

International-MK-TCK Student Handbook



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INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

Office Location: Engineering & Science Center (ENS)

Second Floor, Suite 280

Office Hours: 9am-4pm weekdays, August-May, summer hours reduced

Phone: 937-766-7982

Fax: 937-766-7419

Email: iss@cedarville.edu

Facebook: www.facebook.com/cuinternationalstudentservices



MEET THE TEAM



Brenda Reid: Coordinator of International Student Services

Brenda manages immigration processes and SEVIS compliance, as well as international orientation, academic advising and academic coaching for international, MK, and TCK students. She co-advises the Multicultural and International Student Organization (MISO). Brenda enjoys all kinds of global cuisine, great coffee, photography, and spending time with her family.

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Debbie Ayers: International Student Services Specialist

Debbie is our resident international, having grown up in Zimbabwe and Australia. Her role as the International Student Services Specialist includes supporting international, MK, and TCK students in their transition to U.S. college life, assisting with SEVIS compliance, co-advising MISO, and performing a host of other tasks in support of ISS. Debbie enjoys traveling overseas with her family, exploring new places and cultures, and reading historical fiction.

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Cassandra Varughese: Assistant Director of International Recruitment

Cassandra is the Assistant Director of Admissions and International Recruitment, working with all of the incoming International, MK, and TCK students. Cassandra completed both her Bachelor of Business Management and her Master of Business Administration through Cedarville University. In her free time, Cassandra enjoys hiking with her husband and visiting her family farm on weekends.

Email: cassandrashaffer@cedarville.edu

Phone: 937-766-7700



Brian Nester: Director of Global Outreach

Brian Nester works in the Christian Ministries department as Director of Global Outreach. He coordinates Ministry Teams that travel around the world, sharing the gospel and equipping students for ministry in various settings and capacities. He is also the advisor for the student organization, MuKappa. Brian enjoys spending time with family and traveling with his wife, Dianna.

Email: nesterb@cedarville.edu Phone: 937-766-7609

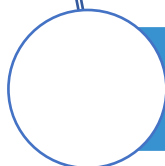
WELCOME TO CAMPUS: LET'S GET STARTED!



“What is your experience with the International/MK/TCK Orientation?”



"I'm so thankful for the Orientation. It is really difficult to get adjusted to a new culture. It can be really overwhelming to familiarize yourself with the basic appropriate behaviors...it made my college transition easier.



"The Cedarville community creates a safe environment to explore what it means to assimilate to a new culture without compromising your own cultural identity."



"Orientation introduced me to others who could relate to my international experience. I got to learn so much about other cultures and make new friends."

Orientation for New International, MK, and TCK Students

Cedarville's orientation offers three days of exciting, informational sessions and fun activities to help International, MK, and TCK students and their families get oriented to campus and university life. We're glad you're here!

This advanced arrival on campus gives you time to meet other students and acclimate to the university campus as well as the support systems and services available.

Orientation sessions cover topics like academic adjustment and support, cultural adjustment, student employment and important details about maintaining visa status. Plus- you'll make memories that will last a lifetime!



Getting Your Student ID Card

Once you are accepted to CU, you can upload your picture to your student portal. When you arrive on campus and check in, we'll have your Student ID card ready and waiting for you. Be sure to keep your ID card safe and on hand at all times. This card will be your key to enter your dorm building, as well as act as your library card and student discount card. Businesses will sometimes ask for a picture ID and your Student ID card can serve as proof of your identity. Your Student ID number also allows for online access to the Centennial Library's online collections and this access continues even after you graduate from the University. This can be beneficial not only for your studies while at Cedarville, but for future graduate studies as well.

	<p>“As I transitioned to CU as a transfer student, the International Student Services were very helpful, and I genuinely felt that they cared for international students.”</p>

Accessing Your Student Email Account

All Cedarville students are provided a university email address using [Google Mail](#). Your Google username and password are the same ones you used for your online application process. All official email correspondence from the University will be sent to this account, as well as messages from your professors. It is imperative that you check your email account daily.

There are computer stations in most buildings where you can check your email (including the Field House/Gym, the Library, and the Stevens Student Center). There are also computer labs in various buildings where you can check your email and print documents. It is wise to know where the nearest computer lab is to each of your classes.

If you want to use Google Apps on your mobile device or cell phone (e.g., to read your Cedarville email), access [Google Apps: Instructions for Mobile Devices](#) on the University webpage for more information.

<http://www.cedarville.edu/help/Google-Apps-Instructions-for-Mobile-Devices>



IMPORTANT FORMS TO COMPLETE

Student Health Forms

All incoming students need to log into the UMS Patient Portal to provide their health history to the University Medical Services (UMS). You will also need to upload your immunization record. Please complete these before arriving on campus.

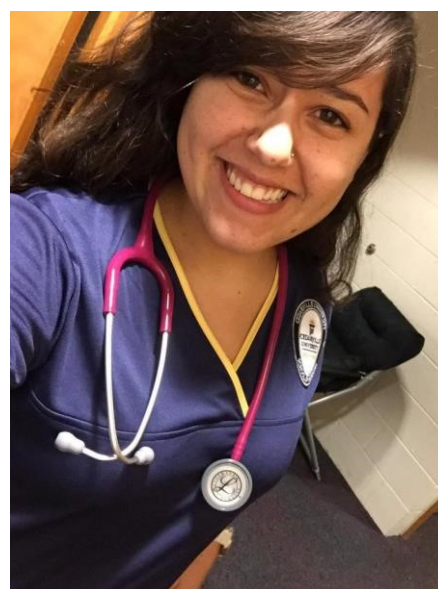
<https://www.cedarville.edu/Offices/University-Medical-Services/Student-Policies.aspx>

If you are unsure about any of your information, contact UMS by emailing them at UMS@cedarville.edu

Health Insurance

It is highly recommended that all *International students* purchase medical insurance coverage to defray the costs of health care while studying in the United States (MK and TCK students are typically covered through a policy provided by their parents' employer). Healthcare costs in the United States can be exorbitant and there is no socialized coverage. This means the patient is responsible for all charges. Purchasing health insurance not only minimizes the financial impact, but also helps ensure quality care.

There are several companies which offer international student health insurance plans at affordable prices. Health insurance coverage assists with expenses both at University Medical Services (UMS) and at facilities in the region providing health care services. It especially helps in the event of a serious injury or illness. Most insurance companies have various levels of coverage, ranging in price from \$35-\$100 per month. Students can purchase health insurance coverage directly from their company of choice. We recommend choosing a moderate plan vs. an economy plan to ensure sufficient coverage.



Information about various health insurance carriers can be found on the International Student Services webpage.

Students should provide proof of medical insurance that will cover them in the U.S. when submitting health forms to University Medical Services, the health clinic on campus.

Consent for Treatment in the Event of a Medical Emergency

If a student is under the age of 18, he/she is considered a minor. If the minor student has a medical emergency while at school, a representative must be able to make decisions for the student on behalf of the parent or guardian. Medical care personnel must be assured that the representative has the authority, as a healthcare proxy, to act for the student and on behalf of the parent or guardian. **All International, MK and TCK students under 18 years old are required to provide a signed Caregiver Consent Form for Emergency Treatment.**

In the event of an emergency involving any International, MK or TCK student whose family resides outside of the United States, it is crucial that Cedarville University also has a FERPA waiver on file to allow a designated University representative to speak with the parents or guardians. (please see FERPA and waiver of privacy below)



It is **highly recommended** that the parents or guardians encourage the student to complete a FERPA waiver giving International Student Services permission to speak to the student and the parents/family in the event of emergency or an issue that needs to be addressed.

