

# International Student Pre Arrival Guide



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## Welcome Letter

*Dear International Student,*

*It's a pleasure to welcome you to Northeastern Illinois University and Chicago! My staff and I are very happy that you chose to study at NEIU.*

*The following pages contain information that I hope will be of help to you as you prepare to attend Northeastern Illinois University.*

*As explained in the acceptance letter, it is very important that you attend the International Student Orientation. Many topics will be discussed that will be helpful to you. You'll learn about the university and its policies and procedures. We'll talk in depth about what you need to do to maintain your international student status. A current international student will share some helpful information and you'll get to meet other international students.*

*NEIU has a lot to offer you! Our students, faculty, and staff are richly diverse in ethnicity, culture, age, and language. In fact, we have been praised by U.S. News & World Reports as being the most ethnically diverse institution in the Midwest! The university offers many student clubs and activities, including the popular International Student Club. We also have resources to help you with your academics, such as the Writing Lab and Tutoring Center.*

*If you have any questions prior to the orientation, please contact the Office or email me at the office.  
We'll see you soon!*

*Sincerely,*

*Cris Toffolo Ph.D  
Interim Director*

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# Receiving Documents for Visa

Congratulations once again for your admission to Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU). We are very excited that you will be joining us for the upcoming semester. You should all have received your admission letter including your I-20 or DS-2019. If you have not received these documents you must contact Ms. Gonzalez for your I-20 to apply for the F-1 Visa, or Mrs. Mendoza for your DS-2019 to apply for the J-1 Visa. You may not apply for a visa until you have obtained these documents.

The U.S. issues three types of student visas.

- F Students Visa: Students who are seeking an degree or language training.
- J Exchange Visa: Students who are participants of exchange program.
- M Student Visa: Students who are enrolled for non academic or vocational study. *\*NEIU does not offer this type of Visa.*

To apply for the Visa go to [travel.State.Gov](https://travel.state.gov) for more information.

## Paying the I-901

Once you have your I-20 or DS-2019 you must pay for the document fee. You will need to go to <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html> to pay for the fee. You will enter your SEVIS ID Number (starts with N00000000000) and is located on your I-20 or DS-2019.

You will enter your last name, and date of birth. Once you hit submit you will be asked to pay for the fee via credit card or debit card. Make sure to print out your receipt, as you will have to present this during your visa interview.

**Note:**

If you are a transfer student you will not need to pay for the SEVIS fee again.

If you are reinstating or changing status you will need to pay for the SEVIS fee.

## F-2 & J-2

If you are planning to come with your spouse and children please reach out to OIP and submit the necessary paperwork for your family to receive an F-2 I-20/ J-2 DS-2019 and apply for the F-2/J-2 Visa.

- Passport Copy.
- Spouse: Marriage Certificate. Child: Birth Certificate
- Updated Financials: You will need to provide additional financials to support your family living in the U.S.

# Visa Application Process

The general rule is to apply as early as possible when you have obtained your I-20 or DS-2019. Visa Processing times vary widely by country and consulate, and by whether or not a security clearance must be requested. You may **apply** for the visa earlier than 120 Days before the start date Indicated on your Form I-20 or DS-2019. However the consulate will **not issue** the visa earlier than 120 days before the start date. Also please remember that you may not enter the U.S. no earlier than 30 days prior to the start date indicated on your Form I-20 or DS-2019.

## The following steps will help you apply for the Visa.

1. You should contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate to apply for your visa. Every U.S. Embassy or Consulate works from the same set of regulations and laws, but may adapt procedures for their location.
  - A. For a list of websites of U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide and for comprehensive information about visa procedures and policies, please visit [USEmbassy.gov](http://USEmbassy.gov)
  - B. If your embassy allows it, Complete the Online Visa Application [Form DS-160](#).
  - C. You will need to upload a photo. Be aware of the [photo requirements](#).
2. Have paid your I-901 Fee & print it out.
3. Applied for the [Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form DS-160](#):
4. Schedule the interview & pay for application fee
5. Gather all required documentation for the Interview:

F-1 Visa	J-1 Visa
<input type="checkbox"/> Form <b>I-20</b> (make sure you sign on page 1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Form <b>DS-2019</b> (make sure you sign on page 1)
<input type="checkbox"/> I-901 SEVIS Fee Payment Receipt	<input type="checkbox"/> I-901 SEVIS Fee Payment Receipt
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>DS-160</b> Confirmation Page	<input type="checkbox"/> Form <b>DS-160</b> Confirmation Page
<input type="checkbox"/> Valid <b>Passport</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Valid <b>Passport</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Photo	<input type="checkbox"/> Photo
	<input type="checkbox"/> If Applicable, <b>Training/Internship Placement Plan, Form DS-7002</b> (submit only if Box 7 on Form DS-2019 is marked)
<i>ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS DURING THE INTERVIEW</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Admission Letter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ You may be asked about provide:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Transcripts, Diplomas, Degree's Certificates of the prior school, and possible Standardized Test Scores.</li></ul></li></ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Admission Letter
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial Documentation: How you will pay for education and living, and travel costs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Financial Statement Form &amp; Official Bank letters/Statements.</li><li>❖ <i>Please note that you will need to submit the originals of these financials forms during student orientation.</i></li></ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial Documentation: How you will pay for education and living, and travel costs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Financial Statement Form &amp; Official Bank letters/Statements.</li><li>❖ <i>Please note that you will need to submit the originals of these financials forms during student orientation.</i></li></ul>

# Visa Interview

Most U.S. Embassies/Consulates require that F-1/J-1 visa applicants appear for a personal interview with a consulate officer. Under U.S. law, all applicants for nonimmigrant visas, such as student visas, are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not. This is a very important part of the visa application process. The following are “10 Points to Remember When Applying for a Nonimmigrant Visa”:

## “10 Points to Remember When Applying for a Nonimmigrant Visa”

### 1. Ties to Your Home Country

You must be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the U.S. Ties to your home country are the things that bind you to your home country. Such as a job, future employment, family or other relationships, financial prospects you won or will inherit, and/or investments.

-If you applied for the U.S. Green Card lottery you will be asked if you are intending to immigrate. A simple answer would be, that you apply for the lottery since it was available but not with a specific intent to immigrate.

-If you overstayed your authorized stay in the U.S. in the past, be prepared to explain what happened clearly and concisely, and with documentations.

### 2. English

Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. It is suggested to practice English in conversation with a native speaker before the interview. Do not prepare speeches!

### 3. Speak for Yourself

Do not bring your parents or family members with you to the interview. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf. If you are a minor your parents should wait in the waiting room.

### 4. Know the Program and How It Fits Your Career Plans

You should be able to articulate the reasons you will study in a particular program in the U.S. and how it relates to your future professional career when you return home.

### 5. Be Brief

Keep your answers to the officer's questions short and to the point. For the most part, officers must make a decision based on the impressions they form during the first minute of the interview. Consequently what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success.

## “10 Points to Remember When Applying for a Nonimmigrant Visa”

### 6. Additional Documentation

Keep in mind that most interviews are 2-3 minutes long. It will be immediately clear to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Aim for quick and to the point explanations.

### 7. Not All Countries Are Equal

Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the U.S. as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their study in the U.S.

### 8. Employment

Your **main purpose** coming to the U.S. should be to **study**, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. You must be clear and articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program.

- \* F-2 Dependents are not allowed to work under their visa regulations. Be prepared to address what your spouse intends to do during their time in the U.S.
  - F-2 Spouse may not engage in full course study. They may enroll in less than a full course of study, and or avocation or recreation in nature. If spouse wants to be full time they must change their F-2 to an F-1.
  - F-2 children in K-12 are allowed to study. F-2 children in post secondary are allowed to study in less than full course study, full time study will require change from F-2 to F-1.

### 9. Dependents

If your spouse and or child will not accompany you in the U.S., be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be tricky if you are the primary source of income. If the consular officer gains the impression that your family will need you to remind money from the U.S. in order to support them, your visa application will be denied. If your family does decide to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at that the same post where you applied for your visa.

