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UNIVERSITY SERVICES FOR INTERNATIONAL SCHOLAR AND STUDENTS

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

UAB is a research university and academic health center that discovers, teaches and applies knowledge for the intellectual, cultural, social and economic benefit of Birmingham, the state and beyond.

UAB encompasses 82 city blocks and has a student enrollment of more than 17,000. UAB also is home to a large graduate school, a world-renowned health care complex and more than 70 research centers, focusing on such diverse issues as AIDS vaccines and aging to the environment, urban affairs, and telecommunications.

UAB also offers numerous programs and services that enhance student education, including the Co-op Program, Study Abroad, Career Center and academic support services. With the City of Birmingham in their back yard, UAB students have enormous opportunity for internships, jobs and valuable hands-on experience. There are more than 200 organizations on campus ranging from academic clubs and volunteer groups to fraternities, sororities and special interest groups.

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

With best wishes,

International Scholar and Student Services

250 Hill University Center
1400 University Boulevard
Birmingham, AL 35294-1150
Phone (205) 934-3328
Fax (205) 934-8664
Email: isss@uab.edu

International Scholar and Student Services (ISSS) is an administrative unit of the University of Alabama at Birmingham responsible for assisting the international scholar and student community. ISSS provides a wide array of services and programs to meet the unique needs of the international community. Some of the services provided include:
Immigration and non-resident alien tax services are available to international faculty, staff and students. ISSS staff provides advice to UAB faculty and administration on the enrollment and hiring of foreign nationals.

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

Notary Public service is available for authentication of foreign credentials.

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

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

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

Smolian International House

1600 Tenth Avenue South
Birmingham, Alabama 35294-1280
Phone: (205) 934-1205
Fax: (205) 975-3226
Email: Ihouse@uab.edu

The UAB Smolian International House offers a variety of services and activities for international students/scholars and their dependents. It provides a central focal point for programs and activities designed to foster a free exchange of information and international understanding. In addition, the house provides temporary housing for UAB internationals making the transition to and from the Birmingham community. The UAB Smolian International House is open from 9AM to 10PM, Monday through Friday, and 12:00 Noon to 10PM on Saturday and Sunday.

Events and activities include Conversational English Classes, Foreign Language Classes, Dance Parties, Cultural Evenings, Sports Tournaments, Free Friday Lunches, International Women’s Group, Friendship Partners Program, Culture Camp for Children, Fall BBQ, International Festival and much more. Contact the Smolian International House for a current list of activities.
English Language Training Services

The English Language and Culture Institute offers several options for English language study, as well as opportunities for studying cross-cultural communication. Part-time courses allow adult students to choose which course would best meet their needs and their schedule. Intensive short-term programs provide an opportunity to improve specific skills over a brief period of time.

For more information on English Language Training Services or to discuss your specific language-learning situation, send an email to elci@uab.edu or call 205-975-6628.

The Graduate School’s Professional Development Program offers courses to augment traditional graduate studies covering topics including communication, presentation, and writing. Many of these courses are specifically designed for non-native English speakers. Graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty members, and researchers are all eligible to enroll. Additional information is available at www.uab.edu/profdev.

Conversational English Classes

Conversational English Classes are available free of charge throughout the Birmingham area in order to improve English language usage. Instructors are volunteers from the community. For current class schedules, contact each organization individually. Some locations offer transportation and childcare. Lessons at church locations may be religious in content. For a listing of community-based conversational classes, call 205-934-1205.

International Women’s Group

Women from around the world meet on Tuesday mornings (10:00AM – 12:00Noon) at the UAB Smolian International House for friendship and fun. The group enjoys excursions to local points of interest as well as informal coffees. Ideas are exchanged and lasting friendships are made. The International Women’s group is open to all. Children are welcome. Call (205) 934-1205 for more information and a monthly schedule.

Friendship Partners Program

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

Student life at UAB offers each individual something uniquely suited to his or her interests. Events ranging from relaxing at free movies or comedy shows to the rigors of rappelling down a cliff or hiking the Grand Canyon in Arizona are available. Each academic term brings new events and new adventures, with chances to make new friends, socialize and have a good time. Regardless of the activity, get involved! Gain the UAB experience by taking an active role in campus life. For information on student activities, call 934-4175 or refer to the student life section of students.uab.edu.

Career Services

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

Services and programs include:

- A web page listing full-time and part-time jobs
- Individual career and job search counseling
- Interest, personality, and values assessments
- A career library filled with occupational information and job search resources
- Seminars and conferences covering a wide range of career management topics
- Career fairs
- On-line resume referral service
- On-campus interview program

For additional information visit the career services website at careerservices.uab.edu.

UAB Career Center has two locations on campus:

Central Office  Branch Office
532 Hill University Center  303 Business-Engineering Complex
Phone: 934-4470  Phone: 934-9202
Email: CareerServices@uab.edu

Study Abroad Programs

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

All international students and scholars are subject to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service rules and regulations regarding travel, as well as any visa requirements.
UAB Study Abroad is committed to helping students acquire skills, knowledge, and perspectives that empower them to live and work effectively in a multicultural world. Most UAB students who study abroad choose from the short-term study abroad/exchange programs offered by UAB. Other programs sponsored by other universities may also be accessed.

Additional information may be obtained from Academic Programs and Policy Office, HUC 470, (205) 975-6611.

**Exchange Programs**

Exchange program opportunities are available to international students. Exchange programs enable students to study overseas for up to a full academic year. The Academic Advisor of the respective student provides academic and administrative support. The international student offices on the host campus provide corresponding academic and administrative support. Participants usually live and study with students of the host country. Some programs require fluency in another language.

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

Students interested in exchange program opportunities and related questions should contact the Academic Programs and Policy Office, HUC 470, (205) 975-6611.

**Campus Health Services**

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

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

Information concerning enrollment in these services is provided during the international student and visiting scholar orientation programs. All nonimmigrant students and visiting scholars are required to pay a service fee to Student Health, as well as purchase the hospitalization insurance policy.
Specific information concerning the services provided by Student Health is found in the Medical Center Student Health Services booklet. Please read this booklet carefully. International students and scholars who are sick should not hesitate to seek help from the Student Health Service. Students and scholars that have difficulty understanding anything about medical status or treatment, should ask the nurse or doctor for clarification.

