

# Eastern Illinois University

## HANDBOOK FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS

This handbook was prepared for people who are new to this university. It contains detailed information and facts about life in the United States, Illinois, Charleston, and Eastern Illinois University. The International Programs student office will be a very important source of information and service to you while you are a student in the United States. The staff in the international student office will be able to help you with most of the questions you have concerning study in the United States.

Office of International Programs

Office Hours: 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday – our door is always open!

### EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Police or Fire Emergency in Charleston: 911

Campus Police (Non-Emergency): 581-3213

Clinical Health Service: 581-3013

Parking and Information: 581-5416

### OTHER USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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# CHAPTER 1

## Getting Started

### HOUSING IN CHARLESTON

#### **Deciding Where to Live**

The most important aspect of life in Charleston will be where you live. Hopefully most of you will have made arrangements before you arrive in Charleston, but regardless the following list are concepts that you should keep in mind when choosing where to live.

**Availability:** Housing may be more difficult to find at the beginning of the semester, both shortly before and after the start of school. But there are more options available during the summer and middle of the semester therefore, it is important to start thinking about housing soon after you decide to attend Eastern Illinois University.

**Convenience:** University housing is in very close proximity to campus and academic buildings. Off-campus housing may be just as near or much farther from campus; if this option is one you choose to pursue, it is important to ask the landlord how far from campus it is so you can make arrangements accordingly.

**Furnishings:** The residence halls are furnished with a bed, dresser, desk and closet space. On campus apartments may be fully furnished or partially furnished. Off campus apartments and houses may be unfurnished, partially furnished or furnished and prices vary accordingly; it is important to ask the landlord to what extent the apartment may be furnished.

**Cooking:** Living in university housing, you have the option to sign up for a meal plan for American-style cafeteria dining provided daily by EIU Dining Services. Cooking may be limited in the residence halls, but is not in an on campus apartment. Living in off campus housing, you are required to buy and cook your own meals.

**Cost:** On and off campus housing costs are very similar. On campus housing may appear to be more expensive, but it includes the cost of all utilities, cable, internet and local phone service. These services may or may not be included in rent costs of off campus apartments and houses.

**Condition:** All of the on campus living facilities are in fair condition. Cheaper off campus housing may be old and in need of repair, but can be made comfortable.

**Privacy:** Residence halls are often full and residents typically have roommates. As a result, noise levels may be higher, but accessibility to socialization and potential friends is also much higher. Off campus apartments may be quieter, but there will also be less opportunity to interact with American students and practice English.

**Legal Obligations:** Contracts for on campus and off campus housing are legally-binding contracts and failure to comply with a contract may result in fines or other punishment. University housing contracts are usually for the academic year (9 months). Off campus contracts are usually for one calendar year (12 months).

# UNIVERSITY HOUSING

## **Undergraduate Students: Residence Halls**

Freshmen (first year students who hold less than 30 credit hours) are required to live in the residence halls for the first year. There are twelve residence halls available for undergraduate students and all are located on campus. There are four all women's dorms, two all men's dorms and six co-ed dorms. All of the residence halls have at least one non-smoking floor, and most have air-conditioning. There are not complete cooking facilities, though a kitchenette may be accessible, and buying a meal plan is mandatory. For more information, contact university housing office at (217)581-5111 or visit the website: <http://www.eiu.edu/~housing/text/assign.html>

## **University Court**

Undergraduate students who have more than 30 credit hours or are over the age of 21 may have the opportunity to live in University Court. These apartments include the same services as the residence halls and students may buy a meal plan, but the apartments do include cooking facilities. For more information contact the University Court Office at (217)581-8000 or visit their website: <http://www.eiu.edu/~housing/text/univct.html>

## **Graduate Students:**

### **University Court**

All graduate students are eligible to live in University Court. These apartments include the same services as the residence halls and students may buy a meal plan, but the apartments do include cooking facilities. For more information contact the University Court Office at (217)581-8000 or visit their website: <http://www.eiu.edu/~housing/text/univct.html>

### **University Apartments**

All graduate students, married students and students with families have the opportunity to live in these apartments. Students may choose between four options with prices depending on space and the amount of furniture supplied by the university. For more information contact the University Apartments office at (217)581-3228 or visit their website: <http://www.eiu.edu/~housing/text/univapts.html#topicc>

*\*This is a popular option for international students and apartments run out quickly.*

## NON UNIVERSITY HOUSING

Many apartments and houses are available for rent in the Charleston area. Cost for these accommodations may vary based on whether the housing is furnished or not, what utilities are included in rent and what sort of amenities are available (such as swimming pools, air conditioning, etc.) If you need assistance beginning your search you may look at the Charleston Chamber of Commerce website:

<http://www.charlestonchamber.com/rentals.html> They have a list of local landlords and contact information.

During your search for a house or apartment, you may encounter several abbreviations with which you are not familiar. Listed below are some that you may find helpful.

Sublet: Take over remaining rent payments due on another person's lease.

SBLT FL OPT: Summer sublet with a fall renewal option.

LG 1bdr. apt.: A large one-bedroom apartment.

Furn/Unfurn: Furniture provided/furniture not provided.

H/W pd. or H/W furn.: Heat and water are included in the price of rent.

A/C: Air conditioning (C/A: Central air conditioning.)

W/D: Clothes washer and dryer on the premises.

all appls.: All major appliances on the premises.

\$/mo.: Rent per month.

\$/util.: Rent plus utilities.

\$/dep.: Rent plus deposit.

\$/OBO: Or best offer.

rent negot.: Cost of rent is negotiable.

gar. or prkg.: Garage or off street parking is provided.

ref or refer: References needed from previous landlord.

### **The Lease**

When you find an available apartment that fits your needs, you will be asked to sign a lease. This is a legally binding contract that describes the rights and responsibilities of the tenant (person who is renting) and the landlord. It will also specify the responsibilities of the landlord for repairing and maintaining the property. It is very important that you understand everything in the lease before you sign it. When you sign a lease, you will probably be required to pay a "security" or "damage" deposit in addition to first and last month's rent. The deposit may be returned to you if you leave the apartment clean and undamaged. Otherwise, the landlord will keep the deposit to account for the cost to return the property to the condition it was in before you lived in it. The deposit may be as much as the cost of one month's rent. If the deposit is more than one month's rent, it may be advisable to look at other options.

## **Apartment Life**

Most apartments and houses in Charleston are single family living units, or for single persons living on their own or with one, two or three roommates. This may be drastically different from the living situation you are accustomed to. Becoming acquainted with your neighbors may make the adjustment to the new living style a little easier, and if something were to happen, it is much easier to approach your neighbors if you know them.

To make living arrangements most tolerable for everyone involved, we suggest you be considerate of your neighbors. Noise may carry very well in your apartment or house, and it is important to keep in mind that your neighbors may be able to hear noise from you such as running, jumping, telephones ringing, the radio or television and vacuuming. These noises may become irritating if they are excessive or occur late at night. Excessive noise is rarely tolerated by anyone, and loud televisions, stereos or parties may encourage your neighbors to call the landlord or police to report their concern. But also keep in mind that your apartment is a living space, not a library, so you cannot expect your neighbors to live in silence all of the time. If you need a quiet place to study you should try the library or other academics buildings. If noise in your apartment is a problem, you should address the concern with your neighbor in a friendly and calm manner. Anger and retaliation will only cause more problems between you and your neighbor.

## **Utilities**

Utilities can include gas, water, electricity, garbage pick-up, telephone, cable television, and internet services. Some of these utilities may be included in the cost of your rent, with the exception of telephone, cable television and internet. If they are not, you will need to contact the respective companies for service hook-up. Nearly all landlords will include garbage pick-up in your rent costs. You should check with your landlord to be sure what company provides service for your apartment or house. Most electric and gas services will be through Ameren CIPS, you can reach them for service at 1-888-789-2477. You will probably need to contact City Hall for water service at 1-217-345-2484. There may be a deposit for each of these services that will be returned upon completion of the services and you will usually have to pay an installation fee when the services are turned on.

## **Renter's Insurance**

Prudent tenants are encouraged to purchase an option called "renter's insurance" (which may also be called homeowner's insurance) to protect against losses caused by fire, theft or vandalism. This kind of insurance covers personal belongings in your room or apartment and in your car if you have one. It also covers damages for which you would be legally liable if a fire or other accident that was your responsibility damaged the building in which you rent. The cost of renter's insurance varies depending on the value of your personal possessions, but is relatively low. When buying insurance, it is considered wise to get rate information from two or three different insurance agents. You can find agents' names and telephone numbers in the telephone directory yellow pages under "Insurance."

# **TELEPHONES**

Most people have a telephone in their residence. Telephones can be installed easily and quickly. Much more business is transacted by telephone in this country than in many other countries.

## **Telephone Directory**

A telephone directory is very useful. It contains the name, address and telephone number of each telephone "subscriber." In addition, it includes emergency telephone numbers, instructions for making various kinds of telephone calls, and general information. The "yellow pages" at the end of the book list all local services and businesses, classified according to the kind of service or business involved.

## **Establishing Telephone Service Off-Campus**

To establish telephone service, call Illinois Consolidated Telephone Company (ICTC) at 1-800-553-9981. Once you call to make arrangements, it will take a few days for your service to be connected. You have the option of buying or renting a phone, although in the long run, it is cheaper to buy a telephone. Inexpensive phones can be purchased at stores such as Wal-Mart.

ICTC will ask for the following information:

- Complete address (including your ZIP code)
- How you would like your directory listing to appear
- The type of basic service you will require
- The type of optional services, if any, you will require
- Your Social Security Number
- Other credit history, including employment history
- A description of the types of telephone outlets at your new address
- Choice of long distance company (There are several long distance companies for you to choose from, such as AT&T, MCI or Sprint. Each has different services and rates. Investigate them before choosing.)

You will be required to pay a deposit before your telephone service is started. The deposit, with interest, is refunded within one year if your phone bills are paid by the date listed on the monthly bill. The deposit is held as security if credit has not yet been established. If telephone service is disconnected, the deposit and interest is applied to your bill.

There is a fax service available to all EIU students located at Copy Express in the MLK Union. If your family is accustomed to sending faxes rather than using the postal service, let them know that your fax number at EIU is: (217) 581-7064. Your name, complete EIU mailing address and your room number (if on campus) should be at the top of each fax. There will be a charge to send a fax as well as to receive a fax. Please do not use or give away any other fax numbers on campus to receive faxes from your family.

## **Mobile Phones**

Many students may be interested in a mobile phone contract as opposed to a home phone because you have more mobility with them. If you choose to use a mobile phone, it is important to shop around for the best deal. There are many mobile phone providers in the Charleston area and they all offer different packages. If you plan to use the phone for international calling, it is very important to ask about rates. Many mobile phones do not allow for international calling, or are very expensive to call internationally.

## **MAIL PICK UP AND DELIVERY**

Mail is delivered to off-campus residences once a day, Monday through Saturday, by the United States Postal Service. You should have your name printed on your mail box. Mail is delivered to on-campus students once a day, Monday through Friday, by campus mail officials.

### **Change of Address**

You must notify the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the post office downtown, the Records Office in Old Main, the Housing Office in the MLK Union and the Office of International Programs in Blair Hall whenever you change your address. You will need to fill out form AR11 to be mailed to DHS within five days of acquiring a new address. It is important to check in with all of these offices when you move to ensure that you still receive all messages, and remain in status with the United States government. If you do not check in with DHS, you will be considered “out of status” and could risk deportation. **Because regulations change frequently, please contact the International Programs Office for the most up to date information.**

### **Forward your mail when you are on summer vacation**

You must have your mail forwarded to an address while you are on summer vacation. It is advisable to ask a friend in the United States to allow you to forward your mail to them and have them collect it during the summer. It is recommended that you do not forward your mail to your home country during the summer because it will probably not catch up with you before you return for the fall semester. You should also notify your family and friends where you will be during summer so they will not send mail to you in Charleston.

### **ZIP Codes**

The United States Post Office requires a ZIP code on every letter with a U. S. destination. This is the last and very important part of an address on an envelope. It is usually a five-digit number, telling what section of the United States the letter is headed for. The proper way to address an envelope in the United States is to put your name and address in the upper left corner and put the addressee in the center of the envelope. The addressee’s information will look like the following:

#### **On-Campus Address**

Your Name  
# Residence Hall  
Residence hall street address  
Charleston, IL 61920

#### **Off-Campus Address**

Your Name  
1234 Apple Valley Rd.  
Apt. 505  
Charleston, IL 61920

### **Post Office**

The post office is located at 320 6<sup>th</sup> St. in downtown Charleston. The phone number is 345-2900 for questions and hours.

## DEALING WITH CULTURE SHOCK

What it is: “Culture shock” is the name given to a feeling of disorientation or confusion that often occurs when a person leaves a familiar place and moves to an unfamiliar one. As a newcomer to Illinois, you will encounter a multitude of new things. The buildings look different, and so do the trees and birds. The food is not the same as it is at home, and the people look, speak and act differently from people at home. Even the smells are different. Your English might not serve you as well as you expected it would. You might not be able to convey your full personality in English, with a result that you think other people are seeing you as a child. Your family and friends are far away. You may feel confused, unsure of yourself as a result of all this, and you may have some doubts about the wisdom of your decision to come here.

### **Symptoms**

Some people are more affected by culture shock than others. The common symptoms of culture shock are:

- Extreme homesickness
- Desire to avoid social settings that seem threatening or unpleasant
- Physical complaints and sleep disturbances
- Depression and feelings of helplessness
- Difficulty with course work and concentration
- Loss of your sense of humor
- Boredom or fatigue (sleep a lot)
- Hostility toward the host culture

All these feelings may make it difficult to deal with residents of the host country and to use their language. Students are sometimes unaware of the fact that they are experiencing culture shock when these symptoms occur. There are ways to deal with this period of culture shock, so it helps to recognize that culture shock may lie behind physical symptoms and irritability.

### **Coping with Culture Shock**

Different people react differently to culture shock. Some become depressed, or even physically ill. Others are stimulated by the new experiences that are open to them. Here are some ideas that might be helpful. Please note that if after implementing the following strategies you are continuing to suffer severe culture shock, contact Sue Songer for additional assistance at 581-7487.

