



## InterAmerican University

2710 Broadway  
New York, NY 10025  
Tel. (212) 465-3434  
Fax. (734) 448-8254  
E-Mail: [iauni@iauniversity.net](mailto:iauni@iauniversity.net)  
Web Site: [www.iauniversity.net](http://www.iauniversity.net)

# Orientation Guide

For international students

Wishing to study

In the U.S.A.

## Table of Contents

- ⊙ Levels of education
- ⊙ Secondary schools / high schools
- ⊙ Universities, colleges, English language programs, vocational schools
- ⊙ What is best for you
- ⊙ How to apply
- ⊙ Financial aid and employment
- ⊙ Immigration status
- ⊙ The I-20 form
- ⊙ Visas
- ⊙ After you are accepted
- ⊙ Grading and credits
- ⊙ Transferring schools
- ⊙ Staying in the United States after studies
- ⊙ Health Insurance
- ⊙ Housing
- ⊙ Definitions of academic terms
- ⊙ Academic year
- ⊙ Upon arrival to the United States
- ⊙ Arriving on Campus
- ⊙ Where to go for more help

## Meeting Deadlines!

It is important to make your request for materials and your application early - several months before you plan to begin your studies. Mail tends to take a long time, and time is needed for processing your application, and to get a response back to you. Find out the deadline for all applications in a college guide

or from the application materials. Try to have all the information and documents at the institution at least a month before this deadline. Always send documents by air mail. A useful tip is to enclose a few mailing labels with your name and address clearly written.

GOOD LUCK

Going to school in the United States or Canada is an excellent investment in your future. The schools available are of good quality and many are easily affordable. You will have an opportunity to perfect your English language skills and to get to know the North American people. Americans are warm and friendly people. The greatness of the American nation is a result of its ability to bind in one purpose peoples from all parts of the world. Therefore, Americans recognize the importance of cultural and educational exchanges. This is why the doors of American schools, colleges and universities are open to you and other students from other countries. We hope that your stay will be educational and enjoyable; and that you will enrich both yourself and your host country through your efforts. Good luck.

## Levels of Education

Education in the United States and Canada is divided into the following levels at the indicated

### Primary Education

Pre-school ages	ages 2 - 6
Elementary School	ages 6 - 12

### Secondary Education

Junior High School	ages 12 - 14
High School	ages 14 - 18

### Post Secondary Education

Junior College	ages 18 - 20
4 Year College	ages 18 - 22
Graduate School	ages (MA) 22 - 24
Graduate School	ages (PH.D.) 22 - 26/8
Post Graduate	after PH.D.

## Secondary Schools / High Schools

This Chapter describes Secondary Education or the years of study generally between the ages of 12 and 18.

Secondary schools or high schools as they are often called are divided into two types:

1. Public
2. Private - Day, Boarding, Parochial, Specializing

## Public Schools

Public high schools are government supported institutions which serve the majority of all students. These schools were designed to serve students from the surrounding community. This may still be the case in rural areas and smaller towns. In America's large cities, bussing of students from other communities is

common. In some large cities, more than 70 per cent of students are bussed in from other neighborhoods. While every effort is made to maintain a high quality of education in the public high school system, inner city schools often suffer from a lack of proper funding. As a result, the physical and academic environment suffers as well.

## **Private Schools**

Private high schools offer education to the same age group in every part of the country, but they are funded by private sources, mostly tuition and private contributions. In general, because of the more direct financial control of the institution by parents, private schools respond more directly to the desires of student's parents. Because private schools are better financed, they have more flexible hiring practices and are able to secure a better teaching staff. Because of individual ownership, private high schools are also able to design their own curriculum.

## **Types of Private schools**

In the United States and Canada private high schools are often called "Academies" and sometimes "Colleges". These names are given to the schools by the owners of the schools and are restricted by state rules governing the use of these terms.

Day Schools allow students to come to school and remain in school until the middle of the afternoon. They provide special programs as do most private schools. However, students are picked up by their parents at the end of the school day, or a special bus delivers children to their home.

Boarding Schools (or Academies) are private schools which also have residential facilities for their students. There are many different kinds of boarding schools ranging from those offering a very general program to ones offering very specialized curricula. In most cases, students are able to enjoy not only a special curriculum, but also a variety of extracurricular activities which are arranged for them by the school's administration.

Parochial Schools are institutions which offer general education and religious education as well. They are designed to teach a student the values of a particular religious sect. Different parochial schools have different regulations as to the type of student they will accept. In most cases there are requirements which will ask that students participate in religious activities.

Schools offering specialized instruction are institutions that concentrate on a special area of learning, or a certain kind of discipline. For example military academies focus on developing a traditional martial discipline in their students. Some schools will instruct their students in a particular sport such as tennis or horsemanship.

Finding the appropriate high school can be a difficult task. This booklet contains advertisements of some of these schools. Detailed descriptions of their programs can be found in the Foreign Student's Guide to American Schools Colleges and Universities on the pages indicated. Should you need more general information you may request it free of charge from this institution.

# Universities, Colleges, English Language Programs, Vocational schools

## Introduction

North American schools welcome and value students from all parts of the world. Foreign students are seen as providers of diversity and international representation. In any particular year, there are nearly half a million foreign students enrolled in several thousand colleges, universities, technical and vocational schools, and English language programs in the U. S. At some schools, foreign students constitute 20% to 40% of total enrollment. Foreign students come to study a wide range of subjects, including business, computer science, engineering, health sciences, and the liberal or fine arts.

There are more than 3,500 colleges and universities in the United States and American colleges and universities abroad. In addition there are several hundred vocational technical and private English language schools. There is a difference between all of these schools. A college, for example, is usually for undergraduates, whereas a university is a collection of one or more colleges, plus a graduate school and various professional schools. Colleges mainly teach but universities, with their large numbers of graduate students, also place emphasis on research. This chapter will help you understand the differences between the many types of schools in the United States.

## Different Types of Schools

The American post secondary educational system can be divided into the following categories of schools:

### 1. Publicly supported:

- Ⓒ 2-year community college
- Ⓒ 4-year state college
- Ⓒ Graduate university
- Ⓒ Some vocational schools

### 2. Private:

- Ⓒ 2-year college / 4-year college
- Ⓒ Graduate University
- Ⓒ Religiously Affiliated
- Ⓒ All types
- Ⓒ Proprietary

### 3. Technical and Vocational schools

### 4. English Language Schools:

### 5. Part of a College or Privately Owned

## Publicly supported schools

Publicly supported schools are generally state or city schools, or community colleges. These colleges are funded by the state and the local government of the area in which they are located. Students who live in these cities may attend these schools at lesser costs than those for students coming from another state or from outside the U.S.A.