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

Scholarships

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

Financial Assistance

Undergraduate Students

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

Graduate Students

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

LIVING IN BIRMINGHAM

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

Alabama Climate

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

Range of average temperatures:

- January: 42 Degrees F (6 Degrees C)
- April: 63 Degrees F (17 Degrees C)
- July: 90 Degrees F (37 Degrees C)
- November: 52 Degrees F (11 Degrees C)

During summer there is an average 51.8 days above 90 Degrees F

Stores and Shopping

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

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

Grocery Stores

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

Drugstore/Pharmacy

Drugstores are the only stores that are licensed to sell prescription pharmaceutical products. Doctors' prescriptions can be filled at a drugstore or at the Student Health Service. Drugstores also have a large selection of cosmetics, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, periodicals, household medicines, greeting cards, photographic film and sundry items.
Department Stores

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

Second-hand Stores

These are stores that receive and then sell used merchandise/goods. These are things that are not new, such as books, clothing, furniture, etc.

Furnishing an Apartment

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

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

Attractions/Recreation

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

The Smolian International House is an excellent resource for the international scholars and students for many social, educational, and recreational events. You may check the website for monthly calendars at www.uab.edu/issss or contact the Smolian International House at 934-1205 for more details.
Restaurants and Dining – Walking Distance

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

Accommodations

UAB Student Housing and Residential Life

UAB maintains a limited number of furnished (includes furniture and appliances) apartments for students. There is no family housing available at UAB. The communities that comprise Student Housing include two apartment style residence halls (Denman Hall and Camp Hall), two suite-style residence halls (Rast Hall and Blount Hall), and a new freshman only residence hall (Blazer Hall). Student Housing is centrally located and within walking distance to all main campus classroom buildings, libraries and the Medical Center. Contact UAB Student Housing for application requirements and room rates.

UAB Student Housing
Denman Hall
1604 9th Avenue South
(205) 934-2092
StudentHousing@uab.edu

Off-Campus Apartment Housing

There are a variety of types of housing for rent in the Birmingham area, many of which are apartment complexes. Most apartments require a one-year lease; however, at times the manager will consider a partial year lease. Contact individual leasing companies to inquire about room availability, cost and leasing agreements. Contact numbers are usually indicated on the exterior wall of individual apartment buildings. Several local companies are able to assist with locating off-campus housing. Consult the yellow pages in the telephone directory or Internet for specific information. Notices of apartment rentals and requests for roommates are posted on the bulletin board in the Smolian International House and are listed in the campus newspapers as well as the classified section of local newspapers.

Questions to Ask Before Renting an Apartment:

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

When Leasing An Apartment:

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

Schools

Pre-Schools/Childcare

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

Public Schools

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

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

Homewood City Schools
7 Hollywood Boulevard
Private Schools

Children who wish to attend a private school where tuition is charged, may contact individual schools to inquire about registration. Information on private schools in Alabama is available at www.privateschoolreview.com/state_private_schools/stateid/AL.

Selecting a Good Child Care Program

Parents have the right and the responsibility to make careful choices - to be good consumers of childcare. It is particularly important that parents are informed consumers and take the time to evaluate childcare options carefully. We recommend that you visit more than one program before making a decision. Take your child with you to meet the provider. Observe the facility when children are present. Visit the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care website NRC.uchs.edu/STATES/AL/Alabama.html to evaluate information to assist in making an informed decision on your child's childcare needs.
Churches, Synagogues and Places of Worship

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

Bookstores

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

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

The list of bookstores in the Birmingham area can be found in the local yellow pages of the telephone directory.

There are three bookstores on or near the university campus. These bookstores sell textbooks in addition to the listing of books described in the above paragraphs. The locations of these bookstores are:

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

Text Mart
1027 11th Place South
Birmingham, AL 35205

Snoozy’s College Bookstore
1321 10th Avenue South
Birmingham, AL 35205
Phone (328-2665)

Telephone

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

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

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

Utilities

The University provides all utilities except telephone service (see Telephone) and cable TV in all residence halls. Off-campus arrangements for utility services may be arranged through the same contacts and procedures in accordance with your lease agreement, and in consultation with the applicable landlord or apartment rental office.

To install these utilities:

1. GAS: Contact ALABAMA GAS CORP. (326-8200) for installation of gas service. A contract and a deposit are required. Address: 20 South 20th Street.
2. ELECTRICITY: Contact ALABAMA POWER COMPANY (252-9115) for installation of service. A deposit is required and a connecting charge is added to the first bill. Address: 600 North 18th Street.
3. CABLE TV: Contact MEDIA WORKS. Residents MUST be at home to let a cable representative into the Residence Hall. If off-campus, contact the local service provider.
4. WATER: Contact WATER WORKS BOARD OF BIRMINGHAM (251-5634) for installation of service. Address: 3600 1st Avenue North.

U. S. Postal Service

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

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

Stamps can also be purchased at the UAB Ticket Office in the Blazer Bookstore.

Zip codes are very important in the United States and abroad as well. Use of the zip code facilitates and expedites the processing of mail. Omission of the zip code will delay the
movement and arrival of mail. In addition to the U.S. Postal Service, packages and large cartons can be shipped by Federal Express or the United Parcel Service (UPS) to almost every city in the United States.

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

Electronic Mail

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

Other Communication Services

Facsimile (FAX) facilities are available at the Central Support Building (1530 3rd Avenue South, 2nd floor) or at the UAB Blazer Bookstore. They are open weekdays from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. There is a charge for faxing. Call 975-5652 for pricing.

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

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

Ground Transportation

Local Public Transportation

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

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

Fare: Exact fare required. Fare boxes will accept bills, but do not make change. For information on special fares for students and children, please call public information at (205) 521-0101. There is no fare for the DART.

Local Taxi Transportation

Service is limited. Refer to the local yellow pages in your telephone directory.
Applying for an Alabama Driver’s License

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

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

Effective November 1, 2005, the Department of Public Safety is responsible for the original (first time) issuance of a Driver’s License and Non-Driver Identification. Learner’s permits are issued at the Trooper’s Station listed below.

Persons moving to Alabama will need to apply for an Alabama Driver’s License. They must surrender their out-of-state license in order to get an Alabama Driver’s License. Other rules may apply – you should contact the Drivers License Office or visit the Alabama Department of Public Safety Website at www.dps.state.al.us/public/driverlicense. A person is granted 90 days to request a State of Alabama driver’s license after moving into the State.

There is only one location in Birmingham where one may apply for an Alabama driver’s license:

Alabama Department of Public Safety
908 Bankhead Highway West, Room 308
Birmingham, AL 35204
205-252-7445

You may renew your Alabama driver’s license at:

813 Green Springs Highway
Homewood, AL 35209
205-916-2720

Written and road exams are offered Monday through Friday 8:00AM to 11:00AM and 1:00PM to 4:00PM. Individuals will be required to take a written exam and a road exam.
The written exam is provided in a variety of languages and can be taken as many times as necessary to successfully pass the exam. The fee for the Alabama driver’s license is $24.50 in cash or a check payable on an Alabama bank.

