Your Helpful Handbook: Visa, Travel, and Cultural Information for New International Students

FALL 2017
Greetings! On behalf of the faculty, staff, and returning students, we welcome you to Oberlin. As you know, Oberlin combines a top-flight professional school of music with a leading undergraduate college of arts and sciences. Oberlin is a place of intense energy and creativity, where students from around the world pursue academic, artistic, and musical excellence. Oberlin College is also home to a vibrant and tightly knit international student community representing more than 50 countries and 9 percent of the student population. We look forward to seeing your how your contributions to Oberlin’s energy and creativity over the next few years attend to the mission of the college.
“Oberlin College and Conservatory educates students for lives of intellectual, musical, and artistic rigor and breadth, sustained inquiry, creativity and innovation, and leadership. Oberlin aims to prepare graduates with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives essential to confront complex issues and to create change and value in the world.

“Oberlin is committed to educational access and opportunity. It seeks to offer a diverse and inclusive residential learning environment encouraging a free and respectful exchange of ideas and shares an enduring commitment to a sustainable and just society.”

Mission statement, adopted by the General Faculty, February 24, 2016

WE OFFER THIS HANDBOOK TO:

• introduce you to the two main offices dedicated to supporting our community of international students at Oberlin: the Office of International Student Services and the International Student Resource Center;

• guide you through the process of applying for an F-1 visa and planning your trip to Oberlin; and

• provide you with guidelines about culture and everyday life in Oberlin and the United States.
THE OFFICES

THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES:
• helps plan the orientation program for new international students;
• issues and reviews F-1 visa-related documents for international students; and
• advises international students on matters related to their U.S. visa status, regulations regarding employment in the U.S., social security numbers, and taxation.

We are open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. eastern time. We encourage you to check our website regularly for more information and updates. We look forward to welcoming you to campus and helping you adjust to life in Oberlin and in the United States.

E-mail: international.students@oberlin.edu
Phone: 440-775-8540 (for international calls to the U.S., dial 001 first)
FAX: 440-775-6369 (for international calls to the U.S., dial 001 first)
Web: www.oberlin.edu/international

THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER:
• embraces a holistic approach and empowers students to actively focus on the ongoing processes of self-exploration and reflection;
• provides students with direct guidance in order to help them reach their long-term personal and professional aspirations;
• offers developmental advising, in one-on-one advising appointments and educational programs, on a wide variety of subjects, including academic research opportunities, curricular and co-curricular initiatives, career readiness workshops, and more; and
• promotes community building with outreach programs to address issues related to cultural adjustment, internationalization, and the impact of the current U.S. political and social climate. The center also helps international students form strong and lasting bonds with each other and the greater Oberlin community.

We are open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. eastern time. We look forward to working closely with you, along with other resources on campus, to ensure you have a rewarding experience at Oberlin.

E-mail: dhamdan@oberlin.edu
Phone: 440-775-8462 (for international calls to the U.S., dial 001 first)
FAX: 440-775-6848 (for international calls to the U.S., dial 001 first)
Web: www.oberlin.edu/isrc
**OBTAINING A VISA**

This section includes a list of keywords and acronyms that pertain to your status as a non-immigrant visitor to the United States. It also includes a description of the necessary steps to apply for a visa to study at Oberlin.

**TERMINOLOGY**

**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS):** The role of DHS is to secure the United States against terrorism and other potential threats.

**DURATION OF STATUS:** The period of time for which F-1 visa holders are admitted to the United States. The end of status is the program end date on the Form I-20, or the date the student stops maintaining status—whichever comes first.

**F-1 VISA:** Nonimmigrants apply for an F-1 visa in order to enter the United States to attend a college or university. An F-1 student must have a current visa stamp in their passport in order to enter the United States.

**FORM I-20:** Form I-20 is a paper record of a student’s information in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Form I-20, “Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status—for Academic and Language Students,” is required to apply for an F-1 visa.

**FORM I-94:** The electronic record of a non-immigrant’s arrival and departure, which is maintained by DHS.

**PORT OF ENTRY (POE):** The airport, land border crossing, or port through which entry is made into the United States.

**PRINCIPAL DESIGNATED SCHOOL OFFICIAL (PDSO) AND DESIGNATED SCHOOL OFFICIAL (DSO):** The PDSO and DSO are on-campus school representatives who provide advice on F-1 visa regulations and maintain student records in SEVIS. Dean Randal Doane is the PDSO at Oberlin. Deans Bo Arbogast and Amy Moniot are the DSOs.

**STUDENT AND EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM (SEVP):** SEVP is a part of the National Security Investigations Division. On behalf of the DHS, SEVP manages schools, nonimmigrant students in F and M visa classifications, and their dependents.

**STUDENT AND EXCHANGE VISITOR INFORMATION SYSTEM (SEVIS):** The online database that DHS uses to maintain information on SEVP-certified schools in the United States and the F-1 and M-1 students who attend those schools.

**U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES (USCIS):** The component of DHS that oversees lawful immigration and the employment of non-citizens in the United States.

U.S. EMBASSIES, CONSULATES AND DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS: Applicants for visas to enter the United States must do so according to the rules of the embassy or consulate at which they apply.

APPLYING FOR AN F-1 VISA

Begin your application by reviewing the information available at the following websites:

- [http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/study-exchange/student.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/study-exchange/student.html)
- [http://www.usembassy.gov/](http://www.usembassy.gov/)

THE SEVIS FEE REQUIREMENT: All individuals receiving an initial Form I-20 are required to pay the SEVIS fee before they apply for the F-1 visa. The fee must be paid before the date of the visa interview and the fee payment must be verified before the F-1 visa can be issued. You should allow no fewer than three business days between the fee payment and your visa interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate. If you are presently in F-1 status at another school, you do not have to pay the SEVIS fee again.

Important Exemption: If you are a citizen of a country exempt from the requirement to have a visa to enter the United States (e.g., Canada), you still have to pay the SEVIS fee and provide proof of that payment at the U.S. POE.

You cannot pay the SEVIS fee at a U.S. embassy, consulate, or port of entry. The fee must be paid with Form I-901, which must be completed in English with the exact personal information as noted on your Oberlin-issued I-20. When you cross the border to study, be prepared to share the following documents with a POE officer:

- proof of identity and citizenship (i.e., your Canadian passport);
- the original I-20 certificate (for all F-1 students);
- confirmation of your payment to SEVIS;
- evidence that you can pay your bills at Oberlin College; and
- proof of your enduring ties to Canada.

STEPS MAY VARY: There are several steps to apply for a visa. The order of these steps varies between embassies and consulates. Please consult the instructions available on the embassy or consulate website where you intend to apply.
YOUR CURRENT VISA: If you are currently residing in the United States on a visa other than an F-1, you may be eligible to study full-time with your current visa, or you may need to apply for a change of status before enrolling at Oberlin. If you are on a visa other than an F-1, please contact us at international.students@oberlin.edu.

- Please schedule your renewal interview, as needed, as early as possible.

NONIMMIGRANT VISA APPLICATION, FORM DS-160: Prepare a digital photo to submit with the online application. See photo specifications at travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/general/photos.html. Complete the online visa application, print the application form confirmation page, and bring that page to your interview.