**Take Good Care of Yourself:** Talk to people, show interest in others, take a short local trip if possible, exercise and get plenty of rest, write a letter or telephone home, eat good food, and do things you enjoy with friends. Take special notice of things you enjoy about living in the host culture.

**Maintain your perspective:** Try to remember that hundreds of students have come to Charleston from other countries and have survived (even when the winter snows come!)

**Evaluate your expectations:** Your reactions to the United States and to Illinois and EIU are products of both the way things are here and of the way you expected them to be. If you find yourself feeling confused or disappointed about something, ask yourself, “What did I expect?” or “Why?” or “Was my expectation reasonable?” If you determine that your expectations were unreasonable, you can do much to reduce the amount of dissatisfaction you feel.

**Keep an open mind:** People in the United States might do or say things that people at home would not do or say. But people in this country are acting according to their own set of values, not yours. Try to find out how they perceive what they are saying and doing, and try to avoid evaluating their behavior using the standards you would use in your own country.

**Learn from the experience:** Moving into a new culture can be the most fascinating and educational experience of your life. It gives you the opportunity to explore an entirely new way of living and compare it to your own. There is no better way to become aware of your own values and attitudes and to broaden your point of view.

Here are some questions that you might try to answer as you encounter the local people:

How do they make friends?

How do friends treat each other?

Who respects whom?

How is respect shown?

What attitudes do they have about their families?

What is the relationship between males and females?

Why do people spend their time the way they do?

How do they deal with conflicts or disagreements?

What do they talk about? When and with whom?

How often do they “take turns” during a conversation?

How loud do they talk?

What do they do with their hands and arms while talking, and where do they direct their eyes?

What kind of evidence do they seek or use when evaluating an idea or trying to win an argument?

There are countless other questions you can ask. You can compare the answers you get to the answers you would get to the same questions in your country, and you can thereby help yourself develop a better understanding of your own society and the one where you are living now.

## Adjusting to a New Culture

When you are in a new setting, you have to make certain adjustments or adaptations in your usual behavior and attitudes. It is suggested to observe your own reactions to being in new culture, and to compare your reactions with those of other people who are here from different countries. These observations can result in increased understanding of yourself and of the various factors that have made you the kind of person you are.

If you are able to keep the perspective of a person who is observing himself or herself while undergoing an unusual experience, you will be able to help prevent yourself from becoming extremely anxious or depressed. You will learn more from the intercultural experience you are having. Many factors influence the way different people adjust to a new culture. One of these factors is, of course, the individual's personality—degree of self-confidence, sense of humor, ability to interact with other people, ability to tolerate ambiguous or frustrating situations, and so on. Other factors influencing people's adjustment to a new culture are the nature and quality of differences between their own culture and the new one; the comparative status of their own country and the new one; the nature of the person's past experience in foreign cultures; and the nature of the particular setting in which the newcomer to a culture is situated. Social scientists who have studied the phenomenon of adjusting to a new culture have identified four phases of adjustment newcomers commonly pass through.

- **Spectator phase:** The new person is excited and optimistic.
  - **Stress and adaptation:** Problems, disappointments and internal conflicts emerge. Feelings of sadness, depression, anger, hostility or rebellion might result.
  - **Coming to terms:** Increasing involvement with the host society reduces the foreigner's generalized hostility and disappointment, and helps him or her find a relatively comfortable, acceptable position in the society.
  - **Decision to return home:** This is a period of excitement and self-examination. If the foreigner has become detached from his or her own society, this phase brings about tension and feelings of ambivalence. If the foreigner still identifies strongly with his or her home country, this phase brings a feeling of release and pleasant anxiety.
- This is only one way of looking at the questions of phases of adjustment. Not everyone goes through all these phases, and different people spend different amounts of time in those through which they do pass. It can be interesting for you to see whether you pass through phases like these yourself.

## **Practical Suggestions for Adjustment to a New Culture**

**Learn local English.** The better you can express yourself and understand the natives, the easier everything will be.

**Realize that you will often be treated as a stereotype.** Foreigners anywhere are treated, at least at first, as representatives of the country that they are perceived to belong to, rather than as individuals. Often, foreign students will be responded to as “a foreign student” or “a student from country X.” The nature of that response will depend on each native’s previous experience with and ideas about “foreign students” or “students from country X,” not on anything about you personally. Try not to let this discourage you. Avoid becoming angry with people who are, after all, just acting like people. You may be able to start some interesting conversations about the subject of stereotypes. You can learn what stereotypes people hold, where the stereotypes came from and so on. And remember that you have your own stereotypes about the host nationals.

**Learn the local criteria for success.** Find out what is considered a good performance in studies, research, social relations and other aspects of your life here. You can get information about this from teachers, native students, secretaries, neighbors and many other people.

**Learn how to get things done in organizations.** Many of the things you want to accomplish will be accomplished through organizations, academic departments, other units of the university, businesses, government agencies, and so on. It is helpful to learn how those organizations work. This entails knowing which units or particular people in those organizations do the work you are interested in; who makes decisions; and how you can best approach the people who work in those organizations. Secretaries are often very good sources of information on this topic. Experienced students can sometimes help too, but not all of them have learned how to accomplish things in an organizational setting.

**Understand how the status of your role here compares to the status to which you are accustomed.** Different societies attach different importance to different roles or positions in the society. In many countries, the role of university student or professor is accorded more respect or status than it is in the United States. A foreign visitor might get more attention and courteous treatment elsewhere than here. It can be difficult to adjust to having a lower social status than you are accustomed to; it helps to recognize that you personally are not being downgraded, but that you happen to be in a society where less value is attached to people in your situation.

**Avoid being excessively influenced by particular dramatic events.** It has been pointed out that newcomers to a society may have a particular, very noticeable experience from which they generalize about the new society and the people who live in it. In fact, the experience might be very unusual, not a safe basis for generalization. For example, one male foreign student new to the university found that his roommate removed all of his clothes when he

was in the room studying or relaxing. The new foreign student at first supposed this was what American students customarily did, and wondered if he should do the same! He wisely asked around, though, and found that his roommate's behavior was not typical. This suggests that if you have a dramatic experience that you find influencing your opinions or feelings about the local people, you would be well-advised to discuss the experience with other people and get an idea whether it is typical or unusual.

**Try to understand other people's situations.** People do the things they do in part because of their own individual characteristics or interests, and in part because of the situations they are in. If you do not know anything about other people's situations, you tend to assume that their individual characteristics account for their behavior. When you are in a new country, you know less about people's situations, so you tend to attribute the things they do to their individual characteristics, and to overlook the influence of their situations. For example, if a person treats you in an apparently unfriendly way by not taking time to talk with you on the street or in an office, you may assume the person is unfriendly. If you knew more about the person's situation, you might realize that the apparently unfriendly behavior was more accurately interpreted as a product of the person's situation, being late for appointment, having an exam to study for or some personal preoccupation not related to you.

In the same way, the local people may understand little about your situation as a newcomer from abroad, and they may misunderstand the reasons for some of your behavior. For example, they may assume that your limited English proficiency or unfamiliar accent is a product of lack of intelligence, rather than a product of inadequate opportunities to practice the language with native speakers. Experienced foreign students have found it more helpful to think positively in these situations, rather than to assume the natives are deliberately being inconsiderate or unkind.

**Homesickness:** Homesickness is a psychological condition caused by feelings of worry, anxiety and fear of helplessness in a new environment. Feelings of helplessness or abandonment are usually caused by not having your immediate family members close to you when you are in a new environment. You must think positive thoughts and be productive to alleviate homesickness. You need to get involved with your new community and with the other international students and faculty members. Make an effort to get to know your roommate or suite mates. Keep your mind and body busy so you don't have time to think about home. It is normal to be homesick – we all suffer from this horrible feeling at some time in our lives. Be assured that everyone in our EIU community, and especially the Office of International Programs and the international student body, are eager to help you. We all know that you are doing something normal by complaining about your homesickness, because it is a normal reaction to your new environment. We understand and we'll try to help you. Remember, the longer you keep these feelings to yourself, the longer the pain of this experience will endure.

**Thinking About Going Home:** When you first arrive in a new country, it is natural to spend much of your time thinking about the new country and your reactions to it. It is

helpful to try to keep in mind, even though you are preoccupied with thoughts about your new setting, that you will probably be going back to your own country after a certain period of time. Remember that you will change while you are in the new country. You will learn new ideas, adopt new attitudes and begin to behave in new ways. This may happen so gradually that you are not aware of it. And while you are changing, things will be changing at home also. Your family members, friends and professional colleagues will have experiences that you do not know about, and they too will develop new ideas, attitudes and ways of behaving. Social, political and economic situations may change too. This means that when you go back home, things will not be as you remember them. You will have to adjust again, this time to your own culture. This readjustment is easier if you realize it is going to be necessary, prepare yourself for it, try to keep your expectations realistic and try not to pass judgement on the people you encounter when you get back home. Although it can be disconcerting and a little scary, the shock gradually eases as you begin to understand the new culture. It is useful to realize that often the reactions and perceptions of others toward you and you toward them are not personal evaluations but are based on a clash of cultural values. The more skilled you become in recognizing how and when cultural values and behaviors are likely to come in conflict, the easier it becomes to make adjustments that can help you avoid serious difficulties.

### **Daylight Savings Time**

In order to have daylight further into the evening in spring and summer, most of the United States uses daylight savings time between the first Sunday in April and the last Sunday in October. Newspapers will remind people to set their clocks forward one hour before going to bed on the last Saturday night in April, and to set their clocks back one hour before retiring on the last Saturday night in October. (The actual change from daylight "standard" time takes place at 2 a.m. on the Sunday). It is important to remember to change your clocks, otherwise, you may be an hour early or late for your appointments, and this is not an acceptable excuse for missing class.

## **BUYING**

Most items can be purchased from a variety of stores. It is helpful to become acquainted with those stores where you can shop most conveniently and economically because prices and quality vary. Such information is available from people who have lived in the area, from newspaper advertisements and the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory. You can ask an employee whatever questions you want about a product without being obligated to buy anything.

Prices in stores are fixed. A shopper does not bargain for a lower price with the store employee, except in the case of buying automobiles or large appliances. Many stores operate on a self-service basis. In these stores, the shopper uses one of the baskets or carts provided, and he/she selects the merchandise that is desired. (It is important to always use the carts or baskets provided; you may be tempted to put an object in your pocket to carry it to the check-out, but this will be interpreted as shoplifting, or stealing.) The merchandise is then taken to the cashier, who totals the amount of the purchase and adds the appropriate sales tax. If you need help in making your selections, you may need to find a clerk to help you. Sometimes it may be difficult to find a clerk.

The absence of clerks may lead you to believe that it would be easy to remove merchandise from the store without paying for it. This is called shoplifting and it is a crime! There may not be many clerks in the store, but frequently, one may find closed-circuit television cameras aimed around the store. There may be one-way mirrors through which store employees watch for shoplifters. And there may be people who are dressed and acting like customers but who are in fact store detectives watching for shoplifters. Most area businesses will take all possible legal actions against shoplifters, even if the item stolen is small and inexpensive. Being arrested once for shoplifting can result in a court hearing, a fine and publicity in the newspapers. A conviction for shoplifting by an international person may result in deportation.

When you buy something other than food, it is advisable to keep the receipt you get when you pay for the item. You will need the receipt if the item is defective or unsatisfactory and you need to return it to the store where you bought it. The receipt proves you made the purchase.

### **Sales Tactics**

You might encounter salespeople who use various high-pressure tactics to induce you to buy from them. This may happen in person or on the telephone. Many salespeople work on commission, which means their wages grow as the volume of their sales grows. Such people have a strong interest in selling as much as possible, and they may be very good at talking people into buying from them. In general, they try to make the customer feel guilty or inadequate for not buying. Or they may try to establish what seems like a very cordial, friendly relationship so that the customer feels compelled to buy in order to maintain the friendliness.

It is wise to remember that you do not have to buy anything from any salesperson. You ought to buy only those things you genuinely need or want and can afford. Try not to let your personal feelings about the salesperson influence you to make a purchase. Remember

that you are entitled to ask a salesperson any questions you want about the product or service, and you are entitled to get a clear, complete answer. You can tell the salesperson you want to think about the matter for a few days, or that you want to talk to other people who have purchased the product or service. You can walk away from a salesperson without a cordial end to the conversation. If a salesperson telephones you (as is not unusual – some businesses hire people to telephone potential customers and try to talk them into buying, also known as telemarketing), you do not have to listen to the person's entire "pitch" and respond to it courteously. You may interrupt the person at any time and state that you are not interested in the product or service. You may simply hang up the telephone without saying anything. Of course, there are many salespeople who are genuinely interested in assisting customers and in offering them reasonable products and prices.

If you are in doubt about the wisdom of a particular purchase, you might want to consult with another person who has had experience with the product or the business that interests you. If you receive unsolicited merchandise in the mail, you are not obligated to pay for it.

## **Sales Taxes**

A sales tax is added to the cost of some purchases. Income generated from sales taxes is used to support various state-run programs, such as highway maintenance, public education and law enforcement. The Illinois sales tax rate is 6.25 percent.

## **Food**

There are three general kinds of food stores – supermarkets, neighborhood stores and convenience stores. A supermarket is a large store which sells not only groceries but also paper goods, kitchen supplies, and health and beauty aids. Supermarkets in the Charleston area include: County Market, Save-A-Lot and Super Wal-Mart. Save-A-Lot is an example of a discount food store where you can buy items for a much lower cost, but there will not be a large selection of items or brands.

Neighborhood stores and convenience stores are smaller, have fewer non-food items. They usually have longer hours of business and charge higher prices on most of their products, such as Casey's, Amoco and Huck's. Convenience stores usually sell gasoline and some automobile supplies as well as a limited range of food products. Most people do nearly all their food shopping at the supermarket, and only go to neighborhood stores or convenience stores to buy one or two items needed quickly.

