



# PRE-ARRIVAL GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



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## **DR. PAMELA LITTLE**

Executive Director, PDSO, RO

Welcome to Alabama A&M University (AAMU). We are looking forward to your arrival to the University community and helping you prepare for this experience. 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. This pre-arrival guide is designed to answer some of the questions you may have prior to arriving at AAMU. We strongly recommend you read it carefully and keep it for future reference. The Office of Community College Relations and Global Initiatives and your campus DSOs are here to help with your questions. Please feel free to utilize all resources available to you. We wish you success as you begin this new adventure.

The **Office of Community College Relations and Global Initiatives (CCRGI)** is your partner during your educational journey, assisting you in achieving your personal and academic goals at AAMU. We will advise you on immigration regulations, cross-cultural adjustment, and your academic success.

CCRGI handles international student advising related to the F-1 and J-1 visa status life cycle, including:

INITIAL I-20/DS-2019  
ISSUANCE

MAINTENANCE OF  
VISA STATUS

IMMIGRATION  
REGULATIONS

CHANGE OF  
EDUCATION LEVEL

SEVIS TRANSFERS

ALL J-1 SCHOLAR  
NEEDS

PAPERWORK  
(LETTERS) REQUIRED  
FOR BANKING,  
DRIVER'S LICENSE,  
SOCIAL SECURITY  
NUMBER

I-20/DS-2019 UPDATES

I-20 EXTENSIONS,  
SHORTEN PROGRAM  
DATES

REDUCED  
COURSELOAD  
AUTHORIZATIONS

EMPLOYMENT  
AUTHORIZATIONS  
(CPT, OPT, SEVERE  
ECONOMIC NEED)

POST-COMPLETION  
AND STEM OPT  
REPORTING

TRAVEL  
AUTHORIZATION



# PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION





# Visa Application & Interview

After receiving your I-20/DS-2019, you will need to arrange for your entry into the U.S. by obtaining the appropriate visa from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate nearest to where you live. To find the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, please visit <https://www.usembassy.gov/>.

You can also learn more about the different visa types, non-immigrant visa processing times, law and policy, visa-related news and more by visiting <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas.html>.

The visa only permits you to enter the U.S.; the form I-20 or DS-2019 allows you to stay. You must always have a copy of your I-20 or DS-2019. You should keep your old I-20s or DS-2019s for your records. If you lose or damage your I-20 or DS-2019, contact your DSO. For more information about scheduling and preparing for your visa interview, visit <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2015/06/five-ways-prepare-your-visa-interview>.

# Health Insurance & Immunization

All incoming international students are required to complete the immunization requirements prior to arrival. Students need to upload their completed immunization form to their MedProctor Portal. Do not upload this form until all of the requirements are complete. Any student who has not complied with the immunization policy by the deadline will have a hold placed on their record. This will prevent registration for classes, which may affect your visa status.

The link for MedProctor is

<https://www.aamu.edu/campus-life/student-support/health-services/incoming-students.html#sts=Med+Proctor>

International students are automatically enrolled in the university sponsored health insurance plan and the cost will be placed on your account. This plan meets all requirements and covers students domestically.



# Currency Restrictions and Transferring Funds

Before finalizing your plans to study in the U.S., you should be familiar with your government's regulations regarding currency restrictions and the transfer of funds. Some governments restrict the amount of money allowed out of the country; others may restrict funds until a letter from the university has been received. You can request an enrollment verification letter from your DSO.







***Immigration laws allow you to enter the U.S. no earlier than 30 days before the program start date listed on your I-20/DS-2019.***



When you arrive at a port of entry to the U.S., you will present your I-20/DS-2019, along with your passport, proof of payment of the I-901 fee, and financial documents. Do not put these documents in your checked baggage. The process of crossing the border can take a long time; please be patient.

Your border entry creates a record called an I-94. You can retrieve your I-94 at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>. This is available 24 hours after your arrival. If you have trouble retrieving your I-94 or if the information on the form is incorrect, you need to contact CBP directly.



# Transportation to AAMU

AAMU's campus is easy to access from several surrounding cities and airports. Huntsville International Airport provides more information about Ground Transportation. It is also affordable to access AAMU's campus through popular ride share apps such as Uber, Lyft, etc. Be sure to have your housing address readily available to provide to any ground transportation service.

Please note that AAMU does not provide transportation to the campus from the airport.



# On-Campus Housing

Housing at AAMU is at a premium, so be sure to complete the housing process as soon as possible. We recommend starting your housing process on the first day the housing application is open for your classification. Campus housing is provided on a first-come, first serve basis. Students who are moving into residence halls should arrive on campus during their designated move-in date and time.

Visit the University Housing website at <https://www.aamu.edu/campus-life/housing/> to explore options and application instructions for on-campus housing.

