



GARDNER- WEBB UNIVERSITY



International Student Handbook



International Student Services

110 South Main Street
Boiling Springs, NC
28017

www.gardner-webb.edu

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WELCOME

The International Student Handbook has been prepared to assist international students at Gardner Webb University with their initial adjustment to the United States and to the university. The International Student Services (ISS), on behalf of all faculty, staff and students, welcomes you to the Gardner-Webb community. We extend our best wishes for your successful academic achievement and an enjoyable and memorable experience at Gardner-Webb University. We are available to serve you in a variety of ways and hope that you will consider our community a home away from home.

In this handbook, you will find answers to the most frequently asked questions from international students. We hope it makes your transition to the United States and Gardner-Webb University as easy as possible and acts as your first guide to studying in the United States. If you have any problems or questions, please do not hesitate to call the International Student Services at (704) 406-3046. We are here to help and guide you every step of the way. If you wish to meet with a staff member, please call to schedule an appointment as soon as possible.

In addition to this handbook, please visit the Office of International Student Services, the Gardner-Webb University Web Site, and the Gardner-Webb University Schedule of Courses, for additional information. Once again, welcome to Gardner-Webb University!

*****Please note that this handbook was prepared for informational purposes only. It does not constitute a contract between Gardner-Webb University and its international students, and should not be construed as such. *****

Jenny Humphries, Director of International Student Services, Primary Designated School Official (PDSO)

Office Location: Tucker Student Center, Office 241

Office Telephone: (704) 406-3046

Email: jhumphries3@gardner-webb.edu

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GARDNER-WEBB UNIVERSITY

Gardner-Webb University has experienced remarkable growth, perseverance, and maturity. The institution began as a boarding high school and later became a junior college. Today Gardner-Webb is a thriving regional university with growing master's and doctoral programs.

From a movement initiated by the Kings Mountain Baptist Association in 1903, and later joined by the Sandy Run Baptist Association, the Boiling Springs High School was chartered on December 2, 1905 as an institution "where the young...could have the best possible educational advantages under distinctive Christian influence." This close relationship of the institution to the area churches continues today.

In response to the changing educational needs of the area, the institution was transformed into the Boiling Springs Junior College in 1928. The Great Depression created many problems for the College, but its survival was secured by the sacrifices of many loyal supporters.

In 1942, Governor O. Max Gardner began devoting his energy, time, and wealth to strengthening and guiding the College. So important was his influence, that the name of the institution was changed to Gardner-Webb College in honor of the governor, his wife Fay Webb Gardner, and their families.

The decades following World War II were years of physical growth and academic development. New buildings went up as enrollments increased. A major step in the institutions' development was its full accreditation as a senior college in 1971. In 1980 the institution began offering a Master of Arts degree in education.

The institution officially became known as Gardner-Webb University in January 1993, culminating years of preparation. Today Gardner-Webb is a flourishing regional institution, which offers distinct degree programs, has a highly qualified faculty, and a beautiful campus of over 200 acres.

Historically, the University has played significant roles in teacher education and ministerial preparation for church-related vocations. Programs of instruction and experiences designed to prepare teachers and ministers continue to be major objectives of the University.

Although there have been many changes over the years, Gardner-Webb University remains closely related to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. The University holds in high esteem its commitment to Christian principles and values as the best foundation for the development of human personality and social order.

The official colors of Gardner-Webb University are red and white. Athletic teams representing the University are nicknamed the Bulldogs.

RACIALLY NONDISCRIMINATORY POLICY

"Gardner-Webb admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs and athletic and other school-administered programs."

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

The Office of International Student Services (ISS) was created to provide services to all students and faculty. While assisting international students with their adjustment to Gardner-Webb University, the office offers programming through the International Club to enhance the student experience.

Our Functions

The ISS works closely with the Admissions Office to validate international students' credentials and financial status before immigration documents are prepared and sent to them for visa application and subsequent entry into the U.S. The office processes all letters and immigration documents as needed by international students before and after arrival to the campus and organizes **orientation** for new students.

The staff members of ISS act as liaison and advisor to academic departments and schools on foreign student issues. We advise international students on academic, personal, social, immigration, and financial matters during their stay at GWU. We are here to guide you as you navigate your way through college life and beyond.

The office staff members liaise with our study abroad partners to provide excellent advising to all Gardner-Webb University students in their search and preparation to study abroad. We also assist faculty and students to locate short-term opportunities abroad especially with our overseas partners.

Jenny Humphries, Director of International Student Services, PDSO Zuridai Jaimes, Graduate Assistant, zjaimes@gardner-webb.edu

Other points of contact for immigration issues:

Brian Cotton, ~~Primary~~ Designated School Official (PDSO)
Director of Executive Education, Graduate Admissions
bcotton@gardner-webb.edu
704-406-4489

John Blalock, Designated School Official (DSO)
Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions
jtblalock@gardner-webb.edu
704-406-3802

International Club (IC)

The ISS can provide you with information on special activities or programs organized for international students. We collaborate with the International Club (IC) to execute many of these activities. The IC is a social organization that fosters friendship and understanding among international and American students by scheduling a variety of events, workshops, and activities throughout the academic year. The Culture to Culture Ambassadors that will be planning club activities for the 2019-2020 year are: Ysabela Cable, Emily Dymont, Joao Espinheria, Petra Jakeljic, Caitie Mayo, Noemi Pascual.

NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

ADDRESS NOTIFICATION

It is mandatory for International Student Services (ISS), GWU Registrar's Office, and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to know your current address at all times. Therefore, once you have found accommodation inform us of your address immediately. This information will only be used for official purposes and will not be released to any third party without your consent. However, by signing the SEVIS Form 1-20, you have given the ISS permission to release the information to USCIS should they request it.

The Registrar's office keeps records of the official addresses for all students. All University mails are sent to the address you have on file in the Registrar's office. Therefore, it is important to maintain accurate address information in the GWU system. Notify the Registrar's office about your new address once you have found accommodation.

In case you move from one accommodation to another, it is important for you to notify the ISS and Registrar's office of your new address. **These offices must have your correct address at all times.**

Please note: The address you indicated on your application form may not be your current mailing address. After arriving on campus, it is your responsibility to change this to your local North Carolina address. Contact ISS through email at jhumphries3@gardner-webb.edu to supply this information.

UNIVERSITY RECORDS

It is important to have your name recorded accurately and in the proper order in the University database from the first semester of your enrollment at GWU, as you will want it to appear on your diploma when you finally graduate. If you are not satisfied with this record, you can correct it quickly at the Registrar's office, located in Dover Campus Center. Remember to have your name in the right order, which is, first, middle, and last names. Once you have established this order, be sure to stick to it to avoid confusion in future.

Be sure to write your name as it appears on your birth record and passport and use it consistently.

MAIL

Every enrolled resident student at GWU is assigned a mailbox number, so you can receive mails sent to you. As long as you remain a resident student, this mailbox number will be yours until you graduate from the University. Once you cease to be a resident student, this mailbox number also ceases to be yours.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Academic Advising is a significant function at Gardner-Webb University. Advising is viewed as a developmental process of decision-making through which a student explores and seeks information from professionals in the campus community. Undergraduate student advising is coordinated through the Academic Advising Center, located on the 3rd floor of Tucker Student Center. The Center is designed to coordinate the following:

- New student registration
- New transfer student advising
- Advising for students with undecided majors
- Declarations of major and minor fields of study
- Advisor assignments and changes
- Faculty advisor training and evaluation

The advisor helps students by providing information and advice concerning academic programs, policies and procedures, and campus resources which allow students to make informed decisions.

Gardner-Webb University advocates student responsibility in academic outcomes, and therefore, the ultimate responsibility for making decisions about educational plans rests with the individual student. Please visit the Gardner-Webb University website (www.gardner-webb.edu) to view your GWU Undergraduate catalog.

The Advising Relationship between Student and Academic Advisor

Gardner-Webb recognizes that students coming to college for the first time have much to adjust to when arriving on campus: living in a residence hall; separation from parents, friends and community; finding one's place on campus; meeting new people; deciding on a major/career; and developing strategies for academic success are some of the issues faced by every first-time college student. In order to assist the student with these concerns, GWU assigns each first-time student to a Freshman Experience class, University 111. The primary role of the freshman experience instructor/advisor is to provide information, guidance and support along the way.

Contact between Parents, Advisors, and Professors

Release of private information is restricted to anyone other than the student, except under a few legally defined circumstances. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 (20USC & 1232g), also known as the Buckley Amendment, governs how student records should be handled.

Private information may not be released to anyone other than the student. However, students can allow access for parents or guardians by completing a FERPA consent waiver. This waiver can be accessed through Webb Connect under the Maintain Information tab.

FULL-TIME STATUS

It is important to remember that international students on an F-1/J-1 visa have to be full time students in order to maintain their student status. This means that undergraduate students must register for a minimum of 12 credits per semester. Graduate students must check with their departments to know the number of credits to register for in order to be full-time, since they vary at Gardner-Webb University per academic programs. Taking classes in the summer session is optional.

ONLINE COURSES

Please be advised there are strict limitations on international students F-1/J-1 in regards to online courses.

Undergraduate students may only take 1 online course of the 12 hours necessary for full-time status.

ID NUMBERS

At Gardner-Webb University, every student is assigned a 9-digit identification number (GWU ID Number). A University Identification Card is required to borrow books from the library, make copies, use certain facilities or equipment, access your on-campus residence, and gain free access University athletic events. You can go to the University Police Office in Poston Center to obtain your ID card; your picture will be taken to process your ID Card.

DEADLINES/LATE FEES

The Registrar's office sets specific dates for registration process. These dates are published each term and appear in a variety of University publications. Failure to meet these deadline dates may result in late fees. It is therefore important for you to adhere strictly to these deadline dates and ask questions if you have any doubts.

DEFINITIONS OF IMPORTANT TERMS

Academic Year: The academic year at the Gardner-Webb University is divided into two semesters (fall and spring) of approximately 16 weeks each. Typically, awards such as scholarships and assistantships or work study cover two semesters (fall and spring). At the end of each semester, there is a final exam period. There is a short break between each semester.

Note: International students are not required to enroll for summer classes; therefore you are not required to be full-time in summer as long as you are a continuing student. However, as long as summer is your first semester at Gardner-Webb University, you are required by USCIS to be a full-time student to be in status.

Major: The field in which you are trying to get your degree.

Grades: The quality of a student's academic work is measured by letter grades; A (excellent), B (above average), C (average), D (lowest acceptable), F (failing). Under certain circumstances, letters such as IP (in-progress), N (no grade), WP (withdrew passing), WF (withdrew failing), S (satisfactory), or U (unsatisfactory) may appear in grade reports. These letters are not grades and are not included in the calculation of a grade point average.

Mid-Term: A test given around the middle of each semester.