What is FERPA?

Students who are 18 years of age and older have legal status as an adult in the United States and their rights and information are protected. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prevents Cedarville employees, both faculty and staff, from speaking with family members (parents, guardians, etc) regarding a student's academic performance or well-being.

Cedarville's Policy is as follows: No personally identifiable information should be released without written authorization from the student each time that the information is needed. Written authorization should consist of the date, the person receiving the information, what records are to be released, and the student's signature.

Waiver of Privacy

A FERPA privacy waiver is a document from the Office of the Registrar which includes the student's signature and names the specific individuals, granting them permission to release information to parents or other specifically named individuals for specific purposes within limited periods of time. Details concerning the process for waiving privacy can be obtained from the Office of the Registrar, upon request.

<https://www.cedarville.edu/Offices/Registrar/Undergraduate/FERPA.aspx>



IMMIGRATION: VISA AND ENTRY DETAIL:

SEVIS and F-1 Visa Resources

Form I-20

The I-20 is also known as a Certificate of Eligibility for nonimmigrant (F-1) student status. Once you are accepted to Cedarville University, the Designated School Official will send you an I-20 acknowledging you are accepted for a program of study at the University. The I-20 is registered with the US Department of Homeland Security and the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Your I-20 notes your identification information, your program of study and the length of the program. It also displays your assigned SEVIS identification number in the upper left-hand corner. This document should be in your possession **at all times** when you travel and is required both for obtaining your visa and must be presented to Customs and Immigration upon entering the United States. Read more about your I-20 here:

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2013/01/what-is-the-form-i-20>

Important I-20 facts:

-**ALWAYS** travel with your I-20. We recommend keeping it with your passport. You will need it, as well as your passport and visa, to come back into the United States.

-**NEVER** throw away an old I-20, even if you have several newer ones, always keep each one. Customs may ask to see previous I-20's.

-Your I-20 is what allows you to remain in the U.S. It is your proof of permission to be here. Your visa gets you entrance to the US, your I-20 allows you to stay.

-Your I-20 will need to be adjusted and reprinted if:

- You change your major
- You extend or shorten your program of study
- You request CPT
- You request OPT
- It is lost or stolen



SEVIS fees / I-901 Fee

Regulation requires that all prospective F-1 students pay the I-901 SEVIS fee before being issued a U.S. visa by the Department of State. Student's failure to pay the fee on their current SEVIS record puts them at risk for termination. Read the instructions on how to pay your I-901 fee here:

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/paying-your-i-901-sevis-fee>

F-1 Visa

International students attending an academic program in the United States, such as a university or college, all require an F-1 visa to enter the United States. The visa and I-20 work together to give student entry and permission to remain in the United States until the program of study is completed. The dates for the student's entire program of study are reflected on the I-20. Once the I-20 reaches the end date, the visa is no longer valid, even if the date on the visa has not yet expired.

Form I-515 A

If a student arrives at a U.S. port of entry and does not have the I-20 or has not paid the I901 SEVIS Fee, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) may either deny entry into the United States or may choose to permit admittance to the United States, but issue the student a Form I-515A.

The Form I-515A permits the student to enter the United States for 30 days. The student must submit the appropriate documents to SEVP within 30 days of entry date. *Failure to comply with the Form I-515A instructions may result in the termination of the student's SEVIS status and require immediate exit of the US*

If you received a form I-515 A, please contact International Student Services immediately after arriving in the United States.

You may wish to keep the contact information for Cedarville University and International Student Services with your travel documents.

Form I-94: Your Admission Number

Each individual that enters the United States is given an admission number. The I-94 admission record is created electronically and maintained in the Customs and Border Protection computer system. This number links US Citizenship and Immigration Services to the arrival information for that traveler (date, time, and port where the individual arrived). The admission number is required when applying for a job, a social security number, and a driver's license.

Instructions on how to retrieve and print your I-94: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>

Remaining in proper visa status with SEVIS

- Undergraduate students must be enrolled in and successfully complete at least 12 credits per semester
- Graduate students must be enrolled in and successfully complete at least 9 credits per semester
- Online coursework cannot exceed 40% of the credit load per semester
- Dropping a course/s that will decrease your credit load to under acceptable limits requires prior permission from ISS and notification to SEVIS of a reduced course load
- All students on an F-1 visa must maintain a GPA of 2.0 or above
- Failure to maintain any/all of these can impact a student's status, and put in question their permission to remain in the program and in the U.S.

STUDENT FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Paying Your Tuition Bill

University policy requires all International students to pay their semester bill in full, before they begin each semester.

International students do not qualify for the 4-pay plan.

Complete Your Financial Responsibility Agreement

Before you can register for courses, you must provide your electronic signature for the [Financial Responsibility Agreement](#), in “MyCU”

Go to the University’s website → “Current Student” → “MyCU” → “Sign Financial Terms & Conditions” → “Financial Responsibility Agreement”

Your signature needs to be provided each semester before you can register for courses.

Instructions on How to Wire Your Payment to the University Cashier’s Office.

International Students can make tuition payments through Flywire, a fast and easy payment service.

Flywire eliminates bank fees and helps you save on exchange rates. Flywire also offers 24 hour customer support and updates you with every step of the payment process.

Access Flywire through Cedarville University’s Cashier’s webpage on Cedarville or go directly to: www.flywire.com



Student Accounts

University and Federal policy do not allow student accounts at the University to be used as a bank account. Any funds remaining in the student account after all University charges are paid in full will be transferred to the student’s bank account. Additionally, all payments for student employment on campus are paid electronically via Payroll to the student’s bank account. Students can easily open a bank account in town once they are on campus. International Student Services can advise on the process. (see Banking, p 17)



DOING LIFE AT THE ‘VILLE’

Banking:

US Bank: www.usbank.com

<https://www.usbank.com/student-banking/>

64 N. Main St

Cedarville, OH 45314

Phone: 937-766-6010

Foreign ATM Cards: US Bank allows cash withdrawals from some foreign bank accounts without charging any withdrawal fee. Your bank in the “foreign” country will have its own fees and exchange rates which may apply. You will need to first request that your card is allowed to be used in the U.S. to ensure the card is not ‘locked’.

Huntingdon Bank: www.huntington.com

194 N. Detroit St

Xenia, OH 45385

Phone: 937-429-7200

Fifth Third Bank: www.53.com

<https://www.53.com/personal-banking/checking/essential-student-checking.html>

100 W. Main St

Xenia, OH 45385 Phone: 937-372-7641

PNC Bank: www.pnc.com

<https://www.pnc.com/en/personal-banking/banking/international-students.html>

98 Hospitality Dr.

Xenia, OH 45385

Phone: 937-372-8825

PayPal: www.paypal.com

Some students choose to use PayPal as an online alternative banking option. It allows transfer of funds and easy electronic payment options when linked to a debit or credit card.

Documents needed to open a bank account:

- Your unexpired passport and visa
- Your I-20
- Copy of I-94 (electronic record of entry retrieved here:
- Any secondary form of identification you may have (student ID card)
- Form W-8 BEN if you are a student not eligible for a SSN
- Letter from ISS if W-8 BEN is being requested



To assist you, International Student Services will provide you with a letter to the bank, confirming your status at Cedarville University and requesting the bank's assistance in opening your account.

