

# INTERNATIONAL SCHOLAR AND STUDENT SERVICES

**Student Handbook**

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## UNIVERSITY SERVICES FOR INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARS AND STUDENTS

### WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOLAR AND STUDENT SERVICES

International Scholars and Students:

Welcome to the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)! The UAB international community includes more than 1300 international scholars and students representing more than 100 countries. We are enriched by your presence here and honored that you have chosen to come to UAB.

UAB and the city of Birmingham will be your home for the coming months or years and I encourage you to become involved in campus and community activities. Take advantage of the many services, extracurricular programs and activities provided for you through International Scholar and Student Services and the Smolian International House.

I wish you success in your professional activities and studies and hope that you enjoy your stay in Birmingham!

With best wishes,

Carol Argo, Director  
International Scholar and Student Services

## **International Scholar and Student Services**

250 Hill University Center  
1400 University Boulevard  
Phone (205) 934-3328  
Fax (205) 934-8664  
Email: [iss@uab.edu](mailto:iss@uab.edu)  
Web: <http://www.uab.edu/iss>

International Scholar and Student Services (ISSS) is an administrative unit of the University of Alabama at Birmingham responsible for assisting the international scholar and student community. ISSS provides a wide array of services and programs to meet the unique needs of the international community. Some of the services provided include:

Immigration and non-resident alien tax services are available to international faculty, staff and students. ISSS staff provides advice to UAB faculty and administration on the enrollment and hiring of foreign nationals.

Orientation programs are available to introduce international students, faculty, staff and family members to UAB and the Birmingham community.

Notary Public service is available for authentication of foreign credentials.

International FYI is an ongoing orientation program, which introduces the UAB international community to various aspects of life in the U.S., as well as provides informational seminars on legal issues, which may be of interest.

The International Mentoring Program assists newly arriving international students through the registration and orientation process. International students are matched with other UAB students who assist them through the first term of study.

Events and activities are held at the Smolian International House where international scholars, students, and family members may meet people from any part of the world.

## **UAB Smolian International House**

1600 Tenth Avenue South  
Birmingham, Alabama 35205  
Phone: (205) 934-1205  
Fax: (205) 975-3226  
Email: [ihouse@uab.edu](mailto:ihouse@uab.edu)

The UAB Smolian International House offers a variety of services and activities for international students/scholars and their dependents. It provides a central focal point for programs and activities designed to foster a free exchange of information and international understanding. In addition, the house provides temporary housing for UAB internationals making the transition to and from the Birmingham community. The UAB Smolian International House is open from 9

a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, noon to midnight on Saturday and noon to 10 p.m. on Sunday.

Events and activities include Conversational English Classes, Dance Classes, Dance Parties, Cultural Evenings, Sports Tournaments, Friday Lunches, International Women's Group, Friendship Partner Program, Culture Camp for Children, International Festival and much more. Contact the Smolian International House for a current list of activities.

### **English as a Second Language (ESL)**

The University of Alabama at Birmingham does not have a language institute designed to provide intensive instruction in English. However, there are English as Second Language classes offered through several offices on campus. Level I English as a Second Language is offered through UAB OPTIONS as a non-credit course. This course is designed for beginning level non-native speakers with little or no proficiency in English and focuses on verbal communication. For additional information contact 934-8263.

ESL courses are offered for credit through the English Language Department. All undergraduate international students admitted to a degree program must sit for a placement examination and may be required to take one or more of these courses before enrolling in required English language courses. Non-degree seeking students may also enroll in these courses which focus on reading, writing, speaking and listening.

The UAB Graduate School also offers a series of courses designed to improve the speaking, comprehension, and writing skills of non-native English speakers. Courses are graduate credit earning and include oral communication, principles of scientific integrity, professional speaking, professional writing, teaching at the college level and beyond, and specialized instruction. For further information, contact Dr. Julia Austin at 975-6539.

### **Conversational English Classes**

Conversational English Classes are available free of charge throughout the Birmingham area in order to improve English language usage. Instructors are volunteers from the community. For current class schedules, contact each organization individually. Some locations offer transportation and childcare. Lessons at church locations may be religious in content.

UAB Smolian International House, 1600 Tenth Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35205, (205) 934-1205

Baptist Student Center, 1501 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35205, (205) 930-0035

Southside Baptist Church, 1016 19<sup>th</sup> Street South, Birmingham, AL 35205, (205) 933-8381

Baptist Church of the Covenant, 2177 University Blvd, Birmingham, AL 35223, (205) 328-0644

Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church, 1728 Oxmoor Road, Birmingham, AL 35209, (205) 941-7121

Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, 1114 Oxmoor Road, Birmingham, AL 35209, (205) 822-1663

Shades Mountain Baptist Church, 207 Columbiana Road, Birmingham, AL 35217, (205) 822-1670

Meadow Brook Baptist Church, 4984 Meadowbrook Road, Birmingham, AL 35242, (205) 991-8384

Hunter Street Baptist Church, 2600 Highway 150, Birmingham, AL 35243, (205) 428-9055

Shades Mountain Independent Church, 2281 Old Tyler Road, Birmingham, AL (205) 978-6000

Leeds Civic Center, 300 Park Drive, Leeds, AL 35094, (205) 699-8990

Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church, 2061 Kentucky Avenue, Vestavia, AL, (205) 822-9631

Briarwood Presbyterian Church, 2200 Briarwood Way, Birmingham, AL 35243, 978-2200

### **International Women's Group**

Women from around the world meet every Tuesday morning (10:00 am – noon) at the UAB Smolian International House for friendship and fun. The group enjoys excursions to local points of interest as well as informal coffees. Ideas are exchanged and lasting friendships are made. The International Women's group is open to all. Call (205) 934-1205 for more information and monthly schedule.

### **Friendship Partners Program**

Friendship Partners is a program designed to provide international students, scholars and their families an opportunity to learn more about the American way of life and culture. Individuals and families from the Greater Birmingham community are matched with international students and scholars. Partners are invited to participate in various events such as holiday celebrations, outdoor activities and social events. Both internationals and locals alike benefit in these relationships. To enroll in the Friendship Partners Program, or to receive more information, contact the Smolian International House at (205) 934-1205.

### **Student Organizations and Student Life**

Student life at UAB offers each individual something uniquely suited to his or her taste. Events ranging from relaxing at free movies or comedy shows to the rigors of rappelling down a cliff or hiking the Grand Canyon in Arizona are available. Each academic term brings new events and new adventures, with chances to make new friends, socialize and have a good time. Regardless

of the activity, get involved! Gain the UAB experience by taking an active role in campus life. For information on student activities, call 934-4175 or stop by the Hill University Center Room 110.

## **Career Services**

The UAB Career Center assists students in planning and fulfilling their career aspirations. This is accomplished through the collaboration with all UAB divisions, schools, and organizations; professional associations; and employers.

Services and programs include:

- Job listings for part-time, internship, and professional positions
- Individual career and job search counseling
- Interest, personality, and values assessments
- Career management courses offered for academic credit
- A career library filled with occupational information and job search resources
- Seminars and conferences covering a wide range of career management topics
- A mentoring program
- Career fairs
- Candidate resume referral service
- On-campus interview program

UAB Career Center has two locations on campus:

Central Office  
532 Hill University Center  
Phone: 934-4324  
Email: [CareerCenter@uab.edu](mailto:CareerCenter@uab.edu)

Branch Office  
303 Business-Engineering Complex  
Phone: 934-9202  
Email: [Careermgt@uab.edu](mailto:Careermgt@uab.edu)

## **Scholastic Assistance Available to Students**

### **Math Department**

The Math Department offers a daily walk-in study session available every quarter. This service is located in the 15<sup>th</sup> Street Classroom Building. Call 934-0427 for details and availability.

### **English Department**

The English Department offers a Writing Skills Center that is available Monday-Friday by appointment only and Fridays from 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Call 934-8118 for more details.

Private Tutors: TRIO office has a list of private tutors available. Call 934-2729.

### **Study Abroad Programs**

International students and scholars may earn academic credits during their enrollment at UAB by participating in either UAB short-term study abroad programs, or one of UAB's many exchange programs. Candidates must undergo an application and interview process.

All international students and scholars are subject to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service rules and regulations regarding travel, as well as any visa requirements.

UAB Study Abroad is committed to helping students acquire skills, knowledge, and perspectives that empower them to live and work effectively in a multicultural world. Most UAB students who study abroad choose from the short-term study abroad/exchange programs offered by UAB. Other programs sponsored by other universities may also be accessed.

Additional information may be obtained by calling 934-5025 or visiting the Study Abroad Coordinator at the Holley Mears Building, Room 112.

### **Exchange Programs**

Exchange program opportunities are available to international students. Exchange programs enable students to study overseas for up to a full academic year. The UAB Study Abroad Office Coordinator AND the Academic Advisor of the respective student provide academic and administrative support. The international student offices on the host campus provide corresponding academic and administrative support. Participants usually live and study with students of the host country. Exchange opportunities at UAB exist at over eighty (80) institutions worldwide. Some programs require fluency in another language.

Flexibility with coursework is required, as specific course offerings are sometimes not known for certain until arrival in the host country. Since most courses at the host university are generally available to exchange students, there is usually a wide variety of courses from which to choose to meet various academic needs.

Students interested in exchange program opportunities and related questions should contact the Study Abroad Coordinator at 934-5025.

### **Campus Health Service**

Health care in the United States is excellent, but it is expensive! The United States does not have a national health plan, nor is the government a major provider of medical care. Arranging and paying for health care is the responsibility of the individual. Because health care in the U.S. is very expensive, the best way to arrange for health care coverage is through the purchase of a comprehensive health insurance coverage plan.

The UAB requires all international students to participate in the University Student Health Service. This health service provides outpatient care for preventive services, as well as for the treatment of acute disease or injury. In addition, the University requires that all international students and visiting scholars purchase a hospitalization insurance plan to cover more serious illnesses or injuries, which require extensive testing, and/or hospitalization.

Information concerning enrollment in these services is provided during the international student and visiting scholar orientation programs. All nonimmigrant students and visiting scholars are required to pay a quarterly service fee to Student Health, as well as purchase the hospitalization insurance policy.

Specific information concerning the services provided by Student Health is found in the Medical Center Student Health Services booklet. Please read this booklet carefully. International students and scholars who are sick should not hesitate to seek help from the Student Health Service. Students and scholars that have difficulty understanding anything about medical status or treatment, should ask the nurse or doctor for clarification.

Medical insurance is highly recommended for the spouses and children of international students and scholars. Be aware that many preexisting conditions may not be covered under the benefits of health insurance policies.

### **Scholarships**

Undergraduate students may qualify for limited scholarships offered through International Scholar and Student Services. These opportunities are announced throughout the year in the Student newspaper and the ISSS newsletter. Graduate students should apply for scholarships or assistantships through their respective graduate programs.

## LIVING IN BIRMINGHAM

With a population of nearly one million, the city of Birmingham is Alabama's largest city and is the state's industrial, business, and cultural center. The University of Alabama at Birmingham is centrally located in the downtown area, which is convenient to many of the city's most entertaining areas. The city is home to major engineering companies, a nationally ranked medical center, a symphony orchestra, a Triple A baseball team, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, and a myriad other institutions and organizations that make it a thriving modern city.

### **Alabama Climate**

Alabama's climate reflects four seasons: Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall.

Range of average temperatures:

January                      42 Degrees F (6 Degrees C)

April                        63 Degrees F (17 Degrees C)

July                         80 Degrees F (27 Degrees C) During summer there is an average 51.8 days above 90 Degrees F

November                52 Degrees F (11 Degrees C)

### **Stores & Shopping**

In the Birmingham area, there are stores to cover every need. The local newspaper usually has advertising sections which show sales for the different stores in the area. Individuals are encouraged to check coupons, which can be used for additional discounts off attractions, food products, restaurants, etc. Students can sometimes benefit from discounts for movie theatres and local area attractions.