SCHEDULE AN INTERVIEW: You must schedule an appointment for your visa interview, as a rule, at the U.S. embassy or consulate in the country where you live. You may schedule your interview at any U.S. embassy or consulate, but be aware that it may be difficult to qualify for a visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate outside your place of permanent residence.

- Wait times for interview appointments vary by location, season, and visa category. Review the interview wait time for your location.
- F-1 student visas can be issued up to 120 days in advance of your course of study start date.
- We cannot emphasize this point strongly enough: apply for your visa as early as possible.
- You are permitted to enter the United States in F-1 or M-1 status up to 30 days before the start date noted on your I-20.

PREPARE FOR YOUR INTERVIEW: Pay the non-refundable visa application fee, if you are required to pay it before your interview. When your visa is approved, you may also need to pay a visa issuance reciprocity fee, if applicable to your nationality. To learn more about fee payment, review the instructions available on the website of the embassy or consulate where you will apply.
REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION: Gather and prepare the following documents before your visa interview:

- **Passport:** Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond your period of stay in the United States (unless exempt by country-specific agreements). If more than one person is included in your passport, each person who needs a visa must submit a separate application.

- **Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form DS-160:** The confirmation page.

- **Application Fee Payment Receipt:** Confirm whether you are required to submit payment before your interview.

- **Photo:** Upload your photo when you submit Form DS-160. If the photo upload fails, bring a printed photo in the format noted in the photograph requirements (see link above).

- **Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status:** Once we enter your information in SEVIS, we send you a Form I-20. Sign the I-20 upon its arrival. You and, as applicable, your spouse and children under the age of 18, if they intend to reside with you in the United States, must be registered in SEVIS. Each of you need an individual Form I-20.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION: Review the instructions for how to apply for a visa on the website of the embassy or consulate where you will apply. Additional documents may be requested to establish that you qualify for an F-1 visa. For example, you may be asked to provide evidence of:

- your academic preparation;
- your intent to depart the United States upon completion of the course of study; and
- your ability to pay all educational, living, and travel costs.

ATTEND YOUR VISA INTERVIEW: During your visa interview, a consular officer will determine whether you qualify for a visa and, if so, which visa category is appropriate based on the purpose of your travel. Your application also includes digital, ink-free scans of your fingerprints. The timing of these scans varies by location.

After your visa interview, the consular officer will notify you if further processing is necessary for your application. When the visa is approved, you may be required to pay a visa issuance fee. You are also to be informed how your passport with visa is to be returned to you. Review the visa processing time to learn how soon your passport may be ready for pick-up or courier delivery.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Wait until you have your visa before buying non-refundable tickets for travel.

- A visa remains valid until its expiration date—or its revoking or cancellation. Therefore, a valid U.S. visa in an expired passport is still valid.
- If your passport expires, leave your U.S. visa in your expired passport. At the POE, present your valid visa in your expired passport and a new valid passport for admission.

TRAVEL TO A U.S. POE: A visa allows a foreign citizen living abroad to travel to a U.S. POE and request permission to enter the United States. Please be aware that a visa does not guarantee you entry into the United States. CBP officials have authority under the DHS to permit or deny visitors admission to the United States.

In advance of your travel, please review www.cpb.gov/travel/international-visitors for important information about admissions/entry requirements, including information about bringing food, agricultural products, or other restricted items into the United States.

CASE-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS: Contact the U.S. embassy or consulate handling your visa application via www.usembassy.gov for more information.
PRIOR TO TRAVEL

FORMS AND INFORMATION

NEW STUDENTS WEBPAGE
Visit new.oberlin.edu/new-students. Visit it again soon. This page provides answers to many of the questions that may arise as you prepare for life as an Oberlin student. If you have trouble accessing your oberlin.edu e-mail or the college website, try using a virtual protocol network (VPN). For information on how to use the Oberlin VPN, see citwiki.oberlin.edu/index.php/For_International_Students_Unable_to_Open_OCMail.

NEW STUDENT FORMS
Complete the forms that are required of all new students. These forms are available in the same portal where you found your admissions decision. Look, too, for e-mail from intlistu@oberlin.edu regarding forms and photocopies that you need to bring with you to Oberlin. Complete all items by the deadlines.

HEALTH FORMS
Pay particular attention to completing these forms. It is your responsibility to make sure that the forms are correct, filled out completely, and readable. It is usually much more expensive to get medical tests and vaccinations done in the U.S. than in your home country. If you have a specific medical condition, bring copies of relevant medical records and documents with you.

EYE AND DENTAL EXAMS
Visit your eye doctor and your dentist before you leave your home country. These types of exams and recommended procedures are not covered by the student health insurance and can be very expensive in the United States.

PACKING

WEATHER
You will experience all four seasons in Oberlin, and each has its beauty and charms. During the school year, you are more likely to need heavier, warmer clothes than lighter, summer-type clothes. In fall and spring, temperatures vary. Winters usually include snow and icy winds. Summers are typically warm and pleasant. Bring clothes that you can wear in layers. For the winter, you will need a warm coat, waterproof boots, a scarf, a hat, and gloves. Clothing and bedding prices in the United States are reasonable, so you may want to plan to purchase those items upon your arrival. You may also want to bring along some national or traditional attire to wear for special occasions, or any time you feel like it!
THE U.S. ELECTRICAL SYSTEM
The electrical system in the United States uses 110V, 60Hz (cycles). If you plan to bring appliances from home, you may need a transformer and plug adapter that can handle the wattage of the particular appliance—or, better yet, we advise you to purchase in the United States any small appliances you may need. They are affordable and more practical than using a transformer, especially in the cases of hair dryers and curling irons.

SENDING PACKAGES TO YOUR ON-CAMPUS MAILING ADDRESS
Every student is assigned an Oberlin College mail room (OCMR) number. These numbers are available in PRESTO after July 1, 2017. The address format for mailing items to your mailbox on campus is:

Your Name (use your full name)
OCMR # _______ (check PRESTO to find your number)
135 West Lorain Street
Oberlin, Ohio 44074-1081
U.S.A.

Please do not send packages in June or July. Shipments of student belongings will be accepted in the mailroom beginning August 1, 2017.

YOUR INITIAL PHONE PLAN
H2O Phone Plan (no affiliation with Oberlin College): H2O offers temporary, flexible phone plans that allow you to use your current phone in the United States. These plans include pay-as-you-go services and options such as automatic recharging and international calling and texting. You can purchase a plan and activate it online, and new SIM cards (and other materials) will be mailed to your overseas address. Then, once you settle into your new life in Oberlin, you can select a different U.S.-based service provider, or stick with H2O. For more details and prices, see www.h2owirelessnow.com/mainControl.php?page=index.

YOUR INITIAL EXPENSES
You will have some expenses as you get settled in Oberlin. We recommend that you carry U.S. currency in traveler’s checks (mostly) and some cash. Depending on your needs, U.S. $200-300 should cover early miscellaneous expenses. Expect to spend another U.S. $300-500 on textbooks and school supplies. It may take you a few days to open a bank account, so we advise you to carry traveler’s checks (rather than cash), which can be easily cashed at a local bank in Oberlin. Bank checks drawn in U.S. dollars from your home country may take several weeks to clear. (Bank checks drawn in a foreign currency are not recommended.) You will be able to use credit cards—Visa and MasterCard, first and foremost, and American Express—from your home country at nearly all the businesses in Oberlin.
TRAVEL AND ARRIVAL

DATES

We invite you to arrive in Oberlin on Saturday, August 19, 2017. This year’s pre-orientation program begins on Sunday, August 20, 2017, and continues through the morning of Tuesday, August 22, 2017. Orientation for all new students begins on Tuesday, August 22, 2017. Please visit the new students web page for information that’s helpful for all new students.