## **Discount and Thrift Stores**

You may run into many types of discount stores, they may be called "Dollar Stores." This is where you can buy many everyday products for a much cheaper price. They are particularly good for cleaning products and supplies, though you will often find other good deals. There are also thrift or second hand shops, which may be a good place to find nice clothing and furniture that has been used, but is still in good condition. This will be much more cost efficient than buying new products.

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY**

People coming to Illinois from abroad bring with them many impressions of life in America. One of those impressions concerns crime and violence. American movies, television, and news reports from the U.S. that appear abroad, may convey the impression that serious crime is widespread, not just in major cities but all over the country. This impression is not well founded. The rates of crime and violence are higher in some parts of the U.S. than others. The crime situation in the Charleston area is quite low. This is not to say that Charleston is a perfectly safe place. Serious crimes, such as murder, armed robbery, grand theft, are relatively rare here. However, some lesser crimes are fairly common. There have been assaults on women. It is therefore wise to take certain precautions to protect yourself and your property. Charleston is generally a safe city compared to other major cities and with larger universities. However, we want you to have an awareness of how to take care of yourself. Being socially cautious is a very important rule, especially when you are in a new country. Here are some specific suggestions:

### **Personal Safety**

- Make sure someone knows where you will be, and when you will return, in particular, **notifying the International Programs office is recommended** when you leave town.
- Keep your doors locked even when you are at home.
- If someone knocks at your door or rings your doorbell, do not open the door until you have asked who is there. You are not required to open the door simply because someone knocks.
- Leave both an outside and an inside light on if you will be away from your room or apartment after dark.
- Use caution when you are walking on campus or other places in the city. Abide by the traffic signals.
- Always use well lighted and well traveled routes; avoid tall shrubbery or other concealing areas.
- Women are advised to be particularly cautious. Avoid walking alone at night, especially in areas of town or on the campus that are not well lit. Walk with a companion, or find a ride in a bus or car. If you must walk, vary your route.
- If you are involved in a rape or sexual assault situation, you should call the University Police at 581-3213 or 911. They will assist you in arranging counseling and any health services you may require.
- The best way to take care of yourself and fend off a potential attacker is to use common sense: remain calm, do not panic, and always look for a way out.
- Remember, 911 is the emergency number.

### **Protecting Valuables**

- Lock the doors to rooms, apartments and cars.
- At the library: do not leave valuables unattended, even briefly. Take your backpack, coat or other valuable possessions with you, or remove valuable possessions from your backpack if you are going to be away from your table.

- Clothing: Winter coats, hats and scarves are sometimes stolen from coat racks in libraries or restaurants. If you own expensive winter clothing, keep it in your sight in public places.
- If you take a vacation away from Charleston, make arrangements for a trusted friend to check your home every day. The post office will hold your mail while you are away if you go there and sign a form for that purpose. Do not let mail or newspapers collect outside your apartment door. If you own many valuables, buy insurance for your household goods.
- Buy a good lock for your bicycle and use it.

## CHAPTER 2

# LIVING IN CHARLESTON AND ILLINOIS

## MANAGING YOUR MONEY

Most international students, like large numbers of American students, live on limited budgets. It is best to manage your money wisely in order to make sure it lasts as long as possible. It is important to be cautious about spending money until you have become accustomed to the value of the dollar and have developed a thorough realization of what your essential living expenses will be.

It is not wise to carry large amounts of cash with you, or to keep it at your residence. Instead, please deposit it in a bank. For daily purposes, ten to twenty U.S. dollars should be more than enough. If you plan to go shopping, whether for groceries or anything else, you may need more, but you should use your own judgment, and writing a check or using a debit or credit card is usually acceptable if you do not have enough cash on you.

### **Currency**

U.S. money is broken down into a decimal system with 100 cents to the dollar (\$). Currency is issued in either coins or bills. Coins are either copper or silver and are issued in six different values and sizes.

1 cent: (a penny) the only copper coin.

5 cents: (a nickel) a silver coin, slightly larger than a penny.

10 cents: (a dime) a silver coin, the smallest coin.

25 cents: (a quarter) a silver coin, larger than a nickel.

50 cents: (half-dollar) rarely seen or used.

100 cents: (silver dollar) rarely seen in circulation.

Paper money, or bills, are all the same size, though their value is noted both on the front and back of the bill. Bills are issued in 1, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100's most commonly, though there are larger bills that most people never see or use. Coins are often used in soda or candy machines (vending machines), laundry facilities, telephones, photocopiers, and parking meters.

Most paper money is grey paper with green printing, though they have begun issuing new twenty dollar bills that incorporate a peach color in them.

### **Methods of Payment**

You may pay for your choices in several different methods. Cash is always acceptable, though it may not be convenient if you are buying something expensive. Most stores and individuals selling items will accept a personal check, though they may require identification, checks numbered starting at 500 or 1000, or they may have a minimum amount you may write a check for. Many people see checks as a hassle, so many will carry debit cards that directly withdraw money from your checking account. Credit cards and

debit cards are both widely acceptable and can be used at most stores. Most locations will also accept traveler's checks as long as they are in U.S. currency. Most banks will allow you to cash traveler's checks or deposit them into an account as long as you hold an account at that bank.

## Banking

There are three types of banking services available in Charleston: Full-service banks, savings and loan associations, and credit unions. Their services are similar in that they all offer savings and checking accounts and loans to qualified customers. The interest rates for these services may be somewhat more competitive at credit unions and savings and loans, but they generally vary only slightly. Banks offer additional services such as safe-deposit boxes and international currency exchanges. Credit unions are member-owned and one must usually be employed at the university or certain other businesses to become a member. We encourage all of our international students and faculty to take advantages of our on-campus banking services.

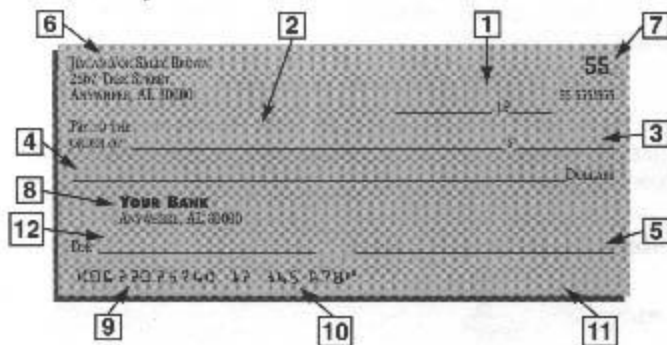
The name of our EIU on-campus bank is First Mid-Illinois Bank and Trust.

It is very important to keep a running balance of your account each time you write a check. A charge is levied each time you overdraw your account – that is, each time you write a check not covered by the amount you have deposited in your account. Most people pay their bills by means of personal checks, sometimes delivered personally but usually sent through the mail. Cash should not be sent in the mail. Sending checks through the mail is the most convenient way to pay your bills.

## Personalized Checks

Nearly all banking customers use personalized checks. Personalized checks have your name, address, and telephone number or other information you choose printed on them. It is not recommended that you have your Social Security number displayed on your checks, though a driver's license number may be appropriate, if you have one. You must pay a few dollars for your supply of personalized checks, so it is wise to wait until you have an address, Social Security number and phone number before you have your checks printed. In the meantime, the bank will issue a temporary supply of blank checks.

## Writing a Check



Above is an example of how to write a check:

1. The date the check was written.
2. To whom the check was written.
3. Amount of check in numbers (after the \$).
4. Amount of check written in words.
5. Your signature as you signed your signature card, which may be different from what is printed on the check.
6. Your name and address.
7. Check number.
8. Bank name and branch where your checking account is handled.
9. Computer routing number.
10. Your checking account number.
11. Amount paid by the bank from your checking account will be printed here.
12. A record of why the check was written.

You must fill in sections 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 when writing a check, and section 12 is optional for your own records.

Immediately after you write a check, you should record all the information from it on your check register. This includes the check number, the date the check is written, the name of the payee (that is, the person or business to whom the payment is being made), the amount of the check, and the fee for the check, if any. You must calculate the balance remaining in your account. This will keep your checking account up to date.

You should also record in your check register any time you add money or “make a deposit” to your account.

Each month your bank will send you a statement of your account, along with the canceled checks you have written and it has paid. You should make sure your record of the amount remaining in your account agrees with the bank’s record. The statement will reflect amounts subtracted from your account by the bank for service charges or for printing personalized checks. You should enter these amounts in your check register.

### **Savings Account**

A savings account earns interest at relatively low rates. If you have several hundreds of dollars above your routine living expenses, a savings account is a safe way to invest it. You

can withdraw any amount from a regular (or “passbook”) savings account whenever it is necessary.

Banks also offer savings certificates and money market certificates that require specified minimum deposits and earn higher rates of interest than regular savings accounts, but which must remain on deposit for designated periods of time. A savings certificate or money market certificate is a prudent investment if you are certain that you do not need the money until the designated time period has elapsed (which can be 90 days, six months, one year, or more). This is usually called a certificate of deposit or CD.

### **Automatic Teller Machines or ATM**

The automatic teller is a computerized device through which bank customers can make deposits or withdrawals at any time of the day or week. To operate an ATM, the customer needs a plastic card, commonly called a money card or debit card, and a personalized secret number the bank provides to the money card holder. Instructions for operating the ATM are given on the machine itself. All the banks in the Charleston area offer debit cards to their customers. You can use your debit card at any ATM, even if it is not a bank where you have an account. However, it is recommended that you only make deposits at the ATM representing a branch of your bank. There is also a small charge for using an ATM that is not sponsored by your bank, usually \$2 for each transaction.

The campus ATMs are located in the Martin Luther King Union Building (West Entrance of East Building), 9<sup>th</sup> and Roosevelt, 4<sup>th</sup> and Roosevelt and in the Lantz Arena in the main hallway. Other ATMs in the city are located at 701 6<sup>th</sup> Street, 500 W. Lincoln and 1400 Lincoln.

ATMs are a convenience offered by banks to make transactions after closing hours, or to avoid long lines in the bank. ATMs have been the target for criminals because of their easy access. Please use common sense when using an ATM, and abide by the following safety instructions.

- Use only ATMs that are in well-lit public areas away from bushes or other possible hiding places that criminals might use.
- Have your card ready before approaching the ATM, and do not take time to count your money until you are in a secure area.
- When using an ATM at night, try to have a friend accompany you.
- Never share your pin number with anyone, and use your body to shield the pin number as you enter it into the machine.
- To keep your account information confidential, always keep receipts or transaction records.

# **MEDICAL CARE AND EXPENSES**

Medical care in the United States has two characteristics that distinguish it from other countries. First, it devotes considerable resources to prolonging the lives of people with serious illness or unusual injuries. The cost of medical care reflects the enormous investments in research, medication and technology that are required to make this type of care available. Second, there is no national medical care program or national insurance program. The result of these and other factors is that medical costs in the United States are extremely high and they must be paid by the individual incurring them.

## **Health and Accident Insurance**

To avoid having to pay high medical bills that result from serious illness or injury (the bill for a few days of hospital care can be in the thousands of dollars), it is necessary to have health insurance. Insurance protects against the need to meet the entire burden of high medical expenses by spreading the cost among a group of people, not all of whom will suffer injury or illness that will result in medical bills.

## **Health Insurance Requirements**

All international students, faculty members and their dependents are required to have health insurance while at EIU. The initial semester you attend the university and each semester following, you will be charged for medical insurance. This insurance fee will be included in your tuition. If you are already covered by medical insurance and you plan to continue that coverage while a student or on staff, you must bring a copy of your insurance policy, in English, with the company name, address and the policy number, to the health center for approval within the first ten days of the semester. Minimum requirements in coverage must be met. The policy must also indicate that you will be covered while in the United States. If the medical plan does meet our standard, your account will then be credited the amount of the insurance fee.

## **Coverage Provided by Health Insurance**

The university's insurance plan does not cover all medical expenses. In general, it covers the higher costs that result from accidents and serious illness, with attendant hospitalization, medical tests, and the services of doctors and nurses. Health insurance usually covers the costs of:

- Hospitalization
- Maternity benefits
- Psychiatric or substance abuse programs
- Physiotherapy
- Some surgery
- Anesthesia
- Ambulance fees
- Dental work as a result of injury

## **Student Health Service**

When you need medical care, go first to the health service on campus. The EIU Health Service is located Student Services Building on 7<sup>th</sup> St., directly behind Klem Hall. All registered students are eligible to use the service provided, the student has a health record on file. The health service is open during the fall and spring semesters, Monday through Friday, telephone 581-3013, 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays. It is closed during holiday periods. During the summer months, the EIU Health Service is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and closed on the weekends.

The staff consists of registered nurses and a physician. The health center is equipped to handle acute health care problems and minor injuries. Most students use the health center for treatment of colds, sore throats, coughs, infections, viruses, rashes, injuries and other minor illnesses. When the health problem is beyond the scope of the health center, the student is referred to a specialist (such as an orthopedist, gynecologist, allergists, etc.) The student must pay for any bills resulting from the referral. There is no charge to use the health center; however, fees are charged for laboratory tests, x-rays and medications. When there is an emergency and the health center is closed, students should contact his/her Resident Assistant or Hall Director for help if you live on campus. The campus police will transport you to Sarah Bush Lincoln Hospital for treatment. You will be charged for any costs related to the hospital visit.

Sometimes students prefer not to use the health center, but you should go there anyway because your student insurance will cover more expenses if you visited the campus health center first. There is a list of health care services in the EIU telephone directory or you may consult the Yellow Pages of the Charleston telephone directory under "Physicians."

## RELIGION

Religion does not play the pervasive role in the United States that it does in some other countries as, for example, in Muslim countries or countries where Catholicism is the official religion. Though the major tradition in America is Christian, there is no official religion or established church supported by the government. Indeed, strong efforts are generally made to prevent any open governmental support of religious activities of any kind. The doctrine of “separation of church and state” is widely respected, and perceived deviations from it over such matters as prayer in public schools cause vigorous debate. Religion is generally considered a private matter. People have their own beliefs, and they may or may not discuss them with others. Many Americans are generally taught not to raise the subject of religion with people they do not know well, lest they offend or create an argument with someone who has differing views.