In the United States, there is an automatic sales tax, which is attached to any purchase that is made. Depending upon the area of Birmingham, individuals should expect a tax of 5-9% added to purchase items. This is not built into the cost of the item as it is in some other countries.

### **Grocery Stores**

Grocery Stores sell all sorts of food such as fresh, frozen and canned fish, poultry, meat, fruit, vegetables and prepared dishes. They also sell staples such as flour, sugar, salt and spices. Bakery goods, dairy products, toiletries (shampoo and toothpaste), paper products (toilet paper, paper towels, sanitary napkins, paper tissue, paper plates and paper cups), and cigarettes are also available in grocery stores. Self-service is the rule in grocery stores, which means individuals take a cart or basket, select the required items, and present them for payment at a cashier's counter. There are some ethnic grocery stores in Birmingham. The ISSS staff can provide information on these.

### **Drugstores**

Drugstores are the only stores that are licensed to sell prescription pharmaceutical products. Doctors' prescriptions can be filled at a drugstore or at the Health Service. Drugstores also have

a large selection of cosmetics, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, periodicals, household medicines, greeting cards, photographic film and sundry items.

### **Department Stores**

Department stores sell a variety of things: shoes, clothing, appliances, furniture, fabric, dishes, pots and pans, linens, towels and toys. Hours of department stores are usually from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday; most are also open on Sunday afternoon. Discount stores offer lower prices, but are often hard to get to without a car. Department stores are also self-service.

### **Second-hand Stores**

These are stores that receive and then sell merchandise/goods that came from or through an intermediary, that is, borrowed, derived, or acquired after being used by another. These are things that are not new, such as books, clothing, etc.

### **Furnishing an Apartment**

For individuals living on-campus, most of the furnishings will be provided. To purchase furniture, individuals should check in the local newspaper for used items to reduce expenses. Also check the school paper, the Kaleidoscope, the university UAB Report, bulletin boards around campus, etc. for advertised items for sale and for local garage sales. Garage sales are when private homes clear out older goods out of their house and sell them. Sometimes neighbors get together and have a large yard sale. These items can include adults' and children's clothing, furniture, appliances, household goods, toys, books and various other stuff. Usually goods are inexpensive, and often quality items may be purchased. These sales are advertised in the newspaper, or signs may be posted on posts or trees near the home where the sale is to take place.

There are consignment shops and thrift stores in the area with second hand furnishings and clothes that can be obtained at a very reasonable price. Look under Thrift Stores or Consignment shops in the yellow pages for listings.

### **Attractions/Recreation**

Birmingham offers a wide selection of entertainment and activities, including a good variety here on the university campus. Look for the University Calendar of Events which is put out each term. The Calendar lists movies, athletic, theatrical, as well as other entertaining activities. Campus and citywide event information can also be obtained at the UAB Ticket Office located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Hill University Center or call at 934-8001. The UAB Ticket Office sometimes offers student discounted tickets to events and attractions. As a student, many of the activities offered on-campus are free with a valid student identification card.

The Smolian International House is an excellent resource for the international scholars and students for many social, educational, and recreational events. You may check the website for

monthly calendars at [www.uab.edu/iss](http://www.uab.edu/iss) or contact the Smolian International House at 934-1205 for more details.

### **Restaurants & Dining – Walking Distance**

There are many types of restaurants, from fast food restaurants, where food is prepared in a few minutes and costs very little, to expensive restaurants. Cafeterias, steak houses, seafood restaurants are other types of popular eatery establishments. Refer to the yellow pages in your local telephone directory for a complete listing and description of restaurants in the Birmingham area.

### **Accommodations**

#### UAB Student Housing and Residential Life

The UAB maintains a limited number of furnished (includes furniture and appliances) apartments for married and single individual students. The communities which comprise Student Housing include a traditional residence hall (Hixson Hall), four apartment style residence halls (Blazer Hall, University Hall, Denman Hall and Camp Hall), a suite-style residence hall (Rast Hall) and two bedroom apartments for students with children (Garden Apartments). Student Housing is centrally located and within walking distance to all main campus classroom buildings, libraries and the Medical Center. Contact the UAB Department of Student Housing for application requirements and room rates.

UAB Department of Student Housing  
Denman Hall  
1604 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
(205) 934-2092  
[safr011@larry.uab.edu](mailto:safr011@larry.uab.edu)

#### Off-Campus Apartment Housing

There are a variety of types of housing for rent in the Birmingham area, many of which are apartment complexes. Most apartments require a one-year lease; however, at times the manager will consider a partial year lease. Contact individual leasing companies to inquire about room availability, cost and leasing agreements. Contact numbers are usually indicated on the exterior wall of individual apartment buildings. Several local companies are able to assist with locating off-campus housing. Consult the yellow pages or internet for specific information.

Notices of apartment rentals and requests for roommates are posted on the bulletin board in the Smolian International House and are listed in the campus newspapers as well as the classified section of local newspapers.

#### **QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE RENTING AN APARTMENT:**

How much is the rent?

When is the rent due?

What is included in the rent? Utilities? Phone? Cable?  
Is a security deposit required? Is it refundable?  
Are storage facilities available?  
Are there laundry facilities?  
Are both furnished and unfurnished apartments available?  
If you have a car or motorcycle:  
    Is parking available, if so what kind, on street, garage, or parking lot?  
    Are there additional charges for parking a vehicle?  
If you have children:  
    Are children permitted in the apartment?  
    Where is the nearest childcare facility located?  
    Where are the nearest schools and is there bus service?  
If you have pets:  
    Are pets allowed? Is there a limit on size or number of pets allowed?  
    Is there a pet deposit? Is it refundable if there is no damage to the apartment?

#### WHEN LEASING AN APARTMENT:

Will the security deposit be returned when the lease has expired?  
How long is the lease? Is there a penalty for breaking the lease contract? Is the lease renewed automatically?  
How much notice must be given before the lease is terminated?  
Is subletting allowed? What procedures are followed, if subletting is permitted?

## **Schools**

### Pre-schools/Childcare

Children under the age of five years may register to attend pre-schools/childcare centers. Contact individual centers to inquire about fees and registration process. Consult the local yellow pages for a complete listing.

### Selecting a Good Child Care Program

Parents have the right and the responsibility to make careful choices-to be good consumers of childcare. It is particularly important that parents are informed consumers and take the time to evaluate childcare options carefully. We recommend that you visit more than one program before making a decision. Take your child with you to meet the provider. Observe the facility when children are present. It is recommended that you visit the Child Care Resources website at <http://childcareresources.org> to evaluate information to assist in making an informed decision on your child's childcare needs.

### Public Schools

Children ages 6 through 17 are expected to attend the public school nearest their homes. Contact the appropriate School Administration Office of your city or county to determine which school to attend, or visit the nearest school office.

Birmingham City Public Schools  
2015 Park Place  
Birmingham, AL 35203  
(205) 583-4600

Homewood City Schools  
7 Hollywood Boulevard  
Homewood, AL 35209  
(205) 870-4203

Hoover City Schools  
100 Municipal Drive  
Hoover, AL 35216  
(205) 439-1000

Mountain Brook City Schools  
3 Church Street  
Mountain Brook, AL 35213  
(205) 871-4608

Vestavia Hills City Schools  
1204 Montgomery Hwy  
Vestavia Hills, AL 35216  
(205) 402-5100

Jefferson County Board of Education  
2100 18<sup>th</sup> Street South  
Birmingham, AL 35209  
(205)930-3800

To access a complete listing of schools, refer to the blue pages of the local telephone directory.

#### Private Schools

Children, who wish to attend a private school where tuition is charged, may contact individual schools to inquire about registration.

Access a complete listing:

[http://family.go.com/Features/family\\_1999\\_01/bama/bama19schools/](http://family.go.com/Features/family_1999_01/bama/bama19schools/)

#### **Churches, Synagogues and Places of Worship**

Birmingham has many churches, temples and places of worship. Foreign students and scholars, who wish to join a church or synagogue, may consult the names and addresses listed in the telephone directory. The listing under “churches” is classified by denomination.

## **Bookstores**

A bookstore is just that – it is a store that sells books. And the types of books and the array of subject matters covered by these books in bookstores can be, and usually are, quite extensive. The types of books can be hardback designed or paperback designed books, of different sizes. Then there are periodicals (magazines and newspapers) from just about every country in the world. And the subject matter of these books and periodicals may cover every conceivable subject matter, as it is usually said in this country, from "A to Z", and every thing in between.

There are books of fiction (an invented story) such as novels and short stories. Then there are books that are called works of nonfiction that simply is literature that is not fictional. Still other varieties of books are those on the life of an individual, called biographies, books on gardening, sewing, inspiration material, how to books, cooking – the list is endless.

The list of bookstores in the Birmingham area can found in the local yellow pages of the phonebook.

There are two bookstores located on the campus of the UAB. These bookstores sell textbooks in addition to the listing of books described in the above paragraphs. The locations of these bookstores are:

Blazer Bookstore  
Hill University Center 150  
1400 University Blvd.  
Birmingham, AL 35294-1150  
Phone (934-4686)

UAB Health Science Bookstore  
528 20<sup>th</sup> Street South  
Birmingham, AL 35294  
Phone (934-6937)

## **Telephone**

On-campus housing has the option for local and long distance telephone service. Necessary forms for this service must be filled out in the Communications. There is an installation charge of \$10, and a monthly charge for line service. Any long distance charges for the month will be billed to the resident. All residents must provide their own touch tone phone. And ask the student housing staff for obtaining a telephone directory.

Off campus telephone service may be arranged with one of several local service providers. Providers are listed in the first pages of any BellSouth White Pages Telephone Book. Information on advanced deposits and monthly rates are available through the local providers.

The Customer Guide of the telephone book contains a wealth of information about how to become fully acquainted with telephone service locally, nationally, or internationally.

## **Utilities**

The University provides all utilities except telephone service (see Telephone) and cable TV in all residence halls. In the Garden Apartments, the University pays for water; however, residents must pay for gas, electricity, telephone service and cable TV. Off campus arrangements for utility services may be arranged through the same contacts and procedures in accordance with your lease agreement, and in consultation with the applicable landlord or apartment rental office.

To install these utilities:

- (1) **GAS:** Contact ALABAMA GAS CORP. (326-8200) for installation of gas service. A contract and a deposit are required. Address: 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 19<sup>th</sup> Street South.
- (2) **ELECTRICITY:** Contact ALABAMA POWER COMPANY (252-9115) for installation of service. A deposit is required and a connecting charge is added to the first bill. Address: 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 20<sup>th</sup> Street South.
- (3) **CABLE TV:** Contact BIRMINGHAM CABLE (591-6880) Address: 6249 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South. Residents **MUST** be at home to let a cable representative into the Residence Hall. If off-campus, contact the local service provider.

## **U. S. Postal Service**

The main post office for the City of Birmingham is located at 351 24<sup>th</sup> Street North. It is open six days a week, twenty-four hours a day, excluding Sundays and holidays. The closest facility to the campus is located at 1821 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue South.

Mailboxes located throughout the city and suburbs are bright blue. These boxes are for domestic and airmail envelopes. The envelope must have sufficient postage. Packages should be mailed through a post office location.

Stamps can also be purchased at the ticket window outside the Alumni Auditorium on the first floor of the Hill University Center.

Zip codes are very important in the United States and abroad as well. Use of the zip code facilitates and expedites the processing of mail. Omission of the zip code will delay the movement and arrival of mail.

In addition to the U.S. Postal Service, packages and large cartons can be shipped by Federal Express or the United Parcel Service (UPS) to almost every city in the United States.

Check with UAB Student Housing Staff concerning receiving mail on-campus.

## **Electronic Mail**

Enrolled students and employees are eligible to obtain a logon identification number to gain access to the Internet via the University Computer Center. Students should contact Educational Technology Services (ETS) or their graduate program. Employees will receive this information through their department.