Bank Customer Identification Programs (CIP)

U.S. financial institutions are required to verify the identity of every individual who wishes to conduct financial transactions. Federal regulations require all banks operating in the U.S. to have Customer Identification Programs (CIP) for anyone seeking to open an account.

Department of Treasury regulations require banks to obtain the following information from you before allowing you to open an account:

Your name

Your date of birth

Your street address at Cedarville University

251 N. Main St, P.O. Box _____

Cedarville, OH 45314 An identification number:

Social Security Number (SSN) issued by the US Government

OR, if a student cannot obtain a SSN...

A letter from International Student Services requesting the bank accept an alternate form of identity verification and...

Form W8-BEN

<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw8ben.pdf>

Cedarville International Student Services can assist students with obtaining documentation necessary for opening a bank account.

**Each bank establishes their own customer identification program, and may ask for additional documentation.*



Types of Accounts & Cards

Checking Accounts

The main account you will use is the checking account. Banks offer different types of checking accounts designed to fit various needs. The cost of checking accounts also varies from bank to bank. Some banks charge per transaction, some have a basic monthly fee, and others offer free services if you maintain a certain minimum balance in your account at all times. Most banks have student options which are low cost. There is typically a minimal charge to order a box of checks (cheques) customized with your name and U.S. address.

All banks have online options which should allow customers to access information regarding their personal account, including all transactions and deposits. This is secure information that only you, the customer, can access.

Be careful to keep an accurate record of every check you write in order to avoid having checks returned and incurring additional charges. “Bouncing” a check (writing a check for more money than you actually have in the account), also called over drafting, is illegal and can cost you time and money. Some banks offer overdraft protection services. Most banks will charge an overdraft fee any time this occurs.

Debit Cards

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

There is often a charge associated with using your debit card.

Savings Accounts

A savings account enables you to save money and accumulate interest on your savings. Interest is paid either monthly or quarterly. The difference between a savings and a checking account is that you cannot write checks on a savings account. Often, banks will permit you to link your checking and savings accounts to allow for easy transfer of funds between the two.

Note: if you do have a savings account, you may receive tax documentation associated with the account and such documents must be referenced and included when preparing tax return documents or provided to anyone who is filing taxes claiming you as a dependent.

Cashing checks

To cash a check, you will need to endorse it by signing your name on the back. In addition, you will be asked to provide personal identification in the form of a driver's license, a State of Ohio ID card, or a CU ID card. Some stores will cash a check for you if you shop there regularly. Supermarkets may allow you to pay by check, with authorization from their credit department, if you present the ID they request (usually an Ohio driver's license). Most banks will cash a check on your behalf even if you do not hold an account with them.

Credit Cards

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

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

Note: unpaid credit card debt can lead to legal and long-term financial problems. If you do have credit card-related issues, please come talk to International Student Services who will help you find a financial advisor or local professional who can help you make a plan to pay off the debt.

Foreign Currency

If you deposit a check drawn on a foreign bank in your U.S. checking account, it may have to go through a collection process. This means that the money is not available to you until the bank here in the U.S. has collected it from the foreign bank. ***It may take several weeks before the money is credited to your account.***

In the case of countries with restrictions on foreign exchange, you may need to provide your family or sponsor with certification of enrollment in order to receive money from your home country. Letters of certification are available, by request, in the International Student Services office.

US Currency:

US money can be confusing. Here is a quick chart to help you understand terms and values, particularly for coins:

penny	\$0.01		1¢	
nickel	\$0.05		5¢	
dime	\$0.10		10¢	
quarter	\$0.25		25¢	
half dollar	\$0.50		50¢	

How to make \$1.00 using change...

Remember there are 100 cents in \$1.00



It takes 100 pennies ($1 \times 100 = 100$)



It takes 20 nickels ($5 \times 20 = 100$)



It takes 10 dimes ($10 \times 10 = 100$)



It takes 4 quarters ($25 \times 4 = 100$)



It takes 2 half dollars ($50 \times 2 = 100$)

You can go here to practice! <https://www.slideshare.net/at208708/203-powerpoint>

Go to this site for further explanation, pictures, and practice learning about US money: <http://www.vidaamericana.com/english/currency.html>



Cell Phone Plans

How do I choose a phone plan?

The following website allows you to compare phone and data plans and customize your search to figure out exactly what you need and how much it will cost. It's a great place to learn what is available and get an estimate of the costs involved.

<https://www.whistleout.com/>

Should I get a contract plan or a pre-paid phone?

Most providers in the United States require either a Social Security Number (SSN) or an expensive security deposit for setting up a contract for your cell phone service. These contracts usually last for one or two years, in which you are required to stay with that provider or pay a fee to cancel the contract.

Most providers offer pre-paid options, in which you pay your monthly bill in advance. These do not require a Social Security Number or high deposits and do not require you to stay with the provider for a fixed time period, but may have higher monthly fees. Almost all providers offer additional options to their plans or pre-paid options for international texting (SMS & MMS) and calls.

Please note that placing international phone calls can be very expensive.

Most providers have an international calling plan that can be added to your account. These plans range in price. Be sure to read the terms and conditions of any plan before signing the contract.

What'sApp and Skype can provide another international calling option but may only be effective when the user has the "unlimited data" option on their cell phone plan.

Contract Phones

Most cell phone contracts will offer a 'free' phone to the customer in exchange for a two-year contract agreement. Although this provides the phone at little or no charge, it locks the customer into a two-year commitment to that cell phone provider. Be cautious and educate yourself on all the requirements and provisions in the plan. Also, some providers offer insurance on the phone in the event of damage. If you are 'hard' on phones, the additional monthly cost for insurance may be beneficial. Phone replacement can be costly, otherwise. It is wise to get a protective, water-resistant, or waterproof case to protect your phone.

Most contract plans give you a set number of minutes per month. Overage minutes are charged at a much higher rate. Check your plan to see if weekend and nighttime minutes are free.

Text messaging is not *always* included, and some providers may charge for each text sent AND received.

Watch for 'hidden' fees that may be included in the plan.

Prepaid Phones

If you intend to make calls to your home country, ensure this is possible with the prepaid plan you are considering.

Some pre-paid plans are month-to-month, others allow you to add minutes as you go.

Typically, pre-paid phones do not require a deposit and no contract is necessary.

Costs range from minimal to those comparable to contract services.

Campus SIMS / Mint Mobile

International Student Services will provide free CampusSIMS sim cards to new students, available in your I-20 mailing for international students or for pick up at the Welcome Table at Orientation for MK and TCK students.

The SIM card can be used with any *unlocked* phone and allows students to pay month-to-month for a text, data, and calling plan of their choice as selected from the CampusSIMS website. www.campussims.com



Local Cell Phone Providers (indicates Cedarville discount available)****AT&T ****

1622 West Park Square
Xenia, OH 45385 (Next to Chipotle)
Phone: (937) 372-8979
Website: <https://www.att.com/shop/wireless>
**Cedarville Discount Available

<https://www.cedarville.edu/Offices/Information-Technology/Cell-Phone-Plans.aspx>

Cricket Wireless

823 W. 2nd St
Xenia, OH 45385 (At corner of W. 2nd St and Allison Ave)
Phone: (937) 274-1111
Website: www.cricketwireless.com

Straight Talk

70 Hospitality Drive
Xenia, OH 45385 (Inside Wal-Mart)
Phone: (937) 376-9878
Website: www.straighttalk.com

Sprint**

2730 N. Fairfield Rd
Beavercreek, OH 45431 (Across from The Mall at Fairfield Commons)
Phone: (937) 426-8700
Website: www.sprint.com
**Cedarville Discount Available

<https://www.cedarville.edu/Offices/Information-Technology/Cell-Phone-Plans.aspx>

T-Mobile

2260 N. Fairfield Rd
Beavercreek, OH 45431 (Inside The Mall at Fairfield Commons)
Phone: (937) 431-1964
Website: <http://www.t-mobile.com>

Verizon Wireless

40 Progress Drive
Xenia, OH 45385 (Near Wal-Mart)
Phone: (937) 372-8611
Website: <http://www.verizonwireless.com>

Virgin Mobile

70 Hospitality Drive
Xenia, OH 45385 (Inside the Wal-Mart)
Phone: (937) 376-9878
Website: <https://www.virginmobileusa.com>

Best Buy

2907 Centre Drive
Fairborn, OH 45324
Phone: (937) 320-1484
Website: <http://stores.bestbuy.com/oh/fairborn/2907-centre-dr-266.html>

Note: Best Buy is a technology retail store. The sales staff will talk with you and can help direct you to the plan and provider that will best fit your needs. Best Buy is also a reputable store for your technological needs and they provide a loyalty card which earns points with each purchase and can be redeemed later for discounts on other technology purchases.





Driving in Ohio:

Getting a Driver's License:

To qualify for an Ohio driver's license, your I-20 must have been issued at least one year prior to your test date. Typically, freshmen do not qualify to test for a driver's license.

Steps to get your driver's license:

1. Study the Digest of Motor Vehicle Laws, available in pdf format from the International Student Services office.
2. Gather your documents:
 - a. Valid Passport
 - b. Current I-20
 - c. Your I-94 Admission number (can be retrieved here: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/consent.html>)
 - d. Letter for International Student Services verifying your current status and address
 - e. Your Social Security number (though not *officially* required, it is often impossible to get a driver's permit without one)
3. Go to the nearest Ohio Highway Patrol driver's license exam station. You will take a vision test and a computer-based exam on Ohio motor vehicle regulations and traffic signs. The test covers items in the Digest of Ohio Motor Vehicle Laws found at the following link : <http://publicsafety.ohio.gov/links/hsy7607.pdf>

If you pass the vision and computerized tests, you will be issued a driver's permit, which allows you to drive on the road with a licensed adult driver in the front seat. The cost for the permit is approximately \$22.

Bureau of Motor Vehicles
601 Ledbetter Rd
Xenia, OH 45385

Phone: (937) 372-4282

Website: <http://www.bmv.ohio.gov/29.aspx>

Hours:

Monday – Friday 8 am – 5 pm

Saturday 8 am – 2 pm

4. Practice your driving skills with a licensed driver in the car accompanying you and, when ready, make an appointment for a driver's road test at the Ohio Highway Patrol driver's license exam station.

Note: International Student Services cannot provide a vehicle for your use.

5. Once you pass your driver's test, you will be issued an Ohio Driver's License. The cost for the Driver's License is approximately \$23.

Automobile Insurance:



It is illegal to operate a vehicle in the United States without insurance coverage.

In Ohio, it is illegal to drive any motor vehicle without insurance or other proof of financial responsibility. It is also illegal for any motor vehicle owner to allow another person to drive the owner's vehicle without financial responsibility proof. To comply with Ohio's Financial Responsibility requirements, individuals must maintain insurance or get a bond.

The following explanation of required insurance coverage can be found at:
<https://www.insurance.ohio.gov/Newsroom/Tips/Pages/MinimumCoverage.aspx>

Student Employment

Campus Employment Opportunities

International students are limited to on-campus employment. SEVIS restricts work to a maximum of 20 hours per week for F-1 visa-holding students during the semester. However, summer employment on campus can be full time, 40+ hours per week.

The average workload for students is approximately 12 hours per week.

Check the University website under “Student Employment” to view and apply for available positions:

<https://www.cedarville.edu/cf/finaid/studentjobs.cfm>

Be sure to note the contact details for any department in which you hope to work and be sure to introduce yourself to them in person. Understand that some of the positions may already be filled before the website is updated. Application for a position does not guarantee employment.

Form I-9

Any student employed on campus must fill out an I-9 form. Employers are required to complete the form to document verification of the identity and employment authorization of each new employee and maintain the form on file for reference. If you get a job on campus, you will be required to complete this form.

<https://www.uscis.gov/i-9>

Social Security Information

All students who are employed must have a Social Security Number for Federal Tax reporting purposes. Please refer to the following page for details:

<https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10181.pdf>

Once you have a job on campus, contact the International Student Services office and make an appointment to go to the Social Security office to apply for your number.

Please go to this site to access and print the social security card application. Fill out as much information as you are able. If you have a question or are unsure, simply skip that part and the Social Security office staff can assist you.

<https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf>

International Students: be sure to bring the following:

1. Completed Social Security application
2. I-20- most recent copy
3. Passport
4. I-94- must still be current- check expiration date!
5. A letter from your Employer on campus, on official letterhead, describing the following:
 - a. Your position: title and description of job
 - b. Your start date
 - c. Your anticipated hours per week
 - d. Your supervisor's name, contact information, and signature
 - e. EIN number (federal tax ID number), if applicable
 - f. A letter from the International Student Services office confirming your status as a student and your current Ohio address.

**MK and TCK students who are US citizens should already have a Social Security Number*



Off-Campus Employment Opportunities

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Any work off campus, for an international student, whether paid or unpaid, volunteer, internship, part time or full time must be directly connected to a student's major and will require CPT approval. Any participation in employment or internship without approval will violate F-1 visa and SEVIS regulations.

International students are permitted to pursue an employment experience in a job that directly relates to their major and is connected with a specific, major-related course in which they are enrolled while working.

The employment and connected coursework must be *concurrent* (no prior or future class can be counted for this, for example, you cannot work in the summer and connect it to a course you plan to take that Fall semester or already completed in the prior Spring semester).

The CPT application must include a job offer letter stating the position, job description, start date and supervisor's name and contact information. The CPT application must be submitted to the ISS office with the advisor's signature and course number and description. The course must be required for the major and not a general education course.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

International students may apply to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for permission to participate in a post-graduation employment experience directly related to their program of study for one year. These permissions come directly from USCIS and are not internal at the University.

Students are not required to have a job offer before they apply to USCIS.

The application can be completed and submitted online or by mail.

Required documents for the OPT application include:

- Form I-765, completed in black ink
- Form G-1145 (if applying by mail)
- A new I-20 showing the OPT request
- Copies of ALL prior I-20 documents
- A copy of your most recent I-94
- A copy of your passport
- A copy of your visa page
- 2 new passport style photos
- Fee of \$410 paid by check or money order or by credit card if applying online.

STEM OPT

Students currently approved for OPT who have a degree in a STEM field, as identified by SEVIS, may apply for an additional 2 year extension to their original OPT experience. The application for the extension must be submitted within 90 days of the original OPT term end date.

The STEM extension requires the employer to develop and agree to a two year training plan for the student showing goals and objectives for student development as well as specific evaluations completed by both employer and student at strategic intervals.

The International Student Services office will assist students in preparing the application. Please refer to the approved STEM degree list here to verify whether your degree qualifies for the extension.

<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf> The

STEM OPT application requires the following documents:

- Form I-765, completed in black ink
- Form G-1145 (if applying by mail)
- Form I-983 completed with your employer
- A new I-20 showing the STEM extension request
- Copies of most recent I-20 document showing current OPT
- A copy of your current Employment Authorization Document (EAD card)
- A copy of your most recent I-94
- A copy of your passport
- A copy of your visa page
- 2 new passport style photos
- Fee of \$410 paid by check or money order or by credit card if applying online.

Economic Hardship:

In the case of severe economic hardship, International students may be permitted to pursue off-campus employment. Any requests would be evaluated and would include consultation with Financial Aid, Student Life, and the Cashier's Office. If there is sufficient evidence, ISS will assist the student in preparing the application to USCIS requesting special permission. Approval for work authorization requires the same documentation and process as the OPT application and approval can take up to four months.

Federal Income Taxes

Any student who works and receives payment is required to file yearly income taxes with the Internal Revenue Service. Taxes are filed with the IRS for income earned the prior year.

If you are an MK or TCK, your parents may be claiming you as a dependent on their taxes. You should talk with your parents/guardians about whether they are filing taxes in your name.

International students can purchase access to tax prep software through the International Student Services office. This can assist them in preparing and filing their tax return.

Students who are US citizens can access tax prep software such as TurboTax which offers assistance in preparation of tax forms

Finally, students should review whether they are eligible for an education tax credit. Financial Aid can assist you in knowing whether you are eligible.

Tax forms to assist with your preparation can be found here:

<http://www.cedarville.edu/Offices/Accounting-and-Finance/Tax-Documents.aspx>

Form W-2

The W-2 form is a wage and tax statement generated by your employer. All students employed on campus who earn at least \$600 in the course of a year will receive a wage and tax statement from the Payroll office. This form indicates all amounts, if any, of income tax, social security, and/or Medicare tax that was withheld from the employee's paycheck throughout the year. Access to this form is necessary when preparing your annual income taxes. You will receive a new W-2 each year.





Academic Information

“GATEways equipped me with the tools I needed academically and in all other areas to serve. I learned a lot about time management which helped me be a good steward of my time. It also taught me to be a good student.”

International GATEways to Success Course

The **G**lobal **A**cculturation and **T**hriving in **E**xcellence course, aka GATEways to Success, is a one-credit seminar *required* for all new international students to help them proactively adapt to culture and college-level learning in the United States. Students will explore proven strategies for taking notes, thinking critically, managing time, taking tests, and writing in English for academic purposes. The course includes practical one-on-one advising appointments with the instructor at strategic points throughout the semester for academic coaching purposes. The course is a semester-long extension of international orientation and sets the foundation for student success, retention, and persistence. This one credit hour does *not* count toward the hours needed for graduation.

“GATEways is helpful because we can openly discuss the US culture. It helps international students connect with each other and is very enjoyable!”

Course Scheduling:

First Semester:

Your first semester course schedule will be generated for you by the Registrar's office. The Registrar works to assign a "balance" of courses to ensure you do not have a schedule that is too demanding or too heavy in one subject matter.

"What if I want to make changes in my schedule?"

It is possible to drop, add, or change courses once the drop/add registration period is opened after the semester begins. It is best to consult with your advisor and gain the required approvals before making any changes. Email your advisor to make an appointment to meet with him or her once the semester begins. See "Dropping and Adding a Course" under "Academic Processes"

Course Load and SEVIS requirements:

All international students on an F1 visa must be enrolled in and successfully complete at least 12 credit hours with a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0. If any of these requirements are not met, the student is considered out of status and their continued enrollment and presence in the US could be at risk. See other sections in this handbook titled: "Remaining in Proper Visa Status with SEVIS" under "Immigration: Visa and Entry Details" and "SEVIS and F-1 Visa Resources"

Scholarship Maintenance

Students who have scholarships in place are responsible to know the required minimum GPA and any other necessary qualifiers needed to maintain those scholarships. It is the student's responsibility to know and ensure these requirements are being met. If the minimum standards are not met, it may result in the loss of scholarships. The University does not hold responsibility for reminding and alerting students of the pending loss of scholarships, that is the student's responsibility.

Communication and Information:

EMAIL is Important! Check your Cedarville email daily! Cedarville University Professors often send assignments via email. The Registrar also sends all registration information via your Cedarville email address. Important announcements and information is also communicated through email. It is imperative that you check your email several times throughout the day.

Syllabus:

The syllabus is a guide to each course. It provides an outline of the topics that the course will cover, the expectations of the professor, and the assignments and deadlines for the semester. It includes information about plagiarism and general academic expectations of the department which may not be discussed other than in the syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the expectations and to meet the deadlines. Most course syllabus can be found on the Canvas learning platform.

Plagiarism:

In the United States, using someone else's words or ideas in an assignment without giving them the credit by citing the source is considered cheating and is a form of theft. It is a very serious offense and can result in penalties ranging from a reduced grade for the assignment to a failing grade for the course, in some cases it may result in expulsion from the university and/or legal action. Please review and be familiar with the Academic Integrity policies of Cedarville University.

<http://www.cedarville.edu/~media/Files/PDF/Student-Life/Academic-Integrity-Policy.pdf>

If you need assistance with understanding and avoiding plagiarism, there are many resources on campus to help! These include the Centennial Library, your Composition professor, and the Writing Center where you can meet with a fellow student who is trained to guide you in writing strong academic papers.



Attendance:

It is important to attend all of your classes. Many professors have an attendance policy that allows for just three or four absences for the semester. Excessive or unexcused absences could result in grade penalties or failure of the course. Be sure to check the syllabus for each class to familiarize yourself with each professor's policy on absences.

Chapel attendance is also monitored and, although a certain number of absences are permitted, any excessive skips can result in a reprimand, a fine, or even being placed on probation for chapel attendance violations by student life. Be sure to check the University Student Handbook for guidelines and attendance policies.

International students, it is very important that you attend classes, or you could jeopardize your F-1 visa status. The US government grants the F-1 visa for the purpose of pursuing a degree, class attendance is a crucial part of that agreement. Your class attendance is tracked by the ISS office to ensure you are maintaining your status. Professors are instructed to inform the ISS office if a student missed three days of class. Attendance is important for your academic success!

**Academic Support:****Academic Coaching for International Students:**

Every international student on a visa is paired with an academic coach to help them achieve at their highest academic level and ensure they maintain the SEVIS requirements. At Cedarville University we understand that international students' ability to remain in the US and at the University is dependent on their academic performance. Our desire is to support you academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually to ensure your success and add value to your educational investment.

Academic Enrichment Center- The Cove:

The Academic Enrichment Center, also known as The Cove, provides study groups, tutors, and peer coaches for all students. The Cove also approves accommodations for students who need additional support or who have a documented disability.

Although speaking English as a Second Language is not considered a “disability” and does not qualify for accommodations like extra time or special concessions, International Student Services will work with The Cove to provide interventions and support to ensure the success of each International, MK, and TCK student for whom English is a Second Language.

The Writing Center:

The Writing Center has trained tutors available to help you with papers and assignments. Tutors are available by appointment. It is recommended you make an appointment early, do not wait until the day before the paper is due. That is too late. All Writing Center tutors are trained in ESL strategies and International students are approved for longer appointments at the Center to promote their success. Make your Writing Center appointment by going here:

<https://www.cedarville.edu/Offices/Writing-Center/Edit-an-Appointment.aspx>

ESL Support:

Cedarville University may provide basic ESL support to International students who need tutoring to improve their performance in higher levels of Academic English. This support is customized to the student and is provided based on student need and availability of tutors each semester.

Academic Processes:**Meeting Your Advisor:**

Each student is assigned an advisor in the school or department associated with their major. If you have not yet declared a major, you will be assigned an advisor that will work with you to help you explore areas of interest. Once you are ready to declare a major, your advisor will connect you with the appropriate department where an advisor will be assigned. ***It is the student's responsibility to contact their advisor and make an appointment to meet.*** Be proactive!

Making An Academic Plan.

It is beneficial to make a semester plan, first-year plan, and four-year plan to ensure you will complete your program on time. Many advisors will *require* you to go to the following site and begin exploring course sequences and start planning your first and second semesters of study. www.cedarville.edu/studentplanning

Course planning is the primary responsibility of the student, but registration for courses will require your advisor's review and approval. The student planning site is very intuitive and will provide resources to guide the student in planning course sequence and semester schedules. The site allows students to track their progress and also alerts them to any prerequisites necessary for certain courses.

Declaring or Changing a Major:

Students who want to declare or change a major must log into MyCU and, under the Registrar's Office find "Change Your Major". Fill out the appropriate information and submit.

Dropping or Adding a Course:

Changes in a student's course schedule must be made through the drop/add process. This may be completed online during the seven calendar days after classes begin. After this time, a Drop/Add Form is required to complete a schedule change (Drop/Add Forms are available from the Office of the Registrar in SSC-132). The student's advisor and the instructor of the course must sign the Drop/Add Form. The corresponding department chair or dean may sign in the absence of either of these faculty.

When a course is dropped, there may be a record on your transcript:

- Before the end of the 2nd calendar week: No record on transcript
- During 3rd through 9th calendar week: "W" withdrawn
- 10th-11th calendar weeks: "WP" withdrawn passing or "WF" withdrawn failing
- Week 12 through end of semester: Dropping a course is not permitted



Dropping or Adding a Course, con't:

Course changes are complete when the Office of the Registrar receives the completed Drop/Add form. The effective date of the course change and refund is the date the completed form is received. Failure to properly drop a class will result in a grade of "Z" which impacts a student's grade point average the same as an "F" grade.

The department chair/dean signature is required to add a course after two weeks of classes.

College Registrar:

The Registrar's Office handles all of your academic transactions. Please consult their web page for answers to questions regarding academic credit, transfer credit, schedule, major and advisor changes. It is likely, if you are an International students, some of the global experience and foreign language requirements for your general education credits will already be satisfied. Verify with the Registrar's Office that these credits are indeed fulfilled and will be evident on your transcript. The Registrar's office also handles CLEP tests. See details for CLEP below.



CLEP: College Level Examination Program

CLEP is designed to provide the opportunity for students to earn college credit by passing examinations in subject areas in which they have already developed college-level knowledge and understanding. The examinations are composed of various multiple-choice questions and are administered in timed segments totaling 90 minutes. Cedarville University offers CLEP tests to current Cedarville University students, as well as to individuals who have been accepted for admission to the University. Tests are offered at least twice per month throughout the academic year. Registration forms and information regarding available test dates may be obtained from the Office of the Registrar. A study guide, produced by CLEP, is available for reference at the Cedarville University library as well as at many local libraries. The current fee for each CLEP exam is \$134 and is payable in two parts. \$45 of this fee must be paid through the Cedarville University Cashier's office at the time of registration. This administrative fee is non-refundable. The remaining \$89 must be paid directly to CLEP using their "My Account" system on the official College Board CLEP website.

Please refer to the following page for additional details on CLEP

<https://www.cedarville.edu/~media/Files/PDF/Registrar/clep2021.pdf>

Grade Points and Point Averages (GPA)

Cedarville University uses the four-point system to determine academic averages. Grade points are awarded as follows:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Grade Points</u>	<u>100 point scale equivalent</u>
A/A+	4.0	93-100
A-	3.7	90-92
B+	3.3	87-89
B	3.0	83-86
B-	2.7	80-82
C+	2.3	77-79
C	2.0	73-76
C-	1.7	70-72
D+	1.3	67-69
D	1.0	65-66
F	0.0	Below 65

The following website provides a grade point average (GPA) calculator:

<http://www.back2college.com/gpa.htm>

The grade point average is computed by dividing the total grade points earned by the total hours attempted. Grades are issued at the end of each semester. ***It is the responsibility of each student to discuss his/her academic achievement with his/her instructor.***

**Due to FERPA restrictions, student progress and performance cannot be shared with parents unless FERPA is waived. Please see section of this handbook entitled "FERPA"*

Academic calendar

The academic calendar can be accessed online on the University website.

Academic catalog

The academic catalog is available online and in printed version, in the Registrar's Office.

Textbooks: Buying, Selling, and Renting

The Cedarville University Bookstore stocks all of the textbooks for all classes. The pricing is competitive and the bookstore offers price comparisons online to ensure you get the best price possible. Log into your student planning site to see your textbook list and make price comparisons.

Many Cedarville students return their purchased books to the bookstore after the semester is complete. This means there are good quality ‘used’ books available for purchase at discounted prices. Also, some students rent textbooks to other students for reasonable prices.

There are textbook rental sites that offer quick and easy rental for most titles and editions. Please reference www.amazon.com or www.chegg.com for rental options



Life on Campus:

The following is supplemental information to assist International, MK, and TCK students

Please be sure to read the Cedarville University Student Handbook for expectations for student participation and conduct.

<http://publications.cedarville.edu/brochures/studentlife/studenthandbook/#>



Meal Plans:

Many students will ask “Which meal plan should I choose? How do I know which is best for me?” Check this link for descriptions of the different plans:

<https://www.cedarville.edu/Offices/Cashiers/Meal-Plan.aspx>

You can adjust your meal plan choice at the start of each semester. Talk to other students and find out which plan they prefer.

Semester Breaks and Vacations:



Students are permitted to remain in the dorm during all breaks during the academic year *except* for the Winter Break that occurs between Fall and Spring semester. The campus shuts down and all students are required to leave campus. Students do not have to move their belongings out of the dorms but are not permitted to reside on campus during that break. Additionally, the Cafeteria shuts down during each break so those students who choose to stay on campus during those breaks where residence is permitted are responsible for their own meals.

There are several restaurants in town as well as two markets that sell food. Most students choose to have a microwave and refrigerator in their dorm room which makes it quite easy to prepare a quick meal.

Summer Storage:

Student Life Services provides limited summer storage for International, MK, and TCK students on a first-come, first-served basis. Students receive an email from Student Life with sign up information. Space is limited; however, Student Life does their best to accommodate those who need storage. For this reason, storage sign-up is limited. If students have extended family within a reasonable distance who could store their belongings for the summer break it is highly encourage that they plan to do so.



Mail and Postage:

Cedarville University has a Post Office on campus. Students are each assigned a mailbox number so they can receive mail while a student here at the University. Letters can also be mailed directly from the CU Post Office and postage can be purchased on site as well.

Anyone wishing to send you mail or packages should use the following address:

Student Name

251 N. Main St, Box # _____

Cedarville, OH 45314

Be sure to check your mailbox each week. Important notices, bank statements, bills, and even graded papers and tests will be returned to you via your mailbox.

Dress Codes:

Cedarville University has a basic dress code students must adhere to while a student on campus. Please check the student handbook for specifics.

The basic requirements are as follows:

No shorts, sweatpants, or pajama pants may be worn to classes or chapel.

Spandex and leggings should not be worn without something over them, whether shorts or a skirt

Shoes must be worn in all academic buildings, chapel, and dining hall.

Chapel:

Cedarville University has chapel every day, Monday through Friday. Chapel attendance is required. Students who have excessive chapel skips are at risk for dismissal.



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“...to stand with brothers and sisters from all nations with unity, despite our differences in culture and background.”

“It means that you get to simultaneously share your culture with others and learn about theirs at the same time.”



“...Being surrounded by a community of people who understand you”

“...to be a model and representative of my country and the unique views of my culture.”

“You can find abundant opportunities to serve, do discipleship and outreach here in Cedarville. If your heart is in it, your spiritual life will flourish.”

Social Life at CU:

International Student Lounge



The International Student Lounge is a great space to settle in, meet new people, have great conversations, or take time to study or rest. The comfortable furniture encourages community while the conference table and workspace promote productivity.

The space includes white boards, a computer and tv screen and a foosball table. There is a refrigerator, microwave and hot water pot for students to use - especially those who might commute from off campus.



While it's a student space, it's also utilized as a conference room for the International Student Services and Study Abroad offices. Students can reserve the space by requesting use through the International Student Services office.

You can find the International Student Lounge in the Embassy hallway in ENS 282. C'mon in and make yourself comfortable!

Student Organizations

There are many events and organizations to get involved in on the University campus. Here are a few suggestions to help you get started!

MISO: Multicultural International Student Organization.

MISO is a student organization that seeks to provide and maintain an international community on campus for International and TCK students. MISO promotes global cultures by planning events and activities to inform others and celebrate the many cultures and diversity on campus. Two of their great events are the Embassy Gala- a celebration of students and their countries, and the MISO World Fair, a community event that offers food, art, dance and music and always includes a 'feature' such as camel rides!

MISO makes an effort to include everyone and takes delight in celebrating the many cultures that represent the Kingdom of God!



Being international means “sharing the piece of home you bring with friends, faculty and staff...”



MuKappa:

MuKappa is a fellowship organization serving missionary kids and international students.

MuKappa has events throughout the year including an international dinner and Snow Camp, a winter retreat with other Mu Kappa organizations from the region.



“It’s been a blast being a part of this group of people, making connections by sharing similar but very different experiences.”

Student Government Association (SGA)

Student Government is a part of the Student Life Division and works to bring opportunities for fun and spiritual growth on campus. SGA events are usually advertised on the screens before chapel begins and in email notices as well as on the screens around campus. Check in and see what’s on the schedule and plan to go with some of your dorm-mates or fellow internationals!



Stress Relief:

Need a break from studying? There are many different events and opportunities on campus that provide a fun distraction and some stress relief.

Intramural sports: volleyball, soccer, basketball...and the list goes on!

Music: chapel band, orchestra, small ensembles,

Jubilate, Inversions. Go to a concert, or become a member!

Drama: each semester the drama department produces a musical or play. Attend, or even better, try out and get involved!

Off campus opportunities: Young's Dairy, The Greene (an outdoor mall), The Mall at Fairfield Commons, John Bryan State Park. Ask other students what they recommend...there is a lot to do in the area!

Restaurants:

There are lots of restaurants offering international cuisine in the region. Check out the many restaurant suggestions on the International Student Services page!



Church Options:

There are many church options available for students in the area, both American- style churches and international churches. Cedarville encourages students to go off campus to enjoy fellowship and service with local congregations and communities. Ask other students where they attend and find a church home-away-from-home!

“Being involved in the local church allowed me to build relationships with the other members in the church and grow spiritually outside of CU...”

Life & Culture in Ohio:

Weather:

The average temperatures in Ohio range in Fahrenheit 20° (-6° Celsius) in the winter to the 80° (27° Celsius) in the summer. The weather in Ohio can change quickly and the temperatures can fluctuate greatly. Someone once heard saying “If you don’t like the weather, wait 15 minutes, it’ll change!”

When you arrive in August, be prepared for temperatures in the high 80 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit. It’s quite warm! But in the winter, the temperatures can drop as low as -20 degrees Fahrenheit (-29° C) in January and February. When you consider the wind chill factor, it may feel as low as -30 degrees Fahrenheit (-35° C). It is cold!!

Be prepared to dress in layers so you can warm up and cool down as the weather changes. Be sure you have a very warm winter coat, hat, gloves, and boots for snow! A raincoat is also a must-have item as umbrellas do not hold up well in the wind.

When you arrive in the Fall, clothing stores will have these items on sale and you might find some of the best prices during this time of year. Plan to ask current students about their winter coats and what wind-protection they have found to be helpful.



Cultural Adjustment and Culture Shock:

Adjusting to life in another culture can be challenging. At first it might seem rather exciting, but as the excitement wears off, it can become intimidating and at times, frustrating or cause some anxiety. That is all part of the transition and adjustment process. It doesn't happen immediately, so give yourself enough time and space to make a healthy adjustment. Talk to other students and listen to their experiences and wisdom. Find your 'community' on campus. Get involved in a student org and church. Make the most of your CU experience and you'll find that soon, you feel 'at home' here at Cedarville!



Homesickness

Homesickness is real and will likely be felt by you and your fellow students at various points in your time at Cedarville. The difference between homesickness for you is that your family and friends are likely too far away for you to make a quick visit home. For this reason, it's a good idea to plan regular catch-up times with family and friends using Skype or other apps or technology. All international students are encouraged to share ideas with their family members about what is helpful. You might want to ask your parents to send a 'care package' to you every few months. A care package is usually a shoebox that is filled with things to remind you of home- favorite snacks and treats, photos, handwritten notes, and small clothing items that pack and ship easily. These things can help remind you of home, family, and culture when they all seem very far away.



Although your dorm mates and friends may not fully understand what you miss about home, they do understand what it feels like to miss home and family and it may provide an opportunity to develop deeper friendships as you encourage one another and share your story. Many international alumni from Cedarville have had old classmates visit their home cities or explore working in countries they heard about from their international classmates and friends at Cedarville. You never know when your story could impact someone!

Sense of Time and Timeliness:

The culture in the US is very time conscious. A typical expectation is that if you are 5 minutes early for an appointment then you're considered 'on time' and if you're actually 'on time', you're late. Americans greatly value punctuality and expect others to be mindful of appointments and agreed-upon meeting times. This also applies to your classes and assignment deadlines. Lateness is not tolerated and, in fact, can mean zero credit on an assignment, test, or quiz if you miss the deadline. Work hard to be on time!

Conversation and Communication:

Greetings: A student once said, "I passed someone on the sidewalk and they asked, 'How are you?', but they didn't stop, they just kept walking away...that's so rude!"

In America, friendly greetings are very often phrased "Hi! How are you?" It is simply a friendly greeting as they walk by and not an indicator that the person wants to stop and have a long conversation. A proper response would be "I'm doing well, thanks!"

If someone wants to talk more with you they will likely use a statement like "we should do coffee sometime." This is an invitation to schedule time to talk and check on how you really are doing.

Directness: Americans are typically very direct. They do not 'hint' at things, but will directly state what they think or need. They might not easily pick up on indirect communication either. Be courteous and straightforward when addressing a need or question and try not to be offended or flustered at their directness. It's just who they are!



Depth of Conversation: Americans often have simple conversations of basic depth (talking about the weather, something they recently watched, a favorite snack) and that is how they begin to learn about others and gauge whether a friendship might develop. Start with concrete facts and information and as you get to know one another, the more abstract information about feelings and personality will follow. Learn the art of casual conversation and watch friendships bloom!

Cynicism, Sarcasm, and Humor:

You might encounter a mindset or attitude that Americans call ‘cynicism’. This is the perspective and mindset that only sees the negative or dark side of an issue or situation. It also often means the cynical person cannot or will not choose to see any positive perspectives and it is difficult to convince them otherwise. When combined with the directness that is typical of Americans, you may encounter conversations or viewpoints that would otherwise be kept quiet in your culture.

Sarcasm is a form of negative humor that will use a statement to communicate something completely opposite. An example would be stepping outside to pouring rain and wind and your friend says “Isn’t THIS a lovely day?!” They are saying that with sarcasm indicated by the tone of voice and conflict of words vs. situation. This is a form of humor that Americans use frequently. It takes a bit of time to recognize, but in time, you’ll be able to identify and even laugh at some of the funny, sarcastic statements you hear!



Classroom Communication: The American classroom is an interactive experience. Professors will often ask for student input and are willing to answer questions during the class. Often, a portion of the student's grade for a course will be entitled "Participation" and it is dependent on the student offering thoughts and questions in class. Lack of participating can be interpreted as disinterest or a lack of effort.

Email communication: It is important that all students check and read their email daily. When responding via email, it is important to communicate professionally and with respect. Be mindful of how you 'sound' in your email and please proofread for errors before sending- and make sure any attachments are attached!

Individualism:

Individualism and independence are greatly valued in America. Children are raised from a young age to be independent and manage things on their own. Some cultures are collective in their approach considering what is best for the group and not just the individual. Group harmony is not always the primary consideration when making decisions or taking action. This can come across as competitiveness or even arrogance but can be unintentional. Try to get to know a person more before assuming they are being offensive. They may not have experience or be familiar with a collective society mindset.



Patriotism:

You will see the American flag all over as you travel and live here in the US. People in the United States love the 'Stars and Stripes' and will display the flag at every opportunity. The National Anthem is played at most sporting events and there are various holidays throughout the year that show appreciation for our heritage.

Americans deeply value the freedom that we have, and they hold great respect for those who fought to defend our country and protect our freedoms. There is also great respect for those who currently serve in the military. This can even be evident at church during national holidays or on significant anniversaries such as September 11. It may seem odd, at times, if you are not familiar with the culture. Please understand that the celebration and show of respect is not because Americans look down on other nations, it's because Americans love their country, a lot!

**Developing Friendships:**

Americans take their time to develop deep friendships and they are cautious about revealing their deeper feelings and values. They often begin friendships with conversation and at first, it may seem as if you're talking about nothing of depth or importance. Give it time. Americans are not quick to reveal their emotions but are cautious until they feel it is safe and comfortable. They often want information first to determine if they are comfortable developing a relationship. Americans value friendship and are very loyal. Conversation and time are the two greatest ingredients in developing lasting friendships.



Personal space:

Personal space varies by culture. Americans appreciate more personal space than other cultures. You might notice that if you stand a bit close, they will back away from you. This is not an indication that they do not like you, but it is an instinctive response. Be mindful that close proximity is not always welcome, but often will relax a bit once the other person gets to know you better. Typically, an arms-length between you and the other person is the comfortable and acceptable amount of space that is appreciated. Personal contact is also uncomfortable and unwelcome until a deeper level of friendship is shared. Once you have known a friend for a semester, you may want to talk to him or her about how your culture demonstrates friendship or trust, such as greeting with a hug.

**Sharing Expenses:**

When a group of students get together to go to the store or go out to eat at a restaurant, it is appropriate that everyone split the cost of gas and reimburse the driver. It's viewed as being considerate toward the person who owns and drives the car and will ensure that they do not feel others are taking advantage of them. They perhaps may refuse the money, but it is appropriate to offer and be willing to help cover the cost.

Food:

America offers a lot of fast food options: burgers, fries, pizza are just a few of the many choices. Take the time to discover the different fresh, healthy options offered in the cafeteria. You can also purchase healthy snacks to keep in your dorm- things like fruit, granola, and yogurt are great snack options that will keep you eating healthy!

The “Freshman 15”:

This is a ‘nickname’ for the weight gain that some Freshmen experience during their first semester. The food at the Dining Hall is plentiful and students are welcome to eat as much as they like, however food choices are important. Make sure you’re eating a balanced diet with plenty of vegetables and fruits. Too much of a good thing can be bad, so drink more water than carbonated beverages. Eat more vegetables than dessert. Exercise is important too! You will be able to stay healthy, reduce your stress, and manage your first year well when you maintain a balance.

Tipping:

Tipping, or paying a gratuity, is expected when going to sit-down restaurants where you have a server, or when you get your haircut or a manicure/pedicure. Many of the people who work in these particular jobs work for low wages, so they depend on tips to help them earn enough to pay their bills. Tipping is a way of thanking the server or provider for their good service. Most people will give a gratuity of 15%-20% of the value of the meal or service as a gratuity. For example, if your meal was \$10, you would leave \$1.50-\$2.00 on the table for the server. Here are a few examples of where you might and might not tip:

Sit-down restaurant (such as the Cheesecake Factory) - YES

McDonalds or Burger King – NO

A Car Wash (only if people dry your car at the end) – YES

A drive-through window – NO

Taxi Driver or Valet- YES Bus-

NO

If you’re confused about tipping, ask a friend!

Talking Politics, Sports, and Finances

Most Americans have fairly strong views on politics, sports, and finances. These are topics that, unless you know a person well, would be best to approach with caution in a conversation. Rather than saying “Don’t you think (name of politician or sports team) is great?” Ask questions like “Do you have a favorite team?” or “Do you enjoy talking about current politics?”

Money is a topic that is also sensitive. Most people do not like sharing information about their income or financial situation and consider that private. You should avoid asking someone how much money they make or how much they spent on something. If you really need to know, this is the only time it is best to be indirect with Americans and ask questions like “Where would you suggest I buy something similar?” or “Does that sort of job pay well?” Keep in mind that some individuals have debt and student loans may often be mentioned, but this is not an invitation to talk about how much money they have or how much they owe. It is still considered a very private topic.

Taking Photographs: When to Ask Permission

While many people have their camera phones and selfie-sticks, it is important to know that some people might get upset quickly if you take their picture without asking their permission first. Of course, there are people who don’t mind, but if you are taking photos you plan to use in a class presentation, a paper, or sharing online, you should ask their permission first. This is especially true of situations where children or “vulnerable adults” or persons with disabilities are in the picture.

A Great Resource for Understanding American Culture:

<http://www.internationalstudentguidetotheusa.com/articles/understanding-americanculture.htm>



Finally...

As you go through your first year, we encourage you to add notes and write down your experiences. When you are in your second year, you'll be glad to have the memories, but you can also share some of your experiences with the new students who arrive and are as nervous as you are right now. We'd love to hear if something in this handbook was particularly helpful, or if there is something you think we should have included.

Now, go on and take a deep breath, and enjoy the adventures of being a student at Cedarville University!

My first thoughts and impressions.....

Questions I need to ask:
