

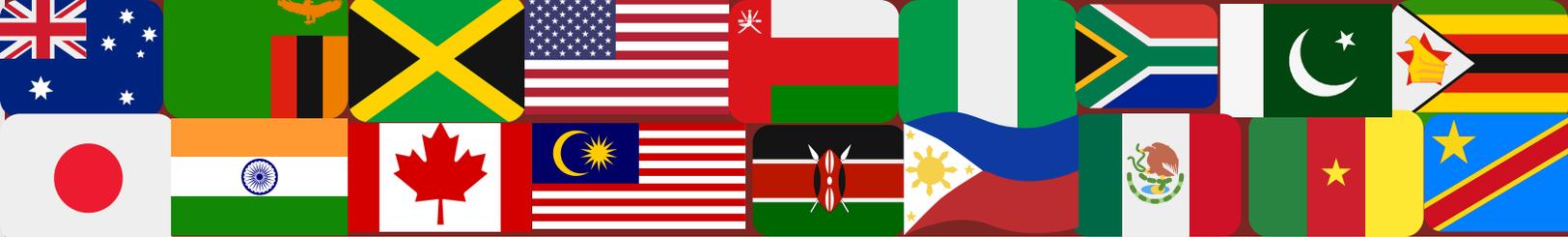


International Student Orientation Guide



FALL 2024





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Welcome to "The Hill"





Greetings & Welcome to "The Hill!"

Dr. Braque Talley
VP Student Affairs

It is my pleasure to welcome you to Alabama A&M University, which affectionately referred to as "The Hill." Our motto, "Start Here, Go Anywhere" is the motivator for all that we do – as we work diligently to provide our students with the requisite skills to be leaders in their chosen walk of life.

Alabama A&M University offers a comprehensive college experience both in and outside of the classroom. AAMU students learn from faculty who are experts in their fields.

Students of Alabama A&M are encouraged to make powerful, life-long connections as they engage with a diverse population of students from across the United States and the globe. AAMU is proud of its growing diversity, as it provides a unique opportunity for International and American students to share a heritage that goes beyond the classroom. Diversity is celebrated throughout campus and the community through food, arts, and entertainment during the academic year.

In the classroom, academic achievement is paramount. Alabama A&M University believes a college degree is earned – not rewarded. We also believe in linking theory to practice as much as possible by offering opportunities for experiential learning. As a student of Alabama A&M University, we will expect more from you and you will learn to expect more from yourself.

As your Vice President of Student Affairs, I look forward to meeting you! It is an honor to welcome you to our very exceptional institution of higher learning and I wish you a very enriching collegiate experience while at AAMU.

Yours in the pursuit of excellence.



Greetings & Welcome to "The Hill!"

Dr. Pamela Little
Executive Director

Welcome to Alabama A&M University (AAMU). We are excited to welcome you as a member of the Bulldog Family!!

In addition to settling in and preparing to begin your studies, you will also be adjusting to and living in a culture that may be quite different from yours.

We are committed to your success and value the diversity you bring to our campus community.

This orientation guide is designed to answer some of the questions you may have as you settle in at AAMU. We strongly recommend you read it carefully and keep it for future reference. The Office of Multicultural Affairs and your campus DSOs are here to help with your questions. Please feel free to utilize all resources available to you.

I wish you much success as you begin this new adventure.



**Welcome to
"The Hill"
Temidayo Davies-Dada
2024-2025
I.S.A. President**

Welcome to a new and exciting year with the International Student Association (ISA)! As the president, it is my great pleasure to extend a warm greeting to each and every one of you.

Our association thrives on the rich diversity and vibrant cultures that you all bring from around the world. Together, we create a unique and inclusive community where we celebrate our differences and find common ground. ISA is dedicated to providing support, fostering friendships, and enhancing the international student experience.

We have planned various events and activities throughout the year to help you connect with others, explore new cultures, and make the most of your time here. Your active involvement and feedback are crucial to our success, and we encourage you to share your ideas and suggestions with us. Let's work together to make this year unforgettable and ensure that ISA continues to be a welcoming home away from home for all international students.

Thank you for being part of our diverse and dynamic community. I look forward to meeting you at our upcoming events and making this a remarkable year for ISA.



"Greetings, Bulldogs!"

Kunmi Balogun

2024-2025

Miss I.S.A

Welcome to an amazing adventure where you will see our educational institution embrace diversity beyond national boundaries and cultural boundaries. We add a unique viewpoint, language, and heritage to the lovely thread that is our academic community, which will undoubtedly enhance it.