## **Other Communication Services**

Facsimile facilities are available at the Copy Center in Hill University Center, adjacent to the Blazer Bookstore. They are open weekdays from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. There is a charge for faxing. Call 975-5651 for pricing.

Pre-paid telephone cards are available from several local convenience stores and gas stations. Each company is independent and charges what the market will allow.

Telegrams are still available through Western Union that can be contacted at 1-800-325-6000. Western Union also provides the service of money transfers.

## **Ground Transportation**

### Local Public Transportation

Bus – Local bus service is provided by MAX (Metro Area Express) to points of interest around Birmingham including shopping areas. DART, (Downtown Area Rapid Transit), a mini-bus system, operates attractive trolleys in the central business district. Bus schedules are available in the lobby of the UAB Hill University Center and at the Smolian International House. Bus service is limited and is not available on weekends.

MAX (Metro Area Express)  
(205) 521-0101

Service: Monday through Friday (No weekend or designated holiday service)

Fare: Exact fare required. Fare boxes will accept bills, but do not make change. For information on special fares for students and children, please call public information at (205) 521-0101.

### Local Taxi Transportation

Service is limited. Refer to the local yellow pages in your telephone book.

### National Ground Transportation

Bus Service  
Greyhound  
624 19<sup>th</sup> Street North  
(205) 252-7120

Train Service  
Amtrak  
National Rail Passenger Service  
1819 Morris Avenue  
(205) 324-3033

## Alabama Driver's License

Persons wanting to purchase a car during their stay in the U.S. will be required to obtain an Alabama driver's license. Anyone in a valid nonimmigrant status (F, J, H, TN, and their dependents) may apply for an Alabama driver's license.

Individuals that are visiting the U.S. with a B-1/WB or B-2/WT status are **not eligible** to apply for an Alabama driver's license. If these individuals have a need to drive while in the U.S., they should obtain an International Driver's License in their home country. An International Driver's License is usually valid for a short period of time (i.e., 30-60 days).

There are several locations in Birmingham where one may apply for an Alabama driver's license. Listed below are the offices that are located near UAB:

908 Bankhead Highway  
Birmingham, AL 35204  
252-7445, telephone

813 Green Springs Highway  
Homewood, AL 35209  
916-2720, telephone

Written and road exams are offered Monday through Friday 8:00 a. m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Individuals will be required to take a written exam and a road exam. The written exam is provided in a variety of languages and can be taken as many times as necessary to successfully pass the exam. The fee for the Alabama driver's license is \$20.00 in cash or a check payable on an Alabama bank.

Everyone should study for the written exam. The ISSS has copies of the Alabama Driver's License Study Booklet in Room 318 Hill University Center and at the Smolian International House, 1600 10th Avenue South.

Those individuals that do not have an International Driver's License must have a licensed driver take them to one of the driver's license locations. The licensed driver must be willing to allow the individual use of his or her car for the road test. The officer will inspect the car. The car must be fully functional (i.e., working turn signals, horn, etc.) before the officer will proceed with the road exam. It is advisable to practice driving this vehicle in a deserted parking lot prior to taking the road exam.

Bring the following items when applying for the Alabama driver's license: Passport, form I-94 card, the specific immigration documents (i.e., IAP-66, I-20, or approval notices for H, O, TN, or TD), and a birth certificate is sometimes helpful.

Applicants for a driver's license are not required to have a social security number. However, individuals should first attempt to apply for a social security number through the Social Security Administration, (see the section entitled "International Students and Scholars Applying for a

Social Security Number.”) If the application is denied by the Social Security Administration, the individual should tell the officer at the driver’s license office that they were denied a social security number because their particular immigration status makes them ineligible to receive one (i.e., not authorized employment by the INS). If the individual cannot convince the officer to accept the explanation, ask to see a supervisor. If a supervisor is not available, contact the ISSS at 934-3328 from a pay phone in the lobby.

Note: Neither the 999-xx-xxxx number issued by the UAB Admission’s office nor an Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) should be presented to the driver’s license office as a social security number. Individuals that pass the Alabama driver’s license exams (written and road test), will be issued an identification number by the Montgomery, Alabama Department of Transportation office.

### **Alabama Identification Card**

This document is used solely for identification purposes. This card is not valid for driving purposes. The cost of this document is \$20.00 in cash or a check payable on an Alabama bank account. The Alabama identification card is issued at the same locations as the driver’s license.

### **Buying A Used or Previously Owned Car**

Before buying a car, be sure to read the Blue Book NADA (National Automobile Dealer’s Association) Official Used Car Guide. This book, available at most libraries and bookstores, describes the price range for any year, make, model and type of car. Expect to pay a sum of money close to the price listed in the Blue Book.

#### Where to Purchase a Used Car

##### New Car Dealer

Some new car dealers also sell used cars. These cars can be slightly used “demos” or trade-ins. Dealers usually keep the best cars for trade-ins and sell cars that are older or are in need of repair to auctions, wholesale buyers and used car dealers. The new car dealers usually sell their used cars with a limited warranty. They also generally sell these cars for more than the Blue Book price.

##### Used Car Dealer

Used car dealers sell cars previously owned or leased. This type of dealer may offer a limited warranty.

##### Private Owner

Some individuals choose to sell their car rather than selling through a car dealer. It is a good idea to test-drive the car. Pay attention to how the car handles. Listen for any noises. Take the car to a mechanic for a complete inspection. Upon purchasing a car, be sure to obtain the car

title to prove legal ownership of the vehicle. Particular attention should be given to the questions listed below.

#### Questions to Ask Before Buying a Used Car:

What is the car's condition?

What is the mileage?

Has it ever been in an accident?

Why are you selling the car?

Has the car been serviced regularly (i.e., oil change, transmission, rotation and alignment of tires)?

#### Problems to Look for When Buying a Used Car:

Leaks – Look at the pavement under the car for dark stains or puddles. This may indicate an oil or brake fluid leak.

Body – Look for any type of rusting or bubbling under the car's paint. Check the wheels, door edges, and trunk floor and lid as well as the car frame.

Engine and Transmission – The car should start and accelerate smoothly. If there is any skipping, hesitation, or noise, the car will probably need expensive repairs. Check the gears, they should shift smoothly and quietly.

Tires – Check for uneven tire wear, which can indicate alignment problems. Examine the trunk and spare tire equipment to ensure all necessary parts are there.

Interior – Be sure to check the window controls, safety belts, seat adjusters, warning lights, wipers, washers, radio, heater and air conditioner.

#### Motor Vehicle Titles

##### Jefferson County Revenue Department

##### General Information (proof of ownership)

Motor vehicle titles may be applied for or transferred through the Jefferson County Revenue Department. One must apply in person, or send a notarized power of attorney. Positive identification, date of birth, driver's license number and Social Security number may also be required. Individuals moving from another state have 30 calendar days from date of entry into Alabama to apply for a title and tag without penalty. A power of attorney is required on all leased vehicles. Names must be signed correctly as shown on title (First, Middle, Last). Alterations, erasures, liquid paper or white-out on any required document voids the document, and you must apply for a replacement document. Proof of Alabama residency is required of all applicants. This may be in the form of an Alabama driver's license, property tax deed, leases of property or utility bills in your name. In order to complete your application for title, the documents listed below may also be required.

- First Alabama title
- Original manufacture's statement of origin properly assigned to you
- Out-of-state title in your name, or assigned to you
- Motor vehicle registration or tag receipt from another state
- If vehicle is financed, name and mailing address of lienholder, date financed, loan account number and copy of title (fax copy is acceptable) NOTE: A physical inspection of the vehicle will be required on first time applications for title. The vehicle may be brought to a Revenue Department location any weekday(except holidays) between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.
- Transfer of current Alabama title
- Alabama title properly assigned to you on the back of the original title, odometer reading and color of vehicle
- Bill of sale
- Marriage license, divorce decree (if applicable)
- Form MVT 5-7 signed and notarized

#### Vehicle Registration

If coming to Alabama from out of state, the following documents/requirements listed below are necessary to register an automobile.

- Out of state title
- Or-
- If lien on title, a fax copy of the face of the title
- The registered owner of automobile must bring in automobile for inspection (see address below), or, if somebody else brings in the automobile, a notarized copy of power of attorney documents to register the automobile.
- Valid Alabama Driver's License or proof of residency
- Payment: Either by check (out of state checks are not accepted!), money order, cashier's check, Visa or Master Card for tag and title are acceptable.

If in state, Alabama Driver's License is required and there is no need to bring the car in for inspection.

Address:

Jefferson County Courthouse  
 A-100 North Annex  
 716 North 21<sup>st</sup> Street  
 Birmingham, AL 35263

Inspections: Vehicles should be parked in the Jefferson County Parking Deck on 21<sup>st</sup> Street between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenues. Large vehicles can be parked on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue in front of the Art Museum.

Phone: (205) 325-5198

Fax: (205) 325-5974

Bessemer Courthouse  
Room 109  
1801 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue  
Bessemer, AL 35020

Inspections: Vehicles should be parked in designated vehicle inspection parking spaces on 18<sup>th</sup> Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue.

Phone: (205) 481-4110

Fax: (205) 481-4113

Center Point Satellite  
2651 Center Point Road  
Birmingham, AL 35215

Inspections: Vehicles should be parked in designated vehicle inspection spaces on the right side of the building.

Phone: (205) 856-8815

Fax: (205) 856-8809

Southern Satellite  
813 Greensprings  
Homewood, AL 35209

Inspections: Vehicles should be parked as near as possible to the front entrance of the building.

Phone: (205) 916-2707

Fax: (205) 916-2721

## **Bicycle Regulations**

Many people enjoy the easy access that bicycles provide for on-campus commuting. Bicycle riders are subject to the same regulations as motor vehicles. The following guidelines have been established to make bicycling safer for everyone at UAB:

- Always wear a helmet and brightly-colored, close-fitting clothes.
- Obey all traffic rules; use proper hand signals when turning or stopping, otherwise, keep at least one hand on the handlebars.
- Ride the bicycle near the right-hand edge of the road with the flow of traffic. If sharing the lane with automobiles, allow enough room for a car to comfortably pass on your left.
- Give pedestrians the right-of-way; and respect areas designated for pedestrians only or as access ramps for the disabled.
- Carry identification and change for a phone call in case of an accident/emergency.
- Never carry another person on your bicycle.
- Lock the bicycle to authorized bicycle racks located throughout campus. Locking or leaning the bicycle to trees, bushes, handrails, signposts, access ramps or other such features of the University landscape in ways that will cause damage to University property, interfere with pedestrian or vehicular traffic, or work responsibilities of University employees, is not permitted and bicycles improperly parked may be locked in place or impounded.
- Bicycles are not allowed inside any campus building, though students living in residence halls may secure bicycles in their room.

- Bicycles do not need to be registered on campus.

## **Banking**

Banks offer a variety of professional services, including checking and savings accounts, certificates of deposit (CDs), automatic teller machines (ATMs), electronic banking, credit and debit cards, investment services, and estate planning. When selecting a bank, it is important to determine which of these services are needed.

Banks and automated teller machines (ATMs) are available throughout UAB and Birmingham. It is advisable to obtain a checking account, as it is dangerous to carry large sums of cash. Shop around for the best interest rates and conditions of banking. Contact the Newcomer Services department of individual banking institutions to determine which services are available. Individuals should understand all terms and agreements and receive adequate instructions on how to use the banking services. Refer to the local yellow pages for a complete listing of the various banks located throughout the Birmingham Area.

Banks require certain information before they will open an account. Individuals will probably be asked to provide photo identification, some personal data, a mailing address, and money to deposit. Banks also will request a Social Security Number (SSN) to be used to report earnings to the federal tax authority, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). It is advisable to obtain a Social Security Number as early as possible in order to open a bank account. A few banks may accept an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) obtained from the IRS.