### 10. Maintain a Positive Attitude

If you are denied a student visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you to bring in order to overcome the refusal. Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. You will receive a formal denial letter from the consular office in the mail.

You can re-apply to for the visa application if you are denied. For more information on the section on [visa denials at the U.S. Department of State](#).



# Visa Results

## Visa Approvals

Once your visa is approved you will be issued an F-1 or J-1 visa in your passport. Verify that your information is accurate before you leave the consulate and request a correction immediate if you see any errors. The visa will indicate:

- Location the Visa was issued
- Date of visa issued
- Date of visa expiration
- Number of entries
- Type of Visa
- Name of the university that you are authorized to attend
- SEVIS ID #
- Visa number

The visa has nothing to do with how long you are allowed to stay in the U.S. It permits you entry to the U.S. You must enter the U.S. before the visa expiration date, and you may stay in the U.S. after the visa is expired as long as your I-20 and DS-2019 are valid.

## Visa Denial

If you were denied a visa try to find out the reason for the denial and if there are any other documents that you would improve for your chances of receiving the visa. Also inquire IF and HOW SOON you can re-apply for the visa.

If for any reason you cannot receive your visa in time for the orientation you must contact OIP so they can inform you to defer your admission to the next available term. You are able to defer once and for up to a year. If you have deferred again you will need to re-apply and admissions will use the same information you submitted, and pay the application fee. You may be required to submit new financials if the one's submitted before have been issued more than 6 months. Once OIP receives your new admission term you will get an updated I-20/DS-2019 indicating the new starting dates.

If you are not able to get the visa or inform us about the change then we will assume that you are not going to pursue the visa again, and your I-20/DS-2019 will be canceled.

## J-1 Exchange Visitor Two Year Home Country Physical Presence Requirement

J-1 exchange visitors may be subject to the two year requirement on your J-1 Visa depending on your program. The following conditions exist to the 212(e) if you:

- Government Funded Exchange Program.
- Graduate Medical Education or training
- Specialized Knowledge or Skill: Check out the [Skill list](#) if your major applies.

You will have find this information on the bottom of your Visa indicating “BEARER IS SUBJECT TO 212(E) TWO YEAR RESIDENCY RULE DOES APPLY”. If you are subject you will be required to return home for at least 2 years after your exchange visitor program. This requirement is based on the U.S. Law in Immigration and Nationality Act, Section 2129(e). The restriction will not allow you to do a change of status, adjust status, obtain another type of visa.

If you are not able to fulfill this criteria you will need to submit the Waiver of Two Year Home-Country Physical Presence Requirement. You will find out more on the [waiver](#) from the Exchange visitor visa at the U.S. Department of State.

# Class Registration

Now that you have your visa. You can start getting ready to register for classes.

First you will need to activate your *NEUport* in order to register for classes. *NEUport* is the University's portal system, that allows you to access your Northeastern Illinois University email account, view your degree evaluations, see your bill and pay for tuition., you can also look up required text pots and sign up for N-Safe.

It is important to set up your *NEUport* account as soon as possible. Please follow the direction to set up your account. You will need your NEIU Student ID. It is indicated in your admission letter, or by email. If you have not received your letter in the mail, you can also access your NEIU ID number by logging into the Application Portal. Your ID number is needed to activate your *NEUport* account successfully.