The pre-orientation program provides you with an opportunity settle into your residence and meet new and returning international students. It’s also your best opportunity to learn about visa and employment regulations, cultural and academic adjustment issues, housing and dining, financial aid, and everyday life in Oberlin and the United States.

Residence halls open for new international students on Saturday, August 19, 2017. Please do not arrive on campus prior to August 19. The residence halls are not able to accommodate you before that date.

LOGISTICS

TRANSPORTATION ARRANGED BY THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER

Dana Hamdan, assistant dean for international students in the Office of the Dean of Students, is the primary organizer of the pre-orientation program. Her office will arrange transportation for you from Cleveland Hopkins International Airport (CLE) if you are arriving anytime on August 19, 2017, or before 8 a.m. on August 20, 2017, to participate in the pre-orientation. Look for an e-mail by mid-July from Dean Hamdan regarding your luggage volume and travel itinerary.

OTHER TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Hopkins Transportation Services: This service does not have a fixed schedule. Call at least 48 hours in advance or make a reservation online (1-800-543-9912, www.gohopkins.com).

Taxi: Taxi rates vary from US $40-60 for a one-way trip from the airport to Oberlin. Below are some local taxi companies and their phone numbers.

- A 2 Point B Transportation 440-775-7222
- Lorain County Cab Company 440-322-6555
- ACE Taxi 216-361-4700
Train: Amtrak is the primary rail service in the United States (1-800-USA-RAIL, www.amtrak.com). The nearest Amtrak station is at 410 E. River Road in Elyria. This station is a 30-minute drive from Oberlin. If you plan to arrive by train, be certain to make arrangements in advance to have a car service or taxi take you from the station to Oberlin.

Buses: Greyhound is the primary bus service in the United States (1-800-231-2222, www.greyhound.com). The nearest Greyhound bus station is located at 216 3rd Street, in Elyria (440-322-0000). The Cleveland Greyhound bus station is located at 1465 Chester Avenue, in Cleveland (216-781-0520). This station is a 40-minute drive from Oberlin. If you plan to arrive by bus, be certain to make arrangements in advance to have a car service or taxi take you from the station to Oberlin.

For more information, see new.oberlin.edu/visitor/transportation.dot.

CHECKING IN
If you arrive between 9:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., check in and pick up your room key at the early arrival desk in Stevenson Hall (Griswold entrance), at 155 N. Professor Street, Oberlin. If you arrive outside these hours, check in at the Office of Safety and Security, at 159 W. Lorain Street, Oberlin. A Safety and Security staff member will let you into your room for the night. Proceed to the early arrival desk the next day to check in and receive your room key.

GUESTS ACCOMPANYING YOU FOR ORIENTATION
Many new students travel to Oberlin for the first time with a family member or a friend. Family and friends cannot be accommodated in the residence halls. If your guests need a hotel, make a reservation as soon as possible; space is quite limited during the orientation period. A list of nearby hotels is available at new.oberlin.edu/new-students. Please note that most hotels are outside the town of Oberlin, and your guests will need to rent a car to travel to and from the hotel. When you RSVP, please include your family and friends if you would like them to join us for the welcome brunch during the international student pre-orientation.
SETTLING IN

PRE-ORIENTATION PROGRAM

The International Student Pre-Orientation Program provides you with an opportunity to settle in, meet other new international students and the international peer mentors, and learn about visa and employment regulations, cultural and academic adjustment, housing and dining, financial aid, and other key topics related to living in Oberlin and the United States.

JET LAG

One of the first adjustments to face after your arrival in the United States is jet lag. Jet lag is the physical shock of having to adjust to a new time zone. It is caused by the long airplane flight from your homeland, and its severity is related to the distance and the direction you traveled. After two to three days (maybe a week) of disorientation and sleepiness, you will start to function normally.

CULTURE SHOCK

You may experience culture shock upon your arrival in the United States. The term “culture shock” refers to the feeling of confusion that often occurs when a person leaves a familiar place and moves to an unfamiliar one. Peter Adler defines culture shock as “the very heart of the cross-cultural learning experience.” The culture shock process forces you to reflect upon yourself and your own culture. The net result is a new understanding of your own values, beliefs, and behaviors.

STAGES OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

The following is a description of the four stages of cultural adjustment identified by Gregory Trifonovitch.

Initial Euphoria
- High expectations
- Everything is intriguing and exciting
- Cultural similarities stand out
- Differences from your own cultural are welcome

Irritability and Hostility
- Differences between home culture and new culture seem troublesome
- Small problems become major dilemmas
- Feelings of confusion, self-doubt, and disorientation
- Homesickness

Gradual Adjustment
- Better able to interpret the culture
• Feeling more comfortable with similarities and differences
• Able to act more confidently and feel more like your normal self
• Interact more naturally in the new culture

Adaptation or Biculturalism
• Able to enjoy new culture
• Embrace cultural difference in new culture
• Appreciate different set of values
• Comfortably establish strong new relationships in new culture

STAGES OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT
When you are feeling overwhelmed, consider some of these coping strategies:

Adjust Your Expectations. Anticipate stress so you can cope with culture shock faster; the goal is not to avoid culture shock, but to reduce its severity.

Check Your Attitude. Remind yourself to be open-minded, positive, inquisitive, and ready to embrace novelty. Observe your new surroundings, keep your eyes open, make note of unfamiliar cues, both verbal and nonverbal. Suspend your judgment. Ask questions. Give yourself time to get oriented.

Take Care of Your Physical and Emotional Well-being. Eat well, sleep well, and establish a daily routine that you can look forward to (exercise, reading, drinking tea, practicing your instrument, etc.).

Participate. Reach out to people in your new environment. Find ways to communicate with them. Invite people to go for coffee or take a walk. You can also take pictures or make a video to share with people back home. Seek out fellow students with similar interests.

Reflect. Assess your experiences and ask yourself how you have changed. Use a journal to express and synthesize your thoughts and feelings. The more you are aware of your ups and downs, the more likely you are to expand your personal growth.

Make Discoveries. One of the most exhilarating experiences is to understand how moving between cultures can shape us. Try to see (through self-reflection) how the new culture has changed your identity in matters such as tastes, behavior, self-perception, and your view of the world.

Draw From Sources of Support. Keep in touch with other people who may share the same or similar culture with you. Get help from resources on campus if you’re feeling homesick or sad. Keep photos of your loved ones from home and share memories and stories with other people.

While intercultural transitions can be very painful, they also offer tremendous potential for personal growth. Be realistic in terms of expectations. Use these coping strategies, ask for help, and enjoy to the fullest your adventures in the new culture!
FRIENDSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES

Most Americans are quite friendly and appear to be very open when you meet them. You may hear Americans refer to acquaintances, such as persons who happen to sit together in class, as “friends.” There are, however, degrees of friendship.