Community colleges (sometimes called junior colleges) grant associate degrees after two years of study. Public community colleges are part of, or closely affiliated with, the great state universities, depending upon the state in which they are located. These colleges offer two kinds of degree programs: career programs (Associate of Applied Science-A.A.S.) and transfer programs (Associate of Art-A.A. or Associate of Science-A.S.). Career programs prepare students to enter the work force directly from a two-year school in fields such as computer technology, nursing, medical technology, travel and tourism, or basic accounting. Students who plan to earn bachelor's degrees can attend certain A.A.S. programs which are designed to parallel the first two years of study in a four-year institution. When transferring from a community college in the same field of study, students with A. A. or A. S. degrees can expect to be accepted by state colleges and universities as third year students. Many career (A.A.S.) program courses are considered non-academic and will not be applied toward a four-year degree.

Community colleges offer an education widely recognized as excellent by public and private universities and four-year colleges and, due to their community based financing, allow many students to work toward bachelor's degree programs at an already-reduced cost. After completion of the bachelor's degree, many students choose to continue for a master's, Ph.D., or other doctoral program. Often, the graduate program is offered at the same school from which the bachelor's degree was earned, though many students decide to pursue graduate study at a different school or university because the four-year school does not offer graduate study, does not offer a graduate degree in the field the student wants, or because another school is less expensive, more prestigious, or offers a larger program with more choices of courses. Look for the phrases "state-supported," "state university," "public," or "community college" to identify publicly-supported schools.

## **Private Schools**

Private (or independent) schools, colleges and universities are organized in the same manner as other colleges, but generally have fees much higher than those of the state schools. These schools are owned by private non-governmental individuals and boards of directors. Their funding is primarily from the tuition they charge and private contributions. Because of this their tuition is relatively high compared to the state or community schools. Some of these private institutions are "prestigious schools" having an excellent reputation. They have a very selective admission policy. Both the student body and the faculty are of high caliber. Graduates of these institutions are often favored in the job market. In this category are such well known universities as Columbia, Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Stanford and others.

## **Religiously Affiliated Schools**

Religiously affiliated colleges and universities are all privately owned and operated (though they may receive some state support for certain programs). They are predominantly Christian (Roman Catholic and Protestant), although there are some Jewish, Islamic and other faiths related institutions as well. These institutions offer general coursework, but they also offer and sometimes require participation in religion courses. Through their sponsoring churches they offer a strong religious life on campus. In general, one need not be a member of a particular church or religious group to attend a religiously affiliated colleges in the U.S., and enrollment in such an institution will not impinge on one's own religious practices. However, some colleges organized along fundamentalist or evangelical lines may require bible study or compulsory church attendance.

## **Proprietary Schools**

Proprietary institutions are usually operated by an individual or a corporate owner. These schools generally concentrate on specific academic programs such as computer programming, or specialized fields such as aviation, fashion design and so on. These private schools offer short term "certificate programs" or longer programs which award Certificates of Completion. Some proprietary schools are licensed to issue associate degrees and may be accredited as well.

New technologies are creating a demand for a highly skilled work force. As a result there is a high value put on specialized skills. In general proprietary schools are not institutions which offer an academic education. Their interest is to provide training in a specific area in the shortest possible time. Students who need to acquire an expertise in a certain vocation may find these schools more appropriate than larger colleges or universities. In other cases proprietary schools offer subjects which are simply not available in a general college or university curriculum.

It is important to obtain specific information on the cost of the tuition and that of housing and other expenses since proprietary schools most often do not have their own dormitory space. There are accrediting agencies for proprietary schools. See the "Accreditation" section for further information.

## **English Language Schools**

There are hundreds or perhaps thousands of English as a Second Language (ESL) programs offered by colleges in both U.S.A. and Canada. At the same time a large number of private English language schools operate to offer one-to-one lessons, intensive programs and TOEFL preparation classes.

Generally, a student on a student visa will have to attend an intensive English program of 20 – 25 hours a week.

Whether you choose a college ESL program or a private one depends upon your particular needs. For example, if you have been accepted to a college or a university, but you must or want to study English before starting your regular classes, it is usually better to attend the ESL program at the college that has already accepted you. College or university ESL programs will most often provide housing, counseling and other services. Some institutions will require you to attend their ESL program if they feel that your English is not good enough. If these institutions do not have an ESL program on their campus, they will direct you to the nearest available program.

If you wish to prepare yourself to enter an American college and you need to improve your TOEFL score, you may wish to enter a private ESL school. This will give you an opportunity to choose an appropriate college after you have studied English for some time, and after you have been to the United States for some time. If you wish to attend a college that requires you to have good English skills, but the school does not offer an ESL program, you may wish to attend a public or private ESL school within the same area and later apply for admission to your desired college.

Remember that attending an ESL program before you enter your regular classes will give you not only the opportunity to improve your English, but also the chance to get better used to your new home before you start your full-time general classes.

Studying ESL or meeting a school's minimum English proficiency requirements does not necessarily mean that your English studies have ended. Nearly all toward two and four-year colleges will test you in English reading and writing, and often in oral English as well. Regardless of your TOEFL score or previous ESL studies, the college will place you in further basic English courses depending upon your test scores. During this kind of English study, you will be extremely limited in the regular college courses you will be permitted to take, and will be barred by some schools from studying anything but--English until you can pass the college test. College level English courses are not intensive and actually obligate you to spend more time to reach the required level of proficiency than you would if you had remained longer in your intensive ESL program. This can be very frustrating and disappointing to students who expect to leave an ESL program and begin immediately to take full-credit college level courses in science, mathematics, or the liberal arts. You can avoid this frustration and disappointment by remaining in your intensive English program after you are ready to pass TOEFL or gain admission to college, until your English ability is better than the minimum requirement for college admission.

# What is best for you...

## Introduction

Decide what kind of education is best for you. This is best done by analyzing your career goals. Find out which of the academic degrees are better recognized and/or demanded by your own government. Do some research to find out which fields of study will most likely lead to a good job after you graduate.

If you have visited the U.S.A. and seen the campus of the school you want to attend, making a decision will be easier for you. But if you have not been to the U.S.A., you must spend time writing to schools and universities to find out how best they can help you. Your local educational advisor can assist you in this task. You will find a large number of schools in the U.S. and abroad. For detailed descriptions of schools please ask your advisor for detailed information that can be got through the Internet.

Location of the institution you will choose is an important factor, but is not as important as knowing the kind of programs and the kind of faculty you will have at this institution. You must decide just how specific you want your field of study to be. If you choose a business administration school, for example, it should be one that specializes only in business, or would you prefer an institution that teaches a wider variety of subjects, so that you can learn other subjects at the same time?

## Picking Your Field of Study

In the U.S. and Canada system, a term used to describe the subject you wish to study is "major". You may also study another subject of less importance to you and this will be known as your "minor". It is important that you decide on your "major" or your general area of study before you begin selecting schools. For example, if you wish to study some aspect of business administration, then you can narrow your search to schools that offer courses and degree programs in business administration.

Do not worry if after thorough research you are still undecided on which course of study to follow. Many colleges and universities (usually Liberal Arts schools) encourage students to take general education studies in different subjects for a year or two and later decide on a major. The American education system is flexible and supports the idea of an all-encompassing, well-rounded education.