### **Bank Services**

#### **Checking Account:**

A checking account safeguards an individual's money while allowing for easy payment of expenses. Some banks require their customers to maintain a minimum balance of funds in their checking accounts. Virtually all checking accounts may be accessed using a plastic ATM card. The card is issued by the bank and may be used together with a personal identification number (PIN) to withdraw cash and make deposits at special banking machines. To avoid being fined, do not write a check or withdraw more money than is available in the account. When writing checks, leave no areas blank. Individuals should not write nor endorse a check for cash until inside the bank.

#### **Savings Account:**

A savings account is used to safeguard money for a prolonged period. A low rate of interest is paid on the balance. Certificates of Deposit (CD) pay higher interest than savings accounts; however, the individual must leave the money untouched for a specific period. The longer the money is left in the deposit, the higher the rate of interest paid.

#### **NOW Accounts:**

Many banks offer NOW (notice of withdrawal) accounts that combine the features of checking and savings accounts. With a NOW account, the individual may write a certain number of

checks each month; such accounts can be very handy for students who maintain a relatively high balance and write relatively few checks.

#### Credit Cards:

Many banks offer a credit card with a charging limit. Credit cards are very convenient, but individuals should use them with caution. The amount charged to the card must be repaid, often at a high interest rate. Credit cards are best reserved for emergencies.

#### Handling Money Safely:

Do not keep large sums of cash, or keep money at home. Individuals should never give out their credit card number or the card expiration date. A lost credit card must be reported immediately to the company or bank that issued the card.

## U.S. SYSTEM OF EDUCATION AND UAB

### **The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)**

Welcome to the Magic City, "one of ten most enjoyable cities to live in the United States," home of the UAB Blazers!

UAB is a comprehensive urban university and medical center complex with an annual enrollment exceeding 18,000 students. In a short period of time, UAB has established excellent programs through six liberal arts and professional schools, six health professional schools and graduate programs serving all major units.

As the University has grown so have its contributions to the state and nation – and so has the potential to do even more. UAB is committed to education, research and service programs of excellent quality and far-reaching scope.

The UAB campus occupies 70 square blocks near downtown Birmingham. With a budget exceeding \$5.5 million, UAB is Alabama's largest employer. Its faculty, staff and support personnel total more than 16,000 individuals.

As an autonomous campus of the University of Alabama System, UAB serves the largest metropolitan area in the state. More than one-fifth of the state's population lives within 25 miles of the urban campus. With classes scheduled from 6:00 a.m. through 10:00 p.m., UAB offers unique educational opportunities to area citizens. These programs, combined with the University's research and service efforts, make UAB an exciting institution and a contributing community citizen.

UAB's primary purpose is to provide educational opportunities for members of a diverse student body. For this reason, educational programs are broad-based and designed to serve the most current needs of the contemporary society. At the undergraduate level, degree programs range from business to the fine arts, from natural sciences to the humanities and the life sciences. At the graduate level, programs serve the career needs of educators and business leaders, as well as those involved in advancing the frontiers of the health sciences. Training for health professionals is available through programs at the certificate (subbaccalaureate) level, master's, doctoral and professional degree levels.

### **Post-Secondary Education**

The United States of America possesses a unique educational system. One of the major differences lies in post-secondary education. In most countries of the world, post-secondary education is operated or controlled by the Ministry of Education or some other centralized government agency. Though private sectors in education may exist, generally in these other countries the government agencies hold the distinction of being the primary education caretaker.

In the United States, each individual state regulates those academic institutions within its borders. These institutions are accredited by private, non-governmental agencies. What does accreditation mean? It implies that a given institution has been investigated by a team of experts

and has met the minimum requirements of the accrediting agencies. UAB is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Many academic programs have additional accreditation from organizations appropriate to the particular academic discipline.

### Schools/Colleges/Universities

In many countries of the world, a college is a secondary school and is very different than a university. Words like “school”, “college” and “university” are often used in other countries with distinct meanings. These words might even signify different levels of education. On the other hand, in the United States these words are used interchangeably. Examples would be questions like, “where do you go to school?” In this case, the objective is to know what university you are attending. In addition, universities are often divided up into sections called “colleges” or “schools.” UAB is divided into 12 schools, which includes the School of Business, the School of Engineering, the School of Health Related Professions, etc. However, upon completion of studies, the UAB awards the actual degree.

### Post-Secondary Institutions

There are three types of post-secondary institutions in the U.S.:

1. *Junior or Community Colleges:* offer two –year Associate degree programs.
2. *Colleges and Universities:* offer Bachelor’s and may offer Associate and /or Master’s degree in some fields.
3. *Universities:* offer Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctoral Degrees.

### Relationship Between Students and Advisors

The Academic Advisor plays an important part in a student’s academic life, helping them to graduate at the scheduled time. The advisor is responsible for guiding students toward this desired goal, and assists them in the selection of a path to attain this goal.

In most countries, the concept of an advisor does not exist. The students have a fixed study load that they have to follow without deviation. So, they usually do not interact with any individual in the position of an advisor to help them. Also, students have to keep track of their own studies and academic matters.

In the United States, interaction with an advisor is an essential part of a student’s academic life. Any student who comes to UAB is assigned an academic advisor. This advisor keeps the “records” of the student and checks periodically on a student’s academic progress. These records consist of the student’s academic well being which relates to student’s grades and the way an individual student is progressing in his/her studies. The advisor is also responsible for assisting students in the selection of classes, which will help them to follow their required and desired course load with efficiency.

## **Relationship Between Students and Faculty**

The relationship between students and faculty in the United States is more informal than in most other countries in which a teacher is more distant from students. Faculty members have a greater interaction with students in contrast to countries in which it is difficult to get in touch with the teacher after class. The idea of office hours is also something that is not common in other countries. Teachers in the U.S. are required to have a specific number of hours in a week in which a student may discuss his/her problems. If a student is uncomfortable asking questions about course work in class, these office hours can be very helpful. Also, teachers take into consideration the limitations of students and act accordingly.

The student/faculty relationship in the U.S. is a more unconventional and casual approach in which students can address their issues in a comparatively more relaxed way. The classroom atmosphere is much more casual. Sometimes, students are allowed to carry food and drinks into the classroom to serve the needs of a mobile American society. This is much different from countries in which the students are not allowed to do anything in the class except study.

Students in the U.S. participate actively in class. They provide verbal feedback to the teachers inside and outside of the classroom. In fact, teachers vigorously encourage this interaction as this helps students to have a better understanding of the topic. Students can disagree with the professor and participate in a healthy debate. The approach is unconventional, but it does not affect this consummation of knowledge in any way.

## **Academic Year**

### **Credit/Semester/Quarter Hours**

An academic year in the United States is classified in either Semesters or Quarters. A semester consists of 15 weeks of a study period in which students attend one class three times a week. The class is fifty minutes in duration and students receive 3 credit hours for attending a class throughout the semester. There are 2 semesters in a year.

At UAB, the Quarter system is used. It consists of 10 weeks of study with most classes meeting 2 times a week for 2 hours. Three credit hours are awarded. There are usually 4 quarters in a year. The usual undergraduate workload for a quarter is 9 credit hours and for a semester 12 credit hours. At the graduate level, the students take 6 credit hours for a quarter and 9 credit hours for a semester. These are the required numbers of hours to classify a student as full-time. Students attending classes adding up to fewer credit hours than mentioned above does not fall into the full-time student category. Credit hours are a confusing concept for international students, as this notion is not prevalent in a lot of countries. UAB awards semester hour credits in a quarter system. When attending a 10-week quarter, the credit provided is the same as a 15-week semester. However, the semester system is the norm in the United States, and UAB will convert to follow this standard in fall of 2001. In most academic programs, a student has to complete 128 credit hours to obtain an undergraduate degree and 36 credit hours to complete a graduate degree.

## Major, Minor, Core, and Elective

Unlike other countries in which students attend universities and usually have a year long course load with predefined courses to take, the U.S. offers a more flexible path to follow. The average 4-year undergraduate study period is divided into these classifications: Major - As the name implies, it consists of the concentration of a student's workload. This is usually the academic field in which the student decides he or she would like to specialize. The major is also a stepping stone for the master's degree. Minor - This classification enhances and facilitates the major field of study. Students taking a specific major would usually minor in a field that will help them gain a better understanding of the major. Sometimes, students select a minor in a field that stimulates their interest but does not relate to their major. Core - These are the courses which students are **required** to take. These courses are usually not related to a student's major or minor but are necessary to attain a degree. In essence, these are the predefined courses which a student has to follow. In the State of Alabama, the core courses have been standardized. All the public universities have been provided with a set of core requirements that are identical. Elective - These are the courses a student may choose and are used to complete the number of hours required for a student to graduate. Sometimes students have a choice of electives, which allows them to pursue their hobbies and other interests.

## Grade Point Average (GPA)

Another confusing concept is that of the GPA. Most countries calculate letter grades based on calculating percentages and then assigning a letter grade for appropriate categories. In the United States, the concept of the GPA is based on the number of credit hours attempted and the grades achieved for those hours. The grades are generally based on percentages: 90% = A, 80% = B, 70% = C, 60% = D; below 60% = F. Each letter grade is provided a specific number of points.

A = 4

B = 3

C = 2

D = 1

F = 0

The GPA is calculated based on the points above and the credit hours. The GPA is the ratio of the total accumulated points from the above scale and the total number of classes taken.

$$\text{GPA} = \frac{\text{TOTAL NUMBER OF POINTS}}{\text{TOTAL NUMBER OF CLASSES}}$$

Example: student takes 10 classes of 3 credit hours each, receives 7 A's, 1 B, 1 C, and 1 D. Then his GPA will be

$$\text{GPA} = \frac{7 \times 4 + 1 \times 3 + 1 \times 2 + 1 \times 1}{10} = 3.4$$

## **Tests And Quizzes (Pop Quizzes)**

Examination structure varies. Each teacher has his/her own criteria as to how students should be tested on the knowledge they have acquired. Some teachers give mid-term examinations and comprehensive finals. Mid-term exams include the material that has been covered in the class up to a certain point, while comprehensive finals are at the end of the course, and consist of all information that has been taught throughout the term.

As an alternative, some teachers divide their examination pattern into "test1, test2....testN" format. Test1 consists of the things that are covered until that test is given. The topics covered in this test are no longer asked for in a later exam. The input for test3 then becomes the material covered after test1, but before test2 and so on.

Quizzes are administered to insure that students are studying for their classes regularly. The quiz results comprise a small percentage of the total grade. A variance is the pop quiz: unlike regular quizzes, the pop quiz is unannounced.

## **Oral Presentations**

Some classes require oral presentations by the student. These presentations may be a major percentage of the final grade and require research on the part of the student. A student is expected to give an oral presentation on a specific subject in front of the other class members and obtains a grade for this presentation.

## **Examination Style – Subjective Vs. Objective**

Examinations are divided into these basic categories:

Subjective examinations are also called essay examinations. The questions asked on the exam demand answers of a descriptive nature. Answers may require a brief response or extensive discussion of a particular topic.

Teachers often favor objective examinations. These exams consist of true/false questions, fill in the blanks, matching the correct answers, and short answers. The dominant type is multiple choice exams. One question will have several possible answers, and students will have to select the correct one. Teachers may or may not deduct points if an incorrect answer is chosen.

## **Research Papers**

Research papers: Sometimes, teachers require students to write a 15 – 20 page research paper pertaining to the course material. These papers might be in lieu of, or in addition to examinations or oral presentations. Students may be permitted to choose their own topic or select a topic from the choices given by the teacher.

## **Syllabus**

A syllabus is an outline of the content of a particular course. Teachers usually distribute the syllabus on the first day of class. The syllabus provides important dates for examinations, the type of examinations, and the course outline. Students must master the material indicated in the syllabus, as that is usually the content of examinations. The syllabus also contains information about the teacher, his/her name, office hours, textbook requirements and any special policies the teacher has regarding the course.

## **Group Projects Vs. Plagiarism**

Group projects may be given in classes when interaction is desired among students. The points for the assignment are given equally to all students involved in the project. Therefore, it is necessary for everyone to provide his or her best input. For group projects, sharing information and material is appropriate. The final project will be a combined effort. Students should not share information on an examination or complete class assignments as a group unless specifically approved by the instructor.