Even though it might be extremely overwhelming to transition to a new culture, our instructors and staff will offer you support and resources to help you succeed in your studies. I have no doubt that your time on The Hill will be a transformative experience that will have a profound impact on both the present and the future.

I appreciate you and wish you happiness, success, and lifelong connections in this new phase of your life. Cheers to an amazing future in academics!!!



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**The Office of Multicultural
Affairs is located in
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Building**

**Hours of Operation
Monday-Friday,
8:00 AM-5:00 PM**

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Maintaining Status





SEVIS REGISTRATION

All international students are required to complete the SEVIS registration procedure at the beginning of every semester. This is to ensure that the required documents are placed on file to comply with Federal immigration regulations to report necessary information about your status to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security via SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System)

link: Resources - Alabama A&M University

Failure to complete the SEVIS Registration process in the given time will result in automatic termination of your SEVIS record by SEVP.

<https://lsrfichewb.aamu.edu/Forms/sevis-Registration>

F1 Requirements

All F-1 students must enroll full-time each semester to remain in status unless you have applied for and your DSO has approved a reduced course load for you.

12 credit hours for undergraduate
9 credit hours for graduate
Only one online course per semester

Even if you have approval from your academic advisor, your DSO **must** approve your application for a Reduced Course Load **BEFORE** you drop below a full course load.



Passport – Be sure you keep your passport valid at all times. Your passport cannot expire while you are in the United States.

Visa – It is important to check the expiration date on your visa. You will need to make the necessary arrangements to renew your visa if you plan to travel internationally and your visa is expired.

Additionally, please reach out to the DSO to extend your I-20 prior to the program end date.

I-94 – Have a copy of your I-94 with you at all times.

TRAVELING

While traveling within the United States, you should carry your immigration documents and your most recent I-94 record.

Anytime you plan to travel outside of the U.S., You **must** complete the travel endorsement request form **PRIOR** to your departure to get a travel signature on your Form I-20 (F-1).



It is essential that you make the necessary preparations for obtaining a new visa if yours is expired, as you will need a valid visa to re-enter the United States. Furthermore, based on the location of the embassy/consulate and the season during which you try to apply, appointments may have to be scheduled weeks in advance.

Reminder! You will not be able to re-enter the United States without a valid visa.

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>



K A I X O



SALAM

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YAXSHIMUSIZ



B O N G U



LIVING in the

United States



EMPLOYMENT

as an F1 student



F-1 students may not engage in any off-campus employment (including paid and unpaid internships) before receiving proper employment authorization from the DSO.

There are two types of work authorization you may apply for:

Curricular Practical Training (CPT), which allows you to engage in an internship or employment opportunity integral to your academic program and related to your field of study.

Optional Practical Training (OPT), which allows you to gain practical experience within your field of study upon completion of your program for up to 12 months.

Any unauthorized employment outside of what is specified on your Form I-20 (F-1) is a violation of immigration regulations and can result in the loss of your student status.

Obtaining a Driver's License

ALL INDIVIDUALS WHO DRIVE IN THE U.S. MUST HAVE A VALID ALABAMA STATE LICENSE OR INTERNATIONAL LICENSE.

After you have settled in, you can take the licensing exam and obtain a license. The driver's license test center (Department of Motor Vehicles) is located at **1115-A Church Street, Huntsville, AL 35801.**

You will need to take the following with you:

- Letter of good academic standing (request via your DSO)
- Passport
- I-94 card or electronic printout of I-94 number from **<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>**
- A second picture ID, such as your AAMU student ID

For more information, visit the Madison County License Department website. <https://www.madisoncountyal.gov/departments/license-department>

Social Security Number

The Social Security Administration, a government agency, is responsible for issuing a social security number (SSN) to those who are legally employed in the US.

To obtain a SSN, you must:

- Be approved for employment (GRA or campus employment).
- Request support letters from DSO.
- Gather the following documents: completed Form SS5, I-20, I-94, employment offer letter, and passport. (All original documents).
- Call the SS office at **1-800-772-1213** to schedule an in-person interview, stating that all necessary documents are available.
- A wait in-person interview date.

Cultural Adjustment

Culture shock is a common experience for international students studying in a different country.