Everyone should study for the written exam. A copy of the Alabama Driver’s License Study Booklet can be found at www.dps.state.al.us.

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

Bring the following items when applying for the Alabama driver’s license: Passport, form I-94 card, the specific immigration documents (i.e., DS-2019, I-20, or approval notices for H, O, TN, or TD), and a Social Security Card or Social Security denial letter.

Applicants for a driver’s license are not required to have a social security number. However, individuals should go to the Social Security Administration and obtain a letter verifying that they are not eligible for a social security number. This letter should be presented to the staff at the Alabama Driver’s License office. If the individual cannot convince the officer to accept the explanation, ask to see a supervisor. If a supervisor is not available, contact the ISSS at 934-3328 from a pay phone in the lobby.

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

**Alabama Identification Card**

This document is used solely for identification purposes. This card is not valid for driving purposes. The cost of this document is $24.25 in cash or a check payable on an Alabama bank account. The Alabama identification card is issued at the same locations as the driver’s license.

**Buying A Used or Previously Owned Car**

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

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

Used Car Dealer

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

Private Owner

Some individuals choose to sell their car rather than selling through a car dealer. It is a good idea to test-drive the car. Pay attention to how the car handles. Listen for any noises. Take the car to a mechanic for a complete inspection. Upon purchasing a car, be sure to obtain the car title to prove legal ownership of the vehicle. Particular attention should be given to the questions listed below.

Questions to Ask Before Buying a Used Car

What is the car’s condition?
What is the mileage?
Has it ever been in an accident?
Why are you selling the car?
Has the car been serviced regularly (i.e., oil change, transmission, rotation and alignment of tires)?

Problems to Look for When Buying a Used Car

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

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

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

Tires – Check for uneven tire wear, which can indicate alignment problems. Examine the trunk and spare tire equipment to ensure all necessary parts are there.
Interior – Be sure to check the window controls, safety belts, seat adjusters, warning lights, wipers, washers, radio, heater and air conditioner.

**Motor Vehicle Titles (Jefferson County Revenue Department)**

**General Information (proof of ownership)**

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

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

**Vehicle Registration**

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

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

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

Jefferson County Courthouse  
A-100 North Annex  
716 North 21st Street  
Birmingham, AL 35263  
Inspections: Vehicles should be parked in the Jefferson County Parking Deck on 21st Street between 7th and 8th Avenues. Large vehicles can be parked on 8th Avenue in front of the Art Museum.  
Phone: (205) 325-5198; Fax: (205) 325-5974

Bessemer Courthouse, Room 109  
1801 3rd Avenue  
Bessemer, AL 35020  
Inspections: Vehicles should be parked in designated vehicle inspection parking spaces on 18th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenue.  
Phone: (205) 481-4110; Fax: (205) 481-4113

Center Point Satellite  
2651 Center Point Road  
Birmingham, AL 35215  
Inspections: Vehicles should be parked in designated vehicle inspection spaces on the right side of the building.  
Phone: (205) 856-8815; Fax: (205) 856-8809

Southern Satellite  
813 Greensprings Highway  
Homewood, AL 35209  
Inspections: Vehicles should be parked as near as possible to the front entrance of the building.  
Phone: (205) 916-2707; Fax: (205) 916-2721

Car/Auto Insurance

Alabama laws require every vehicle to have liability insurance. “This requirement affects automobiles, pickups, trucks, motorcycles, motor homes, and other self-propelled vehicles. Persons operating motor vehicles must also carry evidence of liability insurance coverage. Anyone failing or refusing to provide proof of insurance upon the
request of law enforcement will be subject to a Class C misdemeanor, with a fine up to $500 for the first conviction and $1000 and/or suspension of the driver’s license for up to six months for each subsequent conviction”.

There are many insurance companies, and it is best to check with as many as possible to receive the best price/coverage. Prices depend on age, previous accidents, and the automobile. Liability insurance is designed to offer specific protection against a third party; it will not take care of any damages to your own vehicle. Therefore, if you are going to invest in an automobile; full insurance is strongly recommended.

**Bicycle Regulations**

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

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

**Banking Services**

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

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

Banks require certain information before they will open an account. Individuals will be asked to provide photo identification, some personal data, a mailing address, and money to deposit. Banks also will request a Social Security Number (SSN) to be used to report earnings to the federal tax authority, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). It is advisable to obtain a Social Security Number as early as possible in order to open a bank account. Banks accept an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) obtained from the IRS if you are not eligible for a Social Security Number.

Checking Account

A checking account safeguards an individual's money while allowing for easy payment of expenses. Some banks require their customers to maintain a minimum balance of funds in their checking accounts. Virtually all checking accounts may be accessed using a plastic ATM card. The card is issued by the bank and may be used together with a personal identification number (PIN) to withdraw cash and make deposits at special banking machines. To avoid being fined, do not write a check or withdraw more money than is available in the account. When writing checks, leave no areas blank. Individuals should not write or endorse a check for cash until inside the bank.

Savings Account

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

NOW Accounts

Many banks offer NOW (notice of withdrawal) accounts that combine the features of checking and savings accounts. With a NOW account, the individual may write a certain number of checks each month; such accounts can be very handy for students who maintain a relatively high balance and write relatively few checks.

Credit Cards

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

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

U.S. SYSTEM OF EDUCATION AND UAB

Post-Secondary Education

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

In the U.S., each individual state regulates academic institutions within its borders. These institutions are accredited by private, non-governmental agencies. What does accreditation mean? It implies that a given institution has been investigated by a team of experts and has met the minimum requirements of the accrediting agencies. UAB is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Many academic programs have additional accreditation from organizations appropriate to the particular academic discipline.

Schools/Colleges/Universities

In many countries of the world, a college is a secondary school and is very different from a university. Words like “school”, “college” and “university” are often used in other countries with distinct meanings. These words might even signify different levels of education. In the U.S. these words are used interchangeably. An example would be a question like, “where do you go to school?” In this case, the objective is to know what university you are attending. Universities are often divided up into sections called “colleges” or “schools.” UAB is divided into 12 schools, which includes the School of Business, the School of Engineering, the School of Health Related Professions, etc. Upon completion of studies, UAB awards the actual degree, rather than a specific school or department.

