International Student Orientation: Designing an On-Going Program for Soka University

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SIT Graduate Institute
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORIENTATION:
DESIGNING AN ON-GOING PROGRAM FOR SOKA UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The United States continues to host more international students than any other country in the world. Not surprisingly, universities in California hosted the largest number of international students with 94,279 (Open Doors, 2010). With more than 40 percent of its students consisting of international students, Soka University of America (SUA), located in Aliso Viejo, California, is one of the universities contributing to the influx of international students. As the number of international students increases, it becomes more crucial to have a structure in place to support these students, especially as they encounter many adjustment issues. Institutions can play a major role in facilitating international students’ adjustments to life in a new culture with the supporting activities and programs incorporated into an international student orientation. With a successful international student orientation, these students are able to cope and foresee any potential issues that might affect their time spent studying in a foreign country. Therefore, in this capstone, the International Student Life Coordinator examines the overall needs of international students and designs an international student orientation program that addresses the issues in a manner which is most applicable to SUA students. It will pay special attention to theory, needs assessment, and curriculum.
INTRODUCTION

The United States continues to host more international students than any other country in
the world. International students are valued and welcomed in the United States because they
bring rich experiences and unique cross-cultural perspectives that help to internationalize the
campus and give American students first-hand opportunities to learn about the world. According
to the recent Open Doors 2010 report that is published annually by the Institute of International
Education (IIE), the number of international students at colleges and universities in the United
States increased by 3 percent to 690,923 during the 2009/10 academic year. Not surprisingly,
universities in California hosted the largest number of international students with 94,279 (Open
Doors, 2010). As the number of international students increases, it becomes more crucial to have
a structure in place to support these students.

Soka University of America (SUA), located in Aliso Viejo, California, is one of those
universities contributing to the influx of international students. SUA is a four-year undergraduate
institution whose mission is to foster a steady stream of global citizens who live contributive
lives. In keeping with its mission to foster global citizens, all students are required to study
abroad during their junior year. Out of the entire student population, 42 percent are from outside
of the United States, which contributes to an environment where students can naturally learn to
interact with people from different countries and acquire cross-cultural perspectives. In fact, for
the first time, SUA was included in the U.S. News and World Report Best College Rankings
2012, and was ranked first in the “Most Students Studying Abroad” and the “Most International
Students” categories for Liberal Arts Colleges. In addition to the regularly admitted international
students, there are international students enrolled in the Extended University Bridge Program
(EUBP), which is a 30-week intensive English program. These students are conditionally
accepted to the undergraduate program and have the opportunity to prepare and improve their
English in communication and critical thinking skills necessary for their undergraduate studies. Upon successful completion of the EUBP, these students are admitted to the freshmen class for the following year.

The international students at SUA are an essential component of both the academic and social life on campus. Unlike some universities, international students do not take classes by themselves or live in a separate dormitory. Rather, they are appreciated for their cultural and global perspectives and are fully integrated into the SUA community. Since nearly half of the student population consist of international students, SUA has not had a department or office dedicated to these students in order to avoid being misinterpreted as giving preferential treatment to international students. While a Manager of International Student Services has existed, she has been fulfilling the role of the Designated School Officer (DSO) – therefore, primarily providing international students with visa support and assistance in maintaining their legal status. Interestingly, the Manager of International Student Services reports to the head of the Office of Admissions. All other services for international students (i.e. financial aid, career services, counseling, etc.) are provided by each of the different offices located throughout the campus, just like they are for the general student population. Therefore, all services and information that the University has provided have been the same for international and domestic students.

In recent years, the University has recognized that international students have particular needs and that they require support in adjusting to American life. While they do not wish to create a separate department or office dedicated to international students, they have recognized the benefit of having a staff who could listen to their concerns, coordinate services, and serve as liaison between international students and the other offices or resources on/off-campus. For this
reason, the Office of Student Affairs has established a new position, the International Student Life Coordinator, to which the author has been promoted. Since the University has a DSO in place, the International Student Life Coordinator will not be responsible for immigration matters. Rather, as one of the branches of Student Services, the International Student Life Coordinator will focus on how to facilitate international students’ adaptation to SUA life and what services the University can provide to enhance their experience while they are here.

This capstone examines the overall needs of international students and designs an international student orientation program that addresses these issues in a manner which is most applicable to SUA students. It will pay special attention to theory, needs assessment, and curriculum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

International students often face unique challenges as they try to adjust to a new life in a foreign place. One of the first studies conducted by the Committees on Friendly Relations Among Foreign Students revealed seven major problem areas of international student adjustment: academic or curriculum issues; language difficulties; economic/financial issues; housing difficulties; social interactions; difficulties in health and recreation; and problems in racial discrimination and prejudice (Hammer, 1992). Despite these results, international students’ adjustment needs were not seriously taken into consideration until the 1950s, when the government increased their efforts in attracting international students to American universities and colleges. As their population on-campus grew, it became more apparent to university officials that international students had issues and needs that pertained only to them. Consequently, the demand for broader research about these needs and adjustment issues increased. Interestingly, numerous studies have shown consistency in identifying similar issues
as the first study conducted by the Committees on Friendly Relations Among Foreign Students (Klineberg and Hull, 1979; Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986; Lee, Abd-Ella and Burks, 1981; Peterson and Neumeyer, 1948; Riley and Peterson, 1949). Some of those issues are highlighted below.

When students decide to attend a university in the United States, the first challenge they encounter is figuring out how to finance their education. While most people – like the faculty and administration from the two universities studied by Galloway and Jenkins – assume that acquiring the English language is the most problematic area in adjustment issues, financial concerns also weigh heavily on international students’ minds (Galloway & Jenkins, 2009). This is understandable, since getting an education in the United States is very expensive. While domestic students have options such as scholarships, federal grants, Stafford loans and work-study programs to finance their education, international students have very few options. In addition, international students must prove that they have sufficient funds to cover their first year of study and demonstrate that they have resources available to pay for the rest of the duration of their educational program in order to get their F-1 visa approval. With little to no need-based aid for international students, they often have to pay out of pocket or take out a private loan. Trying to earn money while at school is also difficult because job options are limited. Due to immigration laws, international students can only work on campus. Therefore, the combination of financial difficulties, immigration issues, and employment for international students can make an international students’ life a nightmare.

Once international students arrives on-campus, one of the greatest challenges that they face is the language barrier. Understanding the language presents a major problem for any person moving into a different culture. The issues they encounter with the language can vary from
keeping up with how fast Americans speak and deciphering the language through the unintelligible accents to understanding the correct usage and idiomatic expressions of the language. Inadequate language skills often diminish the international students’ ability to understand what is going on in the classroom and to be able to express themselves. In a study conducted by Galloway and Jenkins (2009), international students at two private, religiously affiliated universities were surveyed to determine the extent of their adjustment issues in the United States. They also did a regression analysis to see how student problems varied between demographics and English language components. Not only did this study reveal that English language was the third largest adjustment issue for international students, but it is also the largest determinant of international student problems (Galloway & Jenkins, 2009). Therefore, Galloway and Jenkins recommend either having a more rigorous admission process or developing academic support programs which help to improve English language skills.

Along with difficulty in acquiring the language and financial matters, another major adjustment problem is academic performance. Often this issue ties into international students’ difficulty in acquiring the language. As mentioned previously, the language barrier directly affects academic performance of students. Under normal circumstances, what would be easily accomplished in their native language – such as understanding the lectures, taking notes, taking exams, completing and understanding the texts and writing assignments, and expressing their opinions or asking questions in class– becomes a very difficult task. Several studies also cite international students’ unfamiliarity with the American educational system as also factors hindering international students’ academic performance (Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998; Thomas and Althen, 1989). The culture of American education can be quite different from their country of origin. For example, the student-faculty relationships are often more informal; student class...
participation is required; the grading system and the way in which one is evaluated (i.e. participation in class discussions, papers, group projects, quizzes, etc.), as well as the way students conduct research and views of academic honesty, is different. Since these differences are more rooted in cultural differences, it may often take more time to adapt, and thus, in the meantime, negatively affect their academic performance.

Part of the adjustment issues that international students face include adapting to American culture - from learning American behaviors, such as tipping waiters, to embracing distinctly American values (i.e. individualism, freedom of choices). International students often experience culture shock, especially those that come from countries that are vastly different from the United States. Oberg (1954), the person who coined the term, describes it as “the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse.” Both, Adler (1975) and Bennett (1977) recognized that people experience a similar type of shock when they are in the state of transition in their lives - not just when they are going into a different culture. Thus, Bennett defined culture shock as transition shock in an alien cultural framework.

Perhaps because social interactions are also culturally bound, another issue that international students face is creating social networks. International students often feel lonely in their new environment due to lack of familiar friends and social networks, as well as familiar cultural and/or linguistic environments. Sherry (2010) notes one of the major themes that came about from the survey results was the absence of friendships with Americans. International students tended to befriend fellow international students. Some of the reasons for having difficulty in making host country friends included Americans not being friendly enough to hang out with international students or not having perhaps enough comfort level with people from different cultures (Sherry, 2010). Yet, several studies have shown that creating social networks,
particularly between international and domestic students, lead to easier adjustment (Abe et. al, 1998; Udoh, 2000; Zimmerman, 1995). For example, in Abe et. al (1998)’s study, the Office of Residential Life and the Office of International Student Services at a public university in the Midwest came together to create a semester-long International Peer Program (IPP). They compared scores of IPP participating versus non-participating students on social adjustment subscale of the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. They found that IPP participating international students scored higher on the social adjustment subscale and international students’ interpersonal skills enhanced as a result of the program.

In addition to various adjustment issues, international students also experience many psychological difficulties. Many works suggest the need for some sort of cross-cultural adjustment counseling to help international students cope with the stresses associated with living and learning in a new, unfamiliar environment (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1989; Paige, 1990; Pedersen, 1991). They are a vulnerable population because even though they are at risk for mental health issues, they are known to underutilize the available services. Several works in cross-cultural counseling and mental health have examined ways in which institutions can improve or provide more culturally sensitive services (Bradley et. al, 1995; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Mori, 2000; Pedersen, 1991).

As one can see, there are many adjustment issues that international students face. However, institutions can play a major role in facilitating the students’ adjustment to life in a new culture. One of the most effective ways is through having an international student orientation. In fact, NAFSA - a professional association dedicated to advancing international education - published its third edition of NAFSA’S Guide to Education Abroad for Advisors and Administrators (NAFSA, 2005) and in it, it emphasizes the importance of orientation by saying
that it is one of the most critical components of study abroad programming. While the guide focuses on outgoing programs, which send American students abroad, the advice that is given is applicable for incoming programs since international students are foreign students studying abroad in the United States. Orientation is an effective way to facilitate students’ learning because it prevents incapacitating stress on the learner by familiarizing what to expect. Many researchers agree that foreigners’ ability to adapt in a new culture is enhanced by their preparedness to face the unknown and familiarizing themselves with the new culture (Brislin, 1974; Grove, 1989; Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988; Kim, 1988). Referring to preparation for culture shock, Brislin (1974) states, “When people prepare for unpleasant, aversive events that could occur in the future, the impact of those aversive events is much less severe than if people did not prepare” (p.3). Therefore, as an institution, SUA can ease international students’ anxiety and help them adapt better to their new environment by providing knowledge of the host culture prior to and after arrival in the host society. By creating a comprehensive international student orientation program that is on-going, many of the international student adjustment issues can be addressed.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

In keeping with SUA’s mission to foster a steady stream of global citizens who live contributive lives, SUA enthusiastically welcomes international students and values the diversity they bring to our community. For this reason, SUA is committed to assisting international students’ transition and adjustment to living in the United States, and, furthermore, to the University. As part of the incoming class, international students already go through New Student
Orientation, which is designed to assist all students through transition to college life. Part of their needs is met through this New Student Orientation, whose goals are the following:

1. For students to have sense of belonging
2. For students to feel important
3. To help students succeed

By fulfilling these goals, the New Student Orientation program aids in the institutional goal of retention.

International student orientation aims to reinforce and fulfill these New Student Orientation goals by providing additional support for international students. Since international students have particular needs, the international student orientation will focus especially on the third goal of providing the tools for international students to succeed at SUA. The objectives for international student orientation are as follows:

- International students will learn about the resources and professional services that are available to international students in the areas of academic matters, financial matters, health care, English language needs, and personal and cultural concerns
- International students will become knowledgeable in the cultural adjustment process and learn ways to cope with it
- International students will gain understanding of institutional values and culture
- International students will develop sensitivity regarding cultural differences
- International students will gain practical skills in studying and maintaining health and wellness
- International students will be prepared for re-entry and cultural re-adjustment upon their return home
NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This year marks the tenth anniversary of SUA. Although SUA is still in its formative years, it has made unimaginable progress and development within this short period of time. One of the remarkable accomplishments includes being ranked 64th in Top 100 National Liberal Arts Colleges according to the *U.S. News and World Report Best Colleges Rankings 2012*. Part of SUA’s success, thus far, stems from its continuous dedication to improve and advance its programs. On several occasions, the University President has shared his vision and hope for SUA to become one of the top liberal arts colleges in the nation. Creating a comprehensive international student orientation program, based on students’ needs, will contribute to achieving this goal. It will support international students’ transitions to SUA and give them additional tools to succeed, thereby increasing retention rate. In addition, a comprehensive international student orientation will help bring SUA up to speed with the current and best practices in the international education field. So what are SUA international student’s needs?

As discussed in the Literature Review, previous studies have discovered approximately six to seven areas of adjustment needs for international students. They are in the areas of health (both mental and physiological) issue, financial matters, cultural matters, academic matters, language acquisition, and social interactions. These categories serve as the basis to examine SUA’s international students’ needs. The Manager of International Student Services, Mary Kan, and the English Language Programs Coordinator, Eugene Lee, were interviewed to better assess these needs. They were chosen because they are staff members who have the most interactions with international students.

**Health**
When asked to rank the top three international student needs on the SUA campus, both Kan and Lee included health issues. Working with the EUBP students, Lee (personal communication, October 3, 2011) says, “Students come here all excited, and don’t realize how the differences in time, climate, water, etc. take a toll on their health. For example, if they are coming from a more humid climate, they don’t realize that they need to drink more water to stay hydrated because it’s so dry here in California...If they start off by getting sick, it gets harder to overcome their homesickness, too.” She suggests programs to promote health and wellness, such as tips on eating healthy, would be a great addition. On a more practical note, international students also need orientation about SUA’s health insurance policy. While they receive the policy, they often do not understand how to read it, and as a result, they do not understand what is covered under their health insurance.

While Lee’s concern sheds light on maintaining physical health and wellness, Kan sheds light on concerns for mental health. As the DSO, who maintains international students’ visas, Kan observes that one of the common reasons for international students to take a leave absence is for health reasons. There are various stress factors in international students’ lives, such as being in a new culture and new environment, living with a roommate, concerns about their families, and keeping up with their academics. These factors could be addressed if they utilized the counseling services available to them. “It’s not that mental health awareness is not being promoted. It is, but students aren’t taking advantage of the counseling services,” says Kan (personal communication, October 3, 2011). As she points out, for some students, the concept of “counseling” may not exist in their cultural framework. On the other hand, it may exist but “counseling” may have negative connotations or stigma associated with it. Therefore,
international students need to be educated on what “counseling” is in the United States and what counseling services provide.

Whether it is the physiological or mental health issues, both Lee and Kan agree that meeting international students’ health needs are important. Health is the foundation for their success. If students are not healthy, they are unable to function in class. As a result, students often fall behind in class work and become disappointed when their performance is not up to par, creating a negative cycle of failure. As Lee (personal communication, October 3, 2011) stated, “Health is the basis for everything in order for the students to perform and succeed as a student.”

Financial

With many studies highlighting financial matters as one of the top concerns for international students, it is not surprising that both staff members also identified this as one of their top international student needs. Both pointed to the fact that many international students worry about the financial burden they are placing on their families back home. This is especially the case for EUBP students, who pay everything out of pocket. Fortunately, SUA is one of the few universities that offer financial assistance to international students, so when they are admitted to the undergraduate program, they are eligible for various scholarships, awards, institutional grants and loans. For example, in an effort to promote greater diversity and access to higher education for both domestic and international students, SUA offers the Soka Opportunity Scholarship (SOS) in which students whose family annual income is below $60,000 a year is eligible for free tuition. Over 90 percent of SUA students, both domestic and international, received financial aid totaling over eight million dollars in 2010. As one can see, SUA tries its utmost to provide necessary financial assistance. Therefore, other than the financial resources, how can SUA support international students? Rather than the issue of finding financial resources
to fund students’ education, Lee and Kan point to the need of managing students’ stress associated with financial difficulties.

International students often worry about their family’s financial struggle. Some feel guilty coming to SUA because they are spending their family’s often limited resources. This puts pressure on the student to succeed. While this pressure can be a motivator to succeed, in excess, this pressure can lead to self-deprecating behaviors. Therefore, it is important to manage students’ expectations and assuage their feelings of guilt. As Lee (personal communication, October 3, 2011) mentioned, “While we may not be able to help them financially, we can listen to their concerns. Just being able to listen takes off a certain burden/pressure off their shoulder by having someone know. Also, by knowing their family’s financial circumstances, I can make recommendations appropriate to their circumstances.”

Another area of financial matters that Kan felt international students need assistance in was taxes. First, there is a need to educate students about taxes because for some students, taxes are a foreign concept. As mentioned above, many international students at SUA receive financial aid. If their financial aid package includes scholarships, awards, and/or grants, they may be taxed for whatever amount that is applied outside of tuition and nominal expenses, such as room and board. Kan indicated that because some students are unaware of this, sometimes students are shocked and feel cheated when they see their account is not credited for the entire amount of their financial package (personal communication, October 3, 2011). Therefore, in order to avoid this confusion, students need to be forewarned and also, encouraged to file taxes so they have an opportunity to receive a refund from their withheld taxes. Since SUA cannot assist students with the tax filing process, the University has purchased a software program, CINTAX, to help them. Therefore, educating students about taxes and filing taxes will be helpful during international student orientation.
Lastly, the banking part of financial matters needs to be addressed. Every year, Student Affairs arrange bank representatives to come to campus during the first week of New Student Orientation so students can open accounts. However, the common questions that the International Student Life Coordinator receives are “What is the difference?” or “What do you recommend?” These questions are reasonable for many students, since it will be their first time to open a bank account, let alone one in a foreign country. Therefore, informing students on how to compare various banks would be useful.

**Culture**

An additional aspect that international students require assistance in is cultural adjustment. Culture shock is one of the major issues that anyone entering a new culture faces. Therefore, it is important for international students to be educated about the culture they are entering - in this case American culture and also SUA’s institutional culture – as well as, the cultural adjustment process. By becoming aware of the cultural adjustment process, students can be aware of what they are going through and be prepared for when the culture shock hits them. At the same time, since students are coming from various different countries, students may encounter clashes with various cultures within the classroom or in the residence halls. This may especially be the case if students from different countries are roommates. Therefore, students need to gain skills that will allow them to facilitate cross-cultural understanding, communication and adaptation.

**Academic**
For the Manager of International Student Services, academic matters were also a very important need that had to be addressed. Since the academic culture at SUA may greatly differ from that of their own country, it is important to inform and prepare international students for that difference. This is more so in the case of SUA because of its small class size, which require students to be active participants. Explaining about these cultural differences (i.e. course load, expectations in the classroom, writing style differences, etc.) and learning about key study skills would allow students to be better prepared for their academic experience. Also, informing international students about the various resources that could help them when they are encountering academic difficulty will assist in the students’ success.

Language and Social Interactions

Surprisingly, the two adjustment needs that were of least concern for Lee and Kan were the language needs and social interactions. For most other universities, English language acquisition would most likely be one of the top concerns and needs. However, interestingly both, the English Language Programs Coordinator and Manager of International Student Services mentioned that while language is a concern, it is not the primary one. As the English Language Programs Coordinator (personal communication, October 3, 2011) mentioned, “Although they stress about language, they can express themselves in some way. It’s not as if they can’t completely speak in English. They had to be in the top of their class to get this far so they can do it.” She also says that since there are so many international students, domestic students become accustomed to having them in class and develop patience to hear them out. This accepting environment of SUA eases the difficulty in utilizing and acquiring the language for international students. Therefore, pointing out resources that could help international students when they are having difficulty with the language may be sufficient.
Out of the various adjustment issues that the international students face, neither Lee nor Kan really touched upon their social interactions. This is probably because international students at SUA do not have a major issue in integrating themselves to the campus community. While most campuses worry about getting international students involved and becoming part of the university, SUA worries about students becoming too involved. Because of the university’s small size and student-centered philosophy, students are involved in many aspects of campus life. International students are not an exception. In fact, many international students take leadership roles in the student clubs and committees, which attest to how well they are integrated into the SUA community. In addition, as part of New Student Orientation, various formal and informal activities are in place for students to get to know each other in the hopes that it will facilitate student interaction and create a sense of belonging. Since the language acquisition and social interactions piece were not identified as primary needs through the needs assessment, these two areas will be low priority areas when considering the design and curriculum of the international student orientation program.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

SUA’s academic calendar runs as follows: fall semester, winter block, and spring semester. However, the freshmen class has an additional summer block before fall semester, in which students take their freshmen seminar class, Core I, and also participate in the New Student Orientation activities. Therefore, the new international student orientation will commence in the summer block of 2012 with the incoming freshmen class and continue for the rest of the academic year until April 2013.

CURRICULUM
Having examined the international students’ needs at SUA, the next step is designing the actual content of the international student orientation program. The author has also considered the structure of the program. Often, orientation activities are held at the beginning of a program and, sometimes, at the end of it. However, both *NAFSA’S Guide to Education Abroad for Advisors and Administrators* (NAFSA, 2005) and the *Orientation Handbook for Youth Exchange Programs* (Grove, 1989) agree that orientation should be an on-going activity rather than meeting once in their four years. Grove (1989) describes the conceptual foundation for a comprehensive orientation program for youth exchange programs and outlines twelve principles. According to the fifth principle, orientation activities should be held periodically throughout the exchangee’s intercultural experience. Typically, any person going into a different cultural environment will go through a basic cycle – pre-departure, arrival, settling and fitting in, and preparation to return. Therefore, a comprehensive international student orientation program should plan activities for each of these phases: a pre-departure orientation, arrival orientation, on-going orientation, and returning orientation.

Please note that Appendix A contains a more detailed curriculum plan, including the objectives and agenda for each of the orientation activities below. Although these are the primary sketches of a curriculum plan, further details will emerge as the time of delivery nears and the International Student Life Coordinator has an opportunity to discuss with other collaborators. The curriculum plan will be further developed to include time allocation, necessary materials and further content details.

**Pre-Departure Orientation**
Orientation for international students should begin prior to students’ departure to the United States. Since SUA’s international students come from various countries, one way to prepare them is through sending pre-departure information. By sending pre-departure information, it helps the students begin their preparation for studying abroad and allows students to anticipate what to expect.

Every year, incoming freshmen receive their acceptance letter and welcome packet in March. Included in the welcome packet is a welcome brochure, which explains the steps that students need to take in order to attend SUA, important forms, as well as a list of items to bring. As part of the welcome packet, the International Student Life Coordinator will include a pre-departure handout for international students. The handout will outline some practical and logistical preparatory tips (See Appendix B). After the welcome packet is sent out to students, the International Student Life Coordinator will upload this handout to the New Student Orientation page on the Soka.edu website so they have access to it online.

Currently, the New Student Orientation page only has four subpages: “Important Forms and Checklists,” “Student Orientation Leaders,” “Hotels, Dining, and Entertainment,” and “Directions from Airport.” Another subpage called, “Preparing to Come to SUA,” will be added under the “Important Forms and Checklists” subpage (See Appendix C). It will include links and other documents that will help prepare all incoming students, including international students, to their new environment. While domestic students may have had several opportunities to visit the SUA campus, for many international students, the day they arrive and check-in may be their first time stepping on to the campus. Therefore, the “Preparing to Come to SUA” subpage will include links to various SUA maps (i.e. campus map, 360 degree photos of campus, the Southern California map to see attractions and cities surround SUA, and campus videos), so that
international students will be able to better visualize and familiarize themselves with the campus. In addition, since students will probably be curious about the academic curriculum and course offerings, the Registrar’s Undergraduate Catalog page will be linked to the subpage. The newest Undergraduate Catalog is usually unavailable until the freshmen’s arrival, so there will be a note on the page that says students will receive the most updated version of the Undergraduate Catalog when they get to campus. The subpage will include a subheading for “International Students,” where the International Student Life Coordinator can add additional information for international students, including the pre-departure handout.

**Arrival Orientation:**

At most institutions, international students have a separate orientation from the rest of the student body. However, at SUA, all freshmen experience New Student Orientation, which lasts an entire month of summer block when all freshmen students are taking a freshman seminar course called Core I. Within the month of New Student Orientation, the first week is usually the most packed. Students meet various department representatives (i.e. Financial Aid, Student Accounts, Registrar, Writing Center, representatives from Academic Affairs, etc.), receive orientation on laptops and other various educational tools used online, receive academic advising, and have various other formal and informal social gatherings. As part of the New Student Orientation program, there are two sessions specifically for international students, which are respectively called “International Student Orientation: Part I” and “International Student Orientation: Part II”. The Manager of International Student Services covers immigration matters in “International Student Orientation: Part I,” while the International Student Life Coordinator is responsible for “International Student Orientation: Part II.” To reflect the content in this session, it will be renamed “International Student Orientation: Adjusting to Life in a Foreign Country.”
Arrival orientation is important to get the students situated and familiarized with their new environment, as well as to prepare them for their educational experience and life at the institution. Since there is a week’s time until “International Student Orientation: Adjusting to Life in a Foreign Country,” international students will receive the International Student Handbook as part of their check-in packet. The International Student Handbook will include general information that would be useful when living in the United States, such as transportation options, banking information, health and safety information, communication options, etc. (See Appendix D). By receiving it when they check in, international students will have something to refer to as they try to figure out their surroundings.

Then, during the “International Student Orientation: Adjusting to Life in a Foreign Country” session, the International Student Life Coordinator can address some basic information on cultural adjustment and alleviate some of the students’ concerns regarding academics, since the session will occur the day before students begin their classes. At this session, international students will meet the International Student Life Coordinator for the first time and become familiar with what services he/she offers. The session will begin with a welcome and a brief overview of the International Student Handbook and topics it contains. During this time, international students will also be informed about taxes, because international students are often unaware that tax could be withheld from their financial aid, affecting their student account balances. Students may end up owing the University or receive less refund from their financial aid for their living expenses. Either way, by informing students before hand, it lessens the shock and also prevents students’ misperceptions that the University is overcharging and swindling money from them. The International Student Life Coordinator will encourage students to file taxes and refer them to the handbook for more information. Then she will transition to cultural
matters and will split students into groups. They will do a cultural assimilator activity, which
would be led by the SOLs.

The culture assimilator activity is an activity where each group will receive several short
descriptions of an incident or situation where interaction occurs between an international student
and a person from the United States. The description will be followed by three or four possible
options of how international students can react to the incident. Then, each student in the group
chooses one of the four options they think is the best way for the international student to react
and will discuss why. After hearing all of the students’ reactions, the facilitator (in this case,
SOLs) will discuss about why particular options are more appropriate in the context of American
or SUA culture (See Appendix A).

Once students gather back together, the International Student Life Coordinator will go
over cultural adjustment phases and give some tips on how to cope with the cultural adjustment
phases, as well as provide a list of resources that could assist them. Afterwards, International
Student Life Coordinator will show a video about “Tips for International Students.” This video
will contain advice from international upperclassmen and also comments from domestic students
about what or how international students contribute to the classroom. It is the hope that this
video will provide international students with valuable tips from their peers, and also give them
confidence or assurance that they can succeed in their classes. The session will end with
informing students of the various resources they have to help them (i.e. Writing Center,
professors, tutoring, Coffee Talks)

On-going Orientation:

In Orientation Handbook for Youth Exchange Programs (Grove, 1989), Principle Six
states, “‘Delayed post-arrival’ is the sub phase of an exchangee’s experience that deserves the
maximum expenditure of energy and resources for orientation” (p.14). This sub phase, which starts approximately three to five weeks after student’s arrival, is the ideal time for ongoing orientation because students have begun to settle in and are mentally, physically, and socially prepared to absorb what is being said. Since students encounter various challenges throughout their cultural adjustment process, the ongoing orientation is a great time for the International Student Life Coordinator to facilitate and address the various needs examined above, and allow students to gain practical skills through the workshops.

To address the greatest need of health, the International Student Life Coordinator will coordinate with the Health Services, Counselor, and Health and Wellness teacher to deliver a series of health and wellness workshops. These workshops will be broken down into several topics that can be covered within an hour: health care in the United States, how to eat healthy in the cafeteria, time management, and stress management. Through these workshops, international students can become aware of how health is viewed in the United States, familiarize themselves with the people who provide health-related service, and gain practical skills to stay healthy. Mori (2000) suggests, “Because international students are hesitant to seek services on their own, it is crucial for counselors to take proactive approaches to increase visibility and accessibility of the counseling facilities.” Therefore, by having the Counselor lead the time management and stress management workshops, it is the hope that it will establish a rapport between international students and will make it easier for students to access the services provided by the counselor.

Another way to help international students succeed is by providing study skills workshops. As discussed in the needs section, there may be a cultural difference in how classes are conducted at SUA compared to their home countries. There is more emphasis on reading writing, and discussions in the classrooms of SUA. Since the Writing Center already offers
various workshops on writing, the International Student Life Coordinator will promote the workshops. She will also work in conjunction with the Writing Center to offer other workshops (i.e. how to skim read) that may not be provided yet.

One of the ways in which the International Student Life Coordinator can assist students with financial matters is through encouraging them to file their taxes and informing them of the process. Since the University personnel cannot help international students with the actual tax filing process, CINTAX software has been purchased so students can easily fill out their tax forms. Although the personnel cannot be involved in step-by-step assistance of filing their taxes, the International Student Life Coordinator can assist the international students in preparing to file their taxes. Since international students will have received their Form W-2 and/or Form 1042-S for taxes by February, the International Student Life Coordinator will send a reminder email around that time about filing taxes and include a link to the CINTAX software. The email will also contain an attachment of tips about using CINTAX (See Appendix E). In addition, since freshmen international students will be filing taxes in the United States for the first time, students who do not work and do not have a Social Security Number (SSN) will need to apply for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). Since there are only a handful of students that need to apply for the ITIN, the International Student Life Coordinator will obtain a list of these students from the Finance Department and contact them individually to go over the ITIN application. Then, the International Student Life Coordinator will send them over to the Finance Department to get the application notarized so they can be prepared to for the tax filing process.

**Returning Orientation:**

A comprehensive international student orientation program should include a returning orientation to complete its cycle of assistance. Research has found that cross-cultural adjustment not only occurs when students enter a new cultural environment, but also when they return back
to their home country after a period of time overseas (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Brislin, 1974; NAFSA, 2005). This reverse cultural adjustment process can sometimes be harder because it is unexpected. Therefore, the objectives of returning orientation are to help international students anticipate and lessen the impact of their readjustment process when they return home and provide some strategies to cope with the reverse culture shock.

Since the end of the academic year is a very stressful time for students, the International Student Life Coordinator will have a low key activity for the returning orientation. International students will be invited for tea and coffee to take some time to reflect and celebrate the end of their first year at SUA. During this activity, the International Student Life Coordinator will address the concept of reverse culture shock and share some tips on easing their transition back home. Materials and contents will be developed for this orientation activity as the time draws nearer to delivery.
STAFFING PLAN

The International Student Life Coordinator will be responsible for coordinating and executing international student orientation activities. While the initial session, “International Student Orientation: Part II,” will be primarily conducted by the International Student Life Coordinator, the other workshops that will be held throughout the academic year will be done in conjunction with other departments. For example, with the health services workshop, International Student Life Coordinator will be coordinating with the Nurse Practitioner on-campus to address the various services that the health clinic offers, as well as go over the health insurance coverage. For the workshops on study skills, he/she will coordinate with the Writing Center to provide students with tools accessible to support their academic needs. For the workshop on counseling, he/she will work with the Counselor to provide an overview of mental health issues that are prevalent on college campuses, especially in the international student body.

In terms of “International Student Orientation: Adjusting to a Foreign Country,” and other workshops that will be held throughout the fall semester, International Student Life Coordinator will utilize the Student Orientation Leaders, who are hired to assist the freshmen through the month of Orientation in August, and support their transition throughout the fall semester. In addition, he/she will hire a student assistant, who will help in the administrative and logistical needs of the International Student Life Coordinator (See Appendix F).

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT AND PROGRAM MARKETING

Participant Recruitment

International student orientation activities will be primarily targeted at freshmen international students because much of the adjustment issues occur during their first year. By
targeting freshmen international students, they are able to gain the tools necessary to adjust and succeed for all four years early on in their academic career. Hopefully, if the international student orientation program helps them, they will reach out to their underclassmen and encourage them to attend various orientation activities. Since this will be the first year to hold international student orientation activities, if other upperclassmen international students would like to attend the workshops, it will be open to all. Also another reason for targeting the freshmen is because Student Orientation Leaders can help promote the activities, which will allow for better attendance.

**Program Marketing**

International student orientation activities will be promoted through the following methods:

- Design flyers for each activity to advertise on campus. These flyers will be posted in prevalent areas of the campus such as the elevators for freshmen Residence Halls, on the public bulletin boards, and on the walls of the dining hall.
- Reminders about the activity will be listed under “Student Announcements” on the campus portal site (portal.soka.edu)
- The International Student Life Coordinator will also send a promotional email to freshmen international students
- Student Orientation Leaders will promote the orientation activities to international students during the fall semester
- At the end of each orientation activity, an announcement will be made about the next scheduled activity
LOGISTICS

Timeline of Delivery

Fall 2011

- International student orientation proposal is drafted and submitted for approval by the Director of Student Services. A draft of the International Student Handbook will be included for approval as well.

- Upon approval of the International Student Handbook, a new “International Student Life” page will be created under “Student Affairs” page on the campus portal site. It will contain information from the International Student Handbook, as well as links to various resources that may be useful for international students.

Spring 2012

January 2012

- Draft and obtain approval for pre-departure information handout

Mid-February 2012 - Early March 2012

- Pre-departure information handout printed and ready to be stuffed in welcome packet by mid-February

- Obtain list of accepted international students from the Office of Admissions and stuff pre-departure information handout in international students’ welcome packets by early March

- Upload pre-departure information handout under the “Preparing to Come to SUA” subpage under the “New Students Orientation” page on Soka.edu website.

April 2012
• Contact Health Services, Counselor, Health and Wellness Instructor to plan for health and wellness related workshops
• Contact Writing Center to discuss plans for study skills workshops
• Gather footage for “Tips for International Students” video

**June 2012**

• Print International Student Handbook
• Create the “Tips for International Students” video

**July 2012**

• Prepare for “International Student Orientation: Adjusting to Life in Foreign Country” session
  o Reserve rooms for discussion break outs: Student Affairs lobby, Ikeda Library 302, Student Affairs Small Conference Room, and Career Library
  o Facilities work request: Move furniture (sofas and tables) in Student Affairs lobby to the sides of the room so there is a large open space
  o IT work request: Set up a projector and screen to show DVD and PowerPoint presentation.

**Fall 2012**

**August 2012**

• First week of August: SOL Training
  o Prepare SOLs for Cultural Assimilator activity during “International Student Orientation: Adjusting to Life in Foreign Country”
• Second week of August: Freshmen Arrival
• Include International Student Handbook and a promotional flyer for “International Student Orientation: Adjusting to Life in Foreign Country” in international students’ check-in folders

• Weekend of second week: International Student Orientation: Adjusting to Life in a Foreign Country
  o Determine how to break into discussion groups
  o Distribute snacks to each discussion location so students can eat while they dialogue

September 2012 ~ December 2012

• Health and Wellness workshops and Study Skills Workshops
  o Coordinate with appropriate staff and be responsible to reserve rooms, place facilities and IT work requests

Spring 2013

January 2013- February 2013

• Draft email about taxes by the end of January and send it by first week of February
• Contact international students that need ITIN and make appointments for one-on-one

May 2013

• Second week of May: Returning Orientation
  o Reserve room and purchase tea, coffee and snacks
HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN

Health

All incoming students (including international and EUBP students) must submit a health history form, complete with proof of necessary vaccinations, and proof of health insurance. In the case of international students, everyone is required to purchase SUA’s student health insurance. As part of the Student Services, the University offers a free Student Health Clinic staffed by a Nurse Practitioner to help maintain student’s health. Students will be encouraged to visit the Student Health Clinic if they feel sick or have health concerns. If a health issue occurs after Student Health Clinic hours, International Student Life Coordinator will make arrangements for the student to be taken to Saddleback Family and Urgent Care. If an emergency occurs, Campus Security will be notified and 9-1-1 will be called.

Safety

Before every international student orientation activity, the International Student Life Coordinator will confirm the nearest emergency exit of and emergency procedure of the venue. Since all international student orientation activities will be held on campus, all campus community members will abide by the safety measures laid out by SUA’s Environmental, Health and Safety Department (EH&S). If an emergency occurs, Campus Security will be notified. If it is a life-threatening emergency, 9-1-1 will be called immediately.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Student safety and security is a priority for the University. Since all international student orientation activities will be held on campus, all campus community members will abide by emergency procedures laid out by SUA’s Environmental, Health and Safety Department (EH&S).
They have developed various plans to insure the highest level of safety. EH&S comply with all Federal, State and local regulations with regards to Health and Safety. These regulations include but are not limited to; 40 CFR (EPA), CAL/EPA, 29 CFR (OSHA), CAL/OSHA, Orange County Fire Authority, Orange County Health Department, and Mouton Niguel Water District. EH&S Department cooperates and actively seeks guidance from the above mentioned regulatory agencies. These policies and procedures are outlined in their manual (See Appendix G) and will be followed.

**BUDGET AND BUDGET NOTES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2012 International Student Orientation Budget</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation Costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food/Drinks/Cutlery</td>
<td>1 orientation cycle</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Student Handbook Printing</td>
<td>100 booklets</td>
<td>$7.50 per booklet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$950</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Personnel Costs** |  |  |
| International Student Life Coordinator | 1 year | 20% of annual salary @ $40