If you are looking for a vocational or technical certificate, you may wish to learn more about the many accredited technical and career schools in the U.S. These schools may be able to train you in a particular field in the shortest period of time since they specialize in the subject you have chosen. Remember that vocational schools generally do not offer more than a certificate. They are non degree granting institutions.

## Which Degree?

There are several types of awards for the completion of technical or academic studies. These are:

- Ⓒ Certificates - requires varied length of time
- Ⓒ Associate Degrees - usually 2 years
- Ⓒ Bachelor's Degrees - usually 4 years
- Ⓒ Master's Degrees - usually 2 years after Bachelor
- Ⓒ Doctoral Degrees - up to 5 years after Master

If you are looking for an academic degree, decide which degree you will pursue in the U.S.A. Remember that 2-year community colleges grant an Associate degree (Associate of Science - A.S.; Associate of Arts - A.A. etc.) as their highest undergraduate degree.

NOTE: There are a relatively small number of institutions that are "Upper Division" 2-year colleges. These institutions offer the last two years of study required to complete the B.A. degree.

Four-year colleges award the bachelor's degree (B.S., B.A., etc.). Academic programs leading to the graduate degree, either the Master's alone (M.A., M.S., M.B.A., etc.) or the Master's and doctorate (PH.D., M.D., etc.), may be available at these four-year schools, or you may have to transfer to another college or university to complete this level of higher education.

Make a list of those technical schools, colleges, university "departments" or special "graduate schools" that offer the program you want. Evaluate the research facilities and the faculty teaching there. Some schools or departments are known for their innovative methods of teaching. You may not have to evaluate the reputation of the entire university, just the department or school where you intend to study.

Finally, take into consideration the duration of each program along with the total cost of obtaining a particular degree. Don't forget to be realistic about the relatively high cost of living in the United States of America and Canada.

## **Applying Your Previous Education**

With few exceptions, post secondary education in your own country will be applied toward your U. S. or Canadian degree program. It is very important for you to supply the school you choose with a complete record of your education and to write a special letter asking if courses from your home country will be counted toward your American degree. You may discover that only a few of your courses will be accepted, but credit for them can be very important in helping you complete your American program more quickly. Many students are pleasantly surprised when virtually all of their previous courses are accepted by an American school.

Because of the general studies requirements, in American higher education, even students who are making a great change in field of study (such as from medicine to computer science, or economics to engineering) will find that courses from home will satisfy many general studies requirements and can save as much as a year of time.

Foreign students often make serious errors when proceeding from one level, such as a bachelor's degree at home, to another level, such as a master's degree in the U.S. particularly when there is an important change in major. Graduate schools in the U. S. have two basic requirements for graduate admission: (1) You must have a bachelor's degree and (2) You must have an adequate undergraduate background in your major. A student with a bachelor's degree in economics from home does not need a bachelor's degree in computer science to enter a graduate computer science program in North America. Instead, the North American college will require completion of certain undergraduate courses prior to acceptance into a master's or Ph.D. program (but not a second bachelor's degree). Students who understand this and who ask many questions about academic rules, may save as much as two or three years of study in completing a graduate degree.

Not all bachelor's degrees from abroad are recognized in the U. S. and Canada. This leads many students to the false conclusion that the American institution is rejecting the entire bachelor's degree program. One of many examples is the student from India with a three-year Bachelor of Commerce who will usually find that American schools will not grant admission to a master's degree program in business. American undergraduate schools, however, will accept the Bachelor of Commerce courses toward a bachelor's degree in business and will often grant nearly three years of credit toward a four-year degree program.

Occasionally, you will find that American colleges will reject all technical courses when you are accepted into an academic program. For example, an engineering school will accept a physics course in mechanics but will reject an applied mechanics course covering manufacturing machinery. On occasion, students may find that higher education from home is not recognized at all by a U. S. institution, though this is not common. It is very important to ask about "transfer credits". Each North American school sets its own standards for granting credit for study at other schools, American or foreign. If one school will accept only half of your credits, apply to another school to see if they will accept more.



Always apply at the appropriate level of education. If you have completed two years of post-secondary education in your home country, you probably should not apply to a community or junior college and you certainly should ask the school's advice before applying. If you have completed a bachelor's degree program, write to graduate schools to see if you meet their requirements for admission before writing to undergraduate schools. Graduate and undergraduate admissions are often handled in separate offices. Always address your inquiries to the Director of Graduate Admissions when you have a bachelor's degree. If you need additional undergraduate study, the Director of Graduate Admissions will explain the requirements.

## **Self-Evaluation**

Evaluate your own academic standards and those of the institution you might want to attend. If the standards are too high for you, chances are you will not be accepted for study; if too low, chances are you will be bored and not challenged as a student.

Keep in mind that most American colleges and universities base their admission decision on academic performance. Scores on standardized admissions tests are also important.

Ask your guidance counselor or teachers if they think you have a chance of being accepted at your first schools of choice.

Study the Foreign Student's Guide to American Schools Colleges and Universities and other school directories and catalogues to determine the type of programs they offer. Find out as many details about an institution as possible. You should try to obtain a catalogue or a brochure from an institution that interests you. You can request it directly from the school, or you may want to ask the International Education Service to obtain several catalogues for you at the same time. This service is free of charge.

## **Location and Climate**

The U. S. and Canada are very large countries. Canada, in fact, is the second largest country in the world, after Russia. The U. S. is about the same size as the continent of Australia. Climate, topography, and population density are extremely varied. There are high mountains and vast, flat plains, deserts and rain forests, sparsely populated areas and huge cities. Both countries stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean and feature several of the world's largest lakes and major rivers.

The population of most of the two countries lives in temperate regions with four distinct seasons. Parts of the southern and southwestern U. S., and Hawaii, are warm year round. A few areas of the northern U. S. and Canada have long, cold winters. Though a few students find it difficult to adjust to extremely cold or extremely hot climates, most schools are located in areas with weather between the two extremes. You should ask questions about climate at schools you are considering, if climate is important to you, and be sure to bring appropriate clothing. Looking at a map will not explain much. Southern Alaska, the Pacific Coast of Canada, and Seattle, in the extreme northwestern corner of the U. S., are all warmer in winter and cooler in summer than Denver or Northern Texas. Parts of California have harsh, snowy winters and parts have no cold weather at all.

For most students, other factors are more important than weather in choosing a school location. Do you prefer to be near mountains or the ocean, a large city, small community, or rural area? For students from many countries, it is important to know if there are settlements of people from their home country and whether or not it will be possible to find foods from home. Students may want to ask if there are other people of their religion near the school so they can find a mosque, a temple, or clergy of their faith.

## Asking For Advice

Discuss your problems with your educational adviser working at an educational advising center in your city. Many advising centers are located at the U.S. consulate and are operated by the United States Information Service (USIS). Some advising centers are sponsored by your own government, often in conjunction with the U.S. government. Others are sponsored by such organizations as AMIDEAST (in Middle-Eastern countries) or the Institute of International Education (IIE). The International Education Service located in Los Angeles, (Santa Monica) California can also assist you free of charge. Do not hesitate to request assistance from this agency if you need help which can be given from the United States as opposed to your local advising centers.

