to the land border port of entry process and receive a paper I-94.

Maintaining Your Student Status

While studying in the United States, it is important to maintain your F or M student status. Your visa says that you are coming to the United States to study. You should not consider any action that detracts from that purpose.

Upon Arrival

- Enter the United States no more than 30 days before your program of study begins.
- Immediately contact your designated school official (DSO) when you enter the United States. When you arrive at school, you need to contact your DSO again, no later than the program start date listed on your Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Status"

Education

- Attend and pass all your classes. If school is too difficult, speak with your DSO immediately.
- If you believe that you will be unable to complete your program by the end date listed on your Form I-20, talk with your DSO about requesting a possible program extension.
- You must take a full course of study each term; if you cannot study full-time, contact your DSO immediately.
- Do not drop a class without speaking first with your DSO.

CPT

Curricular practical training (CPT) at either the undergraduate or the graduate level is only available if this employment is an integral part of an established curriculum and if the position directly relates to your major area of study. Your DSO can give you the school's policy on this option.

Work

If you want to work in the United States, talk with your DSO about your options. Your DSO may authorize certain work; other employment may require your DSO's recommendation and authorization from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

For more information, see Working in the United States.

If you choose to work without authorization, you will be forced to leave the United States immediately. You may not be able to re-enter the United States at a later date.

Do not work without authorization.

Upon Program Completion

Take action to maintain legal status after completing your program of study.

Once you complete your program of study and any authorized period of practical training, you may wish to learn about doing one of the following:

- Transfer to another school
- Change your education level (e.g. bachelor's to master's)
- Apply to change status to another visa status (e.g. H-1B-temporary worker; O-extraordinary ability in science, art or business; P-athlete)

You have 60 days after completion of your program (the program end date on your Form I-20) to leave the United States.

Talk with your DSO first

Your DSO should be the first person you talk with if you have any questions regarding the legal requirements of your stay in the United States. Your DSO can assist in answering your questions or help you find someone who can help.

Talk with your DSO if you are planning to do any of the following:

- Change your major, program, or degree level
- Change your education level
- Transfer to a new school or take a leave of absence
- Take a break from school
- Travel outside the United States
- Move to a new address
- Request a program extension

You may contact SEVP by email at sevp@dhs.gov if your DSO is unable to assist you or if you would prefer to ask someone else.

In your email, please describe your situation and include any questions you have. SEVP provides responses on a first-come, first-served basis. Answer times may vary depending on the current number of inquiries.

A Full Course of Study

A full-time course of study is defined at Mount Mary as 12 credit hours (3 to 4 classes) per semester for undergraduate and 6 credit hours (2 to 3 classes) for graduate students. For Undergraduates none of those 12 credits may be online courses; for graduate students none of those 6 credits may be online courses.

Note: Failing to maintain your status can result in serious penalties! Be sure to see your advisor and the DSO before dropping a class that would leave you with less than a full course of study.

Exceptions to the Full Course of Study Requirement

There are some situations in which F-1 students are considered to be maintaining status even if they are not registered full-time; for example: summer vacation, medical problems, teaching or research assistantships, etc. If you have any questions, you should consult the DSO.

Travel

Outside of the U.S.: You need to have your Form I-20, “Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Status” signed by the DSO (Designated School Official, Mary Karr) in the Registrar’s Office. The signature cannot be more than one year old. You should also carry a copy of the current/next semester's schedule of classes and a copy of your transcript and copies of your financial documents. Your visa must be valid in your passport to return to the U.S.

Within the U.S.: Travel within the United States for any international student or scholar on a non-immigrant visa does not require any special documentation, letters, or any signatures from the University. Still, anyone on a non-immigrant visa should be able to present proof of their legal status within the United States at any time. It is recommended that for travel outside of Milwaukee, you take your passport and at least a photocopy of your accompanying documentation (i.e. I-20, DS-2019, H-1B Approval Notice). Also, it is recommended that you keep photocopies of your main passport page, visa page, I-94 Card, and any other visa documentation with you at all times even when not traveling.

Registrar and DSO (Designated School Official registered with the U.S. Government)

Mary Karr, Registrar
Notre Dame Hall, Room 155
Phone: 414-930-3062

Yasamin Blackmon, Assistant Registrar
Notre Dame Hall, Room 155
Phone: 414-930-3542

See Mary Karr or Yasamin Blackmon for:

- Processing of immigration & visa forms
- Signatures on I-20 for students holding an F-1 Visa (VERY IMPORTANT! NEEDED FOR RETURN TO THE U.S. AFTER LEAVING THE COUNTRY)
- Information on changes in immigration legislation
- Anything requiring the signature of the “Designated School Official” (for purposes outside of the University, such as immigration)

Social Security Numbers

Why do I need a Social Security number? In order to work in the United States, every eligible F and M student needs a Social Security number (SSN). If you do not know if you are eligible to work, please speak with your Designated School Official (DSO).

F and M students who have authorization to work in the United States may apply for an SSN. In addition, any F or M student who wishes to apply for a driver’s license (in a state requiring an SSN before getting a license) may apply for an SSN.