Final: An exam given at the end of a semester, usually on all the academic material covered in class. The final exam schedule is published online at www.gardner-webb.edu

Quiz: A test given during the semester, sometimes unannounced.

Assignment: Out-of-class work required by a professor; for example, reading books, writing papers, or doing a lab report. Your professor will expect the assignment by a certain date.

Vacations and Breaks: Starting with the fall semester, the first vacation comes during October. This is Fall Break. The next break is the Thanksgiving holiday. A long vacation comes during the Christmas to New Year's holidays, usually averaging over three weeks in duration. Many students go home or visit with friends. The vacation comes to an end a few days after New Year's Day.

During the spring, there is a weeklong break in mid-March. Many students head for Florida or other warm beach areas during this time. It is a time of freedom and enjoyment. The longest vacation occurs between spring commencement and the start of the fall semester. During the three months involved, many students travel, work (provided it is authorized or just relax and rejuvenate for the next academic year.

For more information on the full **Academic Calendar**, visit: <https://gardner-webb.edu/student-life-and-services/calendars-and-events/>

To view **Course Registration Schedules**, visit the Registrar's Office online at: <https://gardner-webb.edu/academic-programs-and-resources/registration-and-records/registration/course-schedules/registration-schedule/index>

To view **Academic Catalogs**, visit the Registrar's Office online at: <https://gardner-webb.edu/academic-programs-and-resources/registration-and-records/registration/academic-catalogs/index>

****Important Reminder: ****

Students who are considering either dropping a course or withdrawing from the course or from the University should consider the minimum course requirements for international students for maintaining their visa status.

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND SERVICES

Undergraduate Program

It is important that you become accustomed to the Gardner-Webb undergraduate catalog, and it is especially important to your academic success that you read carefully the section online entitled "Academic Regulations".

*Please study the catalog carefully, especially the sections dealing with your major. It is your primary responsibility to familiarize yourself with these policies and understand how they affect your progress toward graduation. Your advisor and others can assist you, but you will suffer the negative consequences if correct policies and procedures are not followed.

Class Attendance

Regular class attendance is a must at Gardner-Webb University. Students are responsible for all course work conducted in class meetings whether or not they are present. Because learning is a communal experience, **the physical presence of students is required in class for at least of 75% of class meetings**. Attendance is counted from the first scheduled class meeting. Failure to meet this attendance requirement will result in loss of credit for the course and a grade of "F" will be recorded on a student's transcript. Furthermore, it is the prerogative of the professor to set a more stringent class attendance policy. During the first week of the semester, the professor will clearly state, in writing, the attendance policy which will govern the class. Students are responsible for knowing the number of absences that they accumulate.

Absence from class does not excuse the student from responsibility for class work. Planned class absences for foreseeable personal circumstances or official University business must be negotiated with the professor prior to absence.

Should a student exceed the number of absences in his/her class(es) or cease attending classes at all, he/she may be required to vacate his/her residence hall room. In such instances, the Housing Contract will be rescinded.

Withdrawal from Gardner-Webb

Any student desiring to withdraw from the University before official conclusion of any given academic session (fall, spring or summer) **must do so prior to leaving the University**. The withdrawal process begins in the Office of the Registrar, 1st Floor of the Dover Campus Center.

Please note: Failure to withdraw in the proper manner will subject the student to a grade of "F" in all courses attempted for the semester or term and additional monetary fines.

Medical Withdrawals

Any registered student who experiences trauma or a chronic illness that may prevent completion of the semester may apply for a medical withdrawal from the University. **A medical withdrawal request must be filed with the Registrar's Office prior to the start of final exams and must include documentation submitted from a physician or psychologist trained in diagnosis of the medical condition.**

A qualifying medical condition, as determined by the physician or psychologist, must prevent the student from participating in all classes remaining during the current semester. A medical withdrawal is a complete withdrawal from the University. The

supporting documentation from a physician or psychologist accompanying the medical withdrawal request must be submitted on official letterhead from the physician or psychologist and must be addressed to the Gardner• Webb University Registrar. The medical documentation must also include the physician or psychologist's name, title, professional credentials, license or certification number, and should address the following:

1. Specific diagnosis and findings
2. Date the examination, assessment or evaluation was performed
3. In the event that the medical withdrawal is the result of an injury or accident, the date the injury or accident occurred.
4. In the event the medical withdrawal is due to chronic illness, the date the illness made it necessary to stop attending classes.

A student will be notified of the approval decision following review of the medical documentation. If the request is approved, the student will receive a final grade of "W" for each class (except in instances of Academic Dishonesty).

Upon medical withdrawal from the University, a student must apply for readmission to the University to continue studies. The student must provide documentation from the same physician or psychologist, when possible, stating the student is able to resume academic studies at the University. This documentation should follow the same format as above.

The student should contact the Student Accounts Office for questions regarding tuition reduction for the medical withdrawal.

Adding, Dropping or Withdrawal from Courses

Following initial registration period, a student may adjust his or her schedule, in consultation with the academic advisor, through the drop/add process, which occurs during the first week of each semester. After drop/add period, a student may withdraw from a course by completing the Course Withdrawal form available in the Registrar's Office. When a student officially withdraws from a course within the first four weeks of the semester, a "Withdraw" will be designated on the official transcript. If after four weeks into the semester, a grade of "Withdrawal Passing" or "Withdrawal Failing" will be designated on the official transcript. **Dropping below a full-time status (min. 12 hours) may affect residential status, insurance and most importantly, an international student's immigration status.** Students will be charged per credit hour beyond 18 hours. For more information, consult the GWU Undergraduate Catalog.

GRADING SYSTEM

The American education system uses quantitative and qualitative measures to determine qualifications for degrees.

Quantitative measures involve the accumulation of "credits." Every program requires a minimum number of credits to graduate. Every course in a program is assigned a value in terms of "credit hours." Most courses are assigned the value of three credits. This value is approximately equal to the number of hours the class meets each week. This implies that if a student has registered for a three-credit course, the class would probably meet for three hours a week.

In addition, each program will require the completion of certain "core" courses that are mandatory, and certain "electives", which the student can choose from. With respect to qualitative measures, performance is evaluated in terms of grades.

The progress and achievement of a student is expressed in terms of "Quality Point Average" (QPA). This method combines the quantitative and qualitative measures of evaluation. To calculate your Grade Point Average at Gardner-Webb University, visit:

<http://gardner-webb.edu/academics/academic-services/registrar/gpacalc/index.html>

FINANCIAL ISSUES

BANKING INFORMATION

Managing your finances is one of the most important and challenging aspects of an enjoyable academic experience. This section introduces you to a few of the basic banking options available. When selecting a bank, you should compare services, service charges and bank locations before making your decision.

BANKS

When you open an account with a bank, most banks require two pieces of identification, such as your passport and GWU Student ID. Banks may also request to see your I-20.

Two local banks located in Boiling Springs:

Bank of the Ozarks
208 North Main Street
704-434-3100

BB&T
124 North Main Street
704-434-5194

TYPES OF ACCOUNTS

Bank Cards: Many banks issue cards that enable you to deposit and withdraw money 24 hours a day by use of an Automated Teller Machine (ATM). These machines, which are frequently located outside the bank, are very convenient. By using a bank card, customers avoid waiting in line at the bank and have access to cash after the bank closes. Banks that are members of a national ATM network allow you to access your funds with your bank card at selected ATM's throughout the country. There is an ATM located on campus, in Tucker Student Center beside the post office. In some instances, there may be small fees associated with ATM use.

Cashing checks: To cash a check, you will need to endorse it by signing your name on the back. In addition, you will be asked for personal identification in the form of a driver's license, a State ID or GWU ID card.

Some stores will cash a check for you if you shop there regularly. In addition, you can cash checks in our Student Account Office here on campus if it is for less than \$100.

Checking Accounts: Banks offer different types of checking accounts designed to fit individual needs. The cost of checking varies from bank to bank. Some banks charge per transaction, some have a basic monthly fee, and others offer free services if you maintain a certain minimum balance in your account at all times. A list of all the account activity for the preceding month, and in some cases your cancelled checks, will be sent to you in a monthly statement. Be careful to keep an accurate record of every check you write in order to avoid having checks returned due to insufficient funds and incurring additional charges. "Bouncing" a check (writing a check for more money than you actually have in the account) is illegal and can cost you time and money. Through some banks, you can apply for a line of credit attached to your checking account that provides overdraft protection.

Savings Accounts: A savings account enables you to save money and accumulate interest on your savings. Interest is paid either monthly or quarterly. The difference between a savings and a checking account is that you cannot write checks on a savings account.

CREDIT CARD

Credit cards may be convenient, especially if you unexpectedly have major expenses. You can pay expenses such as University and medical fees, airplane tickets and car repairs with any major credit card. You must understand that you can easily accumulate large bills with credit cards, and before you know it, you may be in debt. Before you accept a credit card,

you must be sure to understand all your obligations. Most banks charge an annual fee. If you are unable to pay your full balance each month, you will be charged high interest rates (usually 18% or higher) on the remaining balance and any additional charges you make. Make sure you stay within your budget when making credit card purchases.

DEBIT CARD

A debit card, also known as a check card, allows you to withdraw or deposit money to your bank account using an automatic teller machine (ATM) and to make purchases at stores that accept the card. Some debit cards carry a credit-card logo (such as MasterCard or Visa), and can be used in place of a check or credit card. Debit cards are not credit cards, however, and they can be used only to the extent that you have funds in the account to which they are linked.

FOREIGN CURRENCY

If you deposit a check drawn on a foreign bank in your U.S. checking account, it may have to go through a collection process. This means that the money is not available to you until the U.S. bank has collected it from the foreign bank. It may take several weeks before the money is credited to your account. In countries with restrictions on foreign exchange, you may need to provide your sponsor or your family with certification of enrollment in order to receive money from your home country. The application forms for letters of certification are available in GWU International Services. Please allow five working days for processing.

RECORDKEEPING

It is very important to keep certain documents like your immigration documents - passport, SEVIS I-20/DS- 2019, 1-94, among others in a safe place. Also, keep all records of any immigration forms you might have completed during your stay in the United States (example is the Optional Practical Training). You should also keep copies of income tax returns, monthly bank statements; apartment rent payment, important correspondence, tuition payment receipts, registration statements, etc. as you may need these items at a later date. It is wise to build a folder of these important documents at least throughout your stay in the United

States and perhaps a few more months after leaving the United States. Do not rely on the Office of International Student Services to provide you with copies of important documents. Keep these documents for your personal records.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is a U.S. government institution that maintains a benefits program for injured, disabled, or retired people. The money for this program is obtained through withholding from employees' pay and from employers' contributions. The Social Security Administration issues a Social Security (SS) card which bears a number by which people within a Social Security system are identified. This number also serves as a major identification number for U.S. citizens, permanent residents ("green card" holders,) and legal non-immigrants in the U.S.