Visitors from abroad will find a wide range in the religious practices of Americans in Charleston. Some people attend a church or synagogue weekly and also participate in church/synagogue-related social and service activities. Some attend a church or synagogue irregularly, and some do not attend at all. Some Americans who openly discuss their religious beliefs belong to certain Christian groups who consider it their duty to try to attract others to their faith, but others are genuinely interested in religion and the way it affects their life. You may possibly run into people who are members of cults, but this is rare. Cults are groups that often single out foreign students and try to convert them. Foreign students will want to be aware that kindness done them or interest shown them by representatives of religious organizations will often be displays of genuine helpfulness and concern, but could possibly be part of an effort to induce a student from abroad to join a cult. In the Charleston area, there is little concern for cults, but it is good to be aware that they exist. More often than encounters with cult members, you may meet young Mormon men, dressed nicely in button down shirts and ties, knocking on people’s doors, spreading information about their faith. These people are harmless, and very friendly; they may engage you in conversation, which you may oblige if you have time and are interested.

### **Religious Organizations**

The area has many Christian and Catholic churches in the Charleston area and a synagogue in Mattoon. The names and addresses of the area churches and the synagogue are in the Yellow Pages of the Charleston telephone directory.

**Cults:** As it is used in contemporary America, the word “cult” refers to a religiously-oriented group that may have no affiliation with an established church. Cults generally differ from any traditional religion. They often have a human leader who is considered god-like and who has an exalted position. Their members’ personal possessions sometimes become the group’s property. They operate in a secretive way; they are unclear about their purposes. They often believe they are being persecuted by the general society. Cults sometimes require complete obedience from their members.

Cult members try to recruit you or other members by offering friendship, help and answers to problems. They often choose people who appear lonely or confused because such people are considered more vulnerable to cult members’ ideas. They do not make clear, in

their offers of friendship and help, that they are cult members trying to persuade new people to join.

To protect yourself from cult members who are trying to recruit new members, you need to be very careful of people who:

- tell you they can provide easy solutions to your problems;
- urge you to join them because “everyone is doing it;”
- argue that you should feel guilty if you do not join their organization;
- invite you to isolated weekend “workshops” with unclear goals.

Please do not go to organized meetings that you are not free to leave at any time. You need not listen or reply to a person who does not appear to respect your right to have your own religion.

### **Foreign Visitors and Religion**

International students and scholars who are Christian, Catholic, or Jewish and who want to join a church or synagogue here in Charleston can simply look up appropriate addresses and telephone numbers in the Yellow Pages. Those representing other faiths can seek out fellow nationals who share their beliefs and/or contact our office for assistance and ask how they go about practicing their religion in Charleston.

If you want to see what happens in an American church, you can simply attend a service. Most churches are open to anyone who would like to attend, but you may also go with a friend or acquaintance who attends a church or synagogue.

# **HOUSEKEEPING**

Many people coming to the United States have never faced the need to do their own shopping, cooking and house cleaning. These things have always been done by parents and/or servants. If these activities are new for you, you should be aware that in the U.S. it is completely acceptable for both men and women who are not servants to shop for groceries, cook, wash dishes and clothes, clean house, and take care of children. Most Americans, and all American landlords, think it is important that living quarters be kept reasonably clean. (You may encounter notable exceptions to this). The concern for cleanliness is evident in the supermarket, where you will see large numbers of liquids, powders, and sprays designed to help clean or polish dishes, floors, windows, toilet bowls, walls, furniture, ovens, etc. In addition, you will see brooms, mops, dust mops, dish rags, sponges, scouring pads, and various brushes, all for cleaning purposes. You can ask someone who lives here, and whose living quarters seem clean, to help you select the cleaning supplies you will need.

## **Stoves**

Kitchen stoves may be gas or electric. In either case, it is important to keep the burners and oven clean so they will work safely and effectively. You should wipe the burners after each use to keep soiled food from hardening on them. Clean the oven periodically, using ammonia or a special oven cleaner, unless it is self-cleaning. Instructions for self-cleaning units are usually provided. When using oven cleaner, or any other specialized cleaning product, read the label carefully and follow the instructions. Many cleaning products are harmful if inhaled or allowed to touch your skin.

## **Refrigerators**

A refrigerator should be defrosted when the ice (or frost) around the freezing unit becomes one-quarter-inch thick. To defrost the refrigerator, turn it off, empty it and let the water from the melting frost drip into a tray or pan which you can empty into the sink. You can speed the process of melting the frost by putting a pan of boiling water in the refrigerator beneath the frosted area. Wipe the inside of the refrigerator with a solution of water and baking soda.

Some refrigerators defrost automatically. You should ask your landlord how to take care of yours.

## **Disposal of Trash and Garbage**

Ask your landlord what you should do with your trash and garbage. Refuse is usually collected once a week by either the city where you live or by private contractors.

## **Recycling**

The city of Charleston has a voluntary recycling program for our community. This means that you may separate glass, aluminum cans and newspaper from your trash and garbage. If

you live in an apartment, your apartment complex should have separate trash bins for these items. You will notice that EIU has separate trash bins for these items in every building.

### **Keeping the Kitchen Clean**

American kitchens are less open to fresh air than are kitchens in some other places. Grease and oil in the air tend to accumulate on walls and on the tops of refrigerators and cabinets. These areas should be cleaned to avoid the development of unpleasant odors. This is especially true if you fry food frequently. Keeping crumbs off the counters and the floors will avoid attracting insects and rodents.

### **Bathroom**

An important area in which there are widespread differences in customs and cultures has to do with ideas about toilets and bathrooms. Foreign students and scholars who share bathrooms with Americans, and who want to maintain constructive relationships with those Americans, will want to be aware of these differences. So will students and scholars who rent rooms or apartments from Americans and want to be able to recover their entire damage deposits when they leave the United States.

While Americans in general do not clean and polish a bathroom on a daily basis, as people in some other countries may do, they believe that bathrooms should be kept relatively clean and free of odors.

This means at least weekly cleaning of toilet bowls, bathtubs, sinks, shower stalls and bathroom floors. Hair, soap residues and smears on mirrors and tile should be removed. Products for cleaning toilet bowls, porcelain (with which sinks and toilets are made), tile and glass are available at many types of stores.

After any bath or shower, water that has gotten onto the floor around the bathtub or shower stall should be dried up. Towels and washcloths should be hung so they can dry without creating unpleasant odors.

### **Toilets**

People in many parts of the world do not use the type of toilet on which a person sits. Instead, they are accustomed to the type on which a person squats. Unfortunately, the practice of squatting on a sitting-type toilet will eventually loosen the toilet from its connection to the sewer pipe that goes into the floor beneath the toilet. Then the foul-smelling water will leak out. Therefore, although the adjustment may be difficult, people who are accustomed to squatting on a toilet are well-advised to learn to sit on the toilets used in the United States.

Finally, two points about toilet etiquette:

- Flush the toilet after each use.
- Men should raise the toilet seat before urinating into the toilet so they do not splash urine on the seat, and then put the seat back down when they are finished.

### **Cleaning Supplies:**

A wide variety of cleaning solutions is available in all grocery stores and in some discount department stores. Always read the labels to determine proper uses for each product. These are a few examples of products you can use:

For ovens: Easy Off, Oven-Off (do not use anything on self-cleaning ovens).

For non-teflon-coated pots and pans: "scrubbers" made of copper, steel wool or plastic, such as SOS pads, Brillo, Scotch-Brite.

For washing dishes: Ivory Liquid, Joy, Dove, Palmolive, Dawn (do not use these in dishwashing machines; instead use a dishwasher detergent like Cascade or Finish).

For sinks and tubs: powder products such as Ajax, Comet, or Bon-Ami, or liquid cleaners such as Formula 409, Mr. Clean or Lysol Basin, Tub and Tile Cleaner. Some of these products are not recommended for fibreglass tubs and sinks.

For toilet bowls: SNOBOL, Vanish, Sani-Flush (use carefully and only on the inside of the bowl).

For floors: Mr. Clean, Spic N Span, Pine-Sol (read directions carefully)

For windows & mirrors: vinegar, ammonia, Windex.

For dusting: Pledge, Endust (sprays may not be best for good quality wood furniture).

NOTE: Never mix products that contain chlorine with those that contain ammonia, since poisonous gases may form. Keep all cleaning supplies away from children; many of them are poisonous. In case of accidental ingestion, call the Poison Control hotline at 1-800-764-7661.

# WEATHER IN CHARLESTON

## **Climate**

The climate in Charleston varies from season to season, and we experience all four seasons though the duration of each season is varied and irregular. Spring is typically short, and spring-like weather arrives late in March and may last until the end of May. The temperature is generally mild, accompanied by rain and wind. The flowers and trees begin to blossom in spring.

Summer weather usually begins in June and may continue until the end of September. The temperature is usually hot and humid with temperatures ranging from 60 Fahrenheit at night to 100 or more during the day.

Autumn, also called fall, usually arrives late in September with cooler weather.

Temperatures may range from 30 to 70 Fahrenheit and there is typically rain and occasionally some snow. Winter follows autumn with its harshest weather between December and the first part of March. Temperatures generally range from 0 to 50 Fahrenheit, but may drop well below 0 when the wind chill is factored in. Harsh winds along with snow, sleet and ice are typical during this season.

## **Bad Weather**

During the winter months, you may experience blizzards (bad storms which include snow, high winds, and cold temperatures). After heavy snows, shovel the snow away from the porch and sidewalks where you and others walk. When the snow becomes compressed, it becomes slippery. In case you are not familiar with ice storms, be forewarned that it is dangerous to walk on ice and perhaps even more dangerous to drive on icy streets. If you must go out, wear shoes that have grids rather than smooth leather-soled shoes, and drive cautiously. When driving on ice: brake lightly and repeatedly to stop; if your car should slide, turn your steering wheel in the direction of the slide to regain control; if you have mechanical problems or if the weather becomes torrential and visibility is limited, stay inside the car to remain protected from the cold.

Tornadoes generally occur in the Fall and in the Spring. A tornado is a storm with very high winds that form a funnel cloud. These storms form rapidly and can cause a great amount of damage in a short time. A "tornado warning" means that tornado funnel clouds have been spotted, while a "tornado watch" indicates that weather conditions are such that tornadoes may develop.

Charleston has a disaster warning system to alert the population when a tornado threatens. Sirens are mounted on several buildings throughout the city and will sound continuously when a storm is threatening. At the sound of the sirens, you should take cover in a basement or under a table away from windows to protect yourself from broken glass. If the siren should sound while you are in your car abandon your car and take cover in the nearest ditch or low-lying area. Protect your head with a pillow or your hands. Attempting to drive away from a tornado funnel is not safe. **Do not be alarmed if you hear the warning sirens sound on the first Tuesday of each month in the morning as part of the maintenance of the system.**

## **Dressing for Cold Weather**

The cold weather that occurs during winters in Illinois comes as a shock to visitors from warmer countries. Wear several layers of lighter clothing, rather than one or two very heavy layers. Several lightweight, loose layers will keep you warmer than one heavy layer because air trapped between the layers will be heated by the body and serve as insulation. Clothes with a lining are warmer than unlined garments because of the additional layer. Another advantage to wearing several layers of clothing is that extra layers can be removed indoors, where rooms may be warm. Choose warm fabrics. The type of fabric used in a garment can also affect its warmth. More absorbent fabrics, by allowing perspiration and body moisture to evaporate from the skin, keep you warmer. Natural fibers, such as cotton and wool, are the most absorbent and therefore the warmest fibers. (The fiber content of a garment is printed on a label attached to each garment sold in the United States, so when you are buying clothes, you can see what they are made of).

The weight of a fabric is not necessarily related to its warmth, but its thickness is. Thickly constructed fabrics (knits; pile fabrics such as fake furs; quilted, laminated or bonded fabrics; and thick tweeds) provide greater insulation and thus keep you warmer. Jackets filled with goose down, originally worn mainly for winter camping and hunting, have become very popular in recent years. Although very lightweight, they provide more warmth than many jackets that are made of much heavier materials.

Select clothing designed for cold weather use. Garment design also affects insulation. Tight clothing does not keep you warmer. It actually inhibits blood circulation, so the body cannot warm itself as efficiently, and also provides less chance for warm air to be trapped in the clothing for insulation. However, garments should fit tightly at the wrists, ankles, neck, and waist to prevent warm air from escaping. Ribbed or buttoned cuffs are warmer than open sleeves; turtleneck collars are warmer than open collars; knee socks or tights are warmer than ankle-length socks; thick-soled boots are warmer than shoes; pants are warmer than skirts. A belt at the waist or a tucked-in blouse or shirt helps trap warm air at that area of the body.

In general, it is prudent when you must be outside during very cold weather to leave as few areas of the body exposed as possible. It is essential to keep your head and ears covered with a hat (or a hood). Remember that ears are easily susceptible to frostbite (damage to skin tissue due to freezing).

## **Weather Information**

It is advisable to listen to weather reports and warnings, especially in the case of bad weather. You may tune in to T.V. channels 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 13 for severe weather information. You may also go to [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) or listen to WEIU 88.9 FM Radio.

# **MOTOR VEHICLES**

## **Owning and Operating a Car in Charleston and Illinois**

Anyone residing in Charleston and operating a vehicle in Illinois must have an Illinois driver's license. To apply for a driver's license, you must complete the Residency Certification Form in the International Student Office and take it to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), 1010 E Street, Charleston, IL. 61920; telephone: 345-7401. Go west on Lincoln Avenue to E Street and then turn right for about 1 ½ blocks. The Department of Motor Vehicles will be on your left side of the street.

Remember, when you purchase a car in Illinois, you must pay yearly \$78 fee for drivers license plate payable to the Secretary of State, \$65.00 for a title payable to the Secretary of State (which shows ownership) and there is also a tax to pay (payable to the Illinois Department of Revenue), which depends on the age of the vehicle. The Charleston police will ticket you if the proper license is not properly displayed on the license plate.