Copying someone else's material and labeling it as your own is called plagiarism. Plagiarism is cause for severe reprimand. Students must be careful to avoid plagiarism, even if by mistake. Accusations of plagiarism may lead to course failure or academic suspension.

## **Financial Aid**

### Undergraduate

Federal financial aid in the form of scholarships, fellowships etc. is **not** available to undergraduate international students. However, part time work of 20 hours per week is allowed on campus. On-campus employment refers to jobs available on campus at UAB, and through affiliations with UAB. Participation in a cooperative program is available after a certain number of hours are completed at the UAB. In this program, employment outside the UAB is allowed in a job related to the major field of study with proper authorization. Contact the Foreign Student Advisor for additional information.

### Graduate

Some departments at UAB offer financial aid to graduate students in the form of teaching assistantships or research assistantships. These assistantships provide the benefit of paid tuition and an annual stipend. Graduate students may also work on campus or off campus with appropriate authorization. Contact the Foreign Student Advisor for additional information.

## **Academic Warning – Suspension**

Academic Trouble? If you are struggling with your coursework, you need to be aware of UAB's policy regarding Academic Warning and Academic Suspension. Academic warning is if your

Grade Point Average falls below 2.0 for a given term. If you are experiencing problems with your classes, seek assistance. Consistent academic warnings can result in Suspension. If your Grade Point Average falls below a 2.0 (C) after completing 30 hours at UAB, then you could be subject to the Academic Suspension. A first Suspension results in the inability to attend UAB for one academic term. A second Suspension results in the inability to attend UAB for one academic year. A third suspension results in permanent dismissal from UAB. Realize this also an impact on your immigration status. For a detailed explanation regarding this policy, consult page 44 of the 1999/2000 UAB Catalog or talk to your Academic Advisor.

Solutions? Don't wait until the problem becomes severe. Here is some advice to help:

Inform your Academic Advisor of your weak areas

Consult with the professor of the classes in which you are having trouble

Utilize the English Writing Lab, Math Lab, and any tutoring available

Get a study buddy in your class

Take a cassette recorder to your classes; ask professor if you can tape the classes

Take advantage of the Study Skills Seminars available (see Veteran Affairs office HUC 504)

Study early; don't wait until the last minute

## AMERICAN CULTURE AND CUSTOMS

This is a very exciting, and perhaps anxious time for those who have never traveled or lived in the United States. Moving and leaving behind close friends and family can be very stressful, and immersing oneself in a new culture can be even more so. Many newcomers will be adjusting to a new language, culture and a distinctly different way of life.

Having an understanding of American culture will help in the transition to life in the United States. There are many resources available to assist with the transition. One important recommendation to all newcomers is to become involved in activities offered through the Smolian International House. A wide variety of activities are available and the International House provides an opportunity to meet and develop friendships with other newcomers from around the world.

The following generalizations on American customs are offered as a guide for adjusting to life in the U.S. There are many regional, ethnic and individual differences within the U.S., so please keep an open mind and learn from each person you meet. A selected bibliography is listed at the end of this section which provides valuable information on American culture and culture shock.

### **Greetings**

Americans often greet each other with a “hi” or “how are you.” This is not a question, but a statement.

During introductions people will often shake hands. Embraces or hugs are generally reserved for greeting family members or very close friends.

### **Appointments**

Time is very important to Americans and people are expected to arrive at the precise time an appointment is scheduled.

### **Gestures and Nonverbal Communication**

Many Americans move quite frequently while conversing. People generally like to maintain about one arm length of distance between themselves and the person with whom they are speaking. Eye contact is generally direct.

### **Hygiene**

Americans, as a general rule, are very concerned about hygiene issues. Body odor in particular is a very sensitive issue. Most Americans bathe daily and use an antiperspirant to reduce perspiration and odors. Covering odor with a perfume or cologne will tend to offend Americans. Strong musk and perfumes are just as overwhelming as heavy perspiration.

## **Work Schedules**

The average workday is from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Retail stores usually operate from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. or 9:00 p.m. Some retail stores and grocery stores are open 24 hours a day.

## **Tipping**

When eating in a restaurant it is customary to leave money (a 'tip') for the waiter or waitress who served you. The amount is generally about 15-20 percent of the total bill. It is paid separately and in addition to the amount for the meal. It is also customary to tip bellmen in hotels (about 50 cents per bag) and taxi drivers (10–15 percent of the bill). Do Not tip government employees and school officials. These are considered bribes and are punishable by law.

## **Dialect**

One of the most distinct differences in the Southeast United States is the dialect. Examples of common words and phrases used are included in the Appendix.

### **Bibliography**

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Kohls, L. R. (1988) *The Values Americans live By*.

Hayward, Irva R. and David W. Coombs (1994) *Welcome: A Foreigner's Guide to Successful Living in the Southern United States*

## IMPORTANT CONCEPTS OF THE U.S. LEGAL SYSTEM

(Source: The International Student Handbook by Allan Wernick)

In general, nonimmigrant international students and scholars enjoy the same constitutional protections as U.S. citizens. An international student or scholar can enjoy freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, protection from unreasonable searches and seizures, and the other protections included in the “Bill of Rights” of the U.S. Constitution. An international student or scholar can own property (land and buildings) if they wish to, and they are protected against discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, color and national origin. There are federal, state and often municipal rules protecting all persons from most forms of discrimination.

### Civil Laws, Courts and Lawyers

If you have been wronged by another and can prove that you were damaged as a result, you may have the right to sue the wrongdoer in court for monetary damages. The person suing is called the plaintiff, and the person being sued is called the defendant. The fact that you are not a U.S. citizen will not affect your rights.

With the exception of small claims court, you might have the need to utilize the services of a lawyer. Lawyers generally charge for their services in one of three ways: a contingency fee, an hourly fee, and a flat fee. The fee agreement will often depend on the kind of case you have.

One type of court action in which you ordinarily do not need a lawyer is small claims court. Small claims court is designed to provide speedy relief for a person where a relatively small amount of money is involved. Generally the maximum you are allowed to sue for in small claims court is between \$500 and \$2000.

### Criminal Cases

An international student or scholar has even more reason than a U.S. citizen to be concerned about the ramifications of criminal activity. A U.S. citizen who is convicted of a crime may face a fine or imprisonment. The international student or scholar will suffer these penalties and may be deported as well. If you are arrested or charged with a crime, you or your criminal attorney should consult with an immigration lawyer before pleading guilty to any charges.

An international student or scholar has the same rights as a U.S. citizen if accused of a crime: The right to be represented by a lawyer, and to be provided with a lawyer to represent you if you cannot afford to hire one; the right to remain silent or not to answer questions asked by a law enforcement officer regarding your possible involvement in criminal activity; and the right not to be searched unless the police officer has a warrant, except in emergency circumstances. If you are accused of having committed a crime, the best advice in most circumstances is to not answer any questions regarding charges until you have had the opportunity to talk to a lawyer.

## Freedom of Speech and Religion

International students and scholars have the constitutional right to express their views freely, to join together with others in the expression of those views, and to participate fully in the propagation and publication of ideas, popular or unpopular, so long as those expressions are made in an orderly and peaceful manner. International students and scholars have the same rights to free speech and are subject to the same limitations of freedom of action as U.S. citizens.

## Enforcement of Laws

Laws exist in the U.S. that detail the rights and responsibilities of individuals living and working in the U.S. Each country's laws are unique to that country. If U.S. federal laws are involved, various federal agencies may become involved in the enforcement of these laws and the prosecution of individuals who have been deemed to have "broken" these laws. If state and/or local laws and regulations are involved, they are enforced by local, county, and/or state police and sheriffs departments (sometimes also known as public safety officials).

In some countries of the world, police units can act as both "judge and jury". In the U.S., police who overstep the responsibilities of their position can be prosecuted and punished. The purpose of police in the U.S. is to protect citizens and residents.

In Alabama, public safety is enforced by the Alabama State Troopers, various County Sheriffs Offices, municipal police departments, and various police departments/safety offices at large corporations and institutions. At UAB, a police department exists that is pledged to, "supporting UAB's institutional goals and constantly ensuring a safe, free environment for all campus faculty, staff, students, patients, guests, and visitors." Their mission and purpose are to protect the UAB community and to prevent crime. The UAB police department is in frequent contact with local, county, and state police officials. Officers may patrol campus on foot, by bicycle, on horseback, or by automobile.

The most effective way NOT to be involved in a criminal situation or to be a victim, though, is to be prepared. UAB is a university located in a large, urban setting. While there is nothing to fear in this setting, it is best to use caution in all situations, especially after dark.

## Personal Safety/Security

Birmingham is generally a safe city, but does have its share of crime in all categories. Safety, however, is everyone's responsibility. Dealing successfully with personal issues of safety and security are keys to a successful experience as an international student/scholar. Someone who has had a crime committed against him/her is termed a "victim." Someone who has seen a crime being committed is a "witness." Someone who has committed or suspected of committing a crime is a "suspect." In the U.S., if an individual has been "victimized" or has "witnessed" a crime, it is best to report the crime to the police. The police can assist in the solving of the crime and in prosecuting the "suspect."

## Keys to Protecting People and Belongings

In Choosing an Apartment/House/Residence Hall, Make Certain That:

- entrances and exits are well-maintained and access is only allowed to residents and guests;
- the door locks are sturdy, that the windows can be locked, and that there is a peephole (viewer) in the door;
- if it has a sliding glass door, that this door has a lock and a means to block the door track with a wooden rod;
- the management tightly controls the keys;
- the walkways, entrances, parking areas, elevators, stairways, hallways, laundry rooms, and storage areas are well-lighted (Note: if the building is two-story, the second story is usually safer, especially if there are balconies);
- the mailboxes have locks and are in a centrally located, well-lighted area;
- and the area is well-maintained (burnt lights are fixed, shrubs are trimmed, trash and snow removed).

Living in an Apartment/House/Residence Hall

- Lock the outside doors at all times, even when at home.
- Use the peephole (viewer) whenever anyone knocks or rings the bell before opening the door.
- Do not give personal information to strangers at the door.
- Get to know neighbors.
- Do not walk alone after dark.
- If the power and/or gas turns off unexpectedly, call the power and gas companies directly.
- When leaving for an extended length of time, lock the sliding glass doors and the windows.

Weather Conditions

- WBHM (90.3 FM) is UAB'S official radio station which provides updates on weather and announces university closings due to inclement weather.
- If there is bad weather, radio and television stations will broadcast instructions on dealing with the weather (particular weather problems in Birmingham are tornadoes, hurricanes, and flooding).
- In the Birmingham area, sirens will be activated if a tornado is spotted within the vicinity. (Note: these sirens are tested the first Wednesday of every month).

Having a Telephone

- Consider getting what is termed “caller ID” (caller identification) which allows the caller’s number to be displayed.
- Do not accept “collect calls” from strangers (the call is charged to the receiver, not the caller).

### Avoiding Being “Scammed” (taken advantage of financially) by “Con Artists”

- Don’t give strangers personal information (name, address, social security number, bank account numbers, credit card numbers, etc.) over the phone or in person.
- Never discuss your finances with strangers.
- Never withdraw money from the bank at the suggestion of a stranger.
- Always remember that suspicion is not a bad trait and that faith in someone is not always rewarding.

### Owning a Car/Automobile (See Buying a Car Section)

- Purchase auto insurance (now required by the State of Alabama).
- Always lock the doors and roll up the windows when driving and when the car is parked.
- Park in a well-lighted area at all times.
- When parking on the street, look for approaching cars before exiting the car.
- Check visually inside the car before getting into it each time.
- Check underneath your car from a distance while approaching.
- Do not roll down windows to speak to strangers.
- Do not leave valuables inside the car in the view of others.
- Always have keys ready when returning to the car.
- When needing car repairs, check with friends and colleagues to find a reputable repair shop.