Post Secondary Institutions

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

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

**Relationship Between Students and Advisors**

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

In many countries, students have a fixed study load that they have to follow without deviation. They usually do not need to interact with any individual in the position of an academic advisor. Students have to keep track of their own studies and academic matters.

Interaction with an advisor is an essential part of a student’s academic life in the U.S. Any student who comes to UAB is assigned an academic advisor. This advisor keeps “records” on the student and checks periodically on a student’s academic progress. These records detail the student’s academic well-being in relation to the student’s grades and how the student is progressing in his/her studies. The advisor is also responsible for assisting students in the selection of classes which will help them to complete their required and desired course load.

**Relationship Between Students and Faculty**

The relationship between students and faculty in the U.S. is more informal than in many other countries. Faculty members have a greater interaction with students both in and out of class. Teachers in the U.S. are also required to hold “office hours,” a specific number of hours in a week in which a student may discuss his/her problems. If a student is uncomfortable asking questions about course work in class, these office hours can be very helpful. Teachers can then take into consideration the limitations of students and act accordingly.

The U.S. classroom atmosphere is much more casual than in most cultures. Sometimes, students are allowed to carry food and drinks into the classroom to serve the needs of a mobile American society. This contrasts sharply with countries where students are not allowed to do anything in class except study.

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

**Credit/Semester/Quarter Hours**

An academic year in the U.S. is divided into either Semesters or Quarters. A semester is a 15 week study period in which students attend one class three times a week for 50 minutes or twice a week for one hour and fifteen minutes. Students receive 3-4 credit hours for attending a class throughout the semester. There are 2 semesters in a year. Summer term is classified as a semester but is broken down into several different sessions: 12 week, 9 week, or 6 week A and B sessions.

At UAB, the Semester system is used. The usual undergraduate workload for a semester is 12 credit hours. At the graduate level, students take 9 credit hours for a semester. These are the required minimum number of hours to classify a student as full-time. Some academic programs may require more than the minimum to fulfill their program requirements. Students attending classes adding up to fewer credit hours than mentioned above do not fall into the full-time student category. Credit hours are a confusing concept for international students, as this notion is not prevalent in many countries. In most academic programs, a student has to complete 120 credit hours to obtain an undergraduate degree and 33-36 credit hours to complete a graduate degree.

**Major, Minor, Core, and Electives**

In many countries students attending universities usually have a year-long course load with predefined courses to take. The U.S. offers a more flexible path. The average four-year undergraduate study period is divided into these classifications:

**Major** - As the name implies, this is the major concentration of a student’s workload. It is usually the academic field in which the student decides he or she would like to specialize. The major is also a stepping stone for a master’s degree.

**Minor** - This classification enhances and facilitates the major field of study. Students taking a specific major would usually minor in a field that will help them to gain a better understanding of their major. Sometimes, students select a minor in a field that stimulates their interest but does not relate to their major.

**Core** - These are the courses which students are **required** to take. These courses are usually not related to a student’s major or minor but are necessary to attain a degree. In essence, these are the predefined courses which a student has to follow. In the State of Alabama, the core courses have been standardized. All the public universities have been provided with a set of core requirements that are identical.

**Elective** - These are courses chosen by the student to complete the number of hours required for a student to graduate with a degree. Electives allow students to pursue their hobbies or other interests, or build on the material they have learned in prerequisite classes for their major.
Grade Point Average (GPA)

Another confusing concept is that of the GPA. Most countries calculate letter grades based on calculating percentages and then assigning a letter grade for appropriate categories. In the United States, the concept of the GPA is based on the number of credit hours attempted and the grades achieved for those hours. The grades are generally based on percentages: 90% = A, 80% = B, 70% = C, 60% = D; below 60% = F. Each letter grade is provided a specific number of points. A = 4; B = 3; C = 2; D = 1; F = 0. The GPA is calculated based on the points above and the credit hours. The GPA is the ratio of the total accumulated points from the above scale and the total number of classes taken.

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

For example, a student taking 10 classes of 3 credit hours each, receives 7 A’s, 1 B, 1 C, and 1 D. Then his GPA will be:

\[
\text{GPA} = \frac{7\times4 + 1\times3 + 1\times2 + 1\times1}{0} = 3.4
\]

Tests and Quizzes

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

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

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

Oral Presentations

Some teachers require students to give oral presentations. A student is expected to give an oral presentation on a specific subject (often determined by the teacher) in front of the other class member. These presentations may be a major percentage of the final grade and require extensive research on the part of the student.
Examination Style – Subjective vs. Objective

Examinations are divided into these basic categories:

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

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

Usually, a combination of examination styles will be used by teachers to determine a student’s final grade in a class.

Research Papers

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

Syllabus

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

Group Projects vs. Plagiarism

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

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

If you are struggling with your coursework, you need to be aware of UAB’s policy regarding Academic Warning/Academic Probation and Academic Suspension. If you are experiencing problems with your classes, seek assistance. Consistent academic warnings and probation can result in Suspension. Please see the UAB Catalog for the most current information about Academic Warnings and Probation. If your Grade Point Average falls below a 2.0 (C) after completing 30 hours of coursework at UAB, then you could be subject to Academic Suspension. A first Suspension results in the inability to attend UAB for one academic term. A second Suspension results in the inability to attend UAB for one academic year. A third Suspension results in permanent dismissal from UAB. Suspensions also impact your immigration status. For a detailed explanation regarding this policy, consult the UAB Catalog and talk to your Academic Advisor.

Don’t wait until the problem becomes severe.

Inform your academic advisor of your weak areas
Consult with the professor of the classes in which you are having trouble
Utilize the English Writing Lab, Math Lab, and any tutoring available
Get a study buddy in your class
Take a cassette recorder to your classes; ask professor if you can tape the classes
Take advantage of the Study Skills Seminars available (see Veteran Affairs HUC 504)
Study early; don’t wait until the last minute

AMERICAN CULTURE AND CUSTOMS

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

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

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

Americans often greet each other with a “hi” or “how are you.” This is not a question, but a statement. During introductions people will often shake hands. Embraces or hugs are generally reserved for greeting family members or very close friends.