## **Campus Parking**

All faculty, staff and students who operate or expect to operate a motor vehicle (whether privately owned, leased, or borrowed) on the University campus, either regularly or occasionally, must register with the University police, Parking Service Division, and secure and display a valid parking permit while the vehicle is on the Eastern Illinois University campus. This registration must occur before a vehicle is parked in any campus lot that requires a permit. The parking permit costs are as follows:

Students age 21 or with 60 or more semester hours	\$50 year \$25 semester
Students with less than 60 semester hours (if available)	\$150 year \$75 semester
Motorcycle	\$10 year \$5 semester

The registered user/owner has sole responsibility for the parking permit and all citations with the following exception: if it is determined by the University Police Department that a person attending the University receives a parking ticket on a vehicle to which the registered owner is not affiliated with the University, the operator of that vehicle will be responsible for all tickets issued to that vehicle.

Seldom is the operator of an unregistered vehicle known. Establishing responsibility for parking violations involves the reasonable assumption that a student, faculty or staff member with the same address as the registered owner of the vehicle is the operator of that vehicle that receives parking citation(s). When two or more students, faculty or staff members reside at the same address, the assumption is that one or more are operators. The responsibility of finding a legal parking space rests with the vehicle operator. Lack of parking spaces is not justification for illegal parking.

## **If you live off-campus**

You are allowed to have an Illinois driving license at the age of 19. If you are younger, you must prove you had driver training courses and

- Bring your passport, I-94, I-20, driver's license and Social Security card to the DMV office. If your driver's license is not in English, you must bring a certified translation in English.
- Get the residency certification document from the International Programs Office (if you have residency in Illinois), fill it out and get it notarized.
- Take a copy of your lease for proof of address.
- Take the written examination, which covers Illinois traffic and safety laws. You can get a copy of the Illinois Rules of the Road at the DMV. The manual covers the rules of the road, traffic laws, regulations and defensive driving. Use this book to prepare for the written examination. If you fail the written exam, you may take it again after a couple days.
- Take an eyesight examination at the DMV. You must have at least 20/50 vision in one or both eyes with or without eyeglasses or contact lenses.
- The examiner will require you to take a road test.
- If you pass the written examination, eyesight check and road test, you will be issued an Illinois driver's license. The license is valid for four years. It is the most accepted form of identification in the United States.

## **Motor Vehicle Registration**

If you live in Illinois and buy or own a car, you must title and register it with the Department of Motor Vehicles before it can be driven on public roads. If you move into the state of Illinois, you must title and register your car within 90 days (or sooner if your out-of-state registration expires before then).

To register your vehicle, follow these procedures:

- Complete an application form at the DMV.
- Show proof of ownership of the vehicle.
- Make payment of state sales tax on the purchase (or show that the tax has been paid).
- Show proof that you have vehicle and liability insurance.
- Pay the registration fee.

## **Automobile Insurance**

Every vehicle registered in Illinois must be covered by liability insurance. This covers the costs of injury and property damages you may cause in an accident. Your insurance company must give you an Illinois insurance identification for your vehicle. This card must be with the vehicle at all times. You must show your insurance card if you are stopped by a police officer. If you do not have an insurance card when driving, you can be fined.

Driving an uninsured vehicle is against the law.

There are state limits on the minimum amount of coverage a driver must carry, and it is important that you shop around to find an agency that will offer you the most coverage for the lowest price. International students may have a higher rate for the first two or three years until they have established a driving record in the United States.

# **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

## **Local Police**

The police have different roles in different countries. The main responsibility of police officers is to enforce local ordinances (laws). Some of the ordinances that are most strictly enforced (and most often violated) in Charleston are those concerning alcoholic beverages and driving.

The local police (Charleston City Police, Coles County Sheriff's Department) do not work for the U.S. government or any of its branches (such as the CIA or INS). They do not spy or investigate for the U.S. government or any foreign government. Most of the time they are the best friends you may find on the road so do not be afraid of our police officers. If a person is convicted of violating a law, the convicted person's name and nature of the violation are recorded in the police department's files. This is called a police record. A person will have a police record for committing minor violations as well as criminal violations. A person's police record can be made available to certain governmental authorities.

Many students are concerned that being convicted of a crime will result in deportation. DHS will begin deportation proceeding only if you are convicted of a violent crime, a crime involving drugs or illegal substances, or a crime of moral and financial nature.

## **EIU Campus Police**

EIU has a police force that is fully empowered by the state of Illinois. This means that the officers can carry guns and have the ability to arrest anyone suspected of committing a crime. The EIU police emergency number is 581-3212 or 911. There are emergency phones located in several places on campus that you can use in case of an emergency.

## **Federal Law Enforcement Agencies**

The federal law enforcement agency responsible for enforcing the immigration laws is the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. No other agency shares responsibility for acting in cases where aliens might have violated the terms of their immigration status. A controversial federal regulation requires non-immigrants to answer any questions asked of them by BCIS officers, no matter what the subject of the questions might be.

Another federal law enforcement agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, has responsibilities that sometimes lead their agents to want to question foreign students and scholars.

## **A Word of Advice**

Foreign students and scholars are not required to answer any questions addressed to them by an FBI agent unless the agent has obtained a court order (called a subpoena) mandating a reply. If an FBI agent asks you to answer some questions and does not have a subpoena, you can, if you wish, simply say that you prefer not to answer any questions. Doing so will not affect your immigration status.

If you are contacted by the FBI and are uncertain of how to respond, you may want to contact the International Programs Office for advice. Remember, FBI officers are extremely polite and courteous, and they are very considerate toward your rights in this country. They are also very respectful toward you as a person. For most foreign students and scholars, this is usually a joyful shock.

For more information about your rights as an international student as well as the regulations you must abide by, you may want to visit the website for the DHS, particularly that section regarding immigration services. The DHS website is [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov) and the website regarding immigration services is [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).

# **HOLIDAYS IN THE UNITED STATES**

The U. S. has adopted legislation that moved the celebration of several holidays to the Monday nearest the date of the event the holiday is commemorated. The purpose of this legislation was to create as many three-day weekends (Saturday, Sunday, Monday) as possible.

Four principal national holidays – New Year’s Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas – are still celebrated on the same day each year. Another principal holiday, Labor Day, has traditionally been on Monday. Many businesses and all government offices close in observance of these holidays. Of the holidays on the following list, not all are celebrated throughout the U. S. and not all are celebrated by everyone. Some are holidays only for members of certain religions; others are for particular groups, such as lovers or children.

## **Holiday Calendar**

The following list indicates dates which are legal holidays (when government offices are closed) and those which are business holidays (when many businesses, except some drugstores, service stations, and food stores) are closed.

**New Year’s Day**, Jan. 1 - Celebration of New Year’s Day usually occurs the night before, on New Year’s Eve (Dec. 31), when it is common for groups to have a party to celebrate the coming of the new year. Alcoholic beverages are usually consumed at these parties. It is customary to make loud noises at midnight, when the new year officially arrives; embracing or kissing others at midnight is not unusual. This is a legal and business holiday.

**Martin Luther King Day** - Celebrated the third Monday in January. This is a legal holiday. King was a leader in the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. He was assassinated in 1968.

**Abraham Lincoln’s Birthday**, Feb. 12 – See also, President’s Day, (February, third Monday). Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, was instrumental in ending the Civil War in the 1860s and slavery. Lincoln was assassinated while still in office.

**St. Valentine’s Day**, Feb. 14 - A day for lovers to exchange cards and/or gifts. Children in primary school usually exchange valentine cards with their classmates.

**George Washington’s Birthday**, Feb. 22 - See also, President’s Day, (February, third Monday). George Washington was the first President of the United States. He was the Commander-in-Chief of the colonial army that fought for independence from England.

**President’s Day**, the third Monday in February – This is a legal holiday that commemorates Lincoln’s, Washington’s and other great presidents’ birthdays.

**Ash Wednesday**, date varies - Marks the beginning of the 40-day period of Lent, a period of penitence and fasting in some Christian denominations. On Ash Wednesday, some Christians attend a church service during which a small ash mark is placed on their forehead to symbolize man's ultimate return to dust.

**St. Patrick's Day**, March 17 - A dedication to the patron saint of Ireland. On this day, many people claim Irish ancestry. Many people also wear something green or orange on this day. Every year, a very big parade is held in New York City.

**Easter Sunday**, date varies (March or April) - Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For children, baskets of candy and dyed, hard-boiled eggs are hidden by a mythical Easter Bunny or Easter Rabbit. The children seek out the hidden eggs and baskets.

**Mother's Day**, the second Sunday in May - Gifts, cards and/or special attention are given to mothers and grandmothers.

**Memorial Day**, May 30 (or nearest Monday) – It is legal and business holiday when U. S. soldiers who have died in wars are honored.

**Father's Day**, the third Sunday in June - Gifts, cards and/or special attention are given to fathers and grandfathers.

**Flag Day**, June 14 - Flags are flown to mark the adoption of the American flag.

**Independence Day (or Fourth of July)**, July 4 - Parades, fireworks and flags celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence from England on this legal and business holiday.

**Labor Day**, first Monday of September - A legal and business holiday noting the importance of labor and labor organization

**Rosh Hashonah** (Jewish New Year) and **Yom Kippur** (Jewish Day of Atonement) - Both celebrated on varying dates in September and October.

**Columbus Day**, Oct. 12 ( or nearest Monday) - Commemorates the landing of Italian explorer Christopher Columbus on the shores of North America. This is a legal holiday, but not a business holiday.

**United Nations Day**, Oct. 24 - Speeches and events draw attention to the United Nations.

**Halloween**, Oct. 31 - A children's holiday associated with carving faces on pumpkins called Jack-O'Lanterns and making witches, cats and ghosts for decorations. Children often go to parties in costumes or go "trick-or-treating." "Trick or treating" means putting on a costume and going door-to-door in a neighborhood saying, "trick or treat" and receiving a

piece of candy or fruit from the occupant of the house or apartment. Young children should be accompanied by an adult when trick or treating.

**Election Day**, the Tuesday after the first Monday in November - Not a legal or business holiday, but people may leave work briefly to vote in municipal, county, state and/or national elections.

**Veteran's Day**, the second Monday in November - A legal holiday honoring veterans of armed service.

**Thanksgiving Day**, the fourth Thursday in November - A harvest celebration, stemming from harvest-time festivities in the original American colonies and representing the bond between the Native Americans and pilgrims. A legal and business holiday when, traditionally, families gather and have a large meal that includes turkey and pumpkin pie.

**Chanukah**, late November or (usually) early December - An eight-day Jewish holiday marking the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem.

**Christmas**, Dec. 25 - It began as a Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, but is now a widely-celebrated day of feasting and gift-giving. Preparations include gift-buying and decoration of homes and public places, which may begin as early as Thanksgiving. Santa Claus, or Father Christmas, a mythical figure, is said to visit the home of children on the night of Dec. 24 and leave gifts for them while they sleep.

## CHAPTER 3

### “Getting Along With Americans”

#### **NOTABLE CHARACTERISTICS OF AMERICAN CULTURE**

American society includes people representing large numbers of ethnic, religious, racial, socioeconomic, occupational and other types of groups. People in any of these various groups are likely to have ideas and opinions that differ from those of people in other groups. Even with this diversity, it is possible to mention certain characteristics which, in general, describe attitudes and practices that are common among Americans and that tend to distinguish Americans from people who have grown up in other cultures. Keep in mind that the following remarks are generalizations, and that you will find individuals who are exceptions to any or all of them.

#### **Individualism**

Americans generally believe that the ideal person is an autonomous, self-reliant individual. Most Americans see themselves as separate individuals, not as representatives of a family, community or other group. They dislike being dependent on other people, or having others dependent on them. Some people from other countries view this attitude as selfishness. Others view it as a healthy freedom from the constraints of ties to family, clan, or social class.

#### **Equality and Informality**

Americans are taught that all men (and women) are created equal. While they continually violate that idea in some aspects of life, in others they adhere to it. They treat each other in very informal ways; for example, even in the presence of great differences in age or social standing. From the point of view of some people from other cultures, this kind of behavior reflects lack of respect. From the point of view of others, it reflects a healthy lack of concern for social ritual. It is important to remember to be sensitive of people's differences; terms like retarded and racial slurs are not acceptable and many people will find them to be quite offensive.

#### **Time Consciousness**

Americans place considerable value on punctuality. They tend to organize their activities by means of schedules. As a result, they may sometimes seem harried, always running from one thing to the next, and not able to relax and enjoy themselves. Foreign observers sometimes see this as being ruled by the clock. Other times they see it as a helpful way of assuring that things get done. It is very important that while in the United States you are on time to your classes and meetings, it is even better still if you are able to arrive five, or so, minutes early. People will become very frustrated and angry with persistent tardiness.

## **Materialism**

Success in American society is often marked by the amount of money or quantity of material goods a person accumulates. A person accumulates money and goods by means of such valued qualities as hard work, cleverness and persistence. Some foreigners see all this as a lack of appreciation for the spiritual or human things in life. Others recognize it as a way of assuring a comparatively high standard of living in the country.

## **The Communication Style of Americans**

Another way of describing differences between people from diverse cultural backgrounds, besides comparing their values, is comparing their communicative styles.

When people of differing communicative styles interact, they frequently feel ill-at-ease, and they often misjudge or misunderstand each other. To help understand why that happens, and to try to reduce the communications problems that arise when it does happen, it is helpful if foreigners (anywhere, not just in the U.S.) know something about the communicative style of the local people, and the way it compares with their own communicative style. With that knowledge, foreigners will be better able to understand what is happening when they are dealing with the local people, and will know some of the ways the local people are likely to misunderstand or misjudge them.

### **Here are some generalizations (subject to exceptions) about the communicative style of Americans**

#### **Preferred Topics**

In casual conversation (called small talk), Americans prefer to talk about the weather, sports, jobs, people they both know, or past experiences, especially ones they have in common. As they grow up, Americans are warned not to discuss politics or religion, at least not with people they do not know rather well, because politics and religion are considered controversial topics. Sex, bodily functions and perceived personal inadequacies are considered to be very personal topics, and are likely to be discussed only between people who know each other very well and are certainly not acceptable topics to discuss during dinner situations or more formal encounters with people you do not know well. Younger people generally discuss sex more freely than older people do.