Here are a few examples of cultural differences that may contribute to culture shock:

- Language Barrier
- Social Customs and Etiquette
- Food and Dietary Differences
- Academic Expectations
- Homesickness and Loneliness
- Cultural Values and Beliefs
- Weather

Dealing with Culture Shock



Tips

Dealing with culture shock as an international student can be challenging, but there are strategies you can employ to help navigate this transition.

Here are some tips that students have found useful in dealing with culture shock:

Language Barrier: To overcome this, consider taking language classes, practicing language skills with native speakers, and immersing yourself in the local culture to improve language proficiency.

Social Customs and Etiquette: Observing and learning from locals, asking questions, and observing social cues can help you navigate unfamiliar social customs.

Food and Dietary Differences: Explore local markets, try new dishes, and connect with other international students to share experiences and discover food options that suit your preferences.

Academic Expectations: Seek guidance from professors or academic advisors, participate actively in class, and familiarize yourself with the academic resources and support available to you.

Homesickness and Loneliness: Stay connected with loved ones through regular communication, engage in social activities and join student organizations to build a support network, and explore opportunities to meet new people and make friends.

Cultural Values and Beliefs: Maintain an open mind, embrace cultural diversity, engage in intercultural dialogues, and seek to understand different cultural perspectives to broaden your own cultural intelligence.

Seek Support: Reach out to the Multicultural Affairs Office, student organizations, or peer mentors who can provide guidance and support during your adjustment period.

Banking & Finance

As an international student in the United States, understanding the banking system and managing your finances effectively is crucial.

Here are some key points to consider when it comes to banking as an international student:

Choose a Bank: Research and choose a reputable bank that offers services suitable for your needs. Look for banks that have branches or ATMs conveniently located near campus residences.

Types of Bank Accounts: There are different types of bank accounts you can open as an international student, such as checking accounts and savings accounts. A checking account allows you to deposit and withdraw funds for day-to-day transactions, while a savings account helps you save money and earn interest on your balance.

Required Documentation: To open a bank account, you will typically need to provide certain documentation, such as your passport, visa, I-20 form, and proof of address.

Banking Services: Understand the various services offered by the bank, such as online banking, mobile banking, debit cards, and wire transfers. Online and mobile banking allows you to manage your accounts, check balances, make payments, and transfer funds conveniently through a computer or mobile device.

Fees and Charges: Be aware of any fees associated with your bank account, such as monthly maintenance fees, transaction fees, or ATM withdrawal fees.

Seek Financial Advice: If you have any questions or need assistance with banking and managing your finances, do not hesitate to reach out to the bank's customer service or visit their branch.

Budgeting and Managing Finances: Create a budget to track your income and expenses, including tuition, accommodation, food, transportation, and other necessities.

Below are the two most common banks available for international students at Alabama A&M University.

Regions: A deposit of \$50 is required.

Regions Bank at AAMU Meridian Street: This branch is located at 4900 Meridian Street, Normal, AL 35762. The phone number is (256) 824-6922.

<https://www.regions.com/personal-banking/debit-cards/college-cards/alabama-am-university>

Wells Fargo: A deposit of \$25 is required.

Wells Fargo has a branch located near campus. They offer a variety of student banking accounts, as well as loans and credit cards. The branch is located at 1000 University Drive SW, Huntsville, AL 35811.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wells_Fargo



CURRENCY IN THE U.S

The currency used in the United States is the United States Dollar (USD). The symbol for the United States Dollar is \$. The currency is divided into cents, with coins available in denominations of 1 cent (penny), 5 cents (nickel), 10 cents (dime), 25 cents (quarter), and paper bills available in denominations of 1 dollar, 5 dollars, 10 dollars, 20 dollars, 50 dollars, and 100 dollars.

Living on Campus



Tips

Living on campus as an international student can be an exciting and rewarding experience. It allows you to immerse yourself in a new culture, make new friends, and take advantage of various campus resources. Here are some tips to help you make the most of your on-campus living experience:

Familiarize Yourself with Campus Facilities: Take some time to explore the campus and get to know the different facilities available to you. Locate important areas such as the library, student center, health center, gym, dining halls, and administrative offices. Understanding your surroundings will make your daily life more convenient.

Connect with international student services: Here on campus, we have dedicated offices and international associations that cater to the needs of international students. Reach out to these services to get guidance and support. They can assist you with immigration matters and provide valuable resources for your academic and personal success.