Many advising centers sponsor meetings at which videotapes, which advise about studying in the U.S.A., are shown. Question and answer sessions follow.

Some advising centers will offer individual sessions at which a counselor will help you make up your mind where and what to study. The advising centers that the U.S. (and Canadian) government or your government operate do not customarily charge students for their advice. Some charge only for expenses such as postage or photocopying work. However, many private educational advisers do charge a fee for their services. Be careful which private agency helps you with your application process, and remember the I-20 form which a school issues you for admissions purposes and to obtain your student visa is never for sale.

## Accreditation

American colleges and universities have formed associations that set the educational standards for themselves. The Department of Education maintains a list of recognized accrediting agencies, but there exist many others with an international or sectorial scope. The associations, called "accrediting agencies," evaluate each U.S. college and university. If the institution has achieved an acceptable rating, it is "accredited." Colleges and universities must meet minimum standards to remain accredited.

It is important to attend a school that is accredited, unless you are attending specializing institutions for which no accrediting agency exists. If you do not attend an accredited school, your own country may not recognize your degree, and you may not be able to transfer your credits to another American college or university.

Possibly, your government may insist that you earn a degree from a school with two types of accreditation. One type is regional. Regional accrediting agencies are identified geographically; for example, the "Southwest Association of Schools and Colleges." The other type is by professional accreditation: "Accrediting Commission of Career Schools/Colleges of Technology". Check the latest edition of a book published by The American Council on Education, called "Accredited Institutions of Post-secondary Education." It is available at your local school or educational advising center library.

Accreditation is not required for schools or programs which do not grant degrees, such as English language institutes. These are often legitimate and good schools.

If you have a question about the accreditation of a particular institution, ask your educational adviser, or you may write to the International Education Service.

## Costs

Keep in mind that the cost of an American college education includes more than just tuition. Attention must be given to housing, food, books, supplies, health insurance, travel, and of course personal living expenses (vacation trips, entertainment, clothing, etc.) Find out how much it costs to live in the city or town where the university is located. Prices can differ greatly between living in a small town in the Midwest or a large city on the east or west coast, for example.

The school catalogue or brochure should state the cost of studying there. The Foreign Student's Guide to American Schools Colleges and Universities lists the total cost of living per year or a designated period including tuition.

Costs vary, as you will see in the above mentioned Guide. Private colleges and universities usually have higher tuitions than State supported schools. It is important to remember that even State schools most often charge a higher rate to non-resident or foreign students. At some institutions the tuition for foreign students is two or more times the resident tuition. Room and board, books, supplies and lab fees, health insurance, expenses such as laundry, transportation, telephone, personal items, entertainment, all must be taken into consideration. A rough estimate of average span of costs would be:

State Schools from \$9,000 - \$20,000, including tuition. Private Schools from \$12,000 - \$30,000 and more, including tuition. Rates are for average undergraduate tuition. Certain institutions, such as medical schools for example, will cost much more. Technical, Vocational and English language schools may charge anything from \$400.00 per month or more for tuition only. Since these smaller schools may not have dormitory space for you, you must add to this your own cost of renting an apartment, buying your own food, and sometimes providing your own transportation. Some of these schools do not offer complete packages including tuition, room and board.

Larger colleges and universities will most often provide you with a residence and a meal plan for a set amount of money per quarter or semester or a year.

## **Other Important Considerations**

### **Programs for Spouses**

Is your spouse and/or family joining you? If so you might want to know what kind of programs or services are available for them. Many colleges offer special married student housing for couples. English language programs, or special courses may also be offered for spouses of children of students.

### **Other students**

You should know how large the student population is at a possible choice of school. Do you like lots of people around you? Or do you prefer to study with fewer students and have less distractions? Smaller schools may be able to pay more individual attention to their students.

Take into consideration whether the school is all-men, all-women, or co-educational (mixed). Ask about the number of undergraduate and post-graduate students. How many other international students attend the school? Do most of the students belong to a particular religious or ethnic group?

### **Activities**

If you are interested in certain sports, make sure the college offers you the chance to participate in these. What about choir singing, the theater, local politics? If you want to attend concerts or theatrical events, find out if this will be possible where you are studying.

It is worth taking the time to find out the availability of any of your hobbies or pastimes at either the school of your choice or the environs. Many of these questions are answered in the Foreign Student's Guide to American Schools Colleges and Universities. Check all sections including the "Remarks to Foreign Students" section. Your educational adviser will direct you to other sources of information.

### **Final Step**

When you have narrowed your list of colleges or universities, to five or ten, write to these schools for more information. You may also use the request for Application/Information form provided by the International Education Service to request information and/or application materials. These forms are also available in the American Education Magazine and in the back of the Foreign Students Guide.

The schools will mail you brochures with descriptions of their academic programs and activities. If you need further information, visit your school or educational advising center's library to see if they have any catalogues on file. If not, you might want to order one from the school of your choice (there may be a charge for airmail postage and the catalogue).

If you have no specific choice of school, but you need to find an appropriate school, you can fill out the short Application/Information forms provided by IES on which you answer questions regarding preference in major, geographical location, limit on school fees, etc. You can e-mail this form to IES and the IES Placement Service computer will come up with suitable choices for you.

## How To Apply

International students, apart from the usual academic standards, must meet certain financial and legal requirements. Each university has its own particular policies, but as a general rule, the information they will want from you will relate to one of the following items:

- ⊙ Personal Application Form
- ⊙ Academic Records
- ⊙ Teacher Recommendations
- ⊙ TOEFL
- ⊙ Other Tests: SAT/AT, GRE, GMAT, MAT
- ⊙ Application Fee
- ⊙ Proof of Financial Ability
- ⊙ Personal Application Form

Apart from your name, address and citizenship, the Admission Officer will want to know something about your background, your character, your goals and academic ambitions. Their Application for Admission forms are designed to gain this information from you. After you have read the literature in guides or in catalogues sent to you by the institution, you will understand in some way, their philosophy on life and education and what kind of students they are looking for. While obviously you should never give any incorrect or false information, you will now have a good idea of what aspects of yourself you should emphasize in your application. Present yourself in a clearly-written (typewritten is best) manner, stating your background, awards, achievements, interests (academic as well as general), sports trophies, hobbies, and life objectives.

It is important to complete all the parts of the Application for Admission form. If you leave out certain answers, your application may be set aside or not considered at all. Most applications will ask you to enter your "social security number". If you do not have a nine digit social security number assigned to you by the U.S. or Canadian government, just write "none" in the blank space after this question.

### Academic Records

All U. S. colleges and universities require official records of your previous study. Even English language programs often require proof of completion of secondary school. Each school has its own rules about the records you must send and most are very strict and allow few, or no, exceptions to their rules. It is very important to read the requirements sent to you with the school's application for admission and to supply exactly the documents required and in the form required.