#### **Favorite Form of Verbal Interaction**

In the typical conversation between Americans, no one talks very long at a time. Participants in conversation “take turns” frequently, usually after the speaker has spoken only a few sentences. Americans prefer to avoid arguments; if argument is unavoidable, they prefer it to be restrained and carried on in a normal conversational tone and volume. Americans are generally rather impatient with ritual conversational exchanges. (Only a few of them are common: “How are you?” “Fine, thank you. How are you?” “Fine.”) Women in conversation will often face each other and maintain eye contact throughout the conversation, whereas men will often look away from each other and only make eye contact occasionally. Touching is uncommon unless the conversation is with a close friend.

### **Depth of Involvement Preferred**

Americans do not generally expect very much personal involvement from conversational partners. Small talk without long silences – which provoke uneasiness – is enough to keep matters going smoothly. It is only with very close friends (or with complete strangers whom they do not expect to see again) that Americans generally expect to discuss personal topics.

### **Preferred Tones of Speech**

The ideal among Americans is to be somewhat verbally adept, speaking in moderate tones, using relatively few and restrained gestures, of the arms and hands. They do not touch each other very often.

By contrast, others might prefer even quieter conversation, less talking and even more restrained gestures. Or they might be accustomed to louder voices, many people talking at once, vigorous use of hands and arms to convey meanings or add emphasis, and/or more touching between conversation partners.

### **Level of Meaning Emphasized**

Compared to Americans, people from some other countries might pay more attention to the emotional content or the human feelings aspects of a message, and be less concerned with what Americans would call facts. They may not assume the existence of an objective truth, but may suppose that facts are relative, depending on who is observing them.

Many misjudgments and misunderstandings can arise from interactions between people who have different communicative styles. Here are some examples:

Foreign visitors in the U.S. might hear little but small talk among Americans. They may derive the erroneous conclusion that Americans are not intellectually capable of anything more than simple talk about such subjects as the weather, sports, teachers or their own social lives. The conclusion that Americans are intellectually inferior is also reached by many people who regard argument as a favorite form of interaction, and who find that Americans are often not very adept at arguing.

When commenting about people who customarily speak little and who rely heavily on ritual conversation, Americans might use the labels shy, too formal, or polite.

Vigorous arguing, (with raised voices and much use of hands and arm, and perhaps more than one person talking at a time) of the kind that is “natural” to some people may alarm Americans, who expect violence, or at least long-lasting anger, to follow from loud disagreements.

What many Americans might regard favorably as keeping cool – not being drawn into an argument, not raising the voice, looking always for the facts – might be seen by others as coldness and a sort of lack of humanness. Conversely, Americans are likely to see those who do not keep cool as being overly emotional.

Embarrassment or uneasiness almost always results when someone raises a discussion topic that the other person thinks is inappropriate for the particular setting or relationship.

Americans are likely to view a very articulate person with some suspicion.

These are but a few of the many misjudgments that arise between Americans and people in the U.S. from other countries. It can be very helpful to be aware of the differences in communicative style that produce them. Talking about differences in communicative style, when such differences seem to be causing problems, is usually a good way to reduce the negative effects of the differences.

## **Nonverbal Communication**

When we think about communicating with people from other countries, we think first about their spoken language. But much (some scholars think most) communication between people is nonverbal, involving dress, ornaments, facial expressions, gestures, postures and body positioning.

### **Eye Contact**

When they are talking to someone, Americans alternate between looking briefly into the listener's eyes and looking slightly away. When they are listening to another person, they look almost constantly at the speaker's eyes. Americans tend to distrust people who do not look into their eyes while talking to them.

### **Touching**

People in some countries touch their conversation partners more frequently than Americans do. People in other countries may touch each other less often than Americans do. American men rarely touch each other, except when shaking hands. Women touch each other somewhat more often, but, with rare exceptions, they do not walk hand-in-hand or arm-in-arm the way women in many countries do. Americans usually get nervous if another person stands closer than about an arm's length away, unless the other person is a partner in a romantic relationship. They stand a bit closer if they are side-to-side rather than face-to-face.

This is not to say that there is a taboo on touching conversation partners. There is not. Some Americans periodically touch their conversation partners lightly on the arm or shoulder while talking. If one does so with you, you may do likewise.

### **Body Odor and Personal Hygiene**

As you can readily tell from television commercials, Americans have been taught that the natural smells of people's bodies and breath are unpleasant. Most Americans bathe or shower daily (or more often if they exercise during the day), use an underarm deodorant to counteract the odor of perspiration, and brush their teeth with toothpaste twice daily and perhaps more often than that. In addition, they may rinse their mouths with a mouthwash or chew mints or gum in order to be sure their breath is free of food odors. It is very common for women to shave their legs and underarms and to use a small quantity of perfume each day; many men use scented cologne or after-shave lotion to impart what they believe is a pleasant smell. Most Americans will quickly back away from a person who has body odor or bad breath. This backing away may be the only signal displaying that they are offended by another person's breath or body odors. The topic of these odors is so sensitive that most Americans will not tell another person that he or she has bad breath or body odors.

Some foreign students and scholars come from places where the human body's natural odors are considered quite acceptable, and where efforts to overcome those odors, at least on the part of men, are considered unnatural. Still other students and scholars come from places where personal cleanliness is considered more important than Americans consider it to be, and they may view most Americans as dirty.

## **Other Guidelines**

In a thoughtful and concise introduction to American society and culture, it is noted that: Americans have no taboo of any kind associated with the left hand; they are as likely to touch you or to hand you an object with the left as with the right hand.

Americans have no negative association with soles of the feet or the bottom of the shoes.

They do not feel it necessary to prevent others from seeing these parts of the body.

A common greeting to small children in the U.S. is to pat them on the top of the head.

People in the U.S. often point with their index finger and wave it around in the air as they make especially important points in conversation.

One attracts another person to come closer by holding the hand with the palm and fingers up, not down and wiggling them.

Americans show respect and deference for another person by looking him or her in the face, not by looking down.

Informal, relaxed postures are commonly assumed by U.S. people when they are standing or sitting, even when they are conversing with others. Lack of formal posture is not a sign of inattention or disrespect.

Americans are uncomfortable with silence. They expect to talk rather constantly when in the presence of others.

In the U.S., the doors of rooms are usually left open unless there is a specific reason to close them.

Being on time is very important to many U.S. people. They are likely to become quite annoyed if forced to wait more than 15 minutes beyond the scheduled time for meetings or appointments. Please, always plan to be on time.

(From "A Fondness for Ice Water: A Brief Introduction to the U.S.A. and Its People," AFS International/Intercultural Programs, 1984.)

## **GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICAL SITUATIONS**

The comments in the preceding section are very general. In this section, you will learn about some specific behaviors that Americans usually expect in certain situations.

### **Shaking Hands**

Men usually shake hands with each other the first time they meet. Men usually do not shake hands with women unless the woman extends her hand first. The hand shake should be firm, but not overly aggressive.

After the first meeting, shaking hands is relatively rare. If someone offers his or her hand to you, though, you should shake it. It is considered rude to not shake hands when the hand has been offered. In general, Americans avoid physical contact with each other.

When Americans shake hands, they normally exert a small amount of pressure on each other's hands, move their clasped hands a bit upwards, then a bit downwards, and then release their grip. People from other places where handshaking is customary may hold the other person's hand more or less firmly than Americans do. Many sustain the contact for a shorter or a longer time than Americans generally do. If you do not shake their hands in the manner they expect, you may notice their eyes widen in surprise. They expect handshaking to be done in their familiar way, and are surprised when it is not.

### **Names and Titles**

American names generally have three parts: first (or given) name, middle name or initial and last (family) name, in that order. For example, "I would like you to meet my teacher, Albert Einstein." On many forms and applications, though, the last name is listed first, followed by a comma and then first and middle initial. For example, a person named John Fitzgerald Kennedy would probably give his name as Kennedy, John F., on official forms. First names are used in the U.S. more frequently than elsewhere. People may call each other by their first names immediately after they have met. These general rules apply: Address people of your own approximate age and status by first name. This would apply to fellow students and neighbors.

If the other person is clearly older than you, you should use Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms. and their last name. For example, you would address Marlon Brando as Mr. Brando. If the older person asks you to use his or her first name, do so. The older person will probably address you by your first name from the beginning. Ms., pronounced "mizz," is used for both unmarried and married females.

If the other person has a title such as ambassador or dean, use that title and the last name. For example, you would address Sen. David Sherman as Senator Sherman. Any faculty member can be addressed as Professor whether he or she holds the rank of assistant professor, associate professor or full professor. Mister or Ms. is equally acceptable. If someone asks you to address him or her by first name, or Uncle Bijan, you should feel free to do so.

Americans do not use a title followed by a first name. For example, you would not address Elizabeth Taylor as Miss Elizabeth, but as Miss Taylor or, if she asked you, as Elizabeth.

The use of nicknames is fairly common among Americans. A nickname is not the person's real name, but a name assigned because of certain physical characteristics, behavior patterns or some other factor. Foreign students often acquire nicknames if their own names seem long, unpronounceable or just unusual to Americans. (Many Americans seem to believe it is unreasonable to expect them to learn to pronounce a long or unusual foreign name). For example, a student whose name is Nakagawa might come to be known as Naka. Being called by a nickname is not usually uncomplimentary. On the contrary, it may indicate that you are viewed with respect and even affection.

If you are in doubt about what to call a person, ask him or her. Conversely, Americans will sometimes be confused about what to call you. If you see that a person does not know what to call you, tell them. Say, "You can call me \_\_\_\_."

Americans' use of first name may make it appear to you that they are oblivious to differences in age and social status. They are not. There are subtle differences in vocabulary and manner, depending on the relationship between the people involved. For example, an American is less likely to use slang or obscenities when speaking to a person who is older, whose social status is higher, and/or whom they do not know very well. They will usually talk less and be less assertive in the presence of a person with higher status.

## **Relationships in the Workplace**

Cultural differences are reflected in the workplace as well as in other parts of society. Whether you have a student job in a food service, a research position in a laboratory or teaching responsibilities, you will find that the basic American values discussed elsewhere in this chapter are reflected in the behavior of the people around you. Individualism, equality and efficiency are cultural values particularly noticeable in American workplaces. Each workplace has its own culture with variations, for example, in the amount of attention paid to hierarchical differences. Foreign students and scholars need these following guidelines if they want to be accepted by the Americans around them.

- Arrive at work punctually. If you must be late or miss work, notify your supervisor as soon as you can. Always plan to be on time.
- Ask questions about any assignments or procedures you do not understand.
- Make sure you understand what you are expected to do before you start to do it. Don't say you understand something you do not truly understand.
- If you encounter difficulties in carrying out an assigned task, tell your supervisor immediately.
- Carefully follow any safety or health rules that pertain to your workplace.
- Be neat and clean, shower daily, brush your teeth, use mouthwash, shampoo and comb your hair.
- When appropriate, offer to help other employees with their tasks.
- Avoid treating your supervisor with what Americans would consider excessive deference or respect. For example, avoid saying "Yes, sir" repeatedly and avoid bowing. Notice how other employees at your level address the supervisor and how they treat him or her, and try to follow their example.
- Be friendly and sociable with fellow employees. Watch how they interact with each other, and try to follow their example. Learn something about the topics they

discuss when they are socializing, so you can join their informal conversations. If you have opportunities to participate in outside-of-work social activities with co-workers, try to do so.

- Treat subordinates, including secretaries, with respect.
- Treat females with respect.
- When you are talking with people, look directly at their eyes from time to time. Do not keep your eyes turned away from theirs.
- Periodically ask your supervisor, "How can I improve?"
- Show a positive attitude – avoid complaining and gossiping, and be cheerful and constructive in your dealings with people.
- Consistently practice and improve your English.
- Sometimes workers encounter problems associated with their jobs. For example, they might believe they are being treated unfairly or unreasonably, or that another employee's behavior is making it difficult for them to carry out their responsibilities. When this happens among Americans, the general expectation is that the worker will first speak directly with whom he or she has the problem. The next step is to talk to the supervisor, and then, if there is not resolution, the supervisor's supervisor, then the head of the unit.

## **Social Gatherings**

You will probably have opportunities to visit an American home for dinners or parties. The following paragraphs give a general idea of the behavior that is appropriate in formal situations and the expectations that are common at informal social gatherings. In general, you will notice what may seem to be a lack of attention to the formalities of a traditional host-guest relationship. Americans usually want their guests to feel at home, which to them, means feeling relaxed and able to act naturally as they presumably would in their own homes. Americans do not generally regard social gatherings as opportunities for hosts to display their wealth, generosity or good up-bringing.

Invitations to more formal engagements such as dinners or cocktail parties are usually written. A written invitation will include the date, time, place and a description of the occasion. If it states "R.S.V.P.," a French abbreviation for "répondez s'il vous plait," which translates in to English "respond if you please," you should phone to say whether you plan to attend or not to attend. If it says regrets only, reply only if you do not plan to attend. It is very important to tell the host or hostess about any dietary restrictions you have. If you are unsure how to dress, it is acceptable to ask: "What should I wear?" When replying to a formal invitation, you should never say that you accept an invitation unless you truly intend to attend.

It is essential to arrive on time for a meal or a cocktail party. You will be thought of as inconsiderate and impolite if you do not arrive at the appointed hour. It is a very good idea to notify your host or hostess if you cannot avoid being late. After the party, a telephone call or a personal comment expressing appreciation for an invitation is appropriate.

More formal dinner parties usually begin with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres (small appetizers). You may have an alcoholic or non-alcoholic cocktail. If you do not drink alcohol, it is perfectly appropriate for you to ask the host or hostess which drinks contain

no alcohol. Many dinners are served buffet-style, where the food is put on one table and the guests serve themselves and eat while standing. Student parties are likely to be quite casual. Invitations are often given over the phone or in person. The social rules are more relaxed. Guests might bring some portion of the meal (for example, a salad, dessert or beverage) after asking the host or hostess what would be appropriate to bring.

### **Potluck meals**

Every guest brings a dish to share. This type of dinner is common for larger groups. Potlucks are considered more convenient because they reduce the effort and cost required of the host. They provide an interesting variety of food. Often people share special dishes they like to cook. Although the name potluck implies uncertainty, the host or hostess will usually be certain that an appropriate number of each type of dish will be available. These informal gatherings are the pleasure of both the guests and the hosts. You should feel free to ask for anything that would make you more comfortable. Guests may offer to help clean up afterwards.