Engage in Campus Activities: Participating in campus activities and clubs is an excellent way to meet people and integrate into the campus community. Attend orientation events, join student organizations, and get involved in extracurricular activities that align with your interests. This will help you make friends and create a support network.

Communicate with Roommates and Hallmates: If you have roommates or live in a shared space, communication is crucial. Be open and respectful in your interactions.



ON CAMPUS TRANSPORTATION

Alabama A&M University has a transportation goal of achieving zero transit emissions by 2024. This goal is part of the university's commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship:

Bulldog Transit System: The Bulldog Transit System is a free shuttle bus service that operates on campus and to nearby destinations. Monday through Friday, during the fall and spring.

<https://www.aamu.edu/about/administrative-offices/bulldog-transportation-service/>

Paratransit Service: Door-to-door transportation for students with disabilities.

Parking: Parking permits are required for all students.

City of Huntsville Transit

The City of Huntsville Transit offers a bus service that operates throughout the city. The buses run on a fixed schedule, and fares are typically very affordable.

<https://www.huntsvilleal.gov/residents/streets/public-transportation/>



Uber/Lyft

Uber and Lyft are ride-hailing services that can be used to get around Huntsville. These services are typically more expensive than public transportation, but they can be more convenient.

Walking/Biking:

Huntsville is a relatively small city, so it is easy to get around by walking or biking. These are also great options for getting some exercise.

AROUND HUNTSVILLE

There are a variety of transportation options available in Huntsville, Alabama.

Here are some of the most popular used by International students:

Culture & Customs



American Food

American food culture is a melting pot of different cuisines from all over the world. This is due to the country's history of immigration, which has brought people from all over the globe to the United States. As a result, there is a wide variety of food to be found in the United States, from traditional American dishes to more exotic fare.

Some of the most popular American dishes include:

Hamburger and Hot Dog

These are two of the most iconic American foods. They are typically made with ground beef or porc, and they are mostly served on a bun with ketchup, mustard, and other condiments.



Fried Chicken and Pizza

Fried chicken is a popular Southern dish. It is made with chicken that is coated in a batter or breading and then fried.

Pizza is another popular American food. It is typically made with a dough base, tomato sauce, and cheese, and it can be topped with a variety of other ingredients, such as pepperoni, sausage, mushrooms, and onions.



Bar-B-Que and Macaroni & Cheese

BBQ is a type of cooking that originated in the Southern United States. It involves cooking meat over low heat for a long period of time.

Macaroni and cheese is a classic American comfort food. It is made with elbow macaroni pasta, cheese sauce, and often breadcrumbs.



Shopping



Options

Bridge Street Town Centre: This mall hosts big brands such as Anthropologie, Pandora, Michael Kors, and over 70 other stores and eateries.

Parkway Place is the only indoor mall. The two-floor venue boasts of over 70 stores and boutiques that feature family fashion wares, pet apparel, jewelry, entertainment, and more.

Priscilla's African Apparel: This is amazing African clothing.

Grocery Stores: Publix, Kroger, Whole Food, Aldi's

SuperCenters: Walmart and Target

There are many other options.