As international students who will be pursuing your studies in the U.S. for a certain period of time, you are advised to obtain a Social Security number once you have found an on-campus employment. **The ISS office will not provide you with a recommendation letter to the SS, unless you have a job.** A Social Security number is only assigned to people who are authorized to work in the United States. It is used to post wages to Social Security records so workers can become eligible for Social Security benefits. Social Security Administration will not issue you a card unless you have an on-campus employment.

This SS card is required for obtaining a driver's license in North Carolina. Your GWU ID is not your Social Security number, but a University identification number that can only be used for school records. You may apply for a Social Security number and card at a Social Security office in your area. Visit the ISS to request a letter for a Social Security application if you are employed on-campus. This letter is required to be submitted with your passport and a completed Form SS-5 (Application for a Social Security card) which you can obtain from the ISS. You will also be asked to present a form of photo identification.

Do You Plan to Work? An F-1/J-1 student is permitted under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations to work on-campus for a maximum of twenty (20) hours per week. Since you are authorized to work on-campus, you are eligible for a Social Security Card once you have secured a job.

How to Apply for a Social Security Card: You must provide original documents showing your age, identity, F-1/J-1 immigration status, and proof that your school has authorized you to work.

Age: Your passport will be sufficient for this.

Identity: The Social Security office must see a document that shows the name you want on your Social Security card. A recently issued document with a photograph, such as your passport or GWU ID Card will be adequate in proving your identity.

Immigration Status: Your F-1/J-1 visa, I-94 card issued to you when you arrived in the United States and the student copy of your I-20/DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1/J-1) Student Status must be submitted.

Eligibility to Work: To obtain a Social Security number for work, you must have an on-campus, or Practical Training employment. You must provide SS Office with a letter from your present employer stating that you are enrolled in a full course of study and you need the SSN to complete your employment paperwork.

All documents must be either originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. The Social Security office will not accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents.

How Long Will It Take To Get A Social Security Number?

The Social Security office must verify your documents with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) before a number can be assigned to you. Social Security will issue your number and card within two days of receiving the verification from DHS. Most of the time, they can verify your documents quickly with DHS online. If your documents cannot be verified online, then it may take DHS several weeks or months to respond to Social Security's request. This might take three (3) to six (6) weeks.

INCOME TAX

All non-resident aliens must file a Federal and a State income tax return for the preceding year, whether or not they worked, if they resided in the U.S. for some part of that year.

All income earned in the U.S. will have deductions for Federal and State income taxes withheld by the employer. This "withholding tax" is an estimate of the taxes due on what you earned. This amount will depend on the number of exemptions you claim on the W-4 form you fill out when you become employed. By law, international students are only permitted to claim either "O" or "1" exemption unless they are a married citizen of Canada, Japan, Mexico or South Korea.

Every employer is required to report each employee's total earnings for the previous calendar year and the amount of taxes withheld for the worker. This report, called a W-2, is sent to the Federal government and to you by early February. Students who receive scholarships in excess of their educational costs, or earned wages exempt because of a tax treaty will also receive a 1042-S form. A copy of this form is sent to you and to the Federal government. These forms will be necessary to complete your State and Federal tax returns by April 15. If more has been withheld than what you owe, you will be sent a refund. If less has been withheld, you must pay the difference with your tax forms.

The amount of tax you owe to the U.S. and the State will be affected by: the amount you earn, your immigration status, the length of your residence in the U.S., your purpose for being here, your type of income, and your country of citizenship. The U.S. has a tax treaty with certain countries that exempts a portion of your earned income from U.S. taxes.

ATHLETES

It is mandatory for all international students with athletic scholarships to pay taxes to the U.S. government on the monies received. At the beginning of each semester, athletes should receive information from the Athletic Department on the amount they owe the government based on scholarships received. Amounts therefore may vary, and if in doubt, contact the Athletic Department. If your country has a treaty with the United States, you may be reimbursed this tax money partially or fully. Contact your tax agency for more information.

IMMIGRATION INFORMATION

During your stay in the U.S., you will be asked to comply with various government regulations that apply to students on F-1/J-1 visas. If you have questions regarding your immigration status, please contact the ISS immediately. **DO NOT** rely on friends, professors or staff in your academic department for advice on immigration matters. While these people have good intentions, they may not know the regulations that pertain to your immigration status and situation. One piece of bad advice may put your legal status in jeopardy.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

U.S immigration regulations change frequently. It is very important that you understand these changes so you can make informed decisions. This section presents an introduction to the following issues, primarily as they apply to students in F-1/J-1 status, but they cannot replace the advice and assistance of the ISS. So always check with the ISS before making a decision to change your course of study, transferring to another institution, traveling out of the US, considering employment or the completion of your studies. **Compliance with immigration regulation is your responsibility. If you have questions regarding immigration matters, please speak with the Director of International Student Services, who is the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Designated School Official.**

IMPORTANT IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS

Student's Responsibility

There are four important travel documents that you should be made aware of:

Passport - issued by your country;

Entry Visa - this is your entry permission into the U.S.;

1-94 Card - this is your authorization of stay, indicating the length of your stay; Form I-20 for F-1 students or DS-2019 for J-1 students or scholars.

It is your responsibility to keep these documents updated and valid at all times.

Note: Citizens of Canada only need to present their passport, SEVIS Form I-20/DS-2019 and proof of SEVIS Fee payment upon entry to the U.S. and will be issued an I-94 immediately. They do not need entry visas.

Passport

The passport is the legal document issued by your home country which identifies you as a citizen of that country. While you are in the U.S, your passport must be valid for at least six months into the future. Your passport can be renewed at your government's Consulate or Embassy in Washington, D.C. It must be valid if you plan to leave and re-enter the U.S. You should request information about renewal and apply far in advance of your expiration date since considerable time is required for some countries. Any time you mail your passport, send it by registered or certified mail. Check with ISS for details. In case of passport theft or loss, contact ISS immediately.

Entry Visa

The U.S. visa is the multi-colored stamp or sticker on a page of your passport, issued by the U.S. Consulate or Embassy, which permits you to enter the U.S. Most international students at GWU will have F-1 or J-1 visa. Your visa is stamped on a page in your passport and includes your name and visa classification (F-1/J-1), place and date of issue, visa expiration date, the number of entries into the U.S. permitted on that visa (single or multiple) and the school you are authorized to attend.

The visa DOES NOT grant you the permission to enter or remain in the U.S. It DOES allow the holder of the visa to apply to enter the U.S. at a port of entry, such as an airport. At your port of entry, an immigration officer will review your documents and provided they are satisfactory, issue an I-94 card and attach it to your passport. It is the I-94 (see "I-94" below), your VISA STATUS (Immigration Status), that allows you to enter and remain in the U.S. Once USCIS admits you to the U.S., the visa no longer matters unless you decide to travel abroad with the intention of re-entering the U.S. As long as you remain in the U.S., no one, including the law, cares if the visa expires. **A new visa will be required if the original one expires and you travel outside with the intention of re-entering the U.S.**

Note: Canadian citizens are not required to have a visa. They must show their passport, I-20/DS-2019, and proof of SEVIS Fee payment at the U.S. port of entry when entering from Canada.

If you plan to travel abroad and re-enter the U.S., the ISS must check your travel documents before you leave. If your visa is still valid, you need only to present your passport, I-20/DS-2019, and proof of financial resources at your port of re-entry. If your visa expired during your stay in the U.S. or is otherwise invalid, you will need to apply for a new visa at an American Embassy or Consulate in your home country to obtain a new visa to re-enter the U.S.

I-94 Card

This is the small white "Arrival/Departure" card issued by an immigration officer at your port of entry into the U.S. to all non-immigrants, including students, before passing the U.S. border. It is attached to your passport by the immigration officer at the port of entry. It contains your name, USCIS admission number, birth date, citizenship, date and port of entry into the U.S., immigration status, and the length of time you may remain in the U.S. This is the document along with your I-20/DS-2019 that authorizes you to be in the U.S. Students with F-1 visas have "D/S" written on their I-94s. "D/S" means "duration of status" and indicates students can remain in the U.S. for as long as they are studying full-time in educational institutions and maintaining status.

This card is a temporary document. When you leave the U.S., you must surrender your I-94 at the port of departure. A new I-94 card must be issued to you when you re-enter the U.S. Your I-94 is the proof that you have legally entered the country. When USCIS grants permission to you to enter the U.S., an admission number is usually written on your I-20/DS-2019. Many Port of Entries no longer issue the I-94 card and expect the student to print the document from the USCIS website.

YOU MUST CARRY YOUR I-20/DS-2019 WITH YOU WHILE IN THE U.S. AS IT IS A PROOF OF YOUR LEGAL USCIS (F-1/J-1) VISA STATUS. The I-94 should be kept in the passport at all times.

The ISS will advise that you carry copies of these documents with you while traveling within the U.S. so they are not lost: Form I-20 /DS-2019, Passport and I-94.

Form I-20

SEVIS Form I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility for Non-immigrant "F-1" Student Status) is issued to a prospective student after acceptance. Form I-20 is one of the documents used to apply for F-1 visa; Form I-94; permission to leave and re-enter the U.S. as an F-1 student; transfer from one school to another; or a change of status. Your signature on the SEVIS Form I-20 means you understand immigration regulations and will comply with them. It also authorizes the school to release certain information about you to the USCIS if and when requested. Keep this form with your passport. It is your responsibility as an F-1 student to keep a valid I-20 at all times. See the ISS immediately if I-20 is lost, damaged or you changed program of study.

In case of transfers, the school will update your immigration record in SEVIS. If traveling outside of the U.S., you must have your I-20 signed by a Designated School Official (DSO) at least one week prior to the trip. Form I-20 automatically becomes invalid once you are out of status.

Form DS-2019

SEVIS Form DS-2019 (Certificate of Eligibility for Non-immigrant "J-1" Status) is issued to all exchange visitors and their dependents. Form DS-2019 is one of the documents used to apply for J-1 visa; Form I-94; permission to leave and re-enter the U.S. as a J-1 student; transfer from one school to another; or a change of status. Your signature on the SEVIS DS-2019 means you understand immigration regulations and will comply with them. Keep this form with your passport. It is your responsibility as a J-1 student to keep a valid DS-2019 at all times.

See the ISS immediately if I-20 is lost or damaged.