In the United States, people often say, “Hi! How are you?” or “How are you doing?” and then do not wait for a response. This is a polite phrase and not really a question. You can respond by saying, “Fine, thanks.” Or you may hear an American say, “Drop by anytime,” or “Let’s get together soon.” These are friendly expressions, but they may not be meant literally. It is polite to call someone on the telephone before you visit. Even without an invitation, it is acceptable to call a new acquaintance to see if he or she would like to go to a campus activity with you. You will have to make an effort to meet people so that friendships can develop.

AMERICAN CUSTOMS AND VALUES

Adapted from a resource developed by the University of Pennsylvania’s Office of International Student Services.

Individualism: Most Americans have been trained from an early age to view themselves as separate human beings who have their own opinions and are responsible for their own actions. They do not view themselves as members of a close-knit, tightly interdependent family, religious group, tribe, nation, or other collectivity. The free, self-reliant individual is viewed as the ideal.

Privacy: Americans assume that people “need time to themselves” or “some time alone” to think about things. Americans give the impression that they are “open”; yet in most Americans’ minds, there are certain boundaries people aren’t supposed to cross. It is difficult to determine which boundaries exist and their parameters, but it will become obvious if you cross them.

Tolerance: Tolerance is a value highly treasured and proclaimed in a diverse community like Oberlin College. Diversity is represented by a variety of student organizations and is celebrated on a number of occasions throughout the year: lectures, readings, talks, performances, language tables, and other events. If you have any concerns about discrimination, please speak to Dean Hamdan in Wilder Hall 105.

Equality: The ideal is that “all men are created equal.” The term “men” should not be taken literally in this context, because women are considered to be as equal as men. Status is acknowledged in subtle ways. International students often use more obvious displays of respect, including bowing, averting eyes, and using honorific titles. Americans are respectful of people and aware of status differences; they just display it in a different manner. An underlying assumption of this ideal is that no matter what a person’s status in life, anyone has the potential to achieve great success. Everyone deserves respectful treatment.
**Informality:** Notions of equality lead Americans to be informal in their general behavior and their relationships with other people. For example, introductions are usually made using first names in a casual manner. A typical greeting that you will hear often is “Hi! How are you doing?” When this is said to you, it does not necessarily mean that a person wants to initiate a conversation. Usually, this is said as people are passing one another and not much attention is paid to the response.

**Goodness of Humanity:** Americans generally feel that people are inherently good and can always better themselves.

**Time:** Time is seen as a resource, like water or coal, which can be used poorly or wisely. Americans admire a person who has a written list of things to do and a schedule for doing them. The ideal person is punctual: he or she arrives at the scheduled time for a meeting or event and is considerate of other people’s time. Time should be saved and used wisely.
PEER AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORGANIZATION

As an international student, you will automatically become a member of the International Student Organization (ISO). Its purpose is to:

• provide a support system for students of international status and to help them adjust to cultural differences inherent in living in the United States;

• enrich the cultural activities of Oberlin College through various types of events that inform Oberlin students, faculty, staff, and members of the community about the variety of cultures and countries represented by Oberlin’s international students; and

• provide a resource for international students who seek advice or assistance in academic or social affairs, and to make sure that they are directed to the correct person, office, or organization as needed.

ISO acknowledges the values and principles of Oberlin College as they are expressed in the preamble of the Constitution of the Association of Students of Oberlin College; the Oberlin College Student Regulations, Policies, and Procedures Handbook; and the Oberlin Statement of Goals and Principles in the Preface to the Oberlin College Bulletin.

INTERNATIONAL PEER MENTOR PROGRAM

The peer mentor program for international students offers international students the opportunity to gain leadership and cross-cultural communication skills. Peer mentors guide new international students though their first year at Oberlin and serve as an important resource as they build connections to the campus and the community.

PROGRAM GOALS

• Facilitate the academic and cultural transition of new international students to Oberlin College;

• encourage new international students to become involved in student organizations and other community and campus events;

• provide current Oberlin students with opportunities for leadership and cross-cultural communication; and

• generate friendships and open communication between new international students and upperclassmen at Oberlin College.
MENTORS
Oberlin students who have been studying at Oberlin for at least one year may apply to become mentors. The role of the mentor is to welcome new international students to the Oberlin College family, share information on campus resources, and serve as a general sounding board and role model. Mentors are assigned a group of approximately 8–10 international student mentees from the incoming class. Each mentor-mentee group defines its own relationship and level of interaction.

MENTEES
New international students will be assigned a mentor prior to their arrival. Mentees are encouraged to respond to their mentor’s e-mails and to attend the meetings arranged by their mentors. This relationship is voluntary. Mentees may let their mentor know at any time if they no longer wish to participate in the program.

OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LIFE
The Office of Religious and Spiritual Life supports students in the practice of their faiths at Oberlin. Its website at www.oberlin.edu/orsl contains information about religious activities and student groups active at Oberlin.
DAILY DETAILS

COMMUNICATION

E-MAIL
Check your oberlin.edu email frequently. You are responsible for the content of all communication that the college sends to your oberlin.edu email account. Make sure to use your Oberlin account when corresponding with college faculty and staff.

RESIDENCE HALL PHONES
Residence halls are equipped with local telephone service. Students may bring their own phone or may borrow one from the telephone office in purchasing and auxiliary services.

CELL PHONES
Buying a Cell Phone: Most cell phone providers offer online ordering and some department stores also sell cell phones. A social security number is required in order to sign a phone contract, so most international students purchase pre-paid or no-contract phones until they have obtained a social security number.

- **Walmart**: 46440 U.S. Route 20, which is 1.5 miles south of town, but the road is not pedestrian-friendly (440-774-6720). Sells a variety of pre-paid, contract-based, and no contract phones.
- **Wireless Partners**: 14910 State Route 58, in the same complex as Walmart (440-775-1200). Sells Verizon phones and accessories.

Cell Phone Service Providers: The most popular cell phone providers in the area are listed below, along with student impressions of how the phone service works on campus. These impressions of campus cell reception are not a recommendation or endorsement by Oberlin College.

- **AT&T**: Works in most outside campus locations, but only in certain dormitories ([www.att.com](http://www.att.com), 440-324-7200).
- **Sprint**: Works in most dormitories on campus. Does not always receive a strong connection ([www.sprint.com](http://www.sprint.com), 440-324-1122).
- **T-Mobile**: Works in most dormitories with some exceptions ([www.t-mobile.com](http://www.t-mobile.com), 440-324-1040).
- **Verizon Wireless**: Works in most dormitories except for certain basements/buildings ([www.verizonwireless.com](http://www.verizonwireless.com), 440-324-7800).
INTERNET AND INSTANT MESSAGING FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

If you and the person you are communicating with both have an internet connection, speakers, and a microphone, then Skype or an equivalent offers a cost-effective means of communication. With Skype, both parties can talk for free over their internet connections. You can also call landlines using Skype by setting up an account and pre-paying for phone time. For more information, see www.skype.com. Messaging apps such as Viber can be used to communicate via instant messaging.

FAXING FROM CAMPUS

The mailroom in the basement of Wilder Hall (a.k.a. the Student Union) has a fax machine for general student use. The fax number there is 440-775-8601. Go to the mailroom directly for information on faxing times and prices.