### Owning a Bicycle (See Bicycle Regulations Section)

- Lock the bicycle whenever left outside.
- Secure the bicycle to a designated bicycle rack. A bar lock is recommended.

### Walking After Dark

- Always walk in a group.
- If on campus and not in a group, call the Campus Escort Service for a free ride (tel. # 4-8772).
- Be alert to your surroundings.
- If followed, go to a well-lighted area with a telephone and call the Police; the blue telephones on campus are linked directly to UAB police.

### When Walking To Errands

- Do not carry money in the view of others.
- Be aware of other individuals and areas when walking.

### When Walking Across A Street

- Only cross streets at the intersections. To cross in the middle of the street is termed “jaywalking” and is considered illegal in the U.S. (Note: The police will charge a large fine if someone is caught jaywalking).
- Only cross when the crossing sign designates "walk". Crossing when the crossing sign indicates "Don't Walk" is illegal and dangerous.
- Before crossing the street, look both ways to make certain cars have stopped completely.

UAB Police Department phone numbers are listed below:

UAB Police Department Crime Prevention Unit – 934-2409

Emergency- 934-3535

Non-Emergency – 934-4434

UAB Crime Tips – 934-6899

Escort Service – 934-8772

Rape Response Center – 323-7273

UAB Care Officer – 934-2409

## SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

A U.S. Social Security Number (SSN) is a federal identification number that government agencies use for the purpose of tracking income and for identification purposes. A nonimmigrant that has permission by the Immigration Service to work in the U.S. or is eligible to work incidental to status (i.e. F-1 or J-1 students) can apply for a social security number.

Students and scholars applying for a social security number should drive to the following address:

Social Security Administration  
2001 12th Avenue North  
Birmingham, AL 35234  
Office hours are 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday  
Free parking is available

Students and scholars should take the following documents: Passport, I-94 card, and their immigration document (i.e., IAP-66, I-20, or approval notice for H-1B, TN or O). J-2 dependents must take their Employment Authorization Card (EAC). F and J students must ask the foreign student advisor to complete a letter that verifies employment is incidental to status. Students should present this completed letter to the Social Security Administration.

Individuals will be required to complete an application form and show the documents listed above for identification purposes. The Social Security Administration will review and return the documents. If the application is accepted, it will take approximately 2 weeks to receive the Social Security card in the mail. If the application is not accepted, ask to speak with a supervisor. If a supervisor is not available, call International Scholars and Student Services at 934-3328 from the pay phone located in the lobby.

The social security number may be obtained prior to receiving the card in the mail by following one of the procedures listed below:

Individuals who are proficient in English, may call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 between hours of 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The number should be issued after 48 hours from filing the application. The information person will ask a series of questions for identification purposes (e.g., name, date of birth, mother's maiden name, etc.). If the SSN is not available, individuals may return to the Social Security Administration with their documents several days (3-4) after filing the application. The number will be given at the customer service window.

## TAXATION

The United States of America (USA), most of its fifty states, and various local governments fund their programs and services through a variety of taxes on individuals physically present in the areas of their jurisdiction (whether citizens, permanent residents, or visitors). These taxes can include “sales taxes” (taxes on purchases), “investment taxes,” and “income taxes” (taxes on earnings). These tax dollars are then utilized to pay for the cost of lights, streets, police, schools, retirement, etc. Paying these taxes and reporting income to these various governmental agencies is a legal requirement for an international student or scholar physically present in the USA.

It is common practice in the USA for an employer or the grantor of a scholarship/fellowship to state the gross amount an individual will earn/receive as a total or hourly dollar figure as the amount BEFORE tax. Taxes are removed from a payment before the payment is made to an individual. Therefore, an international student or scholar should expect that the actual amount of money they will be receiving in the USA generally will be less than the amount stated to them verbally, in an award letter, or in an offer of employment letter.

### **Tax Status**

International students and scholars physically present in the USA are determined to be either Non-Resident Aliens for Tax Purposes or Resident Aliens for Tax Purposes dependent upon their current immigration status, previous visits to the USA, and the date of their expected return to their home country. An individual’s tax status directly affects which income taxes s/he must pay. The ISSS will determine and monitor an international student or scholar’s tax status.

### **FICA (Federal Insurance Contributions Act) Tax**

The USA has a federal system of retirement programs (retirement income, medical insurance, etc.) that are paid from taxes on income. The official name for these Federal Income Taxes is FICA, but most US individuals generally describe these taxes and benefits as “social security.”

### **Federal Income Tax**

International students and scholars studying and working in the USA (and their dependents who work) are required to pay federal income tax on any income they receive in the USA either paid to them directly or paid on their behalf. This means that any assistantship, scholarship, fellowship, salary, or compensation received by an international individual may be taxed by the US federal government. One exception to the general rule of paying tax may exist if the international student or scholars’ country of residence has a tax treaty with the US federal government. These tax treaties are designed to foster trade and to prevent double taxation of citizens.

Caution: Just because a country has a tax treaty with the USA does not mean that all types of income are exempt from US federal taxation. Each tax treaty is uniquely designed based upon the desires of the two countries involved. The ISSS is responsible for determining whether an international student or scholar is eligible to utilize a tax treaty.

## **State Income Tax**

Each state in the USA determines its own tax rules. Currently, only income earned in the State of Alabama is taxed in the State of Alabama. Scholarships and fellowships are currently not taxable income in the State of Alabama. Federal income tax treaties do not apply to state taxes. All international students and scholars (and their dependents) that work in Alabama are required to pay state income tax.

## **Local Tax**

Both the City of Birmingham and Jefferson County tax those individuals who work within their boundaries. Therefore, all international students, scholars, and dependents who work must pay both city and county income taxes. The city income tax is currently 1%. The county occupational tax is currently ½%. No tax forms are required for the local taxes. Income tax treaties also do not apply to local taxes.

## **Assistance with Income Tax Filing**

### **Federal Income Tax Filing**

The federal governmental agency responsible for the collection of the federal income tax is the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). By law, the federal government requires that all international individuals (including dependents) must file tax forms every year they are physically present in the USA, regardless of whether they earned any US income for that year. The individual must file these forms directly with the IRS. Various terms utilized to describe the process of filing these forms include “filing” and “reporting”.

### **State Income Tax Filing**

The State of Alabama governmental agency responsible for the collection of the state income tax is the Alabama Department of Revenue. The State of Alabama requires anyone receiving income earned in the State of Alabama to file state tax forms. Therefore, international students, scholars, and their dependents who earn income in the State of Alabama must file state tax forms. The individual must file these forms directly with the Alabama Department of Revenue. International students and scholars who have had no US income or who have only earned scholarships or fellowships do not need to file any State of Alabama tax forms.

### **Local Income Tax Filing**

No requirement exists currently for the filing of local taxes (Birmingham City and Jefferson County).

Often times we've heard international students and scholars stating that they wished they had known the following information earlier in the year. So here are some tips to help make your Y2K tax time a little less stressful:

Remember to:

1. Save a copy of your last year's tax return, if one was filed.
2. Save all statements of income received from UAB (W-2, 1042-S, etc).
3. Save all interest and dividend statements on checking and saving accounts and on any other investments (1099, etc).
4. Save all end-of-the-year documents from your employer(s), your bank, and any investment companies.

The documents listed above usually arrive by mail between the end of December and the end of January. However, you may not realize their importance UNTIL tax filing time (especially if this is the first year you are dealing with filing U.S. income tax forms).

Just remember that a little preparation goes a long way to reduce the stress factor commonly associated with tax time in the U.S.

We've had very positive responses on the usefulness of the NRAware software on our website last year, and we heartily recommend making use of its information again this year.

We are going to do things a little differently this year and supply filing information to our Nonresident Alien students and scholars in a lecture format, not as tried previously with our VITA sessions. We feel that the lecture format, with the tax forms reviewed basically line by line, and in a group setting, will perhaps be more helpful to a larger number of you. This will mean no long lines to wait in! All you will have to do is come to one of the Information Sessions listed in the accompanying schedule, and you will be equipped with the basic knowledge necessary to complete these tax forms on your own.

## IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS

All foreign students and scholars who have entered the U.S. on nonimmigrant visas are subject to federal regulations that do not affect U.S. citizens or permanent residents. It is extremely important that these individuals are well informed about the specific regulations pertaining to their status. These regulations affect foreign students and scholars and their families in areas such as taxes, employment, study and travel. When in doubt, ask the ISSS staff for advice.

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) has placed the burden of responsibility on the foreign national to know the limits of their nonimmigrant status. Listed below are some general requirements for all nonimmigrants:

- Nonimmigrants enter the U.S. for a temporary period of time and are restricted to the activity consistent with their visas. The most important documents in their possession are the passport, the Form I-94, and their particular immigration document (I-20P, IAP-66P, H, O, or TN approval notice). These documents should be kept in a safe place where they can be accessed, if needed.
- Generally, nonimmigrants must demonstrate that their stay in the U.S. is temporary.
- Nonimmigrants must maintain a valid passport.
- Nonimmigrants cannot hold more than one nonimmigrant status at a time.
- Nonimmigrants must be participating in activities that are consistent with the specific immigration status they currently hold.

### **Visa**

A visa is a multicolored stamp placed on one of the passport pages by the U.S. Embassy or Consulate which gives permission to enter the U.S. at the port-of-entry (POE). The visa is presented along with the appropriate document (i.e., I-20P, IAP-66P, H approval notice, etc.) to an immigration officer. At the inspection, the immigration officer marks the immigration status on the Form I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record). Once admitted to the U.S., nonimmigrants are not required to maintain a valid visa stamp.

### **Immigration Status**

Immigration Status refers to an individual's immigration status while in the U.S. Each immigration status has specific conditions and limitations under which a person may remain in the U.S.

### **Duration of Status (D/S)**

Duration of Status (D/S) is defined by the INS as that period in which an F-1 student “is pursuing a full course of study at an educational institution approved by INS for attendance by foreign

students, or engaging in authorized practical training following completion of studies, plus 60 days to prepare for departure from the U.S.”

J-1 exchange visitors are also admitted with the “D/S” notation and may remain in the U.S. as long as they maintain J-1 status until the ending date on the form IAP-66 plus 30 days.

### **Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS)**

The INS service center having jurisdiction over Alabama is located in Mesquite, Texas and may be contacted at the address listed below. This facility is not open to the public for walk-in service. All applications for change of status, employment cards, and employment-based immigrant petitions are processed through this office.

#### **USINS**

Texas Service Center  
P.O. Box 851488  
Mesquite, TX 75185-1488  
(214) 381-1423

The Atlanta District INS office is open to the public Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., except for federal holidays. The district office is very limited on the types of applications they will process. Please contact the ISSS staff prior to visiting Atlanta.

#### **USINS**

Atlanta District Office  
77 Forsyth Street S.W.  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
(404) 331-2788

### **CIPRIS (Coordinated Interagency Partnership Regulating International Students)**

The UAB is participating in a pilot program to test new documents and concepts related to the admission of international students and exchange visitors into the United States. Part of this pilot program tests new document technology, such as a 2D bar code feature, which is incorporated on this form I-20P/IAP-66P. This technology will assist the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service in processing your admission to the U.S. more quickly.

The use and validity of this form is identical to other versions of forms I-20/IAP-66 which you may have seen. If you have any questions about this new pilot program, please contact ISSS.

### **Important Documents**

#### **Passport**

Students and scholars should always keep their passport in a safe place. Most passports are valid for a limited period of time. The law requires that all non-immigrants maintain a passport valid

for at least six (6) months into the future. Some countries have entered into agreements with the U.S. government acknowledging that a passport is valid for six months beyond the expiration date shown in the passport (the ISSS has a listing of these countries). It is the responsibility of students and scholars to remember when their passport will expire and contact their home country Consulate or Embassy for the extension. The ISSS can assist in locating the address information or individuals may check the Internet for consular office information. The amount of time required for a passport renewal varies per country, so please plan ahead.