Appointments

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

Gestures and Nonverbal Communication

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

Hygiene

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

Work Schedules

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

Tipping

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

Dialect

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


IMPORTANT CONCEPTS OF THE U.S. LEGAL SYSTEM
(Source: The International Student Handbook by Allan Wernick)

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

Civil Laws, Courts and Lawyers

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

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

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

Criminal Cases

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

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

Freedom of Speech and Religion

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

Enforcement of Laws

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

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

In Alabama, public safety is enforced by the Alabama State Troopers, various County Sheriffs Offices, municipal police departments, and various police departments/safety offices at large corporations and institutions. At UAB, a police department exists that is pledged to, “supporting UAB’s institutional goals and constantly ensuring a safe, free environment for all campus faculty, staff, students, patients, guests, and visitors.” Their mission and purpose are to protect the UAB community and to prevent crime. The UAB police department is in frequent contact with local, county, and state police officials. Officers may patrol campus on foot, by bicycle, on horseback, or by automobile.
The most effective way NOT to be involved in a criminal situation or to be a victim, though, is to be prepared. UAB is a university located in a large, urban setting. While there is nothing to fear in this setting, it is best to use caution in all situations, especially after dark.

**Personal Safety/Security**

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

**Keys to Protecting People and Belongings**

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

Living in an Apartment/House/Residence Hall
- Lock the outside doors at all times, even when at home.
- Use the peephole (viewer) whenever anyone knocks or rings the bell before opening the door.
- Do not give personal information to strangers at the door.
- Get to know neighbors.
- Do not walk alone after dark.
- If the power and/or gas turns off unexpectedly, call the power and gas companies directly.
- When leaving for an extended length of time, lock the sliding glass doors and the windows.
Weather Conditions
- WBHM (90.3 FM) is UAB'S official radio station which provides updates on weather and announces university closings due to inclement weather.
- If there is bad weather, radio and television stations will broadcast instructions on dealing with the weather (particular weather problems in Birmingham are tornadoes, hurricanes, and flooding).
- In the Birmingham area, sirens will be activated if a tornado is spotted within the vicinity. (Note: these sirens are tested the first Wednesday of every month).

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

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

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

Owning a Bicycle (See Bicycle Regulations Section)
- Lock the bicycle whenever left outside.
- Secure the bicycle to a designated bicycle rack. A bar lock is recommended.

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

When Walking To Errands
• Do not carry money in the view of others.
• Be aware of other individuals and areas when walking.

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

On Campus Emergencies  934-3535
Birmingham Police    328-9311
Escort Service        934-4357
M.A.R.S. –Motorist Assistance  975-6277

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

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

Students and scholars applying for a Social Security Number should drive to the following address:

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

Students and scholars should take the following documents: a letter of eligibility from ISSS, proof of offer of employment, passport, I-94 card, and their immigration document (i.e., DS-2019, I-20, or approval notice for H-1B, TN or O). J-2 dependents must take their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card. F and J students must ask an
immigration advisor to complete a letter that verifies the student is eligible to obtain a SSN. J-1 scholars need a similar letter from ISSS.

Individuals will be required to complete an application form and show the documents listed above for identification purposes. The Social Security Administration will review and return the documents. If the application is accepted, it will take approximately 2-4 weeks to receive the Social Security card in the mail. If the application is not accepted, ask to speak with a supervisor. If a supervisor is not available, call International Scholar and Student Services (934-3328) from the pay phone located in the lobby.

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

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

TAXATION

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

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

Tax Status

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

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

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

**Federal Income Tax**

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

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

**State Income Tax**

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

**Local Tax**

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

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

State Income Tax Filing

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

Local Income Tax Filing

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

Assistance with Income Tax Filing

To assist international students, scholars, and their dependents with their federal and state income tax filing responsibilities, the ISSS offers free assistance in the preparation of the federal and state tax forms. This service is entitled the “UAB Nonresident Alien Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (UAB NRA VITA) Program”. This tax assistance service is offered by ISSS each year during the months of February through April to those international individuals who are classified as non-resident aliens for tax purposes. Those international individuals who are resident aliens for tax purposes with no tax treaty benefits cannot be assisted at the UAB NRA VITA Service. They can receive assistance from other free local VITA programs or from professional tax accountants.

IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS

All foreign students and scholars who have entered the U.S. on nonimmigrant visas are subject to federal regulations that do not affect U.S. citizens or permanent residents. It is extremely important that these individuals are well informed about the specific regulations pertaining to their status. These regulations affect foreign students and scholars and their families in areas such as taxes, employment, study and travel. When in doubt, ask the ISSS staff for advice.
The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) has placed the burden of responsibility on the foreign national to know the limits of their nonimmigrant status. Listed below are some general requirements for all nonimmigrants:

- Nonimmigrants enter the U.S. for a temporary period of time and are restricted to the activity consistent with their visas. The most important documents in their possession are the passport, the Form I-94, and their particular immigration document (I-20, DS-2019, H, O, or TN approval notice). These documents should be kept in a safe place where they can be accessed, if needed.

- Generally, nonimmigrants must demonstrate that their stay in the U.S. is temporary.

- Nonimmigrants must maintain a valid passport.

- Nonimmigrants cannot hold more than one nonimmigrant status at a time.

- Nonimmigrants must be participating in activities that are consistent with the specific immigration status they currently hold.

- All nonimmigrants and immigrants (permanent residents) are required to notify the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service of their change of address within ten days of such change on Form AR-11.

**Visa**

A visa is a multicolored stamp placed on one of the passport pages by the U.S. Embassy or Consulate which gives permission to enter the U.S. at a port-of-entry (POE). The visa is presented along with the appropriate document (i.e., I-20, DS-2019, H approval notice, etc.) to an immigration officer. At the inspection, the immigration officer marks the immigration status on the Form I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record). Once admitted to the U.S., nonimmigrants are not required to maintain a valid visa stamp.

**Immigration Status**

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

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

Duration of Status (D/S) is defined by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as that period in which an F-1 student “is pursuing a full course of study at an educational institution approved by USCIS for attendance by foreign students, or engaging in authorized practical training following completion of studies, plus 60 days to prepare for departure from the U.S.”
J-1 exchange visitors are also admitted with the “D/S” notation and may remain in the U.S. as long as they maintain J-1 status through the program end date on the form DS-2019, plus 30 days.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

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

USCIS
Texas Service Center
P.O. Box 851488
Mesquite, TX  75185-1488

All applications for employment-based immigrant petitions will be processed or reviewed by ISSS and sent to the appropriate USCIS service center.

The Atlanta District office is open to the public Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., except for federal holidays. The district office is very limited on the types of applications they will process. All visitors must have a scheduled appointment with the Atlanta District Office. Appointments can be scheduled through INFOPASS at www.uscis.gov. Please contact the ISSS staff prior to visiting Atlanta.