AAMU residence halls offer single and double occupancy rooms, suites, and apartments. Residence hall rooms come with furniture. You will need to supply your own sheets, towels, and utensils, which are easy to purchase at local retail stores.

Visit [What Items to Bring](#) for list of approved items to bring.



# Off-Campus Housing

Off-campus housing is typically rented through leases, meaning you agree to live in the unit for a stated period. When you sign a lease, you are legally responsible for all rent payments, whether you live there or not. When you rent an apartment, a security deposit is often required in addition to the first and last months' rent. Usually, your deposit is returned when you move out as long as you abide by your lease. Read the lease carefully and understand all of the obligations before signing. AAMU is not responsible for securing your off campus housing.

## Temporary Accommodations

If you arrive in Huntsville before your move-in date, you will need to find temporary accommodations. There are several hotels and temporary housing facilities nearby.

# International Student Orientation

In order to prepare you for your studies in the U.S., CCRGI offers unique information on what you can expect during your time at AAMU and provides information to visa related topics.

You are required to attend the mandatory orientation session. CCRGI will introduce immigration regulations on maintaining your student status while studying at AAMU. Other sessions are held throughout each semester.

The date for the orientation will be shared with you later.



# Bulldog ID

**Your Bulldog ID is the official university ID for students that provides access to buildings and services at AAMU. Carry your Bulldog ID at all times while on-campus. It is property of AAMU. No one else may use your card.**

**Collection of your Bulldog ID will be available during Welcome Week. Be sure to bring your passport in order to obtain your Bulldog ID. We suggest obtaining it prior to attending the International Student Mandatory Orientation Session.**



# Additional Information & Services

## Academic Advisors

Every AAMU student receives an academic advisor dedicated to assisting you throughout your studies. It is mandatory to speak with your academic advisor before registering for classes. Click [Meet Your Advisor](#) for advisor information.

## Expected Expenses

It is not advisable to carry large amounts of cash upon arrival nor during your stay. However, you will need access to personal funds within the first few days of being in the U.S. and throughout your stay to cover the following:

- Tips for taxis and servers in restaurants, which is customarily 10% - 20% of the bill.
- Eating meals in restaurants until you get moved in or are on an AAMU meal plan.
- Clothing for the different types of weather in Huntsville especially the winter. It can get as cold as 35°F /-12°C in January and February and temperature in summer can average 95°F/ 35°C in July and August.
- Personal and household items



# **Additional Information & Services**

## **Banking**

Several banks are close to AAMU main campus where you can open accounts and exchange money. To open an account, you will need to bring your passport and I-20/DS-2019.

U.S. bank loans are not available for international students unless you have a U.S. citizen who will co-sign for the loan.

## **Employment**

When you applied for and received your F-1 or J-1 visa, you agreed that your primary responsibility while in the U.S. is to study, not work. Employment in the U.S. is strictly controlled and limited for international students. Part-time on-campus work is permissible though there is a limited number of jobs available on campus. You should not plan to earn money to subsidize your expenses.

# **Additional Information & Services**

## **Social Security Number**

A Social Security Number (SSN) is a number issued by the Social Security Administration only to those working and receiving compensation in the U.S. As an international student, you will be required to apply for an SSN if you have valid compensated employment.

If you receive an assistantship that includes a stipend, you will be required to apply for an SSN. You cannot apply for a social security number until you have registered your I-20/DS-2019. Once your I-20/DS-2019 is registered, visit your DSO for instructions on applying for an SSN.

If you already have an SSN from a previous status or time in the U.S., you cannot apply for a new one. They do not expire.

# **Additional Information & Services**

## **Privacy and Releasing Information to Parents - FERPA**

AAMU'S Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act or FERPA, protects all student records. This means no one has access to your information unless you give explicit permission to that person.

You may grant FERPA authorization rights to individuals by filling out the FERPA waiver form.

## **Safety & Security On-Campus**

While on campus, you will see AAMU Public Safety. They patrol campus on foot and by car. If you have a question or an emergency, you are welcome to approach a security officer.

# Social Connections

There are many ways to connect with students on campus. CCRGI hopes that the following information can inform you about options to meet domestic and international students.

## Student Organizations

The International Student Association is active on campus. The group meets, hold special events, and offer friendship and support to fellow international students.

AAMU has numerous organizations related to hobbies, academics, and personal interests. For more information and to view a complete list of student organizations, visit the Student Activities website by clicking [here](#).

## CCRGI Events and Activities

CCRGI holds cultural events throughout the year for students to participate in. To connect with other international students and stay informed on current and future CCRGI and AAMU events, please follow us on Facebook and IG at ccrgiaamu.



# HOW TO CONTACT US

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256.372.5418

[ccrgi@aamu.edu](mailto:ccrgi@aamu.edu)

[www.aamu.edu/ccrgi](http://www.aamu.edu/ccrgi)