EXCEPTION: Canadian citizens are not required to have a valid passport while in the USA.

#### I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record)

The Form I-94 is the small white card that is issued at the port-of-entry (POE) into the United States. The eleven-digit number listed in the upper left-hand corner on the I-94 card is known as the admission or entry number. This is an identification number with the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The I-94 shows the individual's immigration classification and endorsements made by the immigration officer to indicate the date and place of admission to the United States and the initial period of authorized stay.

IAP-66P: Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor

I-20P: Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1/F-2/M-1/M-2) Student

I-797: INS Notice of Action indicating approval of a specific immigration status.

### **J-1 Exchange Visitors**

The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program has been an important component of U.S. immigration law for over 46 years. Legislation enacted by Congress in 1948 and 1961 directed the executive branch to facilitate and promote exchanges. Under INA § 101 (a) (15)(J), an individual may enter the U.S. in J-1 status if he or she is a "bona fide student, scholar, trainee, teacher, professor, research assistant, specialist, or leader in a field of specialized knowledge or skill, or other person of similar description." The alien must come to the U.S. temporarily in a program designated by the United States Department of State (DOS) for "teaching, instructing or lecturing, studying, observing, conducting research, consulting, demonstrating special skills, or receiving training."

### **Insurance Requirement**

All Exchange Visitors are required to maintain health insurance as mandated by the Federal regulations. All accompanying spouses and children must also be covered by insurance. Government agencies and state universities can self-insure. The insurance requirements went into effect September 1, 1994. Exchange visitors who "willfully" fail to obtain insurance for themselves and their dependents will be deemed in noncompliance with the insurance requirements and must be terminated from their program.

## **J-1 Professors and Research Scholars**

The University of Alabama at Birmingham is host to approximately 400 professors and research scholars classified within the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. The office of International Scholar and Student Services (ISSS) provides comprehensive programming, immigration advising, orientation and support services for international students and scholars. Professors and Research Scholars should take some time to familiarize themselves with the following information regarding J-1 status.

### **J-1 Scholar Immigration Issues**

The basic immigration information described in the following paragraphs apply specifically to J-1 Scholar status.

### **Maintaining J-1 Scholar Status**

To maintain J-1 scholar status, participants must adhere to the following conditions:

1. Engage only in activities permitted under the program and the category (refer to Sections #2 and #5 on form IAP-66P).
2. File timely and appropriate transfer and extension notifications.
3. Refrain from unauthorized employment.
4. Maintain required health insurance coverage.

### **Limitations of Stay and Extensions**

The form IAP-66P may be issued to a J-1 scholar initially for the period of the exchange up to a maximum of three years. Further extensions may only be granted under rare and extenuating circumstances.

Permission to stay in the United States expires 30 days after the date shown on item #3 of your Form IAP-66P. The ISSS will contact departments approximately 90 days prior to an Exchange Visitor's expiration date. The department will update the form with the requested scholar information and forward to ISSS for processing. ISSS will inform the scholar when the new IAP-66P form is ready. Scholars will need to come to ISSS with their passport to endorse the extension paperwork. Extensions are processed through ISSS only upon a department's request.

### **Employment**

Professors and researchers are permitted to engage in the employment specific to the terms stated on the Form IAP-66P and may engage in additional employment (see Incidental Employment) as authorized by the sponsor. However, an exchange visitor who engages in unauthorized employment violates his or her program status and is subject to termination as an exchange visitor participant.

## Incidental Employment

Research Scholars and Professors may participate in occasional lectures and short-term consultations. These lectures and consultations must be directly related to the scholar's program, must be incidental to the primary program activities, and must not delay completion of the program. To obtain permission to engage in incidental employment, scholars must present the following to ISSS:

1. A letter from the person offering the short-term consultation or lecture stating the terms and conditions of the offer, including the duration, number of hours, field or subject, amount of compensation, and description of the activity; and
2. A letter from the department supervisor recommending this activity and explaining how it would enhance the scholar's program.

ISSS will make a written determination on the request for incidental employment upon review of these letters.

## Transfers to Other J-1 programs

Exchange Visitors requesting a transfer of program from another institution to the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) must first have their intended department at the UAB forward a Foreign Staff Appointment Form (FSAF) to ISSS. ISSS will issue a new IAP-66P and forward it directly to the responsible officer at the previous institution with a request of permission to transfer. If the previous school grants the transfer, the form IAP-66P is returned to ISSS, who then contacts the scholar. The scholar will then come to ISSS to endorse the transfer papers. ISSS notifies the Department of State (DOS) of the transfer.

To transfer to another school from The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), the new university or institution should send ISSS a transfer Form IAP-66 for the scholar. If approved, ISSS will endorse the Form IAP-66 and return it to the new institution.

## Health Insurance

The Department of State (DOS) has mandated through federal regulations that all Exchange Visitors holding the J-1 visa maintain health insurance coverage for themselves and their dependents. The DOS Health Insurance Requirements are as follows:

### General Provisions:

- Medical benefits of at least \$50,000 per accident or illness
- A co-payment not greater than 25% of the covered benefits per accident or illness
- A deductible not greater than \$500 per accident or illness
- A waiting period for preexisting conditions that is reasonable by current industry standards
- Coverage for activities inherent to the exchange program (i.e., flight training for an aviation school)

#### Repatriation Provision:

- \$7,500

#### Medical Evacuation Provision:

- Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in an amount not less than \$10,000

#### Proof of Insurance

All J-1 Exchange Visitors must prove health insurance coverage upon arrival at the UAB. Exchange Visitors will not be able to begin their program here until they show evidence of having purchased the appropriate insurance. Exchange Visitors who are salaried by the UAB and are eligible for UAB insurance benefits may prove insurance simply by enrolling in the UAB insurance program.

Non-salaried Exchange Visitors must prove health insurance by enrolling in the insurance program available at the Student Health Organization or by providing documentation of self-insurance to the Student Health Organization staff.

#### Immunizations

The UAB has a policy that all foreign students and scholars provide proof of measles and rubella immunizations and participate in a tuberculosis-screening program. The Student Health Organization can provide any necessary immunizations. Make an appointment by calling 934-3580.

#### Home Country Physical Requirement

Many J-1 Exchange Visitors are bound by the two-year home-country physical presence requirement. The purpose of the requirement is to have the home country benefit from the exchange visitor's experience and training in the United States. Any questions about the requirement are to be directed to ISSS.

#### Employment for J-2 Dependents

Steps for a J-2 to apply for work authorization:

1. Complete Form I-765 and prepare a letter stating why the employment is desired, indicating the source and amount of support for the J-1 principal participant, and specifically stating that the income derived from employment will not be used for the support of the J-1 Exchange Visitor.
2. Submit the Form I-765 (with fee), photocopy of the J-1 principal's Form I-94, photocopy of the J-2's Form I-94, photocopy of the J-1 principal's Form IAP-66P, to the INS Texas Service Center, P.O. Box 851041, Mesquite, Texas 75185-1041.
3. Obtain 2 immigrant-styled photographs; complete signature card with right index fingerprint.

An information packet is available at the ISSS.

## Orientation Resources for Research Scholars and Faculty

Coming to the UAB offers many unique opportunities and challenges. Some of the challenges involve learning the rules and regulations of the American laboratory, or understanding the American classroom or even learning to live in an American community. The UAB has several resources and opportunities available to Research Scholars and Faculty addressing these concerns.

### Researchers

Risk Management and Safety provides a Laboratory Safety Training course, which is mandatory for all researchers, involved in laboratory research at the UAB. This course covers chemical hygiene, disposal of hazardous materials, emergency procedures and university policies. Contact your department for more information about the course or to enroll.

### General Orientation for Salaried Positions

The Office of Development and Training facilitates a general orientation to the University and to benefits for all new staff and employees. This orientation is for those employed in a salaried position at the University. Contact your department for further details.

### ISSS Orientation

International Scholar and Student Services (ISSS) offers an orientation program for research scholars and visiting faculty participating on the Exchange Visitor Program. This orientation, held Tuesday 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon and Thursday 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., covers topics such as immigration, health insurance, and other information to assist in the adjustment to the United States. Call ISSS for an orientation schedule at (205) 934-3328.

### **H-1B Temporary Worker Status**

H-1B status is designated for aliens employed in “specialty occupations,” which require highly specialized knowledge and a bachelor’s degree or its equivalent. H-1B status is valid for a maximum of six years. However, if the employment terminates prior to the H-1B expiration date, the H-1B petition is no longer valid and a notification is submitted to the Immigration Service. Consult the ISSS immediately if employment is terminated prior to the H-1B validity dates.

Information about the H-1B classification:

- Aliens in H-1B status are not subject to a home residency requirement.
- Aliens in H-1B status may only be employed in the U.S. by the firm, organization or institution that files the H-1B petition.
- The position being offered must require, at a minimum, a bachelor’s degree. Further, the alien must have, as a minimum, a degree that’s equivalent to a U.S. bachelor’s degree. A

combination of work experience and college education can be used to determine the equivalency requirement.

- The salary for an H-1B must be within 95 percent of the corresponding “prevailing wage determination” made by the State Employment Security Agency.
- Aliens in H-1B status can remain in the U.S. for up to six years. However, the initial request for H-1B status may not exceed three years.
- Any organization offering employment may file an H-1B petition.
- There is a national cap on the number of H-1B petitions that will be approved in any given year.
- The processing time for an H-1B petition is approximately three months.

The ISSS has an information packet detailing the H-1B process and the required supporting documentation that accompanies the employer petition.

### **NAFTA (TN) Status**

In 1993, Congress passed legislation for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The legislation contains immigration provisions for a temporary worker category for Canadian and Mexican professionals. This category allows certain Canadian professionals in selected occupations to work in the U.S. if they present a letter of offer from a U.S. employer, proof of their qualifications (usually a copy of their diploma) and proof of their Canadian citizenship at the port of entry. The principal alien is issued a TN status for one year on the Form I-94. The INS officer will endorse the back of the Form I-94 with the alien’s profession and the name of the employer. The alien’s work authorization is specific to that employer only.

Dependents of the principal alien are given TD status. Individuals with TD status are not authorized to work in the U.S.

The TN/TD status can be renewed indefinitely on a year-to-year basis. An extension may be processed through the INS service center in Nebraska or at the border.

Obtaining the Mexican TN status is similar to the H-1B process and, therefore, is seldom used.

### **F-1/J-1 Student Status**

In order to remain in the United States legally and to participate in the benefits of the F and J programs, students must strive to “maintain their status.” As such, students must follow the regulations of their F-1/J-1 program in order to be eligible for the benefits available under the regulations.

#### **Eight (8) Easy Steps to Maintaining Student Status**

1. The student must have a valid passport at all times.
2. The student must attend the school, which they are authorized to attend. Students that obtain a visa for another school and enter the U.S. on that school’s Form I-20P/IAP-66P, must attend

that school for at least one term before they are eligible to transfer. At UAB, students must check-in with the ISSS before being eligible to transfer out to another school.

3. Carry a full course load.

Quarter System:

Graduate	6 hours per quarter
Undergraduate	8 hours per quarter

During the fall 2001 term, UAB will convert from a 10-week quarter system to a 16-week semester system.

Semester System:

Graduate	9 hours per semester
Undergraduate	12 hours per semester

4. Students must notify the Foreign Student Advisor if they are unable to complete the degree program by the completion date specified on the I-20P or IAP-66P.
5. Students must notify the Foreign Student Advisor if they change from one educational level to another (e.g., bachelor's to master's degree).
6. Students must notify the Foreign Student Advisor if they intend to transfer to another school.
7. Students are limited to 20 hours per week of on-campus employment while school is in session. During breaks and annual vacation students may work full-time on-campus.
8. DO NOT work off-campus without the proper authorization by the INS or the Foreign Student Advisor.