DURATION OF STATUS

The completion of studies date in item #5 of the SEVIS Form I-20, or item #3 of the SEVIS Form DS- 2019, is the date by which you are expected to complete requirements for your current program. **If you are unable to complete your program of study by that date, consult with the ISS at least thirty (30) days before reaching the completion date. If you are eligible for program of study extension, the ISS will assist you to comply with extension requirements.**

Gardner-Webb University's Responsibilities

Gardner-Webb University has been approved by the USCIS to work with SEVIS, an Internet-based system which provides tracking, monitoring and access to current information on non-immigrant students. SEVIS enables schools to issue I-20s and to transmit electronic information via the internet to the USCIS and DHS throughout a student's stay in the United States. Gardner-Webb University must report the following about F-1 students each semester:

- Beginning and ending date of studies
- Visa classification
- Enrollment status
- Change of the student or dependent's legal name and address
- Sources of funding
- Practical training
- Date study is completed
- Academic or disciplinary actions due to criminal conviction
- Dropping below a full course of study
- Termination date and reason for termination
- Extensions, school transfers, changes in level of study, employment authorization, reinstatement
- Failure to maintain status or complete program of study

FULL COURSE OF STUDY

International students in F-1/J-1 immigration status are required by law to be full-time students. They must register full-time for fall and spring semesters. They are not required to take classes during summer.

For undergraduates, full-time status means the student must register for at least 12 credits each term; GWU graduate students must consult their departments to know exact credits for full-time status, since this varies by department. If you think you are eligible for a reduced course load during any term, contact the OIP immediately to obtain permission to be registered for less than a full course of study in order to maintain legal F-1/J-1 status. Do not decide on your own to take less than a full load for whatever reason. If you do so without permission, you will be out• of-status.

Exceptions to the full-time study regulation made for students who are:

1. Placed in an improper course level.
2. In the final term of their academic program and need less than the minimum full-time load to complete that program.
3. Encountering serious medical or academic problems.
4. Master's/PhD. degree students who have completed all course requirements and are working full- time on thesis or dissertation.

Note: **If you register for less than a full course of study for any Fall or Spring semester, you must submit a letter requesting permission to take less than full course load to the Director of International student Services. This letter must be received at least a month (30 days) before the start of the semester in question.**

Students who do not have ISS approval for a reduced course load will be reported as being out-of-status to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

MAINTAINING YOUR STATUS

F-1/J-1 students are admitted to the United States for "duration of status" (D/S). This means students are permitted to be present in the U.S. as long as they comply with the rules and regulations pertaining to F-1/J-1 students as set by the USCIS/DOS.

There is a difference between an F-1/J-1 visa and F-1/J-1 status. An F-1/J-1 visa is the stamped page in a passport placed there for entry purposes only. F-1 /J-1 status is granted once a student enters the country and is regulated by the USCIS/DOS. Even if your visa is valid, students can lose legal F-1/J-1 status if they do not comply with the applicable immigration laws regulating their stay in the U.S. Students who fail to maintain their F-1/J-1 status must apply for reinstatement and may be forced to leave the country if reinstatement application is denied.

To maintain F-1/J-1 status, students must adhere to USCIS/DOS regulations. Failure to do so will result in a student being considered "out-of-status" (illegal) by the USCIS/DOS. All F-1/J-1 students are required by law to do the following:

- a. Students on F-1/J-1 visa must pursue a full course of study during every academic session or semester (except during official school breaks) at the school listed on their valid Form I-20/DS- 2019. Full time status/full course of study is defined at Gardner-Webb University as being enrolled in a minimum of 12 credits each fall and 12 credits each spring semester for undergraduate study; graduate students consult your department.

Credits completed during summer semester are not considered in establishing full time status/full course of study for already enrolled students.

- b. Keep Form I-20/DS-2019 valid at all times by following proper procedures for an extension of stay, change of educational levels or programs of study, or transfer to another university. A new Form I- 20/DS-2019 is required whenever a student changes degree levels or program (i.e., from a bachelors to a masters; from a Master's in Business Administration to a Masters in Information Sciences). Students must apply for an extension of their program of study if they cannot complete the degree by the ending date listed in Section 5 of Form I-20 or section 3 of Form DS- 2019. An extension **MUST** be applied for 60 days in advance. Students who do not extend their program in a timely fashion will be considered "out-of -status" with USCIS/DOS and will have to submit an application for reinstatement of status.

- c. For students on F-1/J-1 visas, **no more than the equivalent of one online / distance education class or 3 credits per semester may count towards the "full course of study" requirement**, if the course "does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class" according to immigration regulation:
8 C. F. R. § 214.2 (f) (6) (i) (G):

(G) For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted if taken on -line or through distance education in a course that does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An online or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no online or distance education course may be considered to count toward classroom hours or credits.

- d. After completion of full course of study, students can remain in the U.S. for no longer than 60 days unless they have applied for Optional Practical Training (OPT), moving from one educational level to the other, or school transfer. Contact the International Student Services for more advice. J-1 students have a 30-day grace period only.

- e. Student must always notify the ISS of any change in address or phone number within 10 days of such change.
- f. Be sure your passport is valid at all times.
- g. Attend authorized school. Don't skip classes.
- h. Limit all employment to 20 hours per week while school is in session.
- i. Students must abstain from off-campus work unless specifically authorized under the regulations by USCIS/DOS. Never work illegally, it can lead to deportation.
- j. Students must abide by rules requiring disclosure of information and prohibition of criminal activities.

NOTE: Immigration rules and regulations are constantly changing. ALWAYS check with International Student Services before traveling out of the U.S., transferring to another school, accepting employment (including internship), or completion of your studies.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR PROGRAM EXTENSION

You may apply for an extension of your study program provided:

1. You have continually maintained your F-1/J-1 status
2. The delay in completion is "caused by compelling academic or medical reasons, such as change of major or research topic, unexpected research problem, unexpected family emergencies, or documented illness".
3. Your I-20/DS-2019 has not expired (Form I-20 item #5 or Form DS-2019 item #3)

A student who is ill and cannot attend school must submit a letter from the doctor to the Assistant Director of International Programs, verifying that the student is unable to attend classes and why. This documentation must be received during the semester in question (not as an "after thought") so it can be properly documented. For us to accept medical documentations, they must be from licensed medical doctors, doctors of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologists.

Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are NOT acceptable reasons for program extensions.

A student who fails to complete his or her program within the time prescribed in item 5 of the SEVIS Form I-20 or item 3 of the Form DS-2019, and cannot meet eligibility criteria for program extension is considered "out of status" and must apply for reinstatement to F-1/J-1 student status.

You must apply for an extension of your study program within sixty (60) days before the completion date on your I-20/DS-2019. You must contact the Office of International immediately so that you will have enough time to prepare your application. Also contact Office of International Programs immediately if your completion date has passed.

If you fail to comply with your responsibilities, you will not be eligible to continue any type of employment (even on-campus employment through a scholarship, fellowship, or assistantship) or to apply for school transfer, practical training, or other F-1/J-1 benefits.

AVOID BEING A "PUBLIC CHARGE"

International students in the U.S. sometimes experience financial difficulties similar to those experienced by American students. Although the U.S. government has benefit programs designed to assist low-income families living in the United States, most of these programs are only available to U.S. citizens and U.S. permanent residents. Non-immigrants on F, H, and

J visas are not eligible. Unfortunately, administrators of many public assistance programs rarely have the expertise to assess eligibility based on immigrant status.

Remember that when you applied for your student or other non-immigrant visa, you had to demonstrate to the U.S. Embassy/Consulate that you had the means to support not only yourself but also your family members if they accompanied you. Acceptance of public assistance can be a violation of your immigration status under the "public charge" ground of exclusion. "Public Charge" is a term used by the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the State Department to classify persons who have become dependent on federal or state assistance programs. If the USCIS/DHS finds that you have become a "public charge" because you have accepted public assistance, you could be subject to deportation or denied re-entry to the United States after a trip home. Your non-immigrant visa could even be canceled and you might also be expected to pay back the government for the amount of benefits you have received. Such a decision is extremely difficult to reverse, so be careful! Examples of public assistance programs that are not open to non-immigrants are:

- Aid to families with Dependent Children (AFDC)
- Medicaid, which provides reimbursement for medical care for low-income persons
- Food stamps, which provide low-income families with coupons that they use to purchase food
- Some federal housing programs
- Cash assistance for low-income individuals or families

****Important Reminder: ****

Remember that even if the administrator of a benefit program finds you eligible for a program and encourages you to apply for benefits, you should NOT apply without checking with the ISS. The benefit administrator may not understand that accepting these benefits could affect your immigration status!

TRANSFER OF PROGRAMS OR SCHOOLS

Eligibility for transfer of degree programs/field of study

The student must:

1. Be fully admitted to the new program.
2. Obtain Form I-20 for the new educational program.
3. Enroll in the new educational program during the 60-day grace period following completion of studies or after completion of optional practical training.

Transferring Schools:

A student who is maintaining a valid F-1 status may transfer that status from one USCIS approved school to another by following the transfer procedure outlined below. If you wish to transfer from one school to another you need to:

1. Notify International Student Services of your intention to transfer in order to obtain the verification that you have maintained your student status and you are eligible for F-1 transfer.
2. Submit a letter of request to transfer to another school. With this, you are authorizing ISS to transfer your records in SEVIS to the new school. This should include your desired release date to transfer.
3. Obtain contact information of the DSO at the transfer-in school.
4. Provide proof of acceptance from the new school to International Student Services.

If prior to your transfer you were not a full-time student at the previous school, you must apply for reinstatement to F-1 status before requesting a transfer.

You must maintain status by attending classes until the transfer release date. You cannot decide to transfer in the middle of a term and immediately stop attending classes.

If a student will travel outside of the United States immediately before transferring schools, he/she may transfer his/her immigration documents by re-entering the U.S. with the new I-20 of the school he/she will be attending next. The immigration officials will note the transfer upon re-entry to the United States. Visit ISS for more advice before embarking on this journey.

Note: J-1 students please contact ISS for further information on transfer of programs or schools.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

F-1/J-1 students are admitted to the U.S. to study. Before a student may be issued an F-1/J-1 visa and admitted to the U.S., the student must show that sufficient funds are available for study. USCIS/DHS rules allow F-1/J-1 students to work in the U.S., but only under certain circumstances. Students must maintain lawful student status.

To be eligible for all types of employment authorization, you must be in and continuously maintain lawful F-1/J-1 status. To maintain eligibility, you must have employment authorization and you must limit your work to no more than twenty (20) hours per week while school is in session. Do not assume that you are eligible to work without first contacting the ISS.

There are five categories of employment available to F-1/J-1 students, they are:

1. On-Campus employment
2. Off-Campus employment authorized because of severe economic hardship
3. Special Student Relief program, which is based on the on-campus and economic hardship employment categories
4. Certain employment sponsored by international organizations
5. Practical training (curricular and optional practical training)

ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

As an international student, you are permitted to work on campus for a maximum of 20 hours per week while school is in session; however, most jobs on campus are only offer 12 hours a week. You are not permitted to start working on campus more than 30 days prior to initially starting classes at GWU. During holidays and breaks you will be permitted to work more. In order to locate on campus employment, you should check with the Financial Planning Office located in Dover Campus Center. If you have a visa other than F-1, please contact the ISS to discuss employment opportunities.