COMPUTERS

THE IRVIN E. HOUCK CENTER FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (CIT)

Oberlin College provides a wide range of computing resources to support the educational mission and administration of the college. The CIT facilities are an essential resource for academic, administrative, and research processes for members of the college community. All members of the college community are encouraged to use these resources, provided they respect the rights of others, abide by the rules and regulations of the college, and assume shared responsibility for safeguarding the college’s computing environment. Proper and fair use is essential if all are to derive maximum benefit from them. Users found in violation may be subject to penalties, including temporary or permanent denial of access to CIT resources and services. Violators may also be subject to action by campus, civil or criminal judicial systems. Please visit the CIT website at www.oberlin.edu/cit for more information on CIT services, policies, and available computing facilities.

CONNECTING TO THE NETWORK

Instructions for setting up your accounts and connecting your computer to the network can be found at new.oberlin.edu/office/cit/newobie/.

THE CIT HELP DESK

The help desk can answer all computer-related questions, including inquiries about software and hardware repairs. When contacting CIT, make sure to provide your name, dorm, and room number, type of computer, and question or problem that you are having. CIT resources and services are available at www.oberlin.edu/cit.

To get help with your computer, contact the CIT Help Desk:

- via telephone. Call 440-775-8197 during our operating hours to speak to a consultant or leave a voice-mail and someone will return your call as soon as possible.
• **via e-mail.** Send an e-mail to cit@oberlin.edu and a consultant will return your inquiry as soon as possible.

• **in person.** The help desk is located on the first floor of Mudd Center, within the academic commons.

**FINANCIAL MATTERS**

**SETTING UP A BANK ACCOUNT**
Oberlin has many local banks, and they all welcome student accounts. Most have automatic teller machines (ATMs) on campus for your convenience. Representatives from local banks are on campus during orientation to answer your questions and help you open an account.

**TRAVELER’S CHECKS**
If you decide to carry your money in the form of traveler’s checks, we highly recommend that you purchase U.S. checks because: foreign currency exchange rates can be unfavorable, very few establishments in the U.S. accept foreign traveler’s checks, and most of the local banks in the Oberlin area will not accept foreign traveler’s checks.

**PERSONAL CHECKS OR CASH**
Personal checks or cash in a foreign currency must be sent away for collection. There is a fee for converting foreign checks or currency into U.S. currency. If possible, ask the bank in your home country to make a check payable to you in dollars drawn from a U.S. bank.

**MONEY SENT FROM HOME**
Once you open a bank account, you can have money sent directly to your account from abroad. The length of time it takes for money to reach the Oberlin bank varies widely—from three days to several weeks. The time varies depending on the country and city from which the money is sent. Money can be sent by a bank draft to you, or by electronic transfer. Your bank can provide you with more specific details.

**SALES TAX AND TIPPING**

**Sales Tax:** Sales tax varies by county in Ohio and can run from 5% to 8% of the price. Sales tax applies to all items with the exception of food from grocery stores. (Restaurant food is taxed.)

**Tipping:** Tipping is customary at restaurants and bars. One reason for tipping is to compensate service employees who are paid only a small wage for their work. It is also a means of showing gratitude for good or excellent service. Tips at restaurants and bars usually range from 15% to 20% of the bill. A 15% tip typically indicates average service; 20% means better than average. It may be hard to know whom to tip and what is considered a proper tip. If you are having difficulties, ask a friend for advice. In the
United States, you also tip taxi drivers, porters, doormen, coat-check people, barbers, hairdressers, delivery people, and parking lot attendants. People you do not tip include customs officials or other government employees such as policemen or firemen, mailmen, airline personnel, room clerks or people at hotel desks, bus drivers, store clerks, gas station attendants, theater ushers, and receptionists.

PAYING OBERLIN COLLEGE BILLS
Payments can be made in the form of cash, check, or wire transfer. All payments must be in U.S. funds and draw on a U.S. bank located in the United States. Payments can be mailed to Oberlin College, 52 West Lorain Street, Room 122, Oberlin, OH 44074. Oberlin has partnered with peerTransfer to streamline the tuition payment process for our international students. Go to www.peertransfer.com/school/oberlin/ to begin the payment process. Students may also use the standard wire transfer process. Please contact the Office of Student Accounts at student.accounts@oberlin.edu with questions about your student bill.

DRIVING AND BIKING

DRIVING IN THE UNITED STATES
Getting an Ohio Driver’s License: check the latest information for non-U.S. citizens at www.bmv.ohio.gov.

DRIVING LESSONS
If you have never driven a car, you are required to take driving lessons with a licensed driver 21 years of age or older. The driver can be a relative, a friend, or a professional driving instructor. Consult online directories to locate driving schools in the Oberlin area.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OHIO DRIVING LAWS
- All drivers must have car insurance. If you rent a car, insurance is provided. However, if you drive a friend’s car, you must have some form of insurance.
- If you own a car in Ohio, it must be registered with the state every year. Also, every other year its emissions must be checked at an approved state facility.
- All passengers in the car must wear a safety belt. Serious fines are imposed per infraction.
- Driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs (DUI) is considered a serious offense. Significant fines and penalties, including license suspension, apply to violations of this law.
- Do not have open containers of alcohol in the car. This is considered as dangerous as driving under the influence.
• Driving without a license is a very serious offense with significant fines and penalties resulting.
• Driving in excess of the speed limit can result in a ticket and significant fines.

BIKING IN OBERLIN
A popular alternative to driving in Oberlin is biking. The majority of students ride their bikes for pleasure, to get around campus, and to do errands. Due to the popularity of bikes in Oberlin, many older models are bought and sold across generations of Oberlin students and are available for purchase at reasonable prices. If you decide to purchase a bike, make sure to also purchase a bike lock so that you can secure it adequately. Due to the large number of bike riders in Oberlin, there are certain traffic regulations that exist to ensure your safety and the safety of others. You may receive a ticket from the police or campus security officers if your bike is unregistered, improperly equipped with the required lights and reflectors, if you ride in an unsafe manner, or if you ride on downtown sidewalks. Make sure to read the appropriate sections of the Student Policies (online at new.oberlin.edu/students/policies) that describe the bicycle regulations.

THE OBERLIN BIKE CO-OP
The bike co-op is a cooperatively run bicycle repair, rental, and education center that is located in the basement of Keep Cottage, 154 North Main Street in Oberlin. The door is in the back of the building, facing the parking lot. The bike co-op rents bikes for a reasonable fee on a semester or summer basis. Anyone can enlist to work in the bike co-op in order to earn a bicycle. Each participant helps out around the shop during shifts and then builds a bicycle. Contact the co-op by phone at 440-775-5351 or by e-mail at bikecoop@oberlin.edu.
HEALTH

HEALTH INSURANCE
International students are required to purchase the Oberlin student health insurance provided by Academic Health Plans (AHP) each year, and are automatically billed for that coverage on the fall term bill. For more information, see https://oberlin.myahpcare.com/. You can also read more about insurance coverage on the insurance page of the Student Health Services website: new.oberlin.edu/office/student-health-services/insurance.dot.

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES
The Office of Student Health Services provides a full range of primary care services for Oberlin students, including initial diagnostics for illnesses and injuries, and immediate follow-up assessment and treatment for most short-term illnesses. Students are encouraged to use “Student Health” as their first point of contact and as an ongoing campus health care resource. Most services at student health are provided at no charge to students. A 24-hour, seven-day-a-week telephone HealthChoice Nurse Access Service and Medical Information Line is also available as an after-hour and weekend resource. Oberlin Student Health Services is located one block away from campus, at 247 West Lorain Street. The clinical staff consists of fully licensed and credentialed medical, health education, and support staff. For more information, see www.oberlin.edu/health.

PHONE NUMBERS
- Health services appointments: 440-775-8180.
- 24-Hour nurse line: 1-877-924-7758.

HOURS OF OPERATION
- By appointment: 8:30 a.m.–1 p.m. and 2–4:30 p.m.
- Walk-in hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday from 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m., and Wednesday from 8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. First come, first served. Registration taken up to 12:30 p.m.

COUNSELING CENTER
The primary purpose of the Counseling Center at Oberlin College is to provide psychological support to students as they pursue their academic and personal goals, and to enhance the quality of their Oberlin experience. Counseling is an educational process in which you can gain new perspectives of yourself and others, and acquire skills that enable you to function more effectively. For more information, see www.oberlin.edu/counsel.
ACADEMICS

With the privilege of pursuing an Oberlin education comes the responsibility of supporting both the expectations and the spirit of the Honor Code. This requires each individual to respect all fellow members of the Oberlin community and to vigorously support the protected nature of intellectual property. Oberlin fosters and promotes a strong commitment to open and thoughtful intellectual discourse within the context of the principles defined by the Honor System. It is expected that the core values inherent to the Honor Code will be adopted and upheld by all members of the Oberlin College community.

SCOPE

The Honor Code applies to all academic work, including but not limited to, examinations, quizzes, papers, recitals, and laboratory assignments. Violations of the Honor Code include cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, multiple submissions, and other acts as defined in the policy.

(In instances where there is a lack of clarity about whether a case falls under the jurisdiction of the Judicial or Honor System, the chair of the Student Honor Committee consults with the dean of students, who determines jurisdiction.)

DEFINITIONS

Cheating: Cheating occurs when a student does not do his or her own work on an academic exercise. Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to:

- copying from another student’s examination;
- allowing another student to copy from your examination;
- using outside materials on an examination that are not authorized for use during the test;
- preparing notes to take into a closed-book examination—for example, writing on your hand or desk; and
- collaborating on a project that was intended to be the work of an individual student.
**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the appropriation of the work or ideas of another scholar—whether written or not—without acknowledgement, or the failure to correctly identify the source, regardless of whether it is done consciously or inadvertently. A lack of knowledge of the standards of academic citation does not excuse violating the principles of the Honor Code. Plagiarism may take many forms. In its most blatant form, entire phrases, sentences, or paragraphs are used verbatim, without quotation marks or the appropriate citation. But it is also plagiarism to paraphrase the work of another without attribution, or to take a written passage and alter a few words in an effort to make the writing one’s own. Moreover the use of an idea of another person that cannot reasonably be regarded as common knowledge is plagiarism. Non-textual images such as drawings, graphs, and maps are also subject to plagiarism, as are the experiments, computer programs, musical compositions, and websites of others. Since footnoting and bibliographical conventions differ significantly between disciplines, students should consult with their professors about the conventions of academic footnoting and bibliographical documentation expected in a particular course.

**Fabrication:** The conscious manufacturing or manipulation of information to support an academic exercise. Examples include:

- falsifying citations, for example by citing information from a non-existent reference;
- manipulating or manufacturing data to support research;
- taking another student’s examination or writing another student’s paper; and
- listing sources in the bibliography that were not used in the academic exercise.

**Multiple Submissions:** The same work may not be submitted to more than one course without the prior approval of all instructors involved. Reasonable portions of a student’s previous work on the topic may be used, but the extent of the work must be acknowledged.

**Misrepresentations and Other Acts:** Students who misrepresent academic information to college officials—for example, by falsifying grades or forging college documents, records, or signatures—have violated the Honor Code. Destroying, hiding, and improperly removing or retaining library materials with the intent of denying others access to those materials also are violations of the Honor Code.

For more information, see [new.oberlin.edu/students/policies/honor-system-charter](http://new.oberlin.edu/students/policies/honor-system-charter).

**ACADEMIC ADVISING AND SUPPORT**

**FACULTY-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS**

Oberlin is a small, fairly informal college, and members of the staff, faculty, and administration are able to work with students on a personal basis. Many international students, who are often accustomed to a more formal educational system, find that
the personal nature of the college requires a major adjustment. Some professors will ask you to call them by their first name. Remember that people at Oberlin are quite accessible and willing to become involved in your academic and personal interests.

Do not be afraid to ask questions about things that you do not understand or with which you disagree. Almost all professors encourage students to ask challenging questions both in and out of the classroom. Students are usually free to interrupt lectures to ask for clarification and even argue with the professor.

Professors have regular office hours during which you can make appointments to meet with them if you have any questions or problems. Most professors are also willing to meet students outside these office hours by appointment.

ACADEMIC ADVISORS
Each Oberlin student has an academic advisor to help with planning an educational program according to the student’s interests and goals. The advisor can offer guidance in evaluating academic strengths and weaknesses and provide information on Oberlin’s curriculum and regulations. Academic advisors help students make decisions by sharing with them their educational experience, their ideas, and their understanding of what students are doing. Advisors are most often members of the teaching faculty, but some members of the professional staff can also be advisors for first- and second-year students.

One of the first questions your advisor may ask is why you chose the particular courses you propose to take on your planned schedule. Advising styles differ from advisor to advisor in the way they pose such questions. Some challenge students to think about alternative possibilities; others encourage students to present the pros and cons of the selections they have made. Whatever the style, the object is for the student to make clear goals, consider the options, and make careful choices.

Academic advisors are just that—advisors. They are aware that the decisions you make are yours and not theirs. An advisor might try to persuade you to change your mind, but an advisor may not force you to make a decision you do not want to. You are responsible for your final course choices and for meeting all degree requirements in time for graduation.

Advising in the College of Arts and Sciences
- Arts and sciences students are assigned an advisor until they formally declare a major. A student’s expressed academic area of interest is taken into account, as much as possible, in the initial assignment of a general advisor. When you declare a major, you must choose a faculty advisor from your major department.

Advising in the Conservatory of Music
- For students in the performance majors, the principal private study teacher is the student’s faculty advisor. For students in all other majors, a faculty member from the major department or program serves as your advisor.
Advising in the Double-degree Program

- Double-degree students have two advisors. One is a member of the arts and sciences faculty, initially in or near the field of expressed interest, and ultimately in the major field. The other advisor is a conservatory faculty member in the appropriate conservatory major. Double-degree students are required to meet with both advisors before registering for courses.

THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN OF STUDIES

For students and faculty members in the College of Arts and Sciences and for double-degree students, the Office of the Dean of Studies:

- coordinates academic advising, makes initial advisor assignments for new students, assists students in finding new advisors, as needed;
- provides information sessions for new and returning advisors;
- oversees students’ academic standing by monitoring grade reports and communicating with students, their advisors, and the academic standing committee;
- offers information and advice about academic policy issues, including general academic requirements, requests for over-load study, emergency, and academic incompletes at the end of each semester, exceptions to winter-term policies, and final exam time changes;
- provides information and counseling about individual majors.

For students and faculty members in both divisions, the Office of the Dean of Studies:

- offers advice and resources for exploring off-campus study options;
- advises students about applying for academic leave of absence, enrolled-not-in-residence status, and finish-away status;
- advises students about personal and medical leaves of absence and withdrawing from the college;
- advises international students on issues related to their U.S. immigration status and cultural adjustment, and offers academic, career, and personal counseling;
- provides information and counseling about winter term.

CLASS DEANS

Class deans provide students with an additional administrative layer of help and support. Each class has its own class dean. Class deans are an important point of contact for students as they seek advice regarding academic, social, and personal experiences. The class deans are located in two offices on campus: the Office of the Dean of Students, Wilder 105, and the Office of Student Academic Services, Peters 118. Class deans may provide students with advice or refer them to appropriate
resources. Class deans are also the easily identifiable first point of contact for faculty, staff, and parents who have questions or concerns about a student. A class dean is assigned to each incoming first-year class, and remains the dean of that class for four years. Class deans act as one of the many resources on campus when students experience crises or emergency situations.

You will meet your class dean when you come to campus in the fall. Your class dean is here to help you succeed as a student. He or she will be a particularly valuable resource when you do not know where to address academic, social, or personal problems. Your academic advisor and class dean should enable you to navigate your way through the transitions of the first year of college life.

**STUDENT ACADEMIC SERVICES**
The Office of Student Academic Services helps students maximize their learning opportunities and assists them in their personal growth. Academic services coordinated by the office include workshops, credit-bearing courses, tutoring, and individual academic sessions. The professional staff is especially responsive to the needs of students of differing social and cultural experiences.

**WRITING ASSOCIATES PROGRAM**
The Oberlin College Writing Associates Program is a free and student-staffed writing tutor service based at Oberlin College. Services include the drop-in writing center in Mudd Library, course tutoring, and individual student tutoring upon request, as well as outreach programs in the city and community. The primary goal of the program is to instill a sense of confidence in Oberlin community members by offering them support and the tools with which to write more successfully. For more information, see [new.oberlin.edu/arts-and-sciences/departments/rhetoric/writing-associates-program/](http://new.oberlin.edu/arts-and-sciences/departments/rhetoric/writing-associates-program/).

**ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES**
Oberlin’s English for Speakers of Other Languages Placement Exam: New students who are non-native English speakers take Oberlin’s ESOL placement exam during the pre-orientation program. This exam is given to arts and sciences and conservatory students, regardless of their score on the TOEFL. Course placements and recommendations are sent to students and their advisors prior to their officially scheduled registration time.

For more information, see [new.oberlin.edu/office/international-students/current-students/english-language-instruction](http://new.oberlin.edu/office/international-students/current-students/english-language-instruction).
TIPS FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS


ATTENDANCE
Attend your classes. Class attendance is usually required, and not attending a course may result in failing the course, a lower grade, or denial of an extension for course assignments. Being on time for classes is expected; entering late is considered rude and disruptive. If you are ill and unable to attend class, you should contact the professor (before class) and let them know. You can also contact your class dean when you are unable to attend class.

CLASS PARTICIPATION
In many classes, students are encouraged and expected to participate in classroom discussions. Your final grade may reflect a combination of factors, including class participation. Class participation involves contributing to the class discussions and answering questions in class.

TAKE NOTES
Although this is not usually a requirement, it is very important for you to take notes on your professor’s lecture material, for most of this material may be covered on exams. It is not necessary or even possible to write down every word your professor says. However, you should cover the main points of the lecture material in your notes.

MAKE A SCHEDULE
Follow a schedule that is relatively consistent and regular. Students who follow a regular and predictable schedule of sleep, study, meal times, and exercise report a better quality of life and are, in general, happier and more successful throughout their college careers.

REVIEW BEFORE CLASS
If possible, schedule a few minutes before each recitation class (such as languages and active discussion classes) to “warm up.” Review material from previous class and reading before lecture classes. Such a review will tune you in to the day’s lesson and eliminate lag time. Your learning will be more active and retention more efficient if you have prepared a framework for new material.

REVIEW YOUR NOTES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER EACH CLASS
Do an instant mental replay of the previous lecture on your way to your next class. That quick review will pave the way for a more concentrated review for exams. Later that same day, look over your notes to make sure they include all of the important points from the lecture and that they will be understandable to you when you need to study for an exam.
**KEEP PRIORITIES IN MIND AS YOU MAKE YOUR STUDY PLAN**
It is natural to want to do the easiest or most pleasant tasks first. Think about whether this is in your best interest. Students often report significant success in allotting a specific amount of time to a difficult task and doing that task first.

**AVOID TOO MUCH DETAIL**
Do not over-organize. There is a common temptation to spend far too much time perfecting the plan and never getting to the actual task.

**YOU DO NOT NEED TO ACCOUNT FOR EVERY MINUTE**
A schedule that is too detailed and rigid is nearly impossible to keep; know that you will require some dead time and leave some time slots blank.

**KNOW YOUR SLEEP PATTERN**
Determine how much sleep you need and make every effort to get that amount of sleep on a regular basis. Sacrificing sleep for study is a trap. Avoid it.

**SCHEDULE TIME FOR PHYSICAL EXERCISE**
Exercise is essential for maintaining good mental and physical health. You will feel better, work more efficiently, have more energy, and enjoy greater success in all areas if you get regular exercise.

**PLAN AHEAD**
Double your time estimates and start early. Making and keeping a schedule requires discipline, but in order to stick with the schedule, you must maintain some flexibility. Time estimates may need to be revised, circumstances change, emergencies arise, and sometimes it is impossible to do what you planned to do according to your schedule. It is important that you remain flexible enough to adjust and that you not give up on managing your time wisely.

**ASK FOR HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT**
Asking for help is not viewed as a failure but as being responsible and proactive.

**COMMUNICATE WITH PROFESSORS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN WRITING**
Decisions are considered official when in writing.
REGULATORY, LEGAL, AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

F-1 VISA

MAINTAINING STATUS
There are many protocols to follow to maintain your F-1 visa status. Follow these rules in particular, and you’ll go a long way to maintaining your status.

• Register as a full-time student every semester.
• Should you decide to work during your first year at Oberlin, work on campus.
• Keep your passport up-to-date. You must always have a current passport while you are in the United States.
• Report all changes to your address, legal name, or visa status to a DSO in a timely manner.

TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES
If you are planning to travel outside the United States and to return to continue your studies, you must have a current DSO signature on your I-20—i.e., within 12 months of your date of return.

If your visa stamp is to expire before you re-enter the United States, you need to renew it while you are out of the country. You cannot renew your visa from within the United States.

THE SEVIS DATABASE
Designated school officials (DSOs) keep track of all continuing and new international students in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), a web-based data exchange program maintained by SEVP, a division of the Department of Homeland Security. DSOs are required to create SEVIS records and issue SEVIS Form I-20s to all new and continuing students on the F-1 visa.

Each semester, Oberlin College must report through SEVIS the following information for all F-1 students:

• enrollment and registration status;
• whether a student drops below a full course of study;
• completion of program of study;
• extension of program of study;
• change(s) in legal name(s) or address (in the U.S. and in your home country);
• select academic or disciplinary actions taken against the student; and

• other information, including program transfers, changes in level or major of study, employment authorizations, reinstatement, and termination dates and reasons.

EMPLOYMENT REGULATIONS

During the first academic year:

• students with F-1 visa status are allowed to work on campus, and can do so without DSO authorization;

• on-campus employment may not begin more than 30 days prior to the first day of classes; and

• on-campus employment may not exceed 20 hours a week while school is in session. Full-time on-campus work is allowed only when school is not in session—i.e., during fall break, winter term, spring break, and summer.

After the first academic year: Students with F-1 visa status who have been lawfully enrolled at Oberlin on a full-time basis for one full academic year and have declared a major may engage in temporary off-campus employment via curricular practical training (CPT). The key rules for CPT dictate that:

• you must be authorized to work in SEVIS by the DSO;

• the proposed employment must be related to your major field of study, credit bearing, or recommended to support a credit-bearing course that you are taking or will take in the semester following the proposed employment, and is commensurate with your level of study;

• CPT employment may be authorized only for a specific position, company, period of time, and location. You must provide a written offer of employment from a specific employer, specifying the start and end dates, location, and the nature of employment;

• if you engage in 12 months or more of full-time CPT, you are ineligible for optional practical training (OPT—i.e., the year of work you can apply for after you graduate from Oberlin); and

• CPT employment can be part-time (20 hours or less per week) during the academic year or full-time (over 20 hours per week) when school is not in session.
After graduation:
Optional practical training (OPT) provides F-1 international students the opportunity to gain practical experience in their major field of study. OPT is available to students for up to 12 months after each educational level (i.e., undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate).

For more information, see new.oberlin.edu/office/international-students/current-students/employment/.

LEGAL SYSTEM
In general, international students enjoy the same constitutional protections as U.S. citizens. An international student or scholar enjoys freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, protection from unreasonable searches and seizures, and the other protections included in the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution. There are federal, state, and often municipal rules protecting all persons from most forms of discrimination.

International students often worry that they will be deported should they come into conflict with the law. In general, you will not be deported for a single misdemeanor or a minor offense—e.g., petty theft, disturbing the peace, or drunkenness. But if you were to be convicted of a crime involving “moral turpitude” and be sentenced to one year or more in confinement, deportation is a real possibility. Charges relating to drug (narcotic drugs or marijuana) addiction, possession, and sale fall into this category. Students who violate immigration laws and work illegally in the United States may also be subject to deportation.

CONSEQUENCES OF ARREST FOR NON-CITIZENS
All arrests can generate a National Crime Information Center (NCIC) “hit,” which can have serious consequences to international students, including delay of future visa issuance, problems at the POE, and delayed approval of other immigration applications. In addition, the arrest must be disclosed in all future immigration contexts and applications. If you have been arrested, you should always travel with certified copies of court records to present at the POE (and elsewhere), as requested. If you are convicted (i.e., found guilty), your conviction is recorded in NCIC and in the FBI database. Possible immigration consequences include: inadmissibility, deportability, failure to maintain status, and ineligibility for adjustment to status or other immigration benefits. If the crime is deemed serious, you may be taken into custody by ICE.
LAWS RELATING TO ALCOHOL, DRUGS, AND SMOKING

Alcohol: U.S. laws concerning the sale and consumption of alcohol may seem strict or freewheeling, depending on your nationality. In the United States, it is illegal to purchase, consume, carry, or otherwise transport alcoholic drinks, including beer and wine, before you reach the age of 21. Oberlin College has policies that restrict the consumption of alcoholic beverages on campus.

Drugs: The sale, distribution, use, or possession of marijuana, cocaine, heroin, LSD, Ecstasy, and many other drugs violate federal, state, local, and college laws.

Smoking: In many parts of the United States, all public buildings, including restaurants, are designated “smoke free,” meaning that you cannot smoke in any part of the building. Oberlin is a tobacco-free campus. Outside the college, some buildings have specific spaces designated for smokers. If you are a guest in someone’s home, room, or apartment, always ask permission before you smoke. Look for “No Smoking” signs in offices, classrooms, and stores, and for signs indicating designated smoking areas. Smoking is prohibited in areas where it would pose a fire hazard. Smoking is not permitted in areas of general access, such as lounges, restrooms, lobbies, hallways, and elevators.

TAXES

The United States of America, most of its 50 states, and various local governments fund programs and services through a variety of taxes. These taxes include sales taxes (taxes on purchases), investment taxes, and income taxes (taxes on earnings). Tax dollars are used to pay, for example, for streetlights, roads, police, the court system, and public schools. Paying these taxes and reporting income to these various governmental agencies is a legal requirement for an international student or scholar physically present in the United States. It is common practice in the United States for an employer or the provider of a scholarship or fellowship to state the gross amount an individual is to receive as an hourly figure or total dollar figure before tax.

Taxes are removed before the payment is made to an individual. Therefore, an international student or scholar in the United States should expect that the actual income they receive will be less than the amount noted in an award letter or offer of employment.
FEDERAL INCOME TAX
International students and scholars studying and working in the United States (and their dependents who work) are required to pay federal income tax on any income they receive in the United States either paid to them directly or paid on their behalf. Any assistantship, scholarship, fellowship, salary, or compensation received by an international student may be taxed by the U.S. federal government. (An exception to the general rule of paying tax may exist if the international student or scholars’ country of residence has a tax treaty with the U.S. federal government.)

STATE AND LOCAL INCOME TAX
Each state, city, or county in the United States determines its own tax rules. If you have paid employment work during your time at Oberlin, you need to file a federal tax return, a state tax return, and an Ohio school district exemption return.

INCOME TAX FILING
The federal governmental agency responsible for the collection of the federal income tax is the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). By law, the federal government requires that all international individuals (including dependents) must file tax forms every year they are physically present in the United States, regardless of whether they earned any U.S. income for that year. The individual must file these forms directly with the IRS, which uses the terms “filing” and “reporting” to describe this process. The federal tax-filing deadline is on or about April 15th each year. The state tax-filing deadline is normally the same as the federal deadline.

The Office of International Student Services sends out e-mails providing information and resources to help guide new international students through this process. For more information, see new.oberlin.edu/office/international-students/current-students/tax-information.
SOCIAL SECURITY

Obtaining a social security number is one of the first things you should do as an international student. Having this number will facilitate banking, paying taxes, and applying for jobs, and many other aspects of life in the United States. The Office of International Student Services arranges a trip to the Lorain Social Security Administration during the pre-orientation program, in order to allow you to acquire your social security number as quickly as possible.

STEPS TO APPLY FOR A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

In order to apply for a social security number (SSN), you need to:

• receive an offer of employment on-campus, which we will help arrange during pre-orientation;
• complete the SS-5 and an employment verification form during pre-orientation; and
• apply for the social security number in person at the Lorain Social Security Administration (SSA).

We arrange a bus to transport you to the SSA office, and you need to bring the following original documents with you:

• your passport (with the F-1 visa stamp in it);
• your Oberlin-issued I-20;
• a print-out of your I-94;
• a completed employment verification form; and
• your SSN application form (Form SS-5).
• On day two of orientation, we will help ensure that you have all the necessary documents to take with you to the SSA office.