### **Keeping Appointments and Dates**

Remember that it is considered impolite and extremely inconsiderate to fail to keep an appointment or date without giving prior notice to the other person.

In this society, it is acceptable to decline an invitation by giving a vague excuse or avoiding commitment. If you do not want to accept an invitation, make an appointment, or have a date with a particular person, you should decline the initial invitation or request. You should not accept and then not appear at the appointed time.

After an appointment or date has been agreed on, it sometimes happens that keeping the appointment becomes impossible. In such circumstances, notice should be given as soon as possible. If you fail to keep your appointment, you should call to apologize. Changing plans for an appointment or date does not present the same problems as breaking a date. If you have agreed to go to a movie and then decide that a party would be preferable, it is acceptable to call the other person and propose the change in plans. The other person can accept or decline the proposed change.

### **Gifts**

In different societies, there are different customs concerning the giving of gifts. Sometimes, in relationships between people from different societies, one person will give a gift when the other person did not expect to receive one. Or no gift will be offered when one was expected. Such situations can cause confusion and embarrassment. Here are some general (that is, subject to variation and exception) ideas about gift-giving customs in the U.S.

Knowing these ideas can help avoid awkward situations.

#### **To whom gifts are given**

As a rule, gifts are given to relatives and close friends. They are sometimes given to people with whom one has a casual but friendly type of relationship, such as a host or hostess, but it is not necessary or even common for gifts to be given to such people.

#### **When gifts are given**

Christmas is the only national gift-giving day, when most Americans, with the exception of some followers of non-Christian religions, give gifts. Otherwise, gifts are given on occasions which are special to the recipient, such as birthdays, anniversaries, graduation from high school or college, weddings, and childbirth. Gifts are sometimes given when someone has a new house or is moving away. If you have visited several times for dinner, you may want to bring a small token of appreciation for the hostess. Always bring a small gift for a visit lasting a day or more.

Cards, rather than gifts, are given to acquaintances who are not close friends. This is especially true at Christmas, when it is common for people to send cards to their acquaintances and business or school colleagues.

### **Appropriate gifts**

Generally, an effort is made to select a gift which the giver knows or supposes is the one the recipient needs, wants or would enjoy. The amount spent on the gift is something the giver can afford; generally, it is not expected that people on limited budgets will spend large amounts on gifts. Expensive gifts are to be expected only when the people involved have a very close relationship with each other.

### **Gift acknowledgement**

If a gift is opened in the presence of the giver (as is often done), a verbal expression of thanks is appropriate. If a gift is opened in the absence of a giver, a thank-you note should be sent. The note should make specific mention of the particular gift that has been sent.

### **Tipping**

Tips, or service charges, are not added to the bill in most U.S. hotels or restaurants. Nevertheless, tips are often expected and needed by employees. It is often customary to tip the waiter or waitress in a restaurant 15 or 20 percent of the amount of the total bill, if the service is satisfactory. Tips are not expected in cafeterias or fast-food establishments. In a hotel, the bellhop who assists you to your room expects one dollar per suitcase. Tip taxi drivers 15 to 20 per cent of the fair. These are only suggestions, you should tip based on the service you receive. In these situations, not tipping is very rude, despite how poor the service might have been.

## **TIME SCHEDULES**

### **Individuals and Families**

In general, you can telephone individuals or families between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. without awakening them. Americans eat breakfast shortly after waking, a small meal or sandwich called lunch at or near noon, and a larger meal called dinner or supper sometime between 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. The meal schedule may vary on Sundays, when all meals may be taken later and the large meals may be in the afternoon rather than the evening.

### **Business Hours**

University business hours are (with a few exceptions) between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Some offices close from noon until 1 p.m. for lunch. Most city businesses open at 9 a.m. Closing hours vary. Many businesses always close at 5 p.m. or 5:30 p.m. Businesses in malls and shopping centers are usually open until 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and until 6 p.m. on Sunday.

## **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS** **WITH AMERICANS**

### **Meeting and Getting Acquainted with Americans**

Foreigners anywhere have problems establishing relationships with the local people. This can be frustrating for those who want to get to know some local people and learn to understand them better. The following paragraphs offer some explanations of the difficulties you may face, and some suggestions for overcoming them.

Assumptions and values about relationships, whether they are friendships or romantic relationships, differ markedly from culture to culture, so misunderstandings can easily arise. Misunderstandings arise because people from different cultures often have different answers to such questions as these: Under what circumstances can one appropriately initiate interaction with someone else? What interactions are socially acceptable, considering such variables as age, sex, marital status, differences in social status and the setting where the encounter takes place? How much is appropriate to let the other person know about you?

A particular area in which assumptions and values differ between cultures is that of friendship. Many observers from abroad have the impression that friendships among Americans tend to be shorter and less intense than those among people from many other cultures. Because Americans are taught to be self-reliant, they live in a very mobile society, and for many other reasons as well, they tend to avoid deep involvements with other people. Americans also tend to compartmentalize their friendships, having their friends at work, friends at school, a tennis friend, and so on. Americans often seem very friendly, even when you first meet them. This friendliness does not usually mean that the American is looking for a deeper relationship.

The result of these attitudes and behaviors is sometimes viewed by foreigners as an inability to be friends. Other times it is seen as a normal way to retain personal happiness in a mobile, ever-changing society.

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, 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.

In addition to problems related to differences in assumption and values, there is the further complication of stereotypes. Stereotypes are preconceived notions about an individual that fits into a certain group of people, and are based on limited and incomplete experience and information, but they shape people's thoughts and expectations nonetheless. Americans have many stereotypes about foreign students in general (for example, that they are very hard working, intelligent and rich; that they are clannish and do not speak English well) and about particular categories of foreign students (Chinese are polite, for example, or Italians are emotional). And foreign students have their own

stereotypes of Americans; for example, that they are arrogant, rude, outspoken and generous.

There are two stereotypes which often afflict male-female relationships involving U.S. and foreign students. The first is the idea, held by some foreign males, that American females are invariably willing, if not anxious, to have sex. The second common stereotype, held by some American females, is that male foreign students have no interest in American females other than having sex with them. (American females sometimes have the same stereotype about American males).

The existence of these and other stereotypes can give rise to considerable misunderstanding and block the development of a mutually satisfactory relationship between particular individuals. Stereotypes are probably inevitable, given the way the human mind seeks to categorize and classify information, so it is not realistic to suppose people can forget their stereotypes. But they can be aware of their stereotypes, and be ready to find exceptions to them.

### **Suggestions for Starting Relationships**

What can foreign students do in these circumstances?

The most important fact is that international students need to take the initiative in meeting U.S. students. This can happen on several levels:

Large-scale activities such as groups and social or educational programs serve to acquaint large numbers of local people with certain aspects of other cultures.

Smaller-scale activities such as picnics, parties or athletic activities can include U.S. students and give them an opportunity to have closer involvement with foreign students.

Foreign students can invite native students they know to parties, sports events and so on.

On the individual level, foreign students can show a little more initiative than they often do in starting conversations or joining activities with U.S. students. They can join student organizations that are based on common interest (for example, table tennis, the environment), or they can volunteer to help in any of the EIU organizations that rely on volunteer assistance from community members.

Experienced EIU international students make the following suggestions about making friends with Americans:

- Be patient with the Americans' ignorance of your country and their stereotypes about you and people from abroad.
- Seek out Americans who are at leisure eating in a cafeteria, for example, or sitting in a lounge. Do not try to start conversations with people who are obviously busy.
- Consciously commit time away from your compatriots to spend with Americans.
- Be persistent. Persevere through the disappointments with superficial interactions.
- Learn what Americans do or do not talk about in different situations.
- Observe their focus on themselves, rather than on their families.
  - Have a list of topics you are ready to discuss. Examples: the inside of your house; secondary school; how Sundays are spent; differences in classroom behavior; slang terms; roles of family members; wedding customs; and gestures.

## **ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS**

Generally in the United States, young, unmarried people associate with members of the opposite sex more freely and casually than they do in many other countries. In fact, young Americans are generally encouraged to spend time with friends of the opposite sex. The relationship between two people of opposite sexes might be a casual acquaintance, a brother-sister type of relationship, an acquaintance with romantic overtones, or a passionate involvement. The two people may have no plans for marrying each other or anyone else, or either of them may have plans to marry another person, or they could be planning to marry each other.

The non-American, faced with this perplexing variety of values and practices, is likely to become confused. American students themselves are often very unsure how to meet another person who is interested in romance, how to find out what the person thinks or feels, what kind of relationship the other person is looking for, and what kind of behavior the other person expects in particular situations.

### **Starting Romantic Relationships**

The social rules governing romantic relationships in the United States are loose and unclear. When getting together, Americans tend to do something such as going to a movie or a concert. Going somewhere together to do something is traditionally called a date because the time you will meet and the place you go are agreed upon in advance. Dates can be initiated by either person and do not necessarily lead to romantic relationships. In the past, the man usually asked the woman, and the man paid the expenses of the movie, concert or meal. Today, a woman may ask a man to go out with her. Whether the man or woman offers the invitation, students usually share the expenses.

Relationships typically begin through mutual attraction, often communicated by flirting. When unsure of someone's interest in you, you can try several ways to communicate your interest. You might:

- Express interest in something the person is also interested in.
- Find out about some place you both want to go, but have never been. Or a place that one of you thinks you both will enjoy. Then suggest a time to meet there.
- Express genuine interest in what the other person is doing and, in the course of the conversation, tell the person something about yourself.
- At the end of the conversation with the person, say, "I enjoyed talking with you. I'd like to talk again sometime."
- Invite the person to go along for a casual activity, like a trip to the mall.
- Say "Let's have lunch one day this week."
- Ask the person out, fixing a time and date for a particular activity (such as seeing a movie or play).
- Ask the person to come over to where you live and spend time with each other.

It should be emphasized that if you or the other person agrees to a date or invites the other into his or her home, this is not a commitment to any sexual involvement on either part.

## **Sexual Involvement**

The question of sexual involvement is problematic in any society. It is often more problematic in the U.S. than in many other countries, because there is such a wide range of attitudes and practices here. There are few, if any, reliable ways to guess in advance what a particular person's attitudes about sexual involvement are. However, a person may seem to have different attitudes at different points in time or in different relationships.

The American media tends to convey the inaccurate idea that all Americans are readily available for sexual activity. Some may be interested in sexual activity, but many are not, especially since Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) has become a predominant concern.

Americans generally follow their personal values, their personal feelings, and their thoughts about other people's reactions when considering whether to become intimate with another person. The general situation is that people regard sexual involvement as being entirely the personal and private business of the people involved in the relationship. Most unmarried people who share a bed with a member of the opposite sex do so because they genuinely like the other person and the two of them have come to regard sexual activity as a natural way of showing their affection for each other.

Some segments of society have negative opinions about individuals who engage in sexual activity before marriage. Thus, people's sexual involvements are not usually a matter of widespread knowledge. Somewhat of an exception to this is the case of two unmarried people who are living together. Such arrangements are not uncommon. They almost always involve couples who are committed to a continuing relationship with each other, and their relationship might be known to many people. The two people might be members of the same sex.

## **Relationship Between Dating And Sexual Activity**

When an American woman accepts a date or, after accepting it, indicates additional interest in a man, she is not necessarily expressing a commitment to sexual involvement with him.

When an American man asks a woman for a date or responds to her indications of interest in him, he is not necessarily expecting any sexual involvement.

In practical terms, a date implies no commitments of any kind, other than the basic one of the individuals meeting at the agreed upon time and place.

In general, at least during the early stages of a relationship, Americans may have desires but have no particular expectation about sexual involvement. They await developments, and try to be sensitive to the interests and feelings of the other person.

If a relationship develops, it is important to take steps to prevent disease and unwanted pregnancy. Birth control information and contraceptives are available from the EIU Health Service and at local pharmacies.

Furthermore, the possibility of contracting the AIDS virus is a growing concern. The number of people affected by this disease is increasing year by year and warnings from medical institutions are frequent. The primary recommendations are to choose partners carefully and to use condoms during sex.

## **Sexual Assault**

Prevention, intervention and education programs specifically addressing rape, acquaintance rape (date rape) and other sexual offenses are regularly sponsored by a variety of organizations at EIU.

If a sexual offense should occur, the victim should take the following actions:

Go to a safe place.

Call the campus police at 911 or the city police at 911 if you are off campus.

Contact our office at 581-2321 or 581-7487.

Do not bathe, douche or urinate, if possible.

Keep the clothes worn during the offense in paper bags (never in plastic)

Get prompt medical attention.

Do not destroy the physical evidence until police advise you.

Tell someone all details remembered about the assault.

Write down all details remembered as soon as possible.

For further knowledge on this topic we will encourage all of our international students to read the EIU Student Handbook carefully.

Remember in America that unwanted sex (forced sex) may result in criminal charge and consequence of prison term.

## **AIDS**

You are undoubtedly aware of AIDS. You may wonder whether you will be at risk for developing AIDS in the United States. The answer is simple: you are no more at risk in the United States than you would be at home; your risk of infection depends almost entirely on your own behavior. You can become infected with the virus only if it gets into your blood through contact with the blood, semen or vaginal secretions of an infected person.

You do not get AIDS from:

Swimming in a pool with swimmers who are infected

Sharing drinking or eating utensils

Insect bites

Everyday contact with those who have AIDS

Eating food handled, prepared or served by someone with HIV or AIDS

Donating blood

For more information, consult the health clinic.

**BE AWARE THAT ALCOHOL AND DATING CAN BE A PROBLEMATIC MIX, PARTICULARLY IN A CROSS-CULTURAL SETTING.**

The university health services will direct students seeking HIV/AIDS testing to the Coles County Health Department located on 18<sup>th</sup> St. in Charleston. This service is free of cost, please call 348-0530. The university health service department does provide students with testing for other sexually transmitted infections, (STI's).