Many states require that you or your dependent have an SSN or have already applied for one before you apply for a driver’s license. If you or your dependents are not eligible to work, but want to apply for a driver’s license, you must first apply for an SSN at the local

Social Security office and receive a Form SSA-L676, “Refusal to Process SSN Application.” To learn more, see below.

If you need to apply for a Social Security Number:

- Meet with your DSO to discuss your work options.
- Ensure you are in Active status in SEVIS: Your SEVIS record must be in Active status for at least two days before applying for an SSN. If you have a record in any other status, you will not have success in applying for an SSN.
- Wait 10 days after arriving in the United States before applying for an SSN: Wait at least 10 calendar days from your date of entry into the United States to apply for an SSN. The Social Security Administration (SSA) uses the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program to verify your immigration status information against records contained in the Department of Homeland Security databases, including those housed by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Since the verification relies on the original data source, you must allow time for your arrival information to update in all government systems.
- Visit your local Social Security Administration (SSA) Office: You can file your application for an SSN card in person at and Social Security Administration Office. Be prepared to provide your original documents to prove your age, identity and, work-authorized immigration status. All evidence of immigration status and work authorization must be unexpired. For more information on the types of documents you need, refer to this page of the SSA website.

Obtaining a Driver’s License

Another benefit of studying in the United States is the opportunity to obtain a legal driver's license. F and M non-immigrants are eligible to apply for a license if they are in Active status and present the proper documentation to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in their state.

While the application process may be different in each state, the basic steps are very similar. These steps include talking with your Designated School Official (DSO) about driving rules and regulations, talking to your DSO or RO to make sure you are Active in SEVIS, waiting the proper length of time, registering for a Social Security number (SSN) if required by your state, and submitting the proper documentation. You may also need to pass both a driving and written test.

To drive a car, international students must obtain a driver's license and automobile insurance. Used car prices vary widely, but most students can find an adequate used vehicle for a manageable rate. Please remember to factor in cost of gas, car insurance, and other general maintenance if deciding to purchase a vehicle.

For more information about obtaining a Wisconsin Driver’s License please consult the

Wisconsin Driver's License website (<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov>).

When you apply for a Wisconsin Driver's License, you must have documentation to prove your lawful presence in the U.S., identity, and place of residence.

- *Proof of Lawful Presence.*
F-1 status must provide all of the following:
 - a. Passport
 - b. I-94
 - c. Visa
 - d. I-20
 - e. Certification of Enrollment: a *Letter of Good Standing* may be requested from the Registrar's Office.
- *Proof of Identity.*
Provide Mount Mary ID card.
- *Proof of Residency.*
One of the following:
 - a. Utility bill (most recent), such as gas or electric
 - b. Bank statement (most recent)
 - c. Pay check (most recent)

In order to obtain a Wisconsin Driver's License you must take a four-part test:

- A written test on traffic laws and rules for safe driving
- A vision test
- A road sign test
- A driving test

You will receive your license by mail two to three weeks after successfully completing the required tests if you are in a non-immigrant visa status.

Driver's License Service Center

Milwaukee – Northwest

7301 W. Mill Road Milwaukee, WI 53218

Telephone: (414) 266-1000

Employment Opportunities

Students holding F-1 status have some opportunities for legal employment to supplement their classroom experience and personal funds. Although there are several options, it is critical that students have the appropriate form of work authorization and do not exceed the number of hours per week authorized. Students holding an F-1 visa are only permitted to work up to 20 hours per week during the academic year. For accurate information, call the DSO at (414) 256-1251.

Types of F-1 Student Employment Authorizations

On-Campus Employment

Students maintaining F-1 status are permitted to work on-campus for a maximum of 20 hours per week during the academic year. During the summer and when school is not in session, students can work full time (not limited to 40 hours per week by USCIS). To find out more about on-campus opportunities, visit the Financial Aid Office.

Off-Campus Employment

For an F-1 student to be eligible for off-campus employment, the student must have been continuously and lawfully enrolled in an USCIS approved institution for one academic year or nine months. The information below is a brief description of all the types of off campus job descriptions. If you need more detailed information, please contact the Registrar.

Type 1: Curricular Practical Training (CPT): Participation in a cooperative education program, training for which you receive academic credit, or training which is required for your degree may be authorized as curricular practical training. Any student who works for one year or more in full-time curricular practical training is not eligible for optional practical training. Working without work authorization or working too many hours, results in loss of F-1 student status.

Type 2: Optional Practical Training (OPT): Students holding F-1 status may apply for a total of twelve months of OPT. With the completion of a second, higher level degree, international students may apply for a second year of optional practical training. The training can only be authorized for the major field of study indicated on the current I-20.