## Activating your NEUport account

1. From your computer, open Internet Explorer or other supported browsers and navigate to <http://neiuport.neiu.edu>
2. Click on the **Claim/Activate Account, Lookup ID** link.
3. From the **Password and Account Management Portal** Screen, enter your NEIU ID number in the **University ID** field and **check the box** "By selecting this checkbox you agree to receive texts messages on your mobile device."
4. Click the **Request PIN** button.
5. Next, select where you would like your **PIN to be sent** fro the options provided and click the **Send Pin** button (cellphone, Email or both).
6. You will now see a confirmation dialogue box confirming the **PIN has been sent**. Click **Close** button.
7. Next enter the **PIN number** received (either from text, email or both) in the PIN field and click the **Validate** button.
8. Finally, **create and confirm** your new password. Enter your **New Password** and then **Re-type** your password. Click **Reset Password** button. (*Please refer to the Password rules on the right of the screen to assist with creating a secure password.*)
9. You will now see the dialog box below as your password is being created.
10. Your password is no created. You will now need to **write down your username**, which an be found in the **Password Rules** box to the right. Your **username is in italics blew Password Policy...**
11. You may exit the **Password and Account Management Portal** and return to *NEUPort* to log in using your username and password.  
For assistance with activation your *NEUport* account, you may contact the **Help Desk at +1-773-442-4357** from 9am to 4:30pm Central Time, Monday through Friday.

You should seek your program advisors to help you register for the classes. Reach out to the department major if you do not know who your advisor is.

**OIP or no-one else can register you for class. Only you can register for classes. If the classes are full you will need to consult with the instructor to allow you into the class. If the class is restricted you must speak with the advisor to review your transcript to allow you to register.**

J-1 Students if you are not able to register for classes. You will have to email the department of the course, present a copy of your transcript, so they can authorize you to register for class.

Once you are registered for classes you will receive a bill for the tuition and fee costs. If you are not registered there will be no bill as the balance is based on the credits you are registered for.

You must be registered for Full Time.

Program	Full Time Status
F-1 & J-1 Language Training	+18 hours of class
F-1 Undergraduates	+12 Credit Hours
F-1 Graduates	+ 9 Credit Hours
J-1 Undergraduates	12 Credit Hours
J-1 Graduates	9 Credit Hours

Failure to enroll Full Time with out authorization will result in termination of Your I-20 or DS-2019. We will discuss this during orientation.

To understand your Bill go to NEIU [Understanding My Financial Account](#).

# Immunization

As of Fall 2018 all students who are attending the university will need to submit immunization history to the Student Health Services.

You will need to schedule an appointment with [Student Health Services for review of your immunization records](#) and Tuberculosis (TB) screening. Please bring in your “Yellow Card” this is an international certificate of vaccinations to the appointment.

An English translation of all immunization and TB records by a medical provider or health clinic must be presented to Student Health Services. Please keep a copy of your immunization records for your personal files. If written TB records are not available, you may request TB screening to be done at Student Health Services.

You must submit the information, failure to do so will place a hold on your account. The hold will not allow you to register for the following semester. The hold will be removed once it is completed.

## Complete the following steps to submit the documentation:

1. [Immunization Form](#)
  - a. Print the form out and complete part 1 & Sign part 1 of the form.
  - b. Ask you physician or nurse to complete Part II & Part III
  - c. Ask you physician or nurse to sign Part IV
2. Copy of school immunization records, physician records, clinic records, or military records may substitute Parts II, III, and IV. (Must be in English)
3. Choose the following methods to submit your documents:
  - a. Upload your documents on the NEIU student Health Portal,
  - b. Via Fax +1-773-442-5808,
  - c. Hand deliver during
    - a. orientation
    - b. or to the Student Health Services on E051.
4. You will have 10 days of the start date of semester to submit the documents.

# Health Insurance

Health insurance is mandatory for all J-1 Visa holders. You will be required to submit a copy of health insurance during orientation.

Program participants and their dependents are required to have medical insurance coverage with the following minimum benefits [22 CFR 62.14]:

- Medical benefits of **at least** \$100,000 USD per accident or illness
- Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$25,000 USD
- Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his/her country in the amount of \$50,000 USD
- A deductible not to exceed \$500 USD per accident or illness.

You will be required to have this coverage effective during the full period of your program. This means coverage will be in effect on the start date of your DS-2019. Failure to submit the information to OIP will result in termination of your DS-2019. We recommend to email it to OIP and submit a copy during orientation.