USCIS
Atlanta District Office
77 Forsyth Street S.W.
Atlanta, GA  30303

SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System)

SEVIS is a national tracking system mandated by Congress to monitor F-1 students and J-1 exchange visitors. SEVIS provides the U.S. government with access to accurate and current information on nonimmigrant students (F and M visa) and exchange visitors (J visa) for tracking and monitoring purposes. SEVIS enables schools and program sponsors to transmit electronic information and event notifications, via the Internet, to the USCIS and the Department of State throughout a student or exchange visitor’s stay in the U.S. SEVIS is directed by the USCIS in partnership with the Department of State and the Department of Education (Source: www.uscis.gov).

Important Documents

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

I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record)

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

DS-2019: Certificate of Eligibility for J-1 Exchange Visitors
I-20: Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1/F-2/M-1/M-2) Student
I-797: INS Notice of Action indicating approval of a specific immigration status.

J-1 Exchange Visitors

The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program has been an important component of U.S. immigration law for over 50 years. Legislation enacted by Congress in 1948 and 1961 directed the executive branch to facilitate and promote exchanges. Under INA § 101 (a) (15)(J), an individual may enter the U.S. in J-1 status if he or she is a "bona fide student, scholar, trainee, teacher, professor, research assistant, specialist, or leader in a field of specialized knowledge or skill, or other person of similar description." The visitor must come to the U.S. temporarily in a program designated by the United States Department of State (DOS) for "teaching, instructing or lecturing, studying, observing, conducting research, consulting, demonstrating special skills, or receiving training."

J-1 Professors and Research Scholars

The University of Alabama at Birmingham is host to approximately 500 professors and research scholars classified within the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. International Scholar and Student Services (ISSS) provides comprehensive programming, immigration advising, orientation and support services for international students and scholars. Professors and Research Scholars should take some time to familiarize themselves with the following information regarding J-1 status.
J-1 Scholar Immigration Issues

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

Maintaining J-1 Scholar Status

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

1. Engage only in activities permitted under the program and the category (refer to Sections #2 and #5 on form DS-2019).
2. File timely and appropriate transfer and extension notifications.
3. Refrain from unauthorized employment.
4. Maintain required health insurance coverage.

Limitations of Stay and Extensions

The form DS-2019 will be issued to J-1 research scholars and professors for the period of the exchange up to a maximum of five years. Extensions beyond five years are not permitted. J-1 short-term scholars are issued a DS-2019 for a maximum of six months.

Permission to stay in the United States expires 30 days after the date shown on item #3 of the DS-2019. The ISSS will contact departments approximately 90 days prior to an exchange visitor's status expiration date. The department will update the form with the requested scholar information and forward to ISSS for processing. ISSS will inform the scholar when the new DS-2019 form is ready. Scholars will need to come to ISSS with their passport to endorse the extension paperwork. Extensions are processed through ISSS only upon a department's request.

Employment

Professors and researchers are permitted to engage in the employment specific to the terms stated on the DS-2019 and may engage in additional employment (see Incidental Employment) as authorized by the sponsor. However, an exchange visitor who engages in unauthorized employment violates his or her program status and is subject to termination as an exchange visitor participant.

Incidental Employment

Research Scholars and Professors may participate in occasional lectures and short-term consultations. These lectures and consultations must be directly related to the scholar's program, must be incidental to the primary program activities, and must not delay completion of the program. To obtain permission to engage in incidental employment, scholars must present the following to ISSS:
1. A letter from the person offering the short-term consultation or lecture stating the terms and conditions of the offer, including the duration, number of hours, field or subject, amount of compensation, and description of the activity; and

2. A letter from the department supervisor recommending this activity and explaining how it would enhance the scholar's program.

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

Transfers to Other J-1 programs

Exchange visitors requesting a transfer of program from another institution to the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) must first have their intended department at UAB forward a Foreign Staff Appointment Form (FSAF) to ISSS. ISSS will contact the responsible officer at the previous institution with a request of permission to transfer. If the previous school grants the transfer, the scholar’s SEVIS record will be transferred to UAB. The scholar will then come to ISSS to endorse the transfer papers. ISSS notifies the Department of State (DOS) of the transfer.

To transfer to another school from UAB, the new scholar should arrange a transfer out “effective” date for their SEVIS record to be transferred to their new institution. This date is usually based on the last date of employment at UAB and should be decided in conjunction with ISSS and the new institution.

Health Insurance

The Department of State (DOS) has mandated through federal regulations that all exchange visitors holding a J-1 visa maintain health insurance coverage for themselves and their dependents. Exchange visitors who “willfully” fail to obtain insurance for themselves and their dependents will be deemed in noncompliance with the insurance requirements and must be terminated from their Exchange Visitor program. Health insurance requirements are as follows:

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

Repatriation Provision:
- $7,500
Medical Evacuation Provision:
- Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in an amount not less than $10,000

Proof of Insurance

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

Non-salaried exchange visitors must prove health insurance by enrolling in the insurance program available at Student Health or by providing documentation of self-insurance to be assessed by Student Health staff. A copy of the health insurance application/card or, if appropriate, waiver of UAB health insurance must be provided to ISSS.

Immunizations

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

Home Country Physical Requirement

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

Employment for J-2 Dependents

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

1. Complete Form I-765 and prepare a letter stating why the employment is desired, indicating the source and amount of support for the J-1 principal participant, and specifically stating that the income derived from employment will not be used for the support of the J-1 Exchange Visitor.
2. Submit the Form I-765 (with fee), two passport style photographs, photocopy of the J-1 principal's I-94, photocopy of the J-2's I-94, photocopy of the J-1 principal's DS-2019, photocopy of the J-2's DS-2019 and photocopies of the biographical information page(s) in both the J-1 and J-2’s passports. The application can then be brought to ISSS for checking and mailing, or mailed
Orientation Resources for Research Scholars and Faculty

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

Researchers

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

General Orientation for Salaried Positions

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

ISSS Orientation

International Scholar and Student Services (ISSS) requires attendance at an orientation program for research scholars and visiting faculty participating on the Exchange Visitor Program. This orientation covers topics such as immigration, health insurance, and other information to assist in the adjustment to the United States. Call ISSS at (205) 934-3328 to make an appointment.