The North American term "transcript" refers to the official record of courses and marks from your school. Virtually all colleges will require post secondary school transcripts when you have completed any study past high school. If you are a first year student, you will be required to supply your secondary school transcript and sometimes, your diploma as well. Many schools will require your secondary school records or diploma even if you have completed post secondary study. Also, many schools will require course descriptions, in English, for your post secondary courses.

Most North American colleges and universities will accept post-secondary school transcripts only when they are sent directly from university-to-university without passing through student hands. Read the school's instructions carefully to see if there is such a requirement. Do not expect that any exceptions will

be permitted. Work diligently to get your home university to send the transcripts promptly. Other schools will accept student copies of transcripts, or copies that have been certified by a school or notary public.

A very few schools will accept transcripts, in languages other than English, or in certain languages, such as Spanish or French. Most schools will not, and will require school records in the English language. If your ministry of education does not provide official transcripts in English, you will be required to provide official translations in English. Some schools have very specific rules about acceptable translations. Be sure to read school rules with great care. Many schools will require that you submit both an English translation and an original or certified copy in your language.

## **Teacher Recommendations**

Teacher recommendations are an important part of your application folder. A good, strong recommendation will go a long way to confirm the information you will be supplying. It would be wise to get a recommendation from a teacher who knows both you and your work well, and has taught you in a subject related to your chosen major. Two or more recommendations are useful.

## **TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language**

TOEFL scores are required by a large number of institutions as part of your application package. This test can taken in a number of countries. Please see the following pages for details on the TOEFL and other Language Tests.

Not all institutions request the TOEFL score. Some have their own institutional tests. In many cases if your TOEFL score is not satisfactory, you will be asked to attend an English language program until your English improves. Many institutions, however, will reject your application if your TOEFL score is not high enough. TOEFL score requirements are listed in the Foreign Student's Guide to American Schools Colleges and Universities.

## **Other Tests**

Many colleges and universities require students to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the Achievement Tests (AT). Usually graduate students are asked to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), and the Miller Analogies Test (MAT). Those students applying for MBA and other graduate business programs may have to take the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT). Dates, and more detailed information regarding test centers in your home country, fees, result dates, etc. can be obtained after July, 1995 at the individual addresses below.

### **SAT and AT**

(Note: the SAT and the AT cannot be taken on the same date. You must register separately for each test date.)

Admissions Testing Program of the College Entrance Examination Board  
P.O. Box 6200  
Princeton, NJ 08541-6200, U.S.A.

### **GRE**

P.O. Box 6000  
Princeton, NJ 08541-6000, U.S.A.

### **GMAT**

Educational Testing Service  
P.O. Box 6101  
Princeton, NJ 08514-6101, U.S.A.

### **MAT**

The Psychological Corporation  
555 Academic Court  
San Antonio, TX 78204, U.S.A.

For this test the student must arrange for special testing overseas through an approved examiner. This may be a teacher or educational adviser in your local area. Contact the above address for information on procedures, deadlines and test fees.

## **Application Fee**

This is a fee, payable in U.S. dollars to cover the cost of processing your application. In most cases this fee is not refundable, but some institutions will return part or all of the fee if the student withdraws his or her application within a certain designated period of time.

## **Proof of Financial Ability**

U.S. law requires schools to review evidence of your financial ability to live and study in the U. S. prior to issuing the Form I-20 or Form IAP-66 you will need to obtain a student visa and enter the U. S. to study. If you do not supply adequate documentation of financial ability, you may be denied the I-20 or IAP-66 even after meeting academic requirements and being granted admission. However, U. S. law also prohibits the issuance of the forms to students who have not been accepted for study, so your first priority is always to meet academic requirements and to send the required transcripts and diplomas.

You will be required to prove financial ability either three or four times. Private schools and many public schools will require you to prove that you can afford the school's tuition as a standard for granting admission. At the same time, or beginning shortly after you have been admitted for study, you must meet a higher standard for the school officer who is authorized to sign the I-20 or IAP-66. At that time, you must prove not only that you have money for tuition, but also that you can afford living space, food, clothing, travel expenses, health insurance, and personal necessities. Even when the school official accepts your documentation and issues the form, your proof of financial ability must be approved by the consular officer to whom you apply for a visa and, again at the port of entry, by the Immigration and Naturalization Service officer who decides whether to admit you to the U. S.

School officers use different standards for proof of financial ability. Some are very strict, because they are concerned about suffering you might undergo if you do not have enough money for food, books, or medical care. Usually, you will be required to submit affidavits (sworn statements) from sponsors stating that they will provide you with money and/or a place to live with a family member in the U. S. Sponsors will be required to show that they can afford to give the amount of money promised by providing proof of income (statements from employers or income tax returns), banks statements, or both. Bank statements showing your own money can be accepted, but only if you show that it is your own money and that it was not given to you by a relative who is your actual sponsor. Standards of proof of financial ability, by law, are stricter for your first year of study than for the remainder of your program. You must show the availability of actual cash from bank savings or sponsor income for the first year. Non-cash assets such as real estate, bonds, and stocks can be accepted as proof that you have money to support you and pay school expenses after the first year.

A few schools require you to make a cash deposit in a U. S. account to support yourself during the first year before a Form I-20 or IAP-66 will be issued. Many require that your first semester's or first year's tuition be paid in advance and a few will require a cash deposit with the school toward your living expenses.

Always read school instructions about proving financial ability carefully and follow them as closely as possible. Always keep exact copies of financial documents you send to the school, because you must show precisely the same documents to the consular officer and the immigration inspector. Some schools will return your original documents attached to your I-20 or AP-66, but many will not.

## Financial Aid and Employment

Financial aid of any kind is very rarely available from North American colleges and universities for undergraduates other than U. S. citizens and permanent residents. Financial aid for graduate students is often available, but in the form of fellowships and assistantships requiring teaching or laboratory assistance. Even at the graduate level, such help is often offered only to continuing students and not to new students. Especially at the graduate level, it is worthwhile to ask about financial aid if you need it, but you often will not get encouraging responses.

When it is available and arranged in advance, income from employment with the school can form part of your proof of financial ability for issuance of Form I-20 or IAP-66, but the income must be specified on the form and supported by a letter from the school. Occasionally, a graduate academic department will offer a fellowship or assistantship directly to a student. Do not assume that the department also provided this information to the foreign student adviser or other school official authorized to sign immigration forms. Always include information of this kind with the documentation you provide to qualify for the form.

Unless it is arranged in advance in the form of financial aid and described on your Form I-20 or IAP-66 employment in the U. S. cannot form any part of your financial support for your first year of studies. You should make no mention of plans to work when applying for a visa. Though there are several off-campus work programs available for F-1 and J-1 students, they are never certain and they are never approved before your arrival in the U. S.