**NEIU does not mandate health insurance for F-1 students but it is STRONGLY RECOMMENDED.**

Medical visits, medical procedures, medicine, and emergency costs are extremely expensive in the U.S. even for U.S. residents and U.S. citizens. It can cost double for non U.S. residents and U.S. citizens. While you may be in good health, there will be a circumstances where you will need to see a medical provider. There are some providers who cover F-1 students at a fraction of the price than what the normal insurance coverage for U.S. resident and citizens. We will provide them during orientation.

# Housing

All students admitted to NEIU are eligible to apply for student housing, and is referred to The Nest. You can apply and view floor plans for the Nest [online](#).

Each unit at the Nest includes:

- ✓ Household appliances: Full size refrigerator, Electric Stove & Oven, Microwave, and Dishwasher.
- ✓ Furniture: Leather-Style Sofa, Coffee Table, Kitchen Table with Chairs, Full-Size Bed, or Twin Extra Long Bed, and Dressers
- ✓ Cable and Internet,
- ✓ Light, Heating and Air-Conditioning
- ✓ On-Site Laundry Facility
- ✓ \*The NEST does not provide bed linen, towels, blankets, cups, plates, utensils, etc. You will purchase your necessities separate.

If you decide to live off campus here are some helpful websites to find housing. We do not affiliate with any of these links. So please exercise good judgement when looking for apartments.

- ✓ Craigslist: <http://chicago.craigslist.org/>
  - This is an open forum for people to post advertisements for all sorts of things, including housing and furniture. Craig's List is unregulated, so exercise good judgment when working with individuals you meet on Craig's List.
- ✓ Chicago Reader: [www.chicagoreader.com](http://www.chicagoreader.com)
  - This is a free weekly newspaper that has lots of information regarding local housing, restaurants, concerts, entertainment, etc.
- ✓ American Homestay Network <https://www.homestaynetwork.com/homestay-chicago/>
  - You can stay with host family's.
- ✓ Apartment Searches: [www.apartments.com](http://www.apartments.com)

You should get to know the area around the university when conducting apartment searches. Access a map of the area by going to [google.com](http://google.com) and typing our address 5500 N. St. Louis Ave, Chicago, IL 60625. This will show you the location of the school and the surrounding areas. Look for address near the school for easier commutes.

Want to know how to get around the city using public transportation? Access the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) website at [www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com) for city bus and train schedules and maps. Living near a bus stop or train stop makes life easier!

In fact, the easiest way to find great apartments in Chicago may be to simply walk around the neighborhood you wish to live in looking for “For Rent” signs in the window of apartment buildings. You can call the contact phone number, and make an appointment to see the apartment and get more information about the place.

## Helpful Definitions in Housing:

**Landlord:** the person from whom you will rent the apartment or room. This may be an individual or a management company. Be sure to write down the name and contact information for your landlord because you will need to con-tact the landlord if there are any problems with the apartment.

**Lease:** the contract signed between you and the landlord agreeing on the amount of rent and rules for living in the apartment. Leases can be on a month-by-month basis, six-month basis, or year-long basis. Make sure you read and understand the lease before you sign it! Do not hesitate to ask questions if you do not understand something.

**Tenant:** the renter (you). As a tenant, you have certain rights to protect you from unfair treatment. For information about tenant rights, go to [www.cityofchicago.org](http://www.cityofchicago.org) and click on “Home & Property” and then “For Landlords and Tenants.”

**Security Deposit:** You will be required to pay a security deposit in addition to the first month’s rent before you move in. The security deposit is a sum of money, usually equivalent to one month’s rent. At the end of your lease, you will get the security deposit back if there is no damage to the apartment. Make sure you understand the terms under which the security deposit will NOT be returned to you, such as breaking the lease.

## Housing and Living Expenses:

Monthly rent for an apartment in Chicago varies a lot depending on where you live in the city. It is more expensive to live closer to the lake or downtown. It is cheaper to live in areas further north and west in the city. The rent in the neighborhoods near NEIU are considered pretty affordable.

### RENT:

- A studio (one room) apartment will cost at least \$550 per month.
- A one bedroom apartment will cost at least \$700 per month.
- A onebedroom apartment will cost at least \$900 per month.