## CHAPTER 4

### “Educational Support and Academic Life”

#### **KEYS TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

The American academic system differs from all others in the world. To succeed in it, you will need to learn how it is organized and how it works. You will need to learn, as the Americans say, “how to play the game.” Listed below are some suggestions that you should keep in mind as you begin your studies. You will learn more of the informal rules for academic success as you undertake courses and have the opportunity to talk with experienced students in your field of study. The more you discuss topics such as these with experienced students, the sooner you will be able to develop a helpful understanding of the way your academic department functions.

#### **Understand Student Goals**

In the American educational system, the best student is the one with the highest grade point average, or GPA. Getting the highest possible GPA means getting the highest possible grade in each class, not just those classes in which you are particularly interested. Within each class, getting the highest possible grade means getting the highest possible mark on each assignment and examination, not just those that occur when you are in the mood to study. Academic success here requires consistent, disciplined studying for all assignments, examinations and courses, attention to due dates for assignments, and being on time.

#### **Evaluate Your Expectations**

Keep in mind that a period of adjustment to a new educational system is necessary before you will be able to perform to the best of your ability. In general, foreign students earn lower grades during their first semester in this country. Then, as they become accustomed to the systems and as their English skills improve, their grades improve. Foreign students generally cannot expect to do outstanding academic work during their first semester.

#### **Select Your Courses Wisely**

Especially during your first semester, do not take more courses than necessary. Make sure you have a combination of more demanding and less demanding courses, rather than only difficult ones that require unusually heavy amounts of work. When arranging your course schedule, consult with your academic adviser, and also experienced students who are familiar with available courses and teachers. You may be tempted to take more courses than necessary in order to try to earn your degree faster. The usual result of taking too many courses is discouragement, poor academic performance and a subsequent failure in competition for financial assistance. You should be familiar with the procedures for dropping and adding courses.

## **Work Hard from the Beginning**

It is not possible, in this system, to wait until the latter part of the semester to begin studying. If you do not begin studying on the first day of classes, you are likely to get behind and experience academic difficulty. The typical undergraduate course involves three hours of lectures each week, an additional lab or discussion section, reading assignments, quizzes and tests, a mid-term examination, and a final examination, as well as one or more research papers or projects. Keeping up with the work is important. The study habits that were appropriate for the educational system in your country may not be appropriate here. You may have to learn to approach your studies in a different way while you are studying at a U.S. institution.

## **Talk With Your Teachers**

Teachers here expect students to ask questions in class or immediately following class. They expect students to see them in their offices when they are having problems in class. If you are not doing well in a class and you do not see the teacher to discuss the situation, the teacher is likely to assume that you are not really interested in his or her class or that you are not bothered by your poor performance. In other words, most teachers will have a negative or at best indifferent evaluation of a student who never raises questions or challenges in the class, or who does not visit the teacher outside of the class to discuss any academic difficulties he or she is experiencing.

## **Ask Questions**

Any time you feel unsure of what is expected of you in a class, or of some aspect of the material being presented, ask the teacher and some of your fellow students about it. If you do not ask, it will be assumed that you understand everything or that you are not interested.

## **Understand the Educational System's Assumptions**

From your past experience in other educational systems, you have developed certain assumptions about the nature and purposes of education, and about the way your field of interest should be studied. For example, you may have been taught to view education as a process of absorbing information and ideas from scholars who know a great deal about a body of knowledge that somehow exists in the world.

In the U.S. educational systems, by contrast, you will find that education is viewed more as an effort to acquire more information and a greater understanding of things that are not necessarily known or completely understood by anyone.

You may have been taught that it is important to be able to memorize large quantities of information that are provided by professors, authors or other experts. Here, by contrast, you may find that being able to memorize material is less important than being able to synthesize – bring together and mix in a new way – material from many sources, developing your own ideas and viewpoints. U.S. faculty members tend to agree that learning how to approach studies independently and to develop one's own approaches and ideas is the most difficult task facing new foreign students, especially at the graduate level.

It is important for you to realize that differences of this kind exist between the U.S. and other educational systems, and that you will have to adjust your thinking if you are going to succeed academically. Whether or not you personally accept the values of the education system here, you will have to act in accordance with them while you are here.

### **Study Skills**

Remember that the U.S. educational system rewards students who can study a large amount of material concerning a broad range of subjects, synthesize material from many sources and take examinations effectively. These activities require skills than can be learned. Some of these skills are mentioned and briefly discussed here. For additional ideas or assistance with study skills, you can go to the Writing Center in 3110 Coleman Hall, or call 581-5929 and say that you are interested in getting help with study skills.

### **Organizing Your Time**

You will have a large amount of work to do and a limited amount of time in which to do it. A good way to use your time effectively is make yourself a weekly study schedule of all specified periods of time each day for studying. A good general guideline is for undergraduates can assume that they will need to spend at least two hours studying for each one hour they spend in class. Graduate students can assume at least three hours and perhaps more. Look at the course outlines (or “syllabus”) you get at the opening of the term and notice how much you will have to write for each class during the semester. Fill in your study schedule and follow it accordingly.

### **Reading Effectively**

When you see the length of the reading lists your instructors give you, you will realize that it is not possible to memorize all of your reading materials for the semester, or even to study them in reasonable depth. That is not what you are expected to do. Instead, you are expected to familiarize yourself with the main points from each reading and often to be able to relate what one writer has said to what another writer has said.

## EXAMINATIONS

You will have many examinations. Nearly every class has a final examination at the end of the semester. Most have mid-term examinations near the middle of the semester. There may be additional tests or quizzes given with greater frequency, perhaps even weekly. All these tests are designed to assure that students are doing the work that is assigned to them, and to measure how much they are learning.

### **Objective examinations**

An objective examination tests the student's knowledge of particular facts. International students often have great difficulty with objective examinations, not because they do not know the material on which the test is based, but because they are unfamiliar with the format of the test and because their knowledge of English is not sophisticated enough to enable them to distinguish subtle differences in meaning. There are five different kinds of questions commonly found on objective examinations. You will want to learn to deal with each of them:

**Multiple Choice:** choose from a series of answers, selecting the one (or more) that is most appropriate.

**True and False:** read a statement and indicate whether it is true or false.

**Matching:** match phrases or statements from two columns.

**Identification:** the student must identify and briefly explain the significance of a name, term, or phrase.

**Blanks:** the student must fill in the blanks left in a phrase or statement in order to make it complete and correct.

### **Subjective examinations**

Subjective examinations, sometimes called essay questions, require the student to write an essay in response to a question or statement. This kind of examination tests a student's ability to organize and relate his knowledge of a particular subject.

In your writing, you will be expected to know when and how to paraphrase or summarize another writer's ideas in your own words. If you are not a native English speaker this may seem difficult, even foolhardy, and you may be tempted to quote your source word for word. Because this practice can lead to a charge of plagiarism, it is essential that you acquire the skill of paraphrasing.

# **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

## **Honor Violations**

In general, students in this system are expected to do their own academic work without getting excessive assistance from other people. This does not mean that you cannot ask other students to help with class work. It is permissible and sometimes even advisable to seek help in understanding what is happening in a class and what a specific assignment is about. It is not considered proper to have someone else do an assignment for you, or to copy answers or information from a publication in a way that makes it appear that the answers are ones you devised and composed yourself. That would be considered cheating. Many students in the U.S. get into trouble for what is called cheating or plagiarism. Cheating means getting help that a student is not supposed to get on an assignment, quiz or examination. Plagiarism refers specifically to the practice of copying from a book or other publication and not acknowledging that the words used are someone else's and not the student's. We obey the Honor Code at EIU and all students are required to familiarize themselves with this code of conduct.

## **Here are some other things that are considered cheating:**

Copying other students' assignments;  
Copying other students' answers to examination questions;  
Taking notes or books to an examination and secretly referring to them for assistance in answering examination questions;  
Any classroom behavior or academic actions that a professor indicates as prohibitory during class session or examination period;

You should not look at other students' papers during an examination. To cheat on an examination by getting answers from other students or from materials illicitly brought to the test can result in a zero grade on the examination, an F grade in the course and disciplinary action.

## **Possible Consequences of Cheating**

Some students cheat and are not punished for it, either because the cheating is not detected or because the faculty member in whose class the cheating takes place prefers not to take any action against the student who has cheated. In most cases, though, cheating is detected and has negative consequences for the student who does it. These consequences might be:

a failing grade for the assignment or examination on which the cheating took place;  
a failing grade for the course in which the cheating occurred;  
appealing to the Honor Council for sanction  
expulsion from the University.

## **STUDENT SERVICES**

### **Office of International Student and Faculty Programs**

1113 Blair Hall

581-2321

The staff consists of a Director of International Admissions, a full-time International Student Advisor, a full-time Coordinator of Study Abroad, a full-time office assistant and several student assistants. The Director of International Admission is responsible for all university policies in regard to immigration procedures and all student/faculty/staff with visa status. The International Student Advisor is responsible for counseling on personal, social and financial matters; liaison with sponsoring agencies; miscellaneous problem-solving; information about employment opportunities; and other programming. The International Programs Office assists with the development and implementation of cultural programs for international students. The International Programs Office will also work with University Development to develop fund raising strategies for scholarships, and develop and implement a comprehensive leadership program. The International Programs Office will assist the EIU/Charleston community with “international” resources needed for various civic programs.

It is the IPO’s job is to advance what can be called intercultural education at its institution. This means assisting qualified international students to derive the maximum possible benefit from their stays at EIU while enduring the minimum possible number of the difficulties which can make life uncomfortable for any foreigner. It also means assisting EIU (faculty, staff and students) in deriving the maximum possible benefit from the presence of representatives of other cultures.

### **Counseling Center**

1200 Human Services Building

581-3413

The EIU Counseling Center provides mental health services for our international students. Counseling can be used to help resolve a concern or it can help develop new skills and proficiencies typically desired by some international students. It is also a good place to go for help with time management, adjustment and depression.

### **Health Service**

1401 Human Services Building

581-3013

The EIU Health Service treats minor illness and short-term medical concerns for all students, including international students. In addition to treating outpatients, the health center has facilities for bed patient care with meals and visitation provision. All EIU students including foreign students must have a completed health record on file before receiving medical care.

## **Records Office**

Old Main, Room 1220  
581-3511

The Records Office takes care of changes in registration, name and address changes, grade reports, and transcripts; and prepares letters certifying that students are enrolled at EIU. For any assistance, you need to first stop by our office.

## **Minority Affairs**

1130 Blair Hall  
581-6690

The Minority Affairs is responsible for facilitating interaction among international students, American students of color (African-American/Caribbean, Latino, Asian-American, Native American), and white students, and between these groups and the campus and larger communities surrounding the university. The center also develops and coordinates non-academic support services for American students of color. The center is a repository of books, videos, periodicals and news articles. Students are encouraged to use the center to learn about people of various racial, cultural, national and religious backgrounds.

## **Reading Center**

1320 Buzzard  
581-7898

The reading center offers students aid in reading for their courses. Many text books may be found on audio tapes for students with dyslexia or other learning disabilities. They also offer book fairs where students can buy books for their own enjoyment.

## **University Housing**

Martin Luther King, Jr. Union, West Building (Basement)  
581-5111

University housing accommodates three lifestyles: all female, all male and coeducational. Each residence hall has its own visitation hours and guests must be escorted by a hall resident at all times. Overnight guests in the residence halls must be of the same sex. All residence halls are closed during holidays and vacations except Lincoln-Stevenson-Douglas (LSD) Hall, a dormitory for U.S. and international students designed to foster a celebration of the world community. LSD Hall will be open for its residents during the fall, winter and spring holidays to provide students the opportunity to remain on campus. General information about applying for residence in LSD Hall can be obtained from Kelly Miller, Housing Office, MLK Union, West Building, or by calling 581-7718.

While a student's primary purpose for being in the university is academic, we recognize that a person, to be truly educated, must also develop social and personal skills. An array of activities is planned throughout the year to provide opportunities to meet and become involved in campus organizations and events.

The EIU Division of Student Affairs supports student government, Greek-letter, social organizations and other student groups, and activities. Its purpose is to develop leadership among students with differing backgrounds and support an array of social, educational and cultural activities on campus, particularly the Association of International Students.

### **Writing Center**

3110 Coleman Hall

581-5929

The writing center will help students developing their writing skills. They may help students revise papers or develop study skills.

### **IMPORTANT POLICY**

The intentional false report of a bomb, fire, or other emergency, or the unauthorized alteration or misuse of any fire alarm, firefighting equipment, safety or other emergency device is a crime punishable by the court system. Punishments may include probation, fines, or even jail time.

## **ALCOHOL AND DRUG POLICIES**

EIU is committed to work against the illicit use of drugs and alcohol among students and employees.

EIU and Charleston police officers enforce all Illinois laws, including the following:

- Individuals must be 21 years of age to buy, possess or drink alcoholic beverages.
- Alcoholic beverages may not be sold or furnished to any person who at the time of sale or exchange is visibly under the influence of alcohol.
- Falsely representing one's age for the purpose of purchasing or possessing alcohol is against state law.
- Drunkenness in public (Walking drunk on campus or in the city).
- Possession of open containers of alcohol in public areas are prohibited by law.
- The unlawful or unauthorized manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession or use of alcohol and other drugs in the workplace is prohibited.
- Impairment in the workplace from the use of alcohol or other drugs (except the use of drugs for legitimate medical purposes) is prohibited.
- Alcoholic beverages may not be possessed, distributed or consumed at events open to the general university community and held on university property, except when specific written approval has been obtained for the event in advance. Sponsors are responsible for assuring that all persons in attendance at an event comply with state alcohol law and university alcohol policy.
- No student shall possess or distribute an illegal drug, as defined by Illinois' Drug Control Act. Such possession or distribution is prohibited in any building or on any property owned or operated by the university. Possession is defined to include any area or property for which the student is responsible.

Convictions for violations of these laws could result in fines, loss of driver's license and imprisonment and deportation from United States. University sanctions could include penalties ranging from fines to suspension from the university.

Staff members at the EIU Health Service and the EIU Counseling and Student Development Center can provide additional information about these concerns. More complete information on EIU substance abuse policy can be found in the section on "University Policies."

We strongly encourage you to read the Eastern Illinois University Student Handbook.