Jobs that qualify as on-campus employment include direct employment by the school, and other employment on the school premises, as long as the employer provides direct services to the students e.g. bookstore, cafeteria, etc.

On-Campus Employment, School Transfer and Completion of Studies

If a student who has been issued a SEVIS Form I-20 to begin a new program in accordance with USCIS regulations, and who intends to enroll for the next regular academic term at the institution that issued the Form I-20, he/she may continue on-campus employment incident to status. Please note that if you intend to continue further study in the U.S., you may not be employed on campus after you've completed a course of study unless you have been granted permission to engage in optional practical training (OPT).

Note: J-1 students please contact ISS for further information about on-campus employment.

OFF-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT BASED UPON SEVERE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

You are eligible for off-campus employment based on severe economic hardship if you:

1. Are in lawful F-1 status.
2. Are in good academic standing.
3. Have been in F-1 status for at least one academic year.
4. Can demonstrate that the employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship due to unforeseen circumstances beyond your control and that employment on-campus is unavailable or otherwise insufficient to meet your needs.

This employment is strictly for twenty (20) hours or less per week when school is in session and it is subject to USCIS approval. You may work full-time between terms (when school is not in session) and during summer semester but you must obtain the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) before the start of the employment. Visit ISS immediately for application forms and advice.

The renewal of the work authorization is contingent upon the maintenance of the student's F-1 status. It is automatically terminated if you fail to maintain lawful status or if you complete your course of study earlier than the expected completion date marked on Item #5 of your I-20. Contact the ISS for more information.

Note: J-1 students please contact ISS for further information about off-campus employment.

EMPLOYMENT WITH AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

This F-1 employment benefit allows F-1 students to work for recognized international organizations. This type of work permission is rare for Gardner-Webb University students because such recognized international organizations are rare in Charlotte area. However, if you have a summer job opportunity in another city, you may want to investigate this option further. Please contact the ISS for more information.

Note:

Students with F-1 visas have limited off-campus employment opportunities. Students must be enrolled for at least one year before opportunities become available. Approval by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is required, unless work is in the form of an internship for academic credits. Approval is very difficult to obtain, and students should meet individually with the ISS when off-campus employment appears to be necessary.

* J-1 students please contact ISS for further information on employment with an international organization.

PRACTICAL/ACADEMIC TRAINING

Practical/Academic training is an immigration approved employment, which allows the F-1/J-1 student to gain experience in his/her field of study. Under "Practical Training" which applies to F-1s, there are two types, Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT). Internships qualify as CPT. Academic Training for J-1s is limited to 18 months (36 months for postdoctoral training) and requires a job offer.

****Important NOTE: ****

Questions about individual student employment limits should be addressed to International Student Services.

*J-1 students please contact ISS for further information on Practical Training

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

Curricular Practical Training must be an integral part of an established curriculum in the student's course of study. This includes internships, externships, and cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the university. Check with the ISS to be sure the employment you have obtained qualifies for Curricular Practical Training. A request for authorization for CPT must be approved prior to the student's commencement of employment. This information must be entered into SEVIS to reach the USCIS before the student can start to work. Contact the ISS for details about CPT.

Note: Curricular Practical Training must not exceed 20 hours. You must be simultaneously enrolled to maintain lawful F-1 status.

Eligibility Requirements

Undergraduate F-1 students must have completed at least one academic year of full-time study to be eligible for any form of Curricular Practical Training. If you qualify, visit ISS for advice. If you are a graduate student, you are maintaining lawful F-1 status, and the proposed employment is a required part of your studies, then you may apply for permission to engage in Curricular Practical Training whenever your program requires it, even if it is immediately upon beginning your studies. However, a letter from your department approving the internship must be submitted for the file.

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

Optional Practical Training is generally a twelve-month off-campus employment; but for students in the STEM program (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics programs), they are eligible for a twenty-nine month (29-month) OPT. (GWU does not currently have any programs that meet requirements for STEM) This is designed to provide a student with an opportunity to gain actual work experience in his or her chosen field of study. This employment must be directly related to the student's course of study and must be commensurate with the student's educational level. It is not affected by the student's participation in the Curricular Practical Training/internship/s. **However, if a student had engaged in full-time CPT for more than one year, he or she is ineligible for OPT.** The work may occur anywhere in the United States. Optional Practical Training can be authorized at the following times:

- During the student's annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session if the student is currently enrolled and eligible, and intends to register for the next term.
- While school is in session, provided that it does not exceed twenty (20) hours per week while school is in session. This is deemed "Part-time Pre-completion OPT".
- After completion of all course requirements for the degree, excluding thesis or equivalent, if the student is in Bachelors, Masters, or Doctoral degree program.
- After completion of the course of study.

As of January 2003, the USCIS has approved an OPT for each academic level which means a student can now participate in OPT at the undergraduate level, another at the Masters level and yet another at the Doctoral level.

Eligibility for Optional Practical Training

A student is eligible to apply for Optional Practical Training if he/she meets the following criteria.

1. You must have been lawfully enrolled full-time for at least an academic session (Fall and Spring):
 - As an F-1 student.
 - As a full-time student at a USCIS approved school in another nonimmigrant status before changing your status to F-1.
 - Before falling out of status as an F-1 student, and is subsequently reinstated to student status by USCIS.
2. If the employment to be pursued is directly related to the student's major area of study and commensurate with the student's educational level. It does not have to be an integral part of the student's curriculum.

Part-time vs. Full-time Optional Practical Training

Part-time Pre-completion Optional Practical Training: If a student still has coursework remaining to complete his/her educational program in the last semester, he/she is limited to twenty (20) hours per week of Optional Practical Training while school is in session. Such a student can, however, apply for full-time Optional Practical Training during his/her official school breaks. Graduate students, who have completed all coursework for the degree, excluding thesis, dissertation, etc., can apply for Optional Practical Training. Remember, that there are a total of twelve (12) months available, and training before completion of degree will count against the twelve (12) months and reduce the time available after the degree is awarded.

Full-time Post-completion Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training after completion of course of study will only be granted for full-time use i.e. forty (40) hours per week. You must apply for this training within the first week of your last semester before graduation. **Your application forms must reach the USCIS office at least ninety (90) days before the completion of your course of study.** Visit the ISS for more information.

Duration of Optional Practical Training:

Optional Practical Training is available for a cumulative maximum of twelve (12) or twenty-seven months. If you engage in a part-time Optional Practical Training while in school, this period will be deducted from the twelve (12) or twenty-seven (27) months limit at 50% rate.

Therefore, every two (2) months of part-time Optional Practical Training will be counted for one (1) month of full-time. However, if you start your Optional Practical Training after completion of course of study, then you are entitled to twelve (12) or twenty-seven (27) months of employment.

Application and Authorization

Please contact the ISS to obtain the Optional Practical Training (OPT) packet. Your OPT application must be processed at least one hundred (100) days prior to graduation.

You cannot begin employment until Employment Authorization Document (EAD) has been received, and, the start date has been reached. OPT can only be authorized for a maximum aggregate period of twelve (12) or twenty-seven (27) months for STEM students and it is now approved for each educational level i.e. Bachelors, Masters, and Doctoral levels.

****Important NOTE: ****

The USCIS/DOS has provided a variety of opportunities for you to be lawfully employed during your time in the F-1/J-1 status. Working illegally or without authorization is a serious violation of your status. Please consult with the OIP before accepting any employment off-campus. You are required to comply with the immigration rules and regulations as they pertain to F-1 students. The staff of ISS will counsel you regarding your responsibilities. If you fail to comply with your responsibilities, you may not be eligible for benefits normally available to F-1 students.

Importance of the Actual Date of Completion of the Program of Study/Grace Period

USCIS regulations refer to the date you complete requirements for a program of study, not the date you participate in graduation ceremonies or the date, which is the end of the academic year. Your lawful F-1 status expires after the grace period, which is sixty (60) days after you complete your degree requirements. You are expected to leave the U.S. by that date unless you have filed a timely application for Optional Practical Training or made other arrangements to lawfully remain in the U.S.

Change in Employer after Optional Practical Training Has Been Authorized

You may change employer/s during an authorized practical training provided each position is directly related to your field of study and commensurate with your educational level.

Travel and re-entry after completion of studies but before the issuance of EAD

Be advised that traveling outside of the United States after the application for Employment Authorization Document (EAD) (without receiving the actual approval) may constitute an abandonment of the application. At this point, re-entry may not be guaranteed. Be very cautious about travel unless you have received your EAD. Contact the ISS for more information.

Travel and Re-entry while engaging in Optional Practical Training (OPT)

If you are engaged in part-time OPT before the completion of your program, follow the same procedure for visits abroad and reentry as all F-1/J-1 students.

If you engage in OPT after the completion of your studies, and you travel outside the United States temporarily (less than 5 months), you may be readmitted to resume your employment for the remainder of the period authorized on your EAD card, provided you present:

1. Your I-20 ID that was endorsed by your DSO within the last one year
2. An unexpired Employment Authorization Document (EAD).
3. A letter from your employer stating that you would be returning to your employment. Also carry a job offer letter if you have it.

Students who fail to meet these requirements may be denied re-entry into the United States. Please consult the OIP before embarking on a journey during Optional Practical Training.

Travel and Re-entry after completion of studies with EAD card but without a job

If your OPT has been approved and you depart before you get a job, OPT may end and you may not be able to re-enter. Please consult ISS if you find yourself in this kind of situation.

EMPLOYMENT FOR F-2 DEPENDENTS

USCIS regulations prohibit all study and employment for F-2 dependents (spouse and children) of F-1 students.

Note: J-2 dependents please contact ISS for further information on study and employment.

TRAVEL AND RE-ENTRY

Visits Abroad and Re-entry in F-1/J-1 Status

Whenever you leave the United States temporarily and you wish to return to continue your studies at Gardner-Webb University, make sure you secure necessary documents to:

- Permit your entry to another country
- Permit re-entry to the United States

Before traveling, make sure the following documents are up-to-date:

- Passport - Be sure you have a valid passport.
- U.S. Visa - Check your U.S. entry visa (which is stamped in your passport) to be sure that it is still valid for additional entries. If not, you will need to get a new entry visa from the U.S. consulate or embassy while you are outside the U.S. (Special conditions apply when traveling to Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean Islands for less than 30 days. For more information, visit the ISS).
- SEVIS I-20 /DS-2019 - Have your I-20/DS-2019 endorsed by a Designated School Official (DSO) or Responsible Officer. Verify that the information on your I-20/DS- 2019 is still correct.

In addition, you may want to take the following with you on the journey:

- If you are pre-registered for the upcoming semester, we suggest that you take a copy of that registration with you.
- A copy of your transcript.