## Utilities:

- Water: This is Usually included in cost of rent.
- Electricity: This is usually higher in the summer because air conditioning runs on electricity. Cost varies, but will average about \$40 per month. Contact [www.ComEd.com](http://www.ComEd.com) to set up your electricity account.
- Heat: This cost is much higher in the winter. Sometimes the cost of heat is included in the rent, in which case your rent may be slightly higher overall, but you won't have to pay for gas to heat the apartment. Ask the land-lord whether heat is included in the cost of rent. The cost to pay for your own heat varies, but the average is about \$50 per month. Contact [www.PeoplesEnergy.com](http://www.PeoplesEnergy.com) to set up your gas account.
- Phone: You may have many options when it comes to telephone service. Students tend to use cell phones instead of land-lines. Many companies will offer phone service through a package that also includes Internet access and cable television, such as Comcast, AT&T, or RCN.

## Dining

Campus Dining meal plans are available to The Nest residents. Residents must submit an application to [Campus Dining](#) via their NEIUpport account.

There is a food court in the main campus, and many restaurants available near the campus

## Free Store

We have started a donation and recycling program for international students. You are able to borrow any home/bath/desk supplies as long as you bring them back clean. If you break them, we kindly ask you to replace any of the items you borrowed. When you are done or if you have purchased any items you wish to donate, that way a future international student can use. The Free store is located at LWH 0009.

# Booking your Flight

## Airports

There are two airports in Chicago, O'Hare International Airport (ORD) and Chicago Midway International Airport (MDW). We recommend arriving at O'Hare International Airport (ORD) as it is the closest airport to campus. It is located approximately 15 kilometers from NEIU and is around a 20-30 minute car trip. If you are coming from Midway it takes about an hour to arrive to the campus.

Unlimited free Wi-Fi internet access is available throughout all terminals at O'Hare International Airport and is offered both before and after security.

## Arriving in the USA

Upon arrival in the U.S. you will need to go through U.S. Customs and Immigration and present your travel documents.

Here is what you need to know:

**OFFICIAL PAPERS:** Be sure to put your passport, your original I-20 form, and your original acceptance from NEIU IN YOUR CARRY-ON LUGGAGE. You will need to show them to immigration as soon as you get off the plane **before** you collect your luggage. Please pack a set of copies of all these documents and your passport in your regular luggage and put a e-copy on your phone.

**PASSPORT READING MACHINES: DO NOT USE THEM!!!** You must talk with an immigration officer. Going through the machines will not save you time and they can screw up your visa.

**Be prepared to answer the following questions to a customs officer:**

- Why are you coming to the U.S.?
- Where and what are you going to study?
- Do you have an acceptance letter from Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU)?
- Where are you going to be living?
- Do you have enough money to study in the U.S.?

- What is the Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) address?

**CUSTOMS DECLARATION FORM:** These will likely be named out on the plane, unless you are flying with American Airlines or United Airlines (they no longer give them out). You can also pick one up at the airport. You need to fill out this form before you get to the immigration officer. This is where you can declare food items and money. **DO NOT LIE ON THIS FORM!!**

**MONEY:** If you are bringing **more than US\$10,000** with you (carrying or shipping cash, checks, wire transfers, or any other monetary instrument, etc). **You must declare it** using the form [FinCEN Form 105](#) . Download it using that link and fill out before you leave home, or get the form at the airport. It IS legal to bring more than \$10,000 into the USA, and it will NOT be taxed, but you MUST declare it. If you don't declare it, all the money can be taken away, so please just declare it! Click [here](#) for more information

**FOOD:** It is NOT allowed to bring BEEF or PORK products, or ANY FRESH FRUIT or VEGETABLES into the USA. **ALL FOOD must be declared-** you will be able to keep all foods except those noted above and a few others that can pose a risk to the US food production system. Even if you take cookies off the airplane with you, say "YES" when answering gate question about having food with you. (Don't worry- Chicago is very international city - you will be able to find your local foods and spices, etc. So please don't pack food items.) If you don't declare food items it can be a \$300.00 fine and the food can be taken away and it can take up to 1 hour to process you - if you have a connecting flight you could miss it and the US govt, will not put on another flight.