#### Maintaining a Full Course of Study

F-1 and J-1 students must enroll full-time as required by the regulations set forth by the INS. This includes a requirement that all international students in F-1/J-1 status attend as full-time students for one academic year before being eligible for annual leave (vacation). The following are lawful reasons for less than full-time enrollment:

- Initial difficulties with the English language
- Initial difficulties with the U.S. academic system
- Improper course level placement
- Taking all available courses to meet graduation requirements
- Preparing for comprehensive examinations
- Doing thesis/dissertation research
- Documented medical reasons

Note: Financial difficulties or poor academic performance are not valid reasons for dropping below full time. Located in the appendix is the form that must be completed by the student's

academic advisor verifying the lawful reason why the student is taking less than a full course load. These forms are maintained by the ISSS.

### Extensions of Stay

Extension of the immigration documents must be filed within thirty days of the expiration date of the I-20P/IAP-66P. The expiration dates are located in item 5 of the Form I-20P and in item 4 of the Form IAP-66P.

To process an extension, students need to obtain an extension form from the ISSS to be completed by their academic advisor. Additionally, new proof of funding will be necessary. Students funded by UAB will need an updated letter explaining the assistantship or scholarship. Students that are supported by personal or family funding are required to provide an updated bank statement or affidavit of financial support. Anyone receiving funding from a sponsoring organization will need to obtain a current letter of support.

### School Transfer

UAB students wanting to transfer to another U.S. institution should contact the ISSS. The Foreign Student Advisor will apprise students on the procedures to follow for changing institutions and maintaining their immigration status.

Specifically, F-1 students will need to obtain a Form I-20 from the new school and file a Departure Form with the ISSS. The I-20 must be issued within 15 days of the beginning of classes in order to maintain a valid immigration status. Students that are leaving the U.S. between changing schools should reenter the U.S. using the new school's I-20.

Transferring J-1 students will need to obtain a Form IAP-66 from the new school. This form must be signed by the ISSS in order to release the student from UAB's J-1 program.

### Travel Outside the United States

F-1 and J-1 students who plan on travelling outside the U.S. should consult with the Foreign Student Advisor before making travel arrangements. Students complete a form requesting a travel letter. Students needing to apply for a new visa for reentry will need a new I-20P or IAP-66P. These students will also need to take their transcript, a letter verifying good standing with the university, and financial verification. Discuss plans for travel with the Foreign Student Advisor at least two weeks prior to the planned departure.

Note: If you changed your status in the U.S. from another immigration status, you will be required to obtain an F-1 visa prior to returning to the United States in order to match your current immigration status.

## Employment Opportunities For F-1 Students

### On-Campus Employment

A student in valid F-1 status is entitled to work 20 hours per week on-campus. On-campus employment is limited to positions that provide services to the UAB. In most situations, graduate students that receive assistantships are working the maximum 20-hour per week limit. An additional benefit attached to on-campus employment is the ability to work 40 hours per week during breaks and annual vacation. Please consult with the Foreign Student Advisor before accepting a position in order to verify eligibility.

### Off-Campus Employment Authorization

There are three types of off-campus employment authorization available after a student has been enrolled full-time for an academic year (nine months).

#### Economic Hardship

F-1 students are eligible for off-campus employment if unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control occur. An unforeseen circumstance is defined as any situation that seriously alters a student's financial condition. According to INS, the following scenarios are examples of possible unforeseen circumstances that may qualify for employment based upon economic hardship:

- Loss of financial assistance or on-campus employment without fault of the student
- Substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate
- Inordinate increases in tuition and/or living expenses
- Unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support
- Any unexpected expenses such as medical bills

If approved, the INS will issue a work card valid for one year. This card may be renewed provided that the student remains in good academic standing and maintains their immigration status. The student must also provide proof of continued economic need.

#### Curricular Practical Training

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is available to students after they have been in F-1 status for a full academic year. Graduate Students may be immediately eligible for CPT if the graduate curriculum requires an internship. This type of employment is designed to provide students with hands-on experience to augment their academic program while still in school. Internships or course practicum requirements may be authorized under this type of employment. The off-campus employment must be directly related to the program of study and recommended as an integral part of the academic program. This employment opportunity is limited to twelve months

of authorization for full-time employment. For further details contact the Foreign Student Advisor.

### Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit available to students following completion of their coursework requirements. OPT is limited to twelve months of full-time employment. Most students apply for OPT following completion of their degree. Graduate students who have completed their coursework and who are still working on their thesis/dissertation are eligible to apply. It is optional to apply for this employment authorization for work during annual vacation, but students should take note that this period of employment will be subtracted from the 12-month limit.

NOTE: Students may not begin employment until the INS has issued their Employment Authorization Card (EAC).

### Employment Opportunities for J-1 Students

There are two types of J-1 student employment authorization. All employment for J-1 students requires approval in writing from the J-1 Responsible Officer prior to beginning employment.

#### Student Employment

##### On-Campus

J-1 student employment is limited to 20 hours per week except during school breaks and annual vacation. The J-1 Responsible Officer can approve the employment in increments of 12 months.

##### Off-campus

Students may obtain approval to work off-campus by the J-1 Responsible Officer when “necessary because of serious, urgent, and unforeseen economic circumstances” that have arisen since the student’s arrival in the U.S. as an Exchange Visitor, or since their change, inside the country, to J-1 status.

#### Academic Training

Academic training is employment in the field of the student’s academic program. Academic training can be taken part-time during the program of study or full-time during vacation periods. Academic training used during the program of study will be subtracted from the post-graduate academic training. Academic training is limited to 18 months or the time that the student has been in student status, whichever is shorter. However, if the student receives a doctorate degree, they may be eligible for 36 months of postdoctoral training minus any academic training time used before the degree was awarded. This authorization will be granted in two 18-month increments.

## Employment of J-2 Dependents

J-2 dependents may apply to the INS for an Employment Authorization Card (EAC). They must demonstrate that the income derived from the employment will be “used to support the family’s customary recreational and cultural activities and related travel.” This income cannot be used to support the principal participant (J-1).

## APPENDIX

### Local Expressions

Even though this section is entitled "Local Expressions," it also contains Southern Expressions (Southeastern United States), slang expressions and colloquialisms. For the newcomer to this country, the word "slang", as defined by Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary of American English, is "language peculiar to a particular group; an informal nonstandard vocabulary composed typically of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech." And from the same source, a colloquialism or colloquialisms is defined as "of or relating to conversation; used in or characteristic of familiar and informal conversation; used in conversational style." So, herewith are some common local expressions that maybe heard during your stay in the United States. These phrases and words, slang expressions and colloquialisms, frequently encountered, can be easily misunderstood.

### Words And Phrases

Bathroom: 1) a room in a private home, where one can take a bath or shower, use a commode and wash one's hands in a sink. 2) A bathroom in a public building that has only a hand basin and a commode, and is frequently called a "restroom."

Bill: a term for a piece of paper money; a tally indicating the amount owed for services or goods received.

Biscuit: a round, unsweetened cake eaten at breakfast.

"Bless you": a sympathetic comment made when you sneeze.

"Bless your heart": a Southern statement made by one person to somebody who is having a difficult, stressful experience. It is sometimes also used in expressing appreciation for a gift or an act of kindness.

Bug: 1) to annoy or bother someone; 2) a small insect.

Carry people: to give people rides in one's car from one place to another.

Check: 1) a piece of paper designed for transferring money from one person's account to another person's checking account; 2) the bill a waiter gives you in a restaurant; and 3) (as a verb) to review a document or item to make sure it is correct.

Coke: short for a popular soft drink, Coca Cola.

Commode: a toilet or lavatory.

Con artist (also called a confidence trickster): a person with a wonderful, charming, and friendly personality who tricks one into doing something one does not really want to do. Usually a con

artist gets money from somebody without the person's knowledge or consent. A con man may also cheat another person or get money from him with his reluctant consent and against his better judgment.

Cookie: a hard and crisp or soft and chewy sweet snack.

Cool: 1) pleasant or slightly cold weather. 2) good, nice, enjoyable, attractive, fashionable.

Creek: a small river.

Critter: a little animal.

Den: a room where the family relaxes and, often, watches television.

Dog days: a phrase that has come to mean a very hot day when the temperature exceeds 90 degrees Fahrenheit and even dogs have only enough energy to lie down in the shade.

Every which way: in every direction; also, slang for hasty or sloppy actions.

Fake: unreal, imitation, or to pretend.

Fad: an acronym for "for a day"; means that some item or behavior becomes enormously popular and most people adopt it. After a short time, the popularity fades and the fad is over. Clothing is often faddish.

Fix: to repair something or to prepare something like a meal or one's hair style. Most forms of preparation are sometimes referred to as "fixing."

Fixings: trimmings, special dishes, sauces, or relishes that go with certain foods.

Flat: a rubber car tire from which the air has escaped.

Hallway: an entrance to a house or a passage.

Hamburger: piece of ground meat that has been fried or grilled and placed between two slices of a bread roll.

Hello: a greeting which is less formal than "good morning" or "good evening," and which may be used for any time of the day or night.; it is usually used when one answers the phone informally.

Hot dog: sandwich made with a thin pork, beef, or chicken sausage in the middle of a long bread roll.

Restroom: not a place where one lies down; a room with hand basins and commodes (toilets); also known as bathroom.

See ya: a way of saying "good bye."

### SOUTHERN EXPRESSIONS AND COLLOQUIALISMS (in no particular order)

EXPRESSION	MEANING
Y'all:	Short for you all or all of you
Stick with it:	keep going until you finish the job
Hang in there:	Don't quit
What's up/what's new?:	How are you doing?
Feel free to:	Make yourself welcome
Plug away:	Keep at it busily
See to it:	make sure it's done
Take care of:	to do something
Get around to it:	do it when you get the opportunity
Lost your mind/lose your mind:	to go crazy/to be confused
Lose sight of:	to lose perspective
Looking forward to:	anxious about
Check it out:	look at with close scrutiny
Uptight:	Upset or anxious
Dead Last:	At the very end
Rode hard and put out wet to dry:	completely used up/tired
Out of line:	Out of one's place
Hang On:	Don't give up/hold on
Look ahead:	Think about the future
Blow it off:	Forget about it
Strangle hold:	a tight grip
Along side of:	Beside/together with
Off hand:	Not at one's primary grasp
Bat an eye:	Blink an eye
Irregardless: <u>regardless</u>	(This isn't a word) it should be
Kick in Gear:	To get prepared
End of the line, road, game, etc.:	The very end
Head Start:	Beginning first
Ahead of the game:	Out in front/ahead of the rest
Jump right in:	Begin at your own pace
Strung out:	Very busy
Hard pressed:	Very busy with very little time
Hold back:	To keep back involuntarily
Out of sync.	Not with the ordinary pace
Zeroed in/zero in:	To get a good grasp of the situation
Pull up a chair/take a seat:	Sit down
Out of Whack:	Out of the ordinary/broken
Keep an eye out for you:	Watch for you
Sharp eyes:	Very perceptive

Straighten out/up:	To correct an error
Watch your step:	Be careful
Head Strong:	Stubborn
Step out of line:	To get out of one's place
In the nick of time:	Perfect timing
Keep in touch:	Continue contact/correspondence
Look into it:	Regard with close scrutiny
Sure fire:	Exact
Take in stride:	To receive information calmly
You bet:	Of course
Holding on for dear life:	Holding tightly
On the phone:	Having a telephone conversation
Scared to death:	Extremely frightened
Come again:	Please repeat what you just said
Crazy about:	To like extremely
See you around:	To meet later
Bull headed:	Stubborn
Smart critter:	Intelligent person
This neck of the woods:	In the area
I'm fixing to: something	I'm about to, getting ready to do
Brand new:	Just bought/just purchased
To reckon:	To guess
To get a hold of someone: telephone	To reach them, contact in person or by
Over yonder:	Over there
To chase after someone:	To try to reach them
A good ways off:	A long distance
Hey:	Hello/Hi
My bad:	My mistake
ASAP:	As soon as possible
Common sense:	Natural intuition
To count on someone:	To rely on someone