Among the possible work programs after you enter are:

**On-campus employment.** F-1 students may, work on the campus of the school they are attending provided they are employed by the school itself or by an outside agency or company providing services to students on the campus. No permission is required. Students may not work more than 20 hours per week except during vacation periods. J-1 students also may work on campus but require written permission from the responsible officer who is authorized to sign Form IAP-66.

**Curricular practical training.** This is work that is part of your school's academic program (often called "cooperative education"). Not all schools offer such programs. Authorization is provided by the school's foreign student adviser on the reverse of Form I-20 for F-1 students or in the form of an authorizing letter for J-1 students. This work may be either part-time or full-time, depending upon the school's program. If you use a full 12 months of full-time F-1 curricular practical training, you will not be eligible for any other practical training.

**Optional practical training.** There are two kinds of F-1 optional practical training, training during studies and training after studies. No more than one year of such training is permitted during your entire academic program. If you use your practical training during or after a bachelor's degree program, there will be none available during or after graduate study. The training must be related to your studies and you must be a full-time student for nine months (or one academic year) before beginning the training. Training during studies is limited to 20 hours weekly except during school vacations. There is no limit to weekly hours after graduation. There are similar programs for J-1 students, who are limited to 18 months of work. Permission for optional practical training for F-1 students is authorized by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, but only upon recommendation from the school's foreign student adviser.

**Severe economic hardship employment.** This kind of employment is also authorized by the immigration Service upon a foreign student adviser's written recommendation. You are eligible after one academic year of study only if you can show that your financial situation has changed for reasons entirely beyond your control or ability to plan (for example, death or illness of a sponsor, sudden currency devaluation, or a disaster such as war, hurricane, flood, or earthquake affecting your sponsor's ability to send money).

There are two additional work programs: employment with a company that has certified to the U. S. government that part-time U. S. workers are not available, and work for an international organization. Both programs are very small and available only in certain parts of the U. S. F-2 and M-2 dependents are not permitted to work. J-2 dependents may apply to the Immigration Service for work permission, provided that the income will not be used to support the J-1 student, but such requests are not always granted.

## **Immigration Status**

The U. S. government has created 61 different categories of temporary visitors to the U. S. Most but not all, have corresponding visas. Only three of these categories are legally reserved for study: F-1 (academic or language student) J-1(exchange visitor), and M-1 (technical or vocational student). There are F-2, J-2, and M-2 statuses for the spouses and children of students. The J-1 status includes several categories other than students, including professors, researchers, camp counselors, and cultural visitors.

Some schools are authorized to accept both F-1 and J-1 students and a few may accept both F-1 and M-1 students. Though any academic or language student may qualify for F-1 status, J-1 and M-1 statuses are reserved for students in special circumstances. J-1 students must be financed, at least in part, by the U. S. or home government or be part of an exchange agreement or program. M-1 status is for work-related programs such as refrigeration and air conditioning technology, auto repair, hairdressing, or flight training. The M-1 status has very restrictive rules. An M-1 student may not change schools or even change majors at the same school without permission from the Immigration Service. An M-1 student may change to J-1 status, but not to F-1 status. M-1 practical training and other work opportunities are very limited. If your school of choice offers both F-1 and M-1 programs, you may want to give favorable consideration to the F-1 program, rather than the M-1 program. F-1 students can change majors or change schools with relative ease. J-1 students may change majors or schools only with the permission of the original school or sponsor. J-1 students may also be required to return to the home country for at least two years before continuing in the U. S. In any lawful status, even if they marry a U. S. citizen.

In the experience of most students, F-1 status is the most favorable unless special circumstances or a special educational objective requires J-1 or M-1 status.

The concept of U. S. immigration status is often misunderstood by students. It is not connected to your visa. A U. S. visa does not provide permission to enter the U. S. nor does it grant a permission to remain. A visa must be valid only to the day you enter the U. S. (unless you are exempt from visa requirements). There is no effect on your legal status if your visa expires while you are in the U. S. and F, J, and M visas cannot be renewed in the U. S. The visa is only a travel document which allows you to board an airplane or a ship destined for the U. S.

Permission to be in the U. S. comes from your most important document, Form I-94, which is issued to you at the port of entry when the Immigration and Naturalization Service grants you admission to the U. S. F-1 and J-1 students are admitted for "duration of status," which is written as "D/S" on the Form I-94. D/S means that there is no expiration date for your legal stay. You may continue to study through high school, an associate degree, a bachelor's, master's, Ph.D., and practical training, plus 60 days (30 days for J-1 students). However, your legal status depends upon your following all of the rules pertaining to your status. You must study full-time. You must not take any vacations that are not authorized. You must not work without authorization. You must obtain a new Form I-20 from each new school you attend or for each academic level, even at the same school (for example, changing from an English language program to college studies, from the associate to the bachelor's, bachelor's to master's or master's to doctoral level). You must also apply to your school for an extension of time if you have not completed your program by the date entered on your I-20 or IAP-66. Any violation of the rules ends your legal status and takes away your rights to benefits. These include such opportunities as practical training. Violations also make you technically vulnerable to an attempt by the Immigration Service to deport you, though you may be able to seek "forgiveness" through reinstatement to status by the Service for any violations (but not for unauthorized off-campus employment).

M-1 students, in contrast, are given a definite date for departure on their I-94 form. Extensions are sometimes possible.

## **The I-20 Form**

The I-20 form is a certificate from the school, addressed to the U. S. government, in which the school attests to several facts, including a belief that you are a bona fide student who intends to pursue the academic program to the end and a statement that you have been accepted by the school for a full course



of study. By itself, the form is nothing more than a piece of paper on which facts are stated. An I-20 is a required part of an F-1 visa application, but merely having one in your possession has no legal meaning.

When you are outside the U. S., the I-20 must be taken to a U. S. embassy or consulate, with copies of your financial documentation, and submitted with an application for a visa. If you are inside the U.S., the I-20 is used to notify the Immigration Service when you change schools or extend your program and may also be needed if you apply for reinstatement to student status or some other benefit.

There is a special I-20 for M-1 applicants which serves the same purposes as the I-20 for F-1 students. The IAP-66 is also a certificate and serves similar purposes for J-1 applicants.

You must sign your Form I-20 or IAP-66 before it will be accepted by a consulate, embassy, or the Immigration Service. The signature on Form I-20 constitutes an agreement to abide by the rules and grants the school permission to provide certain information about you to the Immigration Service. When your I-20 is processed, either by the school or the Immigration Service, the first sheet (pages one and two) is removed and sent to an immigration data base. You are given the second sheet, which is called the Student ID Copy.

Take special note of the date entered in item a of your I-20 or the beginning of studies date on your IAP-66. You must arrive in the U. S. and appear at the school by that date. If you cannot, you will need written instructions from the school or may have to wait until a later time to begin studies (with a new form).

Whenever you travel outside the U. S. with plans to return, you must carry your I-20 or IAP-66 with you and you must have a new signature on the form from your foreign student adviser each time you travel.