Type 3: Severe Economic Hardship: F-1 students are eligible to apply for off-campus employment based on severe economic hardship provided that:

- They are in good standing and carrying a full course of study;
- They can demonstrate unforeseen severe economic hardship;
- Employment opportunities on campus are unavailable or insufficient;
- They have been in F-1 status for one academic year;
- Acceptance of employment will not interfere with the student's carrying a full course of study.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT IMMIGRATION ISSUES, TALK TO THE DSO (Designated School Official, Mary Karr in the Registrar's office).

Money and Banking

United States Currency

U.S. Currency is based on the decimal system, with 100 cents to each dollar. Metal coins include pennies (\$.01), nickels (\$.05), dimes (\$.10), quarters (\$.25), half-dollars (\$.50), and dollars (\$1.00). Paper currency comes in \$1.00, \$2.00, \$5.00, \$10.00, \$20.00, \$50.00, and \$100.00 denominations. The \$2.00 bill and \$.50 coin are very rare, but you may see them from time to time. All U.S. paper currency and most coins have an image of

a former president. Most Americans do not keep large amounts of cash with them or in their homes. Americans prefer to keep their money in the bank.

Banking

Banks offer many services, including checking and savings accounts. It is advisable to open an account at a commercial bank. This will give you access to your money easily and safely for paying any bills by check. Also, all banks can accept wire transfers from your family overseas, and automatically post the money to your account. There is usually a charge for this service, and you should check with your bank to find out how much it is. It is also often possible to have a debit card, which you can use to withdraw funds directly from your banking account. Make sure you understand the fees and requirements for any banking service that you use.

Your bank will send you a statement every month, either in the mail or online. Your bank statement will contain copies of checks you have written, plus a list of all transactions you made that month. It is important to check your statement every month. Most banks in the Milwaukee area offer the same general services, but many Mount Mary students choose banks located near the campus. We typically recommend US Bank <https://www.usbank.com> as an option to International Students because they offer a **free checking account**. They are familiar and helpful with the initiation of a checking account and branches are located 10 min away from campus. Students, however, can choose from a variety of institutions.

Opening an Account

You will need to show at least two forms of identification with your photograph. You should take your passport and I-94 card with you to open your account. You do not need a social security number to open a normal savings or checking account. Consult with the bank personnel about the different kinds of accounts available to you.

Writing Checks

Checks are essential in conducting business in the United States. If you lose your checks and quickly notify the bank, the bank will protect your account. Also, your cancelled checks serve as receipts, and your monthly statements from the bank will indicate how you are spending your money.

Never sign a blank check and give it to another person. Make sure that everything is filled out properly.

When you are writing checks at stores, you will be asked for some form of ID, usually a driver's license with current address.

Returned Checks

It is important to keep an accurate record of how much money you have in your account; if you write a check for more money than you have in your account, you will "bounce" a check. Having insufficient funds (bounced checks) can have serious consequences; at the very least you will be charged a fee of \$10 to \$50 per check bounced. Bounced checks can result in a bad credit rating.

ATM

Most banks offer the computerized services of a 24-hour Automated Teller Machine, also known as an ATM, or a debit card. You will be given a small plastic card to use this service. This card, along with your Personal Identification Number (PIN) will allow you to conduct transactions with the bank (deposits, withdrawals, check your balance, transfer money between accounts, etc.)

If you use your ATM card at your bank, there is no charge for the service. If you use your ATM card at another bank's ATM, you will be charged a fee. Many stores accept the debit card with either your signature or the PIN number.

Credit Cards

Many U.S. businesses accept credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express, etc.) as a form of payment. Generally, you must have an established credit history before you can get a credit card. Credit histories are established after a period of showing you are a good credit risk (paying your bills). It is difficult, but not impossible, for international students to get credit cards; opportunities to apply often come to students in the mail.

Taxes

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) expects your compliance with U.S. tax regulations that apply to international students. **All international students need to complete IRS tax forms 8843 and 1040NR-EZ (if applicable income has been earned) whether you have a paying job, a scholarship, or neither.** You will receive forms from the Business Office that will give you some information needed to complete the forms. **The forms must be filed between January 1st and April 15th of each year.** Depending upon the amount of your job or scholarship income and any tax treaties that the United States has with your country, you may or may not owe taxes.

Some institutions in the Milwaukee area (i.e. Marquette University) conduct tax information sessions during the spring semester. Information about upcoming sessions will be sent to you via email or communicated through the International Club. It is your responsibility to gather the necessary materials and complete and return these forms to the IRS.

For more information, visit the IRS web site at <http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/International-Taxpayers>. This web site will give you access to all IRS forms and publications. For instance, if you want to find out about U.S. tax treaties with your country, go to the web site, select Forms and Pubs, then select Publications Online, and then select Publication 901 - US Tax Treaties.

Disclaimer: The Mount Mary University is able to provide you with general guidance. However, any advice provided to you in this handbook should not be construed as legal advice. Additionally, due to the fluid nature of governmental interpretation, the USCIS may change its interpretation of these immigration laws/regulations and eligibility requirements for benefits, at any time. We will do our best to provide you with the most current guidance. Each case is fact-specific and it is advised that you contact an experienced immigration attorney if you have questions regarding your situation.