**PACKING:** Family members will miss you, so they would often slip you a little surprise into your suitcase- favorite sweet, etc. but you are responsible for knowing everything that is in all your suitcases, so just before you leave for the airport recheck all your suitcases to make sure no little gifts were slipped in. Food items and money are the ones that can cause you a problem. See Money and Food above.

**DOGS:** The border officers use dogs to sniff for drugs but also for food. If a dog stops next to your suitcase you will be asked if you have food. If you had food and finished it, the dog might still smell it. The officer will ask you about food- be honest. Say yes.

**WHEN TO FLY:** Avoid arriving on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday, especially between the times of Noon(12pm) and 8pm as the volume of people arriving at O'Hare airport can be over 20,000 in those peak hours, which can mean a delay of 1-2 hours to get processed.

**PHONE NUMBERS:** Carry these phone numbers with you:

Claudia Gonzalez, Program Coordinator, +**1-224-707-1144**,

Cris Toffolo, Interim Director, +**1-651-301-0511**.

We will be available in case you or the immigration people need to reach us!

**PROBLEMS AT THE PORT OF ENTRY:** Report them [here](#). (This is the Traveler Redress Inquiry Program)

**You will need to notify International Programs of your arrival.**

## **Ground Transportation**

Transportation options in Chicago include taxi services, ride sharing with Uber and Lyft, and public transportation. A taxi can be around \$35-\$58 USD depending on traffic conditions. Taxi stands are available at the lower level of each terminal. Requesting a taxi ride at a Taxi Stand ensures you have a licensed driver.

An Uber to campus is about \$25-\$35 USD. Uber and Lyft are two ride-sharing services that require internet access for ride requests.

# Packing & Weather

Only pack what is necessary. You can purchase all household needs when you arrive in the U.S.

## Document Packing List

The following items should be with you at ALL times during travel. Do NOT place them in your luggage as you will collect your luggage after you have gone through inspection:

- Passport
- Visa (F-1 or J-1)
- Form I-20/DS-2019
- Admission Letter
- Copy of Class Registration
- Original Documentation of your financial statement and official bank letters/bank statements. These documents are the ones you submitted for admission but you need to bring original documents during orientation.

Clothing and Attire: Chicago experiences four distinct seasons: winter, spring, summer, and fall. Make sure to pack warm clothing that can be worn in layers for fall and winter.

## Chicago Weather:

Month	Average High Temperatures	Average Rain/Snowfall
January	-1°C	27.4 cm
April	15°C	11.6 cm
July	29°C	9.4 cm
October	17°C	8.0 cm

One of your options is the NEIU Bookstore and it is available on campus where you can purchase school supplies, textbooks, snacks, and general household items such as appliances and bedding and bath. The NEIU Bookstore is located near the Student Union and Information Center in Village Square.

We will go through some places near the campus where you can buy certain items. You can also search online for stores near your new home for your grocery, and home needs.

# Pre Arrival Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to give you a quick review of what you will need before leaving your home. It is recommended to make electronic copies of these documents for yourself and to leave a copy with a trusted family member or friend:

- Passport valid for at least 6 months from date of U.S. entry.
- VISA (F-1 or J-1).
- Travel Arrangements. Only buy your ticket once your visa is approved. You are allowed entry to the U.S. 30 days before the beginning of your Form I- 20/DS-2019.
- Housing. While studying at NEIU you can live at [The Nest Student Housing](#) (on-campus), or off-campus, or with family.
- Transportation. You will need to secure transportation from the airport to campus. Taxi, Uber, and public transportation are available in the Chicagoland area.
- Finances. Make sure to plan your finances while studying in the U.S. for your security. It is not recommended to carry large quantities of money while traveling. Check how to transfer money from your home country to the U.S.
- Activate Your NEIU Account. IF you have not done so, you will need to activate your account to access your student email (to communicate with your professors) and to register for classes.
- Class Registration. You can register for classes online via the [NEIUport](#). For Master students you will be required to speak with an advisor before registering for classes.
- Mandatory Health Requirements. If you will be studying in the U.S. for 6 months or longer NEIU will need a copy of your immunizations or the [Immunization Form](#).