H-1B Temporary Worker Status

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

- Aliens in H-1B status are not subject to a home residency requirement.
- Aliens in H-1B status may only be employed in the U.S. by the firm, organization or institution that files the H-1B petition.
- The position being offered must require, at a minimum, a bachelor’s degree. Further, the alien must have, as a minimum, a degree that’s equivalent to a U.S. bachelor’s degree. A combination of work experience and college education can be used to determine the equivalency requirement.
- The salary for an H-1B must meet the corresponding “prevailing wage determination” made by the State Employment Security Agency.
- Aliens in H-1B status can remain in the U.S. for up to six years. However, the initial request for H-1B status may not exceed three years.
- Any organization offering employment may file an H-1B petition.
- There is a national cap on the number of H-1B petitions that will be approved in any given year. However, universities are exempt from this quota.
- The processing time for an H-1B petition varies based on USCIS backlogs.
- A H-1B petition may be premium processed in about one month for an additional $1,000.

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

Immigrant Petitions

The U.S. Government requires employment authorization for all foreign nationals who are brought into this country to work. Foreign nationals already in this country may work depending upon the visa status they hold. Prior to hiring a foreign nationals in any capacity, the UAB Office of Human Resource Management (HRM) must verify employment authorization. HRM will monitor employment restrictions imposed by the individual’s visa status. The requirements for obtaining employment authorization may be obtained from ISSS. The UAB policy regarding application for an immigrant visa on behalf of a foreign national employee is described below.

Supervisors who propose to support a foreign national for permanent residence status must first request approval from the Department Head. ISSS is available to provide guidance on these procedures, as well as to assist with applying for a permanent employment-based petition.

Seeking the Assistance of an Immigration Attorney

Outside counsel may be retained by the foreign national to assist with filing immigration related applications and petitions, however, outside counsel MAY NOT represent that they are acting on behalf of UAB. Outside counsel must follow established university procedures related to hiring of foreign nationals. All employment-based applications and
petitions must be reviewed by ISSS before submission to the applicable federal government agency.

NAFTA (TN) Status

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

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

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

Obtaining the Mexican TN status is similar to the H-1B process. Consult ISSS staff for details.

F-1/J-1 Student Status

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

Eight Easy Steps to Maintaining Student Status

1. The student must have a valid passport at all times.

2. The student must attend the school which they are authorized to attend. Students that obtain a visa for another school and enter the U.S. on that school’s Form I-20/DS-2019, must attend that school for at least one term before they are eligible to transfer. At UAB, students must check-in with the ISSS before being eligible to transfer out to another school.

3. Carry a full course load.

   Semester System
   Graduate 9 hours per semester
   Undergraduate 12 hours per semester
4. Students must notify an Immigration Advisor if they are unable to complete the degree program by the completion date specified on the I-20 or DS-2019.

5. Students must notify an Immigration Advisor if they change from one educational level to another (e.g., bachelor’s to master’s degree).

6. Students must notify an Immigration Advisor if they intend to transfer to another school.

7. Students are limited to 20 hours per week of on-campus employment while school is in session. During breaks and annual vacation students may work full-time on-campus.

8. DO NOT work off-campus without the proper authorization from USCIS or an Immigration Advisor.

9. Students can only study for one on-line or distance learning class per semester.

10. Students must change their address with ISSS and the UAB Registrar’s Office within 10 days of moving. If the student is working on-campus, they must also change their address within the Oracle Self-Service System.

Maintaining a Full Course of Study

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

- Initial difficulties with the English language
- Initial difficulties with the U.S. academic system
- Improper course level placement
- Preparing for comprehensive examinations
- Doing thesis/dissertation research
- Documented medical reasons
- Student in final semester of study

Note: Financial difficulties or poor academic performance are not valid reasons for dropping below full-time.

Extensions of Stay

Extension of immigration documents must be filed within the thirty days prior to the expiration of the I-20/DS-2019. The expiration dates are located in item 5 of the I-20 and in item 4 of the DS-2019.
To process an extension, students need to obtain an extension form from the ISSS to be completed by their academic advisor. Additionally, new proof of funding will be necessary. Students funded by UAB will need an updated letter explaining the assistantship or scholarship. Students that are supported by personal or family funding are required to provide an updated bank statement or affidavit of financial support. Anyone receiving funding from a sponsoring organization will need to obtain a current letter of support. This extension must be done prior to the expiration of the current document or the student will be considered out-of-status.

School Transfer

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

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

J-1 students should contact ISSS to discuss procedures for transferring to another institution.

Travel Outside the U.S.

F-1 and J-1 students who plan on traveling outside the U.S. should consult with an Immigration Advisor before making travel arrangements. Students complete a form requesting a travel letter. Students needing to apply for a new visa for reentry will need a new I-20 or DS-2019. These students will also need to take their transcript, a letter verifying good standing with the university, and financial verification. Discuss plans for travel with an Immigration Advisor at least two weeks prior to the planned departure.

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

Employment Opportunities for F-1 Students

On-Campus Employment

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

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

Economic Hardship

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

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

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

Curricular Practical Training

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

Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit available to students during their degree or following completion of their coursework requirements. OPT is limited to twelve months of full-time employment. Most students apply for OPT following completion of their degree. Graduate students who have completed their coursework and who are still working on their thesis/dissertation are eligible to apply. It is optional to apply for this employment authorization for work during annual vacation, but students should take note that this period of employment will be subtracted from the 12-month limit.
NOTE: Students may not begin employment until the USCIS has issued their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card.

Employment Opportunities for J-1 Students

There are two types of J-1 student employment authorization. All employment for J-1 students requires approval in writing from a J-1 Responsible Officer (RO) or Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO) prior to beginning employment.

Student Employment

On-Campus

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

Off-Campus

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

Academic Training

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

Employment of J-2 Dependents

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

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

Words and Phrases

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

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

**Biscuit:** a round, unsweetened baked bread.

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

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

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

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

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

**Coke:** short for a popular soft drink, Coca Cola or most any sodas.

**Commode:** a toilet or lavatory.
**Con artist** (also called a confidence trickster): a person with a wonderful, charming, and friendly personality who tricks one into doing something one does not really want to do. Usually a con artist gets money from somebody without the person's knowledge or consent. A con man may also cheat another person or get money from him with his reluctant consent and against his better judgment.

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

**Cool**: 1) pleasant or slightly cold weather. 2) slang expression describing someone as: nice, enjoyable, attractive, fashionable.

**Creek**: a small river.

**Critter**: a little animal.

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

**Diaper**: A cloth placed between the legs of a baby which is not yet toilet trained. In many English speaking countries, a diaper is a “nappy” or a Napkin.”

**Dixie**: A term denoting those states that formed the Confederacy during the American Civil War (1861 – 1865); the Southern states. The term originally referred to New Orleans and derived from Dixie, a $10 bill issued by a New Orleans bank. The bill carried the notation dix, from the French word for ten.