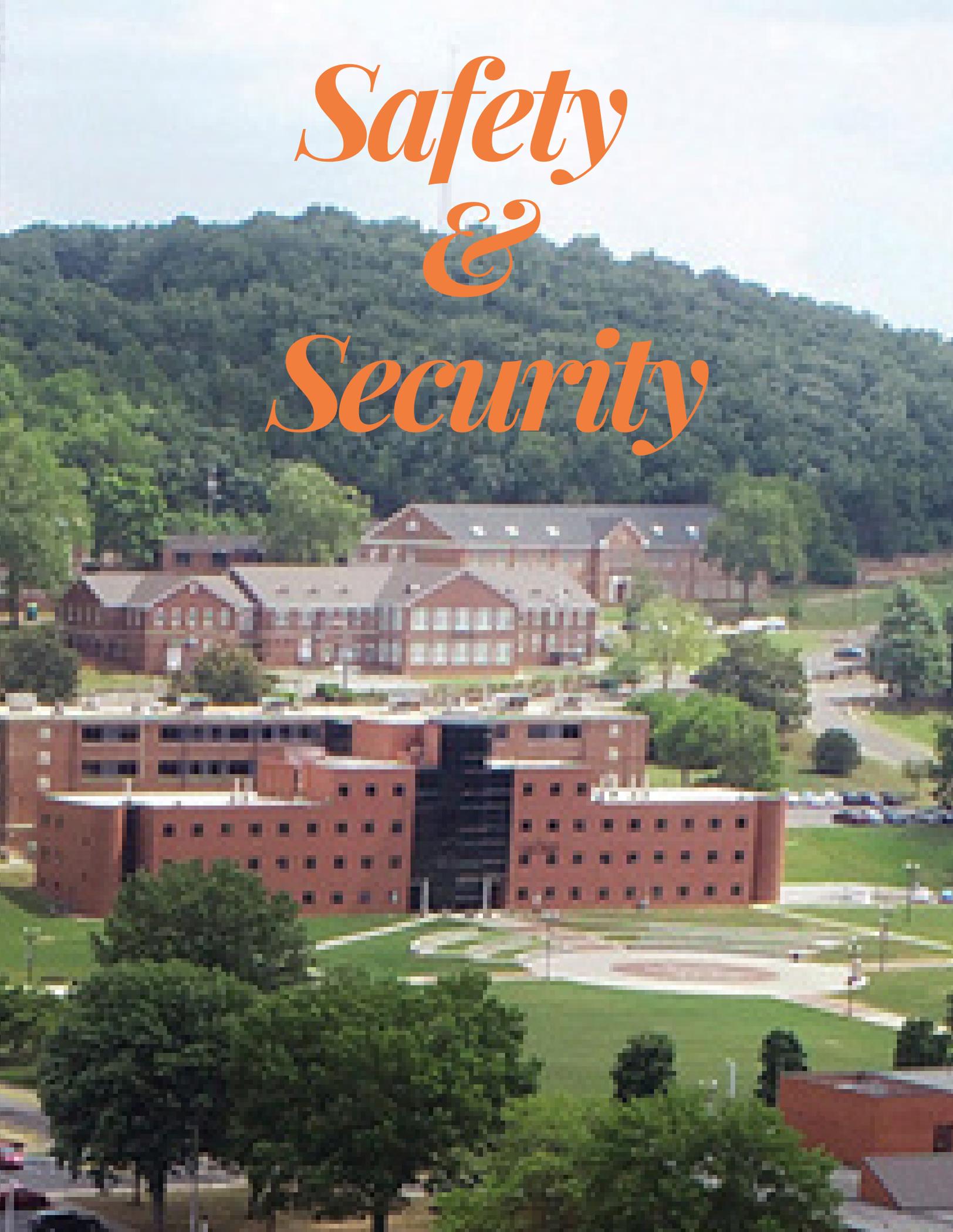
Language & Culture

The most common languages spoken in the United States after English are Spanish, Chinese, French, and German. Spanish is the most widely spoken language in the United States after English, with over 40 million speakers. Chinese is the third most common language, with over 3 million speakers. French is the fourth most common language, with over 2 million speakers. German is the fifth most common language, with over 1.5 million speakers.

Holidays

- New Year's Day - January 1
- Martin Luther King Day (observed) - January 15
- Memorial Day - Last Monday in May
- Independence Day - July 4
- Labor Day - First Monday in September
- Thanksgiving - Fourth Thursday in November
- Christmas Day - December 25

Safety & Security



In case of Emergency



Contact the Department of Public Safety from any on-campus telephone by dialing (256) 372-5000 for a critical situation. You can also contact your Resident Assistant (RA) if you are living in the residence halls. You will meet the RA on your first day in the hall, and you can get his/her phone and room number.

Police Department: (256) 824-6911

Health Center: (256) 824-6915

The following phone numbers must be preceded by a "9" when using a campus phone.

Fire Department 911

EVAC Ambulance 911

Police Emergency 911

Police (non-emergency) (256) 722-7100

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STRATEGY

TEACH
COLLEGE
COMMUNICATION
PLANNING
EDUCATION

INTELLIGENCE
TRAINING

RESOURCES EDUCATIONAL

RESOURCES

UNIVERSITY
SUCCESS
IMPORTANT
RESOURCES
PLAN
SCHOOL
SUCCESSFUL
TRAINING
TEACH
SKILL
MEDIA
STRATEGY

GOALS





Office of Multicultural Affairs (aamu.edu)

Bulldog International (Monthly International Student Newsletter)

Bulldog International Newsletter - Alabama A&M University
(aamu.edu)

Study in the States

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/>

US Citizenship and Immigration Services

<https://www.uscis.gov/>