# Getting to Campus



Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) has three campuses, Main Campus, El Centro, and Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies. The map below is your guide to the Main Campus which is where most classes are held and where International Programs is located.

The Nest is conveniently located near the library on main campus. International Programs is located near LOT A on the lower level of Lech Walesa Hall (LWH).

The address for main campus is the following: 5500 N. Saint Louis Ave. Chicago, IL 60625.

# Office of Student Leadership Development

Part of the college experience in the U.S. involves student life or student activities. These activities can include anything from swimming, boxing, religious organization of your choice, or even a fraternity or sorority. The Office of Student Leadership Development (SLD) oversees student organizations on campus and you participate in leadership opportunities throughout the semester. One of the activities to be on the lookout for is Alternative Spring Break.

The Office of Student Leadership Development (SLD) is located in the Angelina Pedroso Center for Diversity and Intercultural Affairs (Office B-159). You can visit them Monday-Friday from 9am-5pm\* or you can email them at [sld@neiu.edu](mailto:sld@neiu.edu). For a list of daily on campus events, visit the Collegiate Link and login with your NEIUport information: [neiu.campuslabs.com](http://neiu.campuslabs.com).

## Events and Activities

Besides on campus activities, you have access to Chicago-area events that occur throughout the year! Your university student U- Pass (pass for public transportation) is your access to City of Chicago events. With your student ID, you can request student pricing where available\*. Below are some annual events you can checkout:

Spring Semester: Chicago Chinese New Year Parade, Chicago Auto Show, Chicago Underground Film Festival, St. Patrick's Day.

Summer Semester: Fireworks at Navy Pier, Millennium Park Summer Music Series, Chicago Gay Pride Parade, Taste of Chicago, Lollapalooza, Chicago Air & Water Show.

Fall Semester: Chicago Jazz Festival, Chicago Marathon, Halloween, Chicago International Film Festival, Thanksgiving, Christkindlmarket, Zoo lights, Ice Skating at Millennium Park.



# Dealing with Culture Shock

Culture shock can happen to even the most experienced traveler or student, even those who have lived abroad for months or years. It may help you to know what defines culture shock, the accompanying symptoms, and how to manage them. There is usually a euphoric “honeymoon” phase followed by frustration and dissatisfaction with your unfamiliar surroundings, customs, cultures, and people. Just being aware of what to watch for can help you to cope with these feelings, whether experienced by yourself or other students. You may experience: homesickness, boredom, withdrawal, frustration, anxiety, depression, irritability, stereotyping of host nationals, hostility toward host nationals.

Some helpful coping skills:

- Know the country’s language and culture. Check out the Chicago tourism and news sites before you arrive. Talk to other international students who are or have been in the U.S. and talk to U.S. students too.
- Keep an open mind. Flexibility and the ability to accept diverse points of view and cultural differences will be your best protection to alleviate culture shock.
- Try to arrive in the U.S. as early as possible before you start school (up to one month prior to your I-20 start date) to give yourself time to find housing, get settled, and start adjusting to life in the U.S. Find time to explore Chicago’s museums, libraries, parks, beaches, cultural venues, etc.
- Learn to laugh (or at least smile!) at your mistakes. That’s all they are; not personal failures. Don’t let fear of embarrassment keep you from trying new things and making new friends.
- When you don’t understand something, ask! You are coming here for academic and cultural learning, and U.S. students also want to learn about you and your culture too! Asking questions and creating conversation will open the doors to make new friends.
- Don’t be embarrassed or shamed to ask for help when you really need it. Come to the Office of International Programs if you need guidance or have questions. Visit the Counseling Office to talk with helpful people if you are feeling depressed or anxious (<http://www.neiu.edu/~counoff>). More resources can be found on the next page too.