Welcome

Welcome to the University of South Florida! Our office is part of USF World and is located on the first floor of the Patel Center for Global Solutions. We are excited for you to join our diverse student body of over 5000 international students representing more than 140 different countries.

Our staff specializes in assisting international students and scholars with understanding and maintaining their visa status, and connecting them with programs on-campus and in the Tampa community that foster global understanding. It is our goal to ensure that you have the tools to be successful students. This guide is designed to give you valuable information to make important decisions related to your first semester. We trust that you will find it useful as you begin your Glo-Bull adventure!

We wish you the very best throughout the year and look forward to getting to know you better in the months ahead.

Warm regards,

Marcia Taylor, M.A.
Director, OIS

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Pre-Arrival

A) TO DO LIST

I. Pay the SEVIS fee, get your VISA stamp, and make sure all travel documents are in order.
   a. Go to www.fmjfee.com to pay the SEVIS (I-901) fee. Be sure to print the receipt and upload to iStart.
   b. Go to http://www.usembassy.gov/ to schedule a visa appointment at the nearest Embassy or Consulate and to complete the visa application forms.
   c. Go to your visa appointment with your I-20 or DS-2019, passport, admission letter, and financial documents (e.g., award letter, bank statement, etc.). Read Tips for Applying for a Non-immigrant Visa. (NOTE: Citizens of Canada and Bermuda do not need a visa stamp. They the proof of payment of the SEVIS (I-901) fee at the US Port of Entry).

II. Begin the iStart pre-arrival process - https://istart.usf.edu
   a. You will use E-Forms to provide OIS with important information and copies of documents.
   b. Complete pre-arrival information modules.

III. Arrange travel to Tampa International Airport (TPA) located about approximately 19 miles from the university.

IV. Register for a University Orientation - Undergraduate Orientation / Graduate Orientation.

V. Find on-campus or off-campus housing.
   a. To live on-campus, visit Housing and Residential Education for rates, availability, move-in dates.
   b. To live off-campus, first look at the university’s affiliated properties. These properties provide a residential experience that is more similar to living on-campus. USF Student Government provides up-to-date information and advice about housing in the university area at their Off-Campus Housing website.

VI. Submit required forms to Student Health Services
   a. All students are required to provide proof of immunization history. Go to the Immunization Compliance page for current links to the Immunization History.
   b. All international students are also required to purchase health insurance that meets university and state guidelines. To remove the registration hold student must submit the Agreement form. Students who do not purchase the USF plan must have the other insurance the USF Insurance Compliance Form.

VII. Plan your arrival to attend Mandatory OIS Document Check and Information Session during one of the scheduled times.

B) WHAT TO BRING

I. Clothing - When packing, bring clothes that are comfortable in warm and humid weather with some appropriate clothing for cooler temperatures. Dressing for class is generally casual. Jeans, shorts and tennis shoes are acceptable. Please note that most buildings at USF are air-conditioned. Tampa has a humid subtropical climate with average high temperatures ranging from 65°F to 95°F and average low temperatures ranging from 50°F to 74°F. During the
summer months (June - August) it is hot and humid with frequent rainstorms in the afternoons. Winter is somewhat cooler and less humid. Temperatures may occasionally drop to as low as 40°F in the evenings and warm up during the day.

II. Electrical items - The U.S uses an 110v electrical current. You may buy a travel voltage converter online or at stores like Walmart, Target, Home Depot, or Amazon.

III. Documents/Mementos: It is much easier to obtain services in the U.S. if the proper documents are available. You should bring your driver's licenses, academic records, birth certificates, medical records, scholarship notices, and employment recommendations which may be useful during your stay. In addition, it is a good idea to bring cultural mementos to display or use at cultural or social gatherings.

IV. Baggage: International Services at USF cannot accept or store baggage. Please do not send any baggage or parcels to this office.

V. Money & Currency Exchange - It is strongly recommended that you bring at least $5,000 in the form of U.S. "traveler's checks" to cover expenses during your first four weeks in the U.S. This amount does not include the cost of tuition and fees which also must be paid before the beginning of classes if you are a student. Foreign currency can typically be changed at banks in the area, but foreign checks require 4-6 weeks to clear the bank.