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

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

**Fake**: unreal, imitation, or to pretend.

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

**Favors somebody**: Looks like somebody.

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

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

**Flashlight**: A battery-powered light held in the hand. (British – torch)

**Flat**: a rubber car tire from which the air has escaped.
Gas station (or “filling” station): A place where gasoline can be bought.

“Get” somebody: To transport somebody from one place to another; take revenge on somebody.

Good ole boy or girl: Southern male stereotype that refers to a specific type of Southern man/girl who is a sensible, simple, hard-working man/woman who usually grew up in a rural area and prefers to live there.

Grits: A well-known Southern breakfast cereal made from corn and eaten with salt and butter with eggs, bacon, and sausage.

Guts: Literally, intestines; slang for courage.

Hi: Informal way of saying “hello.”

Holler: 1) to shout or yell. 2) A cove or isolated valley in the country.

Hood: The bonnet of a car, the cover that protects the engine.

How y’all doin’? How is your life and that of your family? This does not mean you should respond with a list of your health problems. You simple say “just fine, thank you.”

Howdy: Very informal way of saying “hello.”

Hush puppies: A ball of cornmeal about an inch in diameter deep fried in oil and eaten with fried fish.

Lavatory: A hand basin or sink; not a toilet as in parts of Europe and Britain.

Napkin: A cloth used at the table for protecting one’s clothes from spilt food and for wiping one’s mouth. This is known in some parts of the world as a “serviette.”

Neat: 1) tidy, in order. 2) Very good, enjoyable.

Okay (O.K.): Yes, everything is just fine.

Panhandler: A beggar on the street who usually asks for money.

Phony: Unreal, insincere, pretense.

Pick-pocket: A thief who steals a wallet or any other valuable item from someone’s clothing, purse, or bag.
Purdy: Pretty.

Rain check: A voucher given by a store clerk to be used to purchase an advertised sale item that is not in stock and which must be ordered. Also a term used when one cannot accept an invitation or offer at the moment, but would like to be asked again in the future.

Redneck: Usually a Southern man who has a disdain for education for himself and his children, for cultural activities, formal clothing, and fancy homes. A redneck often has racial prejudices and will be threatening, at times, to people of another race.

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

Rip off: An item or activity priced too high or of inferior quality.

Scam: An illegal trick used to cheat someone out of money or other possessions.

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

Steal: “A steal” is a bargain; good value for little money; also a verb.

Toilet: A room that accommodates a sanitation receptacle called a commode.

Trunk of a car: The separate compartment where the luggage is placed at the rear of the car away from the passenger area (British – boot).

Uncool: Unattractive, ugly, unfashionable; used primarily by young people.

Utilities: Services such as electricity, natural gas, and water. Some rental fees include utilities, others do not. Rates vary from place to place.

Working on it: Trying to achieve something.

Y’all come: An invitation to attend a function or it may simply mean “good bye.”

Yer: Your

Yonder: Indicates the location of something, usually a long way in the distance, but usually within sight.

You bet: You are right or “I agree.”

Zap something: to suddenly hit or grab something.
### All Time Great Southern Expressions and Colloquialisms (in no particular order)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPRESSION</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y'all:</td>
<td>Short for you all or all of you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stick with it:</td>
<td>Keep going until you finish the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hang in there:</td>
<td>Don't quit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's up/what's new?:</td>
<td>How are you doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel free to:</td>
<td>Make yourself welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plug away:</td>
<td>Keep at it busily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See to it:</td>
<td>Make sure it's done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take care of:</td>
<td>To do something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get around to it:</td>
<td>Do it when you get the opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost your mind/lose your mind:</td>
<td>To go crazy/to be confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lose sight of:</td>
<td>To lose perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking forward to:</td>
<td>Anxious about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check it out:</td>
<td>Look at with close scrutiny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uptight:</td>
<td>Upset or anxious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead Last:</td>
<td>At the very end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rode hard and put out wet to dry:</td>
<td>Completely used up/tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of line:</td>
<td>Out of one's place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hang On:</td>
<td>Don't give up/hold on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look ahead:</td>
<td>Think about the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blow it off:</td>
<td>Forget about it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strangle hold:</td>
<td>A tight grip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Along side of:</td>
<td>Beside/together with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off hand:</td>
<td>Not at one's primary grasp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bat an eye:</td>
<td>Blink an eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregardless:</td>
<td>(Not a word) it should be regardless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kick in Gear:</td>
<td>To get prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of the line, road, game, etc.:</td>
<td>The very end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Start:</td>
<td>Beginning first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahead of the game:</td>
<td>Out in front/ahead of the rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jump right in:</td>
<td>Begin at your own pace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strung out:</td>
<td>Very busy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard pressed:</td>
<td>Very busy with very little time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold back:</td>
<td>To keep back involuntarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of sync:</td>
<td>Not with the ordinary pace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeroed in/zero in:</td>
<td>To get a good grasp of the situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pull up a chair/take a seat:</td>
<td>Sit down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Whack:</td>
<td>Out of the ordinary/broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep an eye out for you:</td>
<td>Watch for you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharp eyes:</td>
<td>Very perceptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straighten out/up:</td>
<td>To correct an error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch your step:</td>
<td>Be careful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Strong:</td>
<td>Stubborn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step out of line:</td>
<td>To get out of one's place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the nick of time:</td>
<td>Perfect timing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Keep in touch: ............................................................Continue contact/correspondence
Look into it:.............................................................Regard with close scrutiny
Sure fire:.................................................................Exact
Take in stride: ...........................................................To receive information calmly
You bet:......................................................................Of course
Holding on for dear life: ............................................Holding tightly
On the phone:.............................................................Having a telephone conversation
Scared to death:..........................................................Extremely frightened
Come again:.............................................................Please repeat what you just said
Crazy about:.............................................................To like extremely
See you around:..........................................................To meet later
Bull headed:...............................................................Stubborn
Smart critter:.............................................................Intelligent person
This neck of the woods:.............................................In the area
I'm fixing to:..............................................................I'm about to, getting ready to do something
Brand new:...............................................................Just bought/recently purchased
To reckon: ...............................................................To guess
To get a hold of someone:.........................................To contact someone by telephone or in person
Over yonder: ............................................................Over there
To chase after someone:............................................To try to reach them
A good ways off:......................................................A long distance
Hey:......................................................................Hello/Hi
My bad:.....................................................................My mistake
ASAP: ........................................................................As soon as possible
Common sense:........................................................Natural intuition
To count on someone:..............................................To rely on someone