- Ask the Academic Services to prepare an "Enrollment Certification Form" for you. This will verify that you have been attending and are expected to return to continue your studies at Gardner-Webb University.
- When you apply for a new visa, the officer will ask to see your financial documentation.
- If you are traveling to a location other than your home country, you may need a visa to enter that country. For more information contact the ISS, or that country's embassy or consulate well ahead of your planned trip; four months is not too early.

Travel In-Country: If you intend to travel within the U.S. during your stay, please carry copies of your passport, I-20 and I-94.

Travel out of U.S.: If you, or your accompanying dependents, intend to travel temporarily out of the U.S. and return, you will need to have ISS check your documents. All students traveling anywhere outside of the U.S. must have a valid SEVIS I-20 for re-entry. You will also need to have a valid U.S. visa to re-enter and, of course, your passport must be valid. If necessary, make sure you obtain a new U.S. visa at the U.S. Embassy/Consulate abroad before returning as you will not be permitted entry to the U.S. without a valid visa.

Please visit the ISS **at least one week** before your travel to have your DSO endorse your SEVIS I-20. If you are authorized to engage in Optional Practical Training, you must carry your EAD in addition to the endorsed SEVIS Form I-20.

Travel to Canada, Mexico, Or the Caribbean Islands: Mexico and Canada have distinct entry requirements, which must be investigated by the student. Please check these websites for more information.

- The Canadian Embassy home page is at: www.canadianembassy.org
- The Mexican Embassy home page is at: www.embassyofmexico.org/english/main2.htm

Note: If you have changed to an F-1 status in the U. S. and are leaving the country for a short time (less than 5 months) to return and complete your education, you may apply for the F-1 visa while outside the US before returning.

AFTER COMPLETION OF STUDIES

Once you have completed your program of study at GWU, you have a few immigration options.

1. You are expected to depart the U.S within sixty (60) days as an F-1, or thirty (30) days as J-1, after the completion of the course of study (grace period).
2. You may continue in F-1 status by pursuing further F-1 studies either at Gardner-Webb University or in another USCIS approved school.
3. You may apply for Optional Practical Training at least one hundred (100) days before completing your course of study.
4. You may apply to change your F-1 status to another non-immigrant classification no later than sixty (60) days after the completion of your course of study.

Note:

If an F-1 student does not choose one of these options after completing his or her course of study, he or she will be "out of status." That student's "duration of status" will end sixty (60) days after completing the full course of study.

Failure to Depart

A failure to depart is considered a violation of status, thereby making the student deportable.

* J-1 students please contact ISS for further information on your options for after completion of studies.

ADDITIONAL IMMIGRATION INFORMATION (For F-1 Students)
EAD APPLICATION PROCEDURE

To apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), all applicants must submit the following (in the listed order below):

- o Check or money order payable to the USCIS. Consult ISS for information on the amount. (Do not write on the back of the check.)
- o Form 1-765 (available from the ISS)
 - In item #3, make sure that the address you indicate will be valid for 2 to 3 months.
 - In item #16, indicate the appropriate code (you should also write next to the code the type of eligibility category) which are:
 - (c)(3)(i) F-1 Optional Practical Training
 - (c)(3)(ii) F-1 Off-campus with qualifying international organization (c) (3)
 - (iii) F-1 Off campus employment due to Severe Economic Hardship.
- o Photocopy of Form I-94 (front and back)
- o Photocopy of the last EAD (front and back) - if available and applicable.
- o 2 Photographs taken no earlier than 30 days before submission to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The applicant's head should be bare unless the person is wearing a headdress as required by a religious order to which he/she belongs. The photo should not be larger than 1 and 1/2 x 1 and 1/2 inches, with the distance from the top of the head to just below the chin about 1 1/4 inches.
- o Photocopies of the identification page(s) from the passport (including the page that indicates the passport expiration date).
- o Photocopy of the most recent visa

Additionally, for the following, you must submit: F-1

Optional Practical Training:

- o Photocopy of SEVIS 1-20 ID with Optional Practical Training recommendation and DSO's signature on page 3
- o Photocopy of all previous I-20s(all pages)

F-1 Employment with International Organization:

- o Letter of certification from the international organization that the proposed employment is within the scope of its sponsorship
- o Photocopy of I-20 ID endorsed by the DSO within the past 30 days.

F-1 Employment Due To Severe Economic Hardship:

- o Photocopy of I-20 ID
- o Evidence/explanation detailing the unforeseen economic circumstances that cause the hardship situation and the unavailability/insufficiency of on-campus employment and a list of assets, income and expenses

F-1 Employment under the Special Student Relief Provisions

- o Photocopy of I-20 ID, with certification by the ISS
- o Evidence/explanation detailing the unforeseen economic circumstances that caused the hardship situation
- o A list of assets, income and expenses

INVITING DEPENDENTS AND GUESTS TO U.S.A

DEPENDENTS:

If after arriving in the U.S., you (F-1 student) wish to invite your immediate family (wife, husband, and children (unmarried under the age of 21) to join you, you must notify the OIP at once. You will need to send them their SEVIS I-20s issued in your name, but also bearing their names individually, with which they can apply for US visas. ISS would need to see a proof of financial support (\$5,000.00 for each dependent) for the family's stay before issuing the I-20s. Dependents of F-1 visa holders will receive F-2 visas.

Note: Once in the U.S., dependents in F-2 status may not accept employment of any kind, at any time.

TEMPORARY VISITORS:

If you intend to invite family members other than spouse/children for a short visit to the U.S., you need not send any forms, but rather a personal letter to the prospective guests inviting them to visit for a specified time will do. With this, the visitor would obtain a tourist visa at the U.S. Embassy/Consulate abroad.

HEALTH ISSUES

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR MEDICAL INSURANCE

All international students are required to carry the University Student Health Insurance policy unless they can prove coverage equal to or greater than the University policy. Such insurance must be provided by an underwriter that is located in the United States, as well as a United States claims administrator. Foreign based policies **WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**. Insurance fees will be included on your tuition bill as soon as you are registered. The fee is \$559 for fall semester and \$374 for the spring. Students are responsible for paying this fee each semester they are registered. Students who qualify for a waiver of the policy must follow the guidelines established by the Student Accounts Office for obtaining a waiver.

Listed below are two insurance companies for your research; use any company you desire.

<http://www.1stagency.com/programs.htm>

<http://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/atlas America/>

COUNSELING SERVICES

The Gardner-Webb University Counseling Center provides academic, emotional, social, and vocational support as well as mental health consultation to students, faculty, and staff. A team of professionals trained in education and counseling help University community members in developing constructive life plans, handling crisis situations, and coping with day-to-day problems. Short-term individual, group, and couples counseling sessions are available at no additional cost. The University Counseling Center adheres to the American Counseling Association's code of ethics and operates within a Christian perspective. All services provided are confidential and no information will be given to others without the consent of the individual. The University Counseling is located in Tucker Student Center and is open for appointments, Monday• Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. For after-hours emergencies, an on-call counselor can be reached by calling University Police at (704) 406-4000.

CULTURESHOCK

COPING WITH CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Culture shock is not quite as shocking or as sudden as most people anticipate. It is the process of adjusting and settling into a new environment, whether it's a new school, home, job or country. It takes time and energy, and affects the mind and body. It is part of the process of learning a new culture that is called "cultural adaptation." Always remember that culture shock is a normal process and everyone goes through it at one point or the other.

Some surprises always await you when you arrive in a new environment. People may walk and talk more quickly, traffic patterns may be different and confusing, and buildings may look different than expected. Such differences are easy to see and quickly learned. The manner in which classes are taught, registration for courses, and other procedures may seem strange at first. You may become homesick, just missing everyone you had said "good bye" to when leaving your country. We do understand. The International Student Services (ISS) is the best place to go for help with such matters. At the ISS, we attempt to ease your adjustment to the country and the Gardner-Webb community; however, that feeling of ease and comfort may take time to achieve depending on the individual.

Gradually, as you become more involved in Student Activities on campus and get to know the people around you, the culture shock will begin to decrease. Our advice to you will be, "Get involved in GWU activities as quickly as possible and keep an open mind." This attitude will help you make friends easily. While you are trying to make friends and adapt to the American culture, it is important for you to retain your cultural identity.

Here are a few tips that will help you in the adjustment process.

1. *Listen and Observe*

A lot can be learned if one observes the way in which people interact. Pay attention to the way people speak and act - this includes observation of verbal as well as non-verbal communication, namely gestures and actions.

2. *Ask Questions*

If you do not understand what is going on, or what is expected of you, do not hesitate to ask questions and clarify your doubts. Most people will gladly help you out. If you do not understand people's slang or accent, politely ask them to repeat what they have said.

3. *Keep an Open Mind*

You may see a lot of things that are done differently in the U.S. as compared to your home country. Do not assume that what is different is automatically bad. Try to understand the locally prevalent values and attitudes.

4. *Curiosity and Openness*

It is good to be curious and want to know more about the culture of the place that you have come to. Try to learn more about the traditions and values upheld. Similarly, if people ask you about your culture, be open and honest. This builds up trust and confidence between you and others.

5. *Handling Confusion and Frustration*

It is common to feel confused and frustrated when in a new place. Do not be overly concerned about it. As you get used to the place, the confusion and frustration will subside and you will begin to feel like you belong.

6. *Become Involved*

Try and become involved in student groups or organizations. This will help you to meet people with similar interests and hobbies. It will be an opportunity for you to discover new talents.

SOCIAL INVITATIONS

While you are here, we hope that you will meet and spend time with Americans and their families. These suggestions may help you feel more comfortable when you are invited out. The invitation is usually for you only, unless your host specifically invites your family or friends. Bringing guests of your own without asking your host's permission is considered impolite. The written invitation will include the date, time, place, and description of the occasion.

You should always answer a written invitation, especially if it says R.S.V.P. (Repondez s'il vous plait; French for "please respond"). You may respond by telephone or by letter; prompt notice is appreciated. Never accept an invitation unless you really plan to go. If you must decline an invitation, it is enough to say, "Thank you for the invitation, but I am unable to attend." If an unavoidable problem makes it necessary for you to change plans, be certain to tell the host as soon as possible before the time when you are expected.

Make sure you get directions to the place where the event will be held. When accepting an invitation for a meal, be sure to explain to your host if there is anything you are not supposed to eat. This courtesy will help the host to plan for food and beverages that everyone can enjoy.

If you must refuse something after it has been prepared, refuse politely. Never hesitate to ask for any food on the table: "Would you please pass the rolls?", since asking for more food is considered to be a compliment to the host. Being on time is also very important in American culture.

INDIVIDUALISM AND PRIVACY

The most important thing to understand about Americans is their devotion to individualism. From childhood, they have been trained to consider themselves as separate individuals who are responsible for their own situations in life and their own destinies. They have not been trained to see themselves as members of a close-knit, tightly interdependent family, religious group, ethnicity, nation, or other collectivity.

Closely associated with the value they place on individualism is the importance Americans assign to privacy. Americans assume that people need some time to themselves or some time alone to think about things or recover their spent psychological energy. Americans have great difficulty understanding foreigners who always want to be with another person, or who dislike being alone.

DIRECTNESS AND ASSERTIVENESS

Americans generally consider themselves to be frank, open, and direct in their dealings with other people. Americans will often speak openly and directly to others about things they dislike. They will try to do so in a manner they call "constructive," that is, a manner which the other person will not find offensive or unacceptable. If they do not speak openly about what is on their minds, they will often convey their reactions in nonverbal ways (without words), through facial expressions, body positions, and gestures.

Americans are not taught that they should mask their emotional responses. Their words, the tone of their voices or their facial expressions will usually reveal when they are feeling angry, unhappy, confused, or happy and content. They do not think it improper to display these feelings, at least within limits. They are much less concerned with avoiding embarrassment to themselves or others than most cultures. To Americans, being honest is usually more important than preserving harmony in interpersonal relationships.

EDUCATION AND CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

In many cultures, there is a great difference in status between students and professors. Students show their respect for their professors by listening quietly. They do not question what the professor says. In the United States, it is quite acceptable for students to ask questions and to engage in discussions with the professor. This is not disrespectful. In fact, professors view participation in class discussions as a sign of interest in the subject matter.

During the first class meeting, your professors will inform you of their office hours and when and how they can be reached. If you have a problem with the material presented in class, do not hesitate to see the professor during office hours and ask for help. Even if you do not have a problem, it is a good idea to drop in and talk to your professor. It gives both of you a chance to get to know each other. This may be particularly important if you have trouble understanding the professor, or he/she has trouble understanding you. Often, all it takes is a little time to get used to the other person's style of speaking.

At the time of the first class meeting, your professor will specify "due dates" for various assignments. These dates are quite firm, and you must hand in your assignment by that date in order to get full credit. If you know that you cannot meet a deadline for an important reason, contact your professor before the deadline and try to work out an arrangement that is mutually agreeable.

One thing you need to know about studying in the U.S. is that speaking and learning in English will be exhausting and frustrating, particularly in the beginning. Sometimes, international students have to spend much more time than their American counterparts to complete the same assignments. This can lead to stress and a feeling of inferiority. The most important thing you can do to improve your level of success in the classroom is to improve your English skills. Your English will not improve if the only people you talk to outside the classroom speak your native language. You should speak to Americans whenever possible, watch television, listen to the radio, and read newspapers and magazines. Interacting with U.S. culture will greatly enhance your ability to understand your colleagues and professors on the academic level. The more proficient your English becomes, the more successful you will be in the classroom.

If you are feeling pressure, you have to take the initiative and ask for help. You must ask to join study groups or ask professors questions. No one will approach you to ask if there is anything you do not understand. However, classmates and professors are usually willing to help if they know you are having problems. Be prepared to do whatever it takes to help yourself. Remember how much effort it took to get the opportunity to study at Gardner-Webb University, and then put twice as much effort into your work to make the most of your stay here. Feel free to visit the International Student Services Office in Tucker Student Center to discuss different strategies to make your university experience successful.

Smoking is not permitted in University classrooms, buildings or on any campus grounds. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted anywhere on campus.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY/PLAGIARISM

Students are expected to do their own work in class, during exams and on assignments. Passing in another person's work as yours is considered a violation of the University's policy on academic integrity. To allow someone else to pass your work as his or hers is another version of the same offense and is punishable in the same manner.

Since the charge of plagiarism is serious, it is important for you to know how to work with other peoples' ideas responsibly. It is important to cite sources of information whenever you use other peoples' materials as references, whether printed or otherwise. If you are not sure as to how you should cite these references, ask your professor for his or her style of citation. The Writing Center is an excellent resource to use!

Plagiarism should not be confused with honest sharing of ideas. Writers get advice from different sources including friends and colleagues. In recognition of such contributions, you may want to acknowledge those people who have taken time to share their thoughts with you, in the acknowledgement page of your book or thesis. With this, you'll be thanking them and also acknowledging their contributions.

DAY-TO-DAY ISSUES

HOW TO OBTAIN A NORTH CAROLINA DRIVER'S LICENSE

A driver's license in the United States is used for two different purposes. One is a permit to drive and the other is for identification. Each state has different rules governing the issuance and use of the license. In order to drive legally in North

Carolina you must have a valid driver's license. If you have an out-of-state license, ("state" meaning one of the states in the U.S. as well as a foreign state), it is recognized for the first thirty days you reside in North Carolina, then you must obtain a North Carolina driver's license. North Carolina does not recognize the "international driver's license."

If you plan to write checks in the area, you will soon realize how often the driver's license is used as a form of identification. If you would like an identification card and would not like to drive, you can get one from the license office if you provide them with items 3, 4, 5 and 6 listed below.

The state of North Carolina requires six things to issue a North Carolina driver's license

1. The ability to see, drive and have knowledge of the rules of driving in North Carolina. This is proven by taking and passing a test. The test has four parts: written, sign recognition, driving and a vision test. The written test is taken directly from the Driver's Handbook which you can study here:
http://www.ncdot.org/dmv/driverservices/drivershandbook/download/NCDL_English.pdf

A passing score is 80. Note: they do test your vision; if you wear glasses, take them with you to get your license.
2. Coverage by, at minimum, liability insurance-get form DL 123 completed by your insurance agent and take it with you to the license office.
3. Two forms of identification. Motor vehicle laws require proof of your full name and date of birth. The following documents are acceptable: passport with your I-94 card, I-20 or DS-2019, an authentic document from INS, certified or original birth certificate.
4. Proof that you are a "resident" of North Carolina. This means that you are living in North Carolina. Effective November 1, 2001, in accordance with North Carolina General Statutes 20- 7(b1), every customer applying for an Original Driver License, Permit or Identification Card must provide one document showing proof of residency in North Carolina. This policy is for first time issuances only. This is in addition to the requirement for two forms of identification, unless one of the required ID documents has the applicant's residence address on it. Requirement: Any document presented must have the customer's current North Carolina residence address and name. Both the name and residence address must appear on the Driver License, Permit or Identification Card. Take some proof that shows you are employed or studying in the area.
5. Effective September 1, 2006, the issuance of any driver license, learner's permit or ID card **does not require** the applicant to show proof of a Social Security Card. (F-1s with no Social Security Number and the F-2s can use their passports for ID and their I-94s and I-20s to indicate lawful status for the length of license. Same with the J-1s and J-2s and their I-94s and DS-2019s. Proof of Residency is needed, such as an electric bill, apartment lease, etc. . . . You may call the local DMV for more information regarding this proof and it is recommended that you do so.)
6. Fees vary, so check the Driver's Handbook for the fee schedule.

In Shelby, the office is located at the US 74 Bypass 1914 East Dixon Blvd. The office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. You can call and make an appointment for the driver's license tests. Your license or identification card is issued while you wait. Below is the address and telephone number:

Department of Motor Vehicles
1914 East Dixon Blvd Shelby, NC 28152
Telephone: 704-480-5408

AUTO INSURANCE

In order to obtain license plates for a car, you will be required to show proof that you have auto insurance. Many companies offer a variety of auto insurance policies, so you should "shop around." After selecting a policy, read it carefully before signing any document/s. The following companies offer auto insurance.

Company, Web Site & Phone

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|----------------|
| Allstate Insurance | http://www.allstate.com | |
| Geico Direct | http://www.geico.com | 1-800-841-3000 |
| Liberty Mutual | http://www.libertymutual.com | 1-800-225-2467 |
| Nationwide Insurance | http://nationwide.com | 1-800-882-2822 |
| Progressive Insurance | http://www.progressive.com | 1-800-776-4737 |
| State Farm Insurance | http://www.statefarm.com | 1-877-734-2265 |

LAWS RELATED TO DRIVING

Driving is a serious responsibility and should not be taken lightly. We have listed some of the laws related to driving that you should be aware of:

- a. Driving under the influence of alcohol is illegal and is a punishable offense. (This is applicable even if you are of legal drinking age, which is 21 years of age.)
- b. It is illegal to have an open container of alcohol in a moving vehicle.
- c. You must drive at or below the posted speed limits. Speed limits may differ on different roads.
- d. You must stop for a school bus that has its red lights flashing and its STOP arm extended.
- e. You must make way for police vehicles, ambulances, or other emergency vehicles.
- f. Pennsylvania Law requires that drivers and passengers wear seatbelts.
- g. All small children must be seated in the back seat of a car. They should be seated in special car seats with the seat belts fastened.
- h. Only vehicles with special license plates and handicap stickers can park in spaces reserved for handicapped persons. These spaces are noted with a wheelchair symbol.

PARKING

Once you are legally allowed to drive a vehicle, you should be aware of the fact that parking, on and off- campus, involves additional costs. You need a parking permit to park on campus. For more information about parking on-campus, contact the Gardner-Webb University Police at (704) 406-4444.

Meter parking requires the deposit of quarters into the parking meter. Note that parking rates may differ in different areas of the city. You may also need a parking permit to park the vehicle at your residence.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Gardner-Webb University takes the responsibility of providing a safe living and learning environment for our students very seriously. Campus crime statistics are available upon request through our campus Police Department. We are pleased with the low number of incidents at the university when compared to other colleges and universities. Full-time public safety officers operate at 24/7 on campus. If you feel that there is a threat to your safety or life, contact Gardner• Webb University Police immediately at (704) 406-4444. If you are off- campus, call 911 in the event of a life-threatening emergency.

Remember that 911 is an emergency number only. Do not use it for general inquiries.

U.S. HOLIDAYS

If there is a major religious holiday that is celebrated in your country and you do not feel that you should go to class on that day, you can ask your professors if they will allow you to miss class that day. It is up to the professor to either agree or disagree with your proposal. If you decide to be absent from class without the professor's consent, this absence may affect your grade because attendance is an important factor in the calculation of final grade. Major American holidays are listed below.

Government offices and business will be closed on those that are noted as "official holidays."

New Year's Day: January 1

This is an official holiday for schools, offices and stores. New Year's Eve, December 31, is more important to Americans than New Year's Day itself. Everyone gathers with family and friends to "ring out the old and ring in the new," an expression that reflects the old custom of ringing church bells to greet the New Year.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday: January 15

This is an official holiday that began in 1986. Martin Luther King, Jr. organized and led the civil-rights movement in America during the 1960's.

Groundhog Day: February 2

Not an official holiday. The groundhog is a small burrowing animal that hibernates during the winter months. Legend has it that he emerges on February 2. If he sees his shadow on a sunny day, he will be frightened and return to this burrow. This is supposed to indicate six more weeks of wintry weather. If he doesn't see his shadow, then spring should arrive soon!

Lincoln's Birthday: February 12

Official holiday in many states; often celebrated in conjunction with George Washington's Birthday or "President's Day." Abraham Lincoln was President during the Civil War (1861 - 1865), a period that had a profound effect on the history of the nation. Believing that a "house divided against itself cannot stand," Lincoln acted to free the slaves and bring the seceded states back into the union.

Valentine's Day: February 14

Not an official holiday. A romantic holiday celebrated by sending cards and giving candy or flowers to special close friends and partners.

Washington's Birthday: February 22 (celebrated on the 3rd Monday in February)

This is an official holiday. It commemorates the birthday of George Washington, commander-in-chief of the Revolutionary Army that freed America from the colonial rule of England. Washington was also the first President of the United States.

Saint Patrick's Day: March 17

Not an official holiday. St. Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland, and this holiday was brought to America by Irish immigrants. People celebrate this holiday by wearing something green, socializing with friends and singing Irish folk songs.

April Fool's Day: April 1

Not an official holiday. As in many other countries, this day is marked by the custom of playing harmless practical jokes on friends or colleagues.

Easter: A Sunday in March or April

Not an official holiday. A religious holiday for Christians who believe that on this day Christ rose from the dead. Many old traditions are now connected with Easter, including the decoration of brightly colored eggs and giving gifts and candy to children.

Mother's Day: Second Sunday in May

Not an official holiday. On this day Americans honor their mothers by sending flowers, buying small gifts, and taking their mothers out to eat so that they don't have to cook or work around the house.

Father's Day: Third Sunday in June

Not an official holiday. Fathers are honored on this day. Children give those cards and gifts.

Memorial Day: Last Monday in May

This is an official holiday. Memorial Day is the day on which Americans remember those who died in military service to their country. Many families visit cemeteries and decorate grave markers with flowers. The day is also marked with patriotic parades. This day is considered the beginning of the summer season.

Independence Day: July 4

This is an official holiday. Independence Day commemorates the day the Declaration of Independence was signed in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. The holiday is celebrated all over the country with picnics, political speeches, and community get-togethers that culminate in fireworks displays.

Labor Day: First Monday in September

This is an official holiday. This holiday was established in recognition of the contribution of the labor movement to the productivity of the country. This day is the last holiday of the summer season and is celebrated with picnics and other outings.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: Late September/Early October

Not an official holiday. Rosh Hashanah, commemorating the creation of the world, is the first of the Ten Days of Penitence, which end with Yom Kippur, the most solemn of Jewish holidays. For Rosh Hashanah, families gather for a feast in which an apple is dipped in honey to express hope for a sweet year ahead. In Judaism, Yom Kippur is a day of judgment; on the eve of Yom Kippur, Jews ask forgiveness from those that they have wronged. The keynotes of the holiday are fasting and a collective confession, repeated several times throughout the day.

Columbus Day: Second Monday in October

Some organizations observe it as an official holiday. The day honors Christopher Columbus who is the explorer credited with discovering America in 1492.

Halloween: October 31

Not an official holiday. This was originally a religious holiday, but its religious character has been lost in the United States, and it is now celebrated mostly as a children's holiday. Traditions include carving out pumpkins with funny or scary faces, as well as dressing up in costumes and going around the neighborhood to receive candy treats. When people come to the door, children say "trick or treat," meaning "If you don't give me a treat, I will play a trick on you." Neighbors are ready with treats to distribute to these visiting children.

Veteran's Day: November 11

This is an official holiday. On this day Americans honor the veterans of all wars.

Thanksgiving Day: Fourth Thursday in November

This is an official holiday. The first Thanksgiving Day was celebrated by the Pilgrims at Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts in 1621 to give thanks for the bountiful harvest and their triumph of survival over the wilderness. Now it is a time when Americans give thanks for the good life they enjoy. They celebrate by getting together with family to eat traditional food such as turkey, cranberry sauce, sweet potatoes and pumpkin pie. Since this is the busiest travel time in the U.S., the day following is sometimes a holiday as well so that people can join their families in other cities.

Hanukkah: Eight Days, usually in December

Not an official holiday. This is one of the less solemn of the Jewish holidays, but one widely observed even by non-religious Jews. The only Jewish holiday connected with war, Hanukkah celebrates the victory of Jewish Maccabeus over their Syrian ruler in 1678 BC. Hanukkah is marked with parties, games, gifts for children, and the lighting of the nine candles of the menorah.

Christmas: December 15

This is an official holiday. Many people regard Christmas as the most important holiday of the year, with the holiday season extending from a few days before Christmas to New Year's Day. Although its origins are religious in nature, it is a holiday celebrated by almost everyone in the country. Family members travel great distances to be together on this day on which gifts are exchanged, and a traditional dinner is shared. Even families who do not have strong religious convictions decorate a Christmas tree and join in the festivities.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

The United States is one of the last countries to convert to the metric system; in fact, the attempt to make the conversion has been unsuccessful. There have been some switchovers, but most units of measure in the U.S. will probably be unfamiliar to you.

Distance/Length:

100 Kilometers = 62.5 miles
1 Meter = 3.281 feet
1 Meter = 39.37 inches
1 centimeter = 0.39 inches
1 yard = 3 feet

1 mile = 1.67 kilometers
1 yard = 0.91 meters
1 foot = 30.5 centimeters
1 inch = 25.4 millimeters
1 foot = 12 inches

Weight:

1 kilogram = 2.2 pounds
1 gram = 0.035 ounces
1 pound = 16 ounces

1 pound = 0.45 kilograms
1 ounce = 28.00 grams

Fluids:

1 liter = 4 1/3 cups
1 liter = 1.06 quarts
1 liter = 0.26 gallons
1 cup = 0.24 liters

1 gallon = 3.80 liters
1 quart = 0.95 liters
1 pint = 0.47 milliliters
1 ounce = 29.57 milliliters

Kitchen Measures:

Americans use volume rather than weight in measuring quantities for most recipes in home cooking. They also use the term ounce as both a fluid measure and a weight: 16 ounces is both one pound and one pint or two cups. It is very easy to get confused! The following table may help you to decipher recipes:

1 teaspoon (tsp or t) = 2 liquid grams
6 and 2/3 tbsp. = 100 liquid grams
2 cups = 1 pint (pt) = 454 liquid grams

1 Tablespoon (tbsp or T) = 6 liquid grams
16 tbsp = 1 cup
4 cups = 1 quart = 907 liquid grams

CLOTHING SIZE CONVERSION TABLE

Dresses/Suits/Coats - Misses

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| USA | 8 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 18 | 20 |
| British | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 18 |
| Continental | | 38 | 40 | 42 | 44 | 46 | 48 |

Dresses/Suits/Coats - Women (Waist Sizes)

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| USA and British | 34 | 36 | 38 | 40 | 42 | 44 |
| Continental | 42 | 44 | 46 | 48 | 50 | 52 |

Dresses/Suits/Coats - Juniors

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| USA and British | 7 | 9 | 11 | 13 | 15 | 17 |
| Continental | 34 | 36 | 38 | 40 | 42 | 44 |

Stockings

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|-----|---|----|------|----|
| USA and British | 8 | 8.5 | 9 | 10 | 10.5 | 11 |
| Continental | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Blouses/Sweaters

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| USA and British | 30 | 32 | 34 | 36 | 38 | 40 |
| Continental | 38 | 40 | 42 | 44 | 46 | 48 |

Shoes

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|
| USA | 5 | 5.5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 8.5 | 9 |
| British | 3.5 | 4 | 4.5 | 5.5 | 6.5 | 7 | 7.5 |
| Continental | 35 | 35 | 36 | 38 | 38.5 | 39 | 40 |

Coats/Suits/Sweaters/Shirts

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| USA | 36 | 38 | 40 | 42 | 44 | 46 |
| European | 46 | 48 | 50 | 54 | 56 | 59 |

Shirts

| | | | | | |
|----------|------|----|------|----|------|
| USA | 14.5 | 15 | 15.5 | 16 | 16.5 |
| European | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 |

TEMPERATURES

Centigrade (Celsius) and Fahrenheit (Fahrenheit temperature = 9/5 (Celsius + 32))
(U.S. uses Fahrenheit)

| | Centigrade (C) | Fahrenheit (F) |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Boiling | 100 | 212 |
| Body Temperature | 37 | 98.6 |
| Room Temperature | 20 | 68 |
| Freezing | 0 | 32 |

U.S. MONETARY SYSTEM

The money system in the U.S. consists of both coins and paper currency, as it is in other countries. The most commonly used coins and bills and their equivalent to the U.S. dollar (\$), the basic unit, are listed below.

Coins

There are four commonly used coins. They are:

| | | | |
|----|------------------------------|------------|-------------------|
| 1 | one cent or penny | .01 dollar | (Copper in color) |
| 5 | five cents or nickel | .05 dollar | (Silver in color) |
| 10 | ten cents or dime | .10 dollar | (Silver in color) |
| 25 | twenty-five cents or quarter | .25 dollar | (Silver in color) |

Paper Currency

The paper currency called "bills" or "bucks" are commonly circulated in six (6) denominations:

\$1.00 \$5.00 \$10.00 \$20.00 \$50.00 \$100.00

TIMEZONES

The U.S. is divided into 4 time zones.

Eastern (eastern states); Central (central and Midwest states); Mountain (west and southwest states including North Carolina State); and Pacific (west-coast states). Each zone is one hour different from the adjacent zone, thus if it is 5:00 p.m. in Charlotte; the time will be 4:00p.m. in Chicago; 3:00 p.m. in Denver; and 2:00 p.m. in Los Angeles.

CONCLUSION

We hope this handbook will be of immense help to you while studying at Gardner-Webb University. The information contained therein will prove useful to you at different times, some at the beginning of your studies, others toward the end.

Please feel free to send comments and suggestions to us on how we may better serve you. In case you have other suggestions on how we can improve on this handbook or our services, please let us know. We will appreciate your input very much. Our Office is open to all, feel free to come in and get to know us better. We certainly will love to know you too.

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Foreign Student and Scholar Handbook 2009-2010- University of Pittsburgh www.pitt.edu Gardner-Webb University website: www.gardner-webb.edu Gardner-Webb University Transitions 2010-2011 A Guide to First-Year Experience... Gardner-Webb University International Student Handbook 2009- 2010

Johns Hopkins Services for International Students website www.spsbe.jhu.edu NAFSA Adviser's Manual (2010) & NAFSA's International Student Handbook (2010) Robert Morris University International Student Handbook (2008/2009) Social Security Office web site www.ssa.gov

The handbook was originally prepared by Mrs. Titilola Adewale, Assistant Director of International Programs for the use of international students at Gardner-Webb University.

It was last updated on 06/21/2019 by Mrs. Jenny Humphries, current Director of International Student Services at GWU.