## Visas

Some F-1, J-1, and M-1 applicants are exempt from visa requirements, including Canadian citizens, British citizens resident in Canada, and British, Dutch, and French nationals who reside permanently in Caribbean territories of those countries (though the latter must present police certificates in order to enter without visas). Certain Pacific islanders and American Indians residing in Canada or Mexico may also enter without visas. Students who are visa-exempt must present Form I-20 or Form IAP-66 at the border, along with financial documentation, when entering the U. S. If admitted, they will be issued Form I-94. Except for Canadians, all applicants must have passports that are valid for at least months past the date of entry. When entering the U. S. from outside the Western Hemisphere, even Canadians must present valid passports (but not visas).

All others must obtain visas in order to reach a U. S. port of entry. In most circumstances, you will succeed in getting an F, M, or J visa only if you apply in your home country and only if you apply at the visa post (embassy or consulate) nearest your home. Exceptions are made for students who actually reside in countries other than their own, or who have permission to stay in another country for an extended period of time; also students who have no U. S. consular office in their home country.

You must complete a visa application form and present both your Form I-20 or IAP-66 and the same financial documentation you provided to your school. The consul may ask you for other documents. Student visas are issued, usually by the hundreds or thousands to students from virtually every country in the world. Often, however, students hear rumors from friends or family that it is "impossible" to get an F-1 visa from certain consulates.

It is possible. What students do not hear is that visas were denied because the visa application was poorly made. Before applying for a visa, it is necessary to know the rules and to prepare carefully. The following information will help you to prepare carefully:

Under the rules the consul must follow, you will be regarded as a person who intends to come permanently to the U. S. . Unless you convince the consul that you intend to return to your home country, you will be found legally ineligible for an F-1, J-1, or M-1 visa. Since "intention" is a state of mind, proving it can be difficult for a young person with no career or property at home. In any way you can, show ties to your home country. A written offer of a job in your home country after your U. S. studies is

very helpful. If you have a brother or sister who studied in the U. S. and returned home, take their passports to show to the counsel. If your family owns property or a business in your home country, take deeds or other records (do not simply tell the consul about these facts). If you have family members both in the U. S. and at home, emphasize those who are at home. If your family has social prominence or positions of leadership or honor in your home country, take evidence of these facts. It helps if at least part of your financial sponsorship comes from your home country, even if most of it comes from the U. S. If you or your immediate family, have money in a bank in your home country, take your bank statement, even if this money is not going to be used for your education and was not used to provide financial ability to obtain Form I-20 or Form IAP-66.

Be very definite about your study plans. Be prepared to say why you picked the school for which you are destined.

Be ready to describe your academic program and the kind of career or job it will help you get in your home country. Explain, if asked, why it is better to study in the U. S. than at home. Be prepared to offer facts and evidence on paper rather than discussion of your personal needs or desires.

Do not despair if your application is denied. Some students apply several times before succeeding, though you must have new facts or evidence with each application. Take careful notes concerning the date, place, and the name of the consul, if possible. Some schools will offer advice and assistance when your visa is denied (some will not), but the school cannot help if you do not provide detailed information and a copy of any written visa denial you may receive. You may not appeal a visa denial, but you may ask that the consul's decision be reviewed.

## **After you are accepted**

The Admission Office will send you a letter that you have been accepted. At this time, they will ask you to comply with various requirements. They will ask you to confirm that you accept the offer of admittance.

Depending on the school's policy, you will be asked to send either a deposit towards full payment of fees, or send a full year's fees in advance. Often they will ask if you wish to apply for campus housing and if so you will be asked to send a deposit. They will also send instructions on how to prepare for your first term. It is suggested that students respond to these questions and requirements immediately, in order to secure your admission without any last minute problems.

## **Waiting List**

It is possible that the university you prefer will offer to put you on their waiting list - that is, you have the qualifications for acceptance at this institution, and your name is put on a waiting list for the first available opening. It is advisable to accept the waiting list status, but go ahead and accept a place at a university which is second or third choice. Should your waiting list status change later on to a definite offer, you can always cancel out of your second choice university. (Be prepared, however, to lose your deposit.)

## **Grading and Credits**

During your studies in the United States you will be graded on all your examinations and you will receive a final grade for the performance during the entire semester, trimester or quarter. The most common method of grading is by letter or number in the following way:

A = 4 = Superior  
B = 3 = Good

C = 2 = Average  
D = 1 = Poor  
F = Loser  
I = Incomplete

The student will receive a failing grade if the work is not completed within a specified time.

Pass/Fail Some schools use only the Pass/Fail method in which a student either passes (and receives credit for the courses) or Fails (and does not receive credit).

Examinations in the United States are almost all in writing. You will be tested either with an essay test where you will have to write down your own thoughts on a subject, or you may be tested with a "multiple-choice" test where you will have to choose the correct answer from a number of choices given. Oral examinations are used only in the defense of a graduate thesis.

American undergraduate and master's degree programs are completed by accumulating credits. Credits are best understood if you think of them as building blocks. Most associate degrees require 64 to 68 credits; bachelor's degrees, 120 to 136 credits, and master's degrees, 24 to 60 credits, depending upon the major. Each successfully completed course contributes credits to the total. A typical lecture course will meet for one hour, three times each week during a semester, trimester or quarter. By completing and passing the course, you earn three credits. Students usually enroll for between 12 and 16 credits each term as undergraduates, but for fewer credits as graduate students.

## **Transferring schools**

You are expected to study at the school indicated on your I-20 form. If you decide to switch schools before leaving your country, you should see your local visa officer. You may transfer schools upon arrival in the U.S. but you will need the permission of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and receive a new I-20 form from the transferring school.

## **Staying in the U.S. after studies**

With an F type visa you may stay in the U.S. up to one year for practical training after completing your studies. With an M visa you may stay up to 6 months. You would require a recommendation from your school that such training would not be available in your home country. An Exchange Student may remain for an additional 18 months in the U.S. if your sponsor approves this training.

The international student advisers on campus keep up with all the changes in the immigration and visa laws and it is a good idea to check in with them, and ask advice about any problems or questions you may have.

## **Health Insurance**

It is a firm legal requirement that all J-1 students and their J-2 dependents carry a specified minimum amount of insurance to cover accident, illness, medical evacuation, or return of remains in case of death. Many schools require that F-1 students maintain the same amount of insurance required of J-1 students.

Health care is very good in the United States, but it is also very expensive and is not provided by the government. Even if your school does not require insurance, it is dangerous planning not to buy it. Your college may have a special insurance plan for you to join. If not, there are several special insurance programs for foreign students. Your foreign student office will have more information on these.

If you are free to choose among several plans, you should be aware of "deductibles." The deductible is the amount you pay from your own funds to the doctor or hospital. It is the part which is not covered by the insurance. The insurance company pays the remainder of the bill.

## Housing

Some students prefer to live on campus, others prefer to live in their own apartments, or take a room with a family. Again, each college has its own policy regarding housing and many in fact require first year students to live on campus. If you decide to stay on campus you will be asked to send a deposit upon your acceptance. You will be offered assistance in finding suitable accommodation if you prefer to live off campus. It should be remembered that if you find private accommodation, you will be asked to sign a lease contract (usually for a year), and you will most often be required to pay:

- one month's rent in advance
- one month's rent as "last month's rent"
- and the equivalent of one month's rent as a damage deposit

As we mentioned before, if you are attending a technical or vocational school or a private English language program, you need to make sure that housing is available in the vicinity of the school. You may wish to find out if the school offers you help in finding proper housing, or if the school has its own housing. It is important to find out if you can be housed within walking-distance from the school, or if you will have to take public transportation. In some cases buses are not available to transport you to the school. In this case you will have to secure your own transportation. Used or new cars or motorcycles can be purchased easily in the U.S., but you must add their cost to your expenses, and of course you will have to have a local or an international driver's license.

## Definitions of academic terms

**Academic Year:** Usually of 9 months duration. It will consist of either two terms (semesters), three terms (tri-mesters) or quarters (four terms). Schools on semester or trimester calendars usually offer optional summer terms for students who want to complete their programs more quickly.

**ACT:** An achievement test which measures subject ability and required by some colleges and universities for admission.

**Credit:** A unit of academic work successfully completed. Depending on the particular course, the time spent in class, or the difficulty of the subject, a course might be worth 1, 2 or 3 credits. Usually equivalent to the number of lessons per week/per semester. (i.e. 3 credits = 3 lessons per week during one semester).

**Deadline:** The time by which something must be submitted. If you submit something after the deadline, it most probably will not be reviewed. Most institutions have an application deadline and it is important that you are aware of these dates.

**Faculty:** The professors or teachers who are employed at the educational institution.

**Graduate student:** A student who has entered studies for his Master's or Doctoral degrees.

**GRE:** Graduate Records Examination, a test required from students who wish to be considered for acceptance into graduate school.

**High School:** Generally this term refers to an educational institution which offers grades 9 to 12 and is attended by students from ages 14 to 18. It is the standard secondary school completed before applying to college, or any post-secondary school.

**Major:** The subject in which a student specializes and, usually, the area in which a student plans a career.

**Minor:** The subject studied at a less concentrated level and in order to round out an education.

**Placement Test:** Most schools give these tests to new students in order to place them at a level of class most suited to their needs.

**Prerequisite:** A requirement that is asked from a student before he or she can register or advance to a higher level. For example, some courses cannot be taken before the completion of a lower level course. For example: Business 101 may be a prerequisite for taking Business 102.

**Quarter:** A division of the academic year into four equal parts with brief vacations between each.

**SAT:** (Scholastic Aptitude Test) An achievement test required by most colleges and universities.

**Semester:** A division of the academic year. This year is divided into two semesters, or terms, in the academic year (9 months).

**Term:** See "Quarter" and "Semester" and "Trimester".

**TOEFL:** (Test of English as a Foreign Language). This test is required of students whose native language is not English. Each school has its own scoring level for admission.

**Trimester:** A division of the academic year where the academic year of nine months is divided into three terms.

**Undergraduate:** An Associate or Bachelor's degree. A student must have these degrees before continuing in a graduate program for a master's or doctorate degrees.

## Academic Year

Many schools divide their academic year into two terms or semesters, but some have the trimester system, that is, they divide the year into three terms. Still others use the quarter system, or four terms. The academic year begins in fall - end of August or beginning of September - and continues through to the end of May or beginning of June. Although it is possible to enter school at the beginning of any term, it is strongly advised to do so at the fall term, as many of the classes are designed to be followed consecutively from the beginning. Also it is easier to make friends when all students begin at the same time.

## Vacations

**Thanksgiving:** The fourth Thursday in November and the following Friday. This holiday commemorates the Pilgrims' good harvest of 1621 and is celebrated with prayers of thanks and feasting.

**Winter Break:** Two weeks in late December and early January. They include time off for Christmas holidays.

**Spring Break:** One week in March or April.

**Other Vacation Time:** Some schools and colleges may also close their doors for a variety of religious and national holidays. These holidays are short one or two day breaks. You may not be able to plan any trips for these mini-vacations, but many Americans do plan to enjoy some days off work. Generally if the holiday is close to a week-end, it will be tagged on to the week-end creating what is called a "long week-end" of three days or more.

## **Upon Arrival to the U.S.**

Wherever your airplane lands in the United States, or when you arrive at the border station you reach when entering by land from Canada or Mexico, the first thing you should be ready for is inspection by customs and immigration officials. Customs will often ask many questions, and may examine your luggage. The embassy or consulate will have placed your Form I-20 or IAP-66 in a sealed envelope for presentation to an immigration officer.

The immigration officer may or may not ask a few simple questions. He or she will then place inspection stamps on your I-20 or IAP-66 and on your Form I-94. You will be given the student copy of your school form and an I-94 departure record on which your immigration status (F-1, J-1, or M-1) will be written, along with the time you are required to leave the U. S. (D/S for F-1 and J-1 students, and a definite date for M-1 students). Though tiny, the I-94 is your most important document. It is your permission to enter and remain in the U. S. Do not lose it. Your I-20 is also important and should be kept in a safe place. Your I-94 should be firmly stapled to your passport, on the page opposite your visa.

If you are on medication, be sure to bring a letter from your doctor describing the medication and what it is for.

## **Arriving on Campus**

One of the items which should be sent to you by the school should be a calendar of events. Many schools will send several separate papers describing arrangements to begin school, including placement testing, academic advisement, registration, and the first day of classes. Among these papers will be information on the orientation program or programs. Most schools offer general orientation for all students and a special separate program for foreign students. Do not miss these programs (they may be required, but attend even if they are not). Orientation sessions will explain how the American education system works and will usually include a segment on your rights and obligations under the immigration regulations. You will be told about expected behavior in the classroom, including oral participation, which is given importance in American education. You will be told how the grading and credit systems work, how to choose a major and what courses you are expected to take for general and major requirements.

Do not expect anything more than general answers about term papers, assigned books, reports, or examinations. In America, these matters are decided by individual professors, not the school, and even two professors teaching the same course may assign different books. They make different decisions on papers and examinations and may use different standards for awarding grades. Often, foreign student orientation will include a tour of the campus or surrounding community and guidance on special services and academic advisement.

## **Where to go for more help**

In most countries of the world, the United States government employs Educational advisers who are trained and happy to help you with questions about your plans to study in the United States. These advisers are generally at the United States Information Service (USIS) office which is often located at or near the United States Embassy or Consulate. However, the Institute for International Education (IIE) and the Fulbright Centers also offer counseling services for foreign students.

In the United States, the International Education Service (IES) located in Los Angeles (Santa Monica) California will assist you with any additional questions about any American and Canadian institution, and will request application forms for you. You may use the IES Application/Information Request Forms to request several application forms at the same time. You may contact IES at the address and phone number provided in the beginning of this publication, or FAX us at (310) 576 3479. All IES services are free of charge to all students.