### Arrival

I. Entering the U.S.: You should carry your passport with visa stamp and I-20 (F-1) or DS-2019 (J-1) in your carry-on luggage on the airplane. At the US Port-of-Entry, the officer should put a BLUE & RED stamp in your passport near your F-1 or J-1 visa that includes the date of arrival, the visa status (F-1 or J-1) and “D/S”. This refers to the duration of status/stay that is needed to complete your academic program. If the officer puts a date, you need to come to OIS so we can assist in correcting this error. For more information about the arrival process, see the U.S. Department of Homeland Security website Study in the States.

II. Transportation from Airport: Free Airport Pick Up in Tampa is available through USF Campus Ministries and must be requested at least two weeks prior to arrival. If you prefer to arrange for your transportation upon arrival, a shuttle service and taxis are available at all area airports in the baggage claim area. For current costs and transportation options at Tampa International Airport, visit the Tampa International Airport website's Ground Transportation page.

III. Temporary Accommodations: If you have not arranged for apartment rental prior to arrival or you arrive before the opening of campus housing, you may need to seek temporary accommodations. There are several hotels near the campus that offer discounted room rates for USF students. For a full list go to Hotels Near the Tampa Campus.

### Post-Arrival

i. UNIVERSITY MATTERS
   a. Get your USF ID – Download this form and fill it out before going to the Card Center located in the Student Service Building (SVC) room 1032. They will take your photo and issue the card the same day. Your university account will be
b. Complete mandatory OIS Document Check – Document Check is the process by which an international advisor (DSO) checks that all of your immigration documents show correct status and entry into the US. After arrival into the US, you can upload documents to iStart from any electronic device, university computer, or the computers at the OIS office. Then come to one of the schedule times for a face-to-face meeting. For students who are not F-1 or J-1 students, this is only an online procedure.

c. Attend a mandatory OIS Information Session – During Information Session, we will explain the rules about immigration, how to stay legal in the US, how to contact our advisors, and how to connect to the university community.

d. Attend university orientation – Undergraduate Students (First Year and Transfer) should plan to attend Glo-Bull Beginnings Week. Graduate Students can attend the Graduate Orientation and their individual department orientation.

e. Go to Week of Welcome Events – WOW is a campus wide celebration designed to get new students familiar with USF traditions, involvement opportunities, and the campus before school starts. All students are invited to most events – including graduate students. This is a great chance to make new friends and begin to get acquainted with American Culture. There are events every day for all interest areas. Events include picnics, dances, parties, and FREE food. The First Fifty Days are additional events that include university traditions such as Round-Up, Movies on the Lawn, and Homecoming.

ii. Personal Matters

a. Set up a bank account – There are many options for banking. Here are three that are convenient and close to the campus:

1. USF Federal Credit Union is located on-campus with a branch inside the Marshall Student Center. They have many services, including checking and savings accounts, loans, and a low annual rate for credit card subscribers. You do not need an SSN to open an account. They may ask for a proof of residence when opening an account. Your lease agreement can be used for this proof. Membership is a small fee. For more information, contact the USF Credit Union 813-569-2000 or visit http://creditunion.usf.edu/

2. Bank of America has a branch on Fowler Avenue that can be reached using the BullRunner. They have a Student Checking Account, which has no monthly charge if you are under the age of 24. They offer options for money transfers and students may also get a credit card with no annual fee. For locations go to their branch locator.

3. Chase Bank is located on Fletcher close to campus. They offer multiple languages at their ATM. You need an SSN to open an account. For the Closest branch: CHASE bank locator

b. Arrange to pay the tuition bill – Your USF bill is due each semester by the end of the first week (add/drop week). Failure to pay the bill in full will result in late charges and loss of access to some USF services. See the Student Financial Services page for payment deadlines, payment options, and more.
c. **Shopping List** – Below are items that you may need when you move into your housing.

### Bedding
- Bedbug-protecting mattress cover
- Duvet/duvet cover or comforter
- Mattress pad
- Pillows/Pillowcases
- Sheets **(check the size of your bed by contacting your residence hall or apartment complex)**

### Laundry
- Laundry detergent
- Bleach
- Drying rack
- Iron & Ironing board
- Laundry hamper or bag
- Quarters (for washer/dryer)
- Stain remover

### Kitchen Supplies
- Bottle opener
- Broom/Dustpan
- Can opener
- Dish towels
- Dishes (bowls, plates, cups)
- Utensils
- Dishwashing soap/Hand soap
- Disinfecting wipes
- Duster
- Glass cleaner
- Oven mitt
- Paper towels
- Plastic wrap & Tinfoil
- Sealable plastic bags
- Sponges
- Trash bags

### Bathroom
- Air freshener
- Towels & washcloths
- Bathroom rug
- Shower curtain and rings (if needed)
- Cleaning supplies (i.e. rubber gloves, shower cleaner, toilet brush, toilet cleaner)
- Shower mat
- Shower organizer

### Toiletries/Products
- Antibacterial gel
- Bar soap
- Body wash
- Deodorant
- Lotion
- Moisturizer
- Mouthwash
- Shampoo & Conditioner
- Shaving Cream
- Sunscreen
- Toothpaste

### Toiletries/Supplies
- Hairbrush
- Nail clippers
- Razor
- Tissues
- Toilet paper
- Toothbrush
- Tweezers

### Medical
- Allergy medicine
- Aloe lotion
- Antiseptic wipes
- Bandages
- Cold and flu medicine
- Cortisone cream
- Decongestant
- Eye drops
- First aid kit
- Hot and cold packs
- Insect repellent
- Multivitamins
- Over-the-counter pain medication
- Rubbing alcohol
- Supplements (iron pills, etc.)
- Thermometer
- Throat spray
- Upset stomach medication
- Vaseline

### Miscellaneous
- Batteries
- Flashlight
- Cooler
Other Helpful Hints:

i. Transportation Options
   1. The USF bus system is called the Bull Runner. Students and scholars can ride for free with a valid USF ID Card. It is very convenient and goes to most apartment complexes and shopping. See the map for routes and hours.

   2. HART (Hillsborough Area Regional Transit) – The HART buses take students almost everywhere in Tampa, including downtown for FREE with your USF ID (faculty/staff/scholars must pay $.50 per trip).

   3. In addition to Uber and Lyft, you can call traditional cab services - http://www.yellowcaboftampa.com/

ii. Getting a Cell Phone - When making inquiries, you should ask if there is a special plan for students, if there is a USF discount, and what is needed to set up a service plan. Be aware that some providers require an SSN to conduct a background check. Before purchasing a phone or service plan, be sure to ask about data plans, text plans, and limits on international calls. Below are the popular cell phone providers in the area:

   - T-Mobile
   - Metro PCS
   - AT&T
   - Verizon
   - Sprint

iii. Obtaining a Florida Driver’s License – If you have a driver’s license from your home country, you can go to www.gathergoget.com to get the list of documents that you need to get your Florida driver’s license. If you have never had a driver’s license, you will need to pass a Traffic Law & Substance Abuse Education Course, the written traffic laws and signs test, and the driving test. Go to the official government website for the most current information. You must have completed Document Check to get a Florida Driver’s License since your I-20 or DS-2019 must be in active status at the time of application.

iv. Things to Do in Tampa – See the TAMPA BAY GUIDE for comprehensive information on things to do in and around Tampa Bay. List of popular options:

   - Beaches
   - Ybor City
   - Busch Gardens
   - Adventure Island
   - Lowry Park Zoo
   - Florida Aquarium
   - Tampa Museum of Art
   - Tampa Bay History Center
   - Pirate Water Taxi
   - USF Riverfront Park

v. Ethnic Grocery Stores Near USF

   - House of Spices (Indian)
   - MD Oriental Market (Asian Market)
   - A-Green Supermarket (Korean)
   - Al-Aqsa (Middle Eastern)
   - Apna Bazaar
   - Patel Brothers
   - Caribbean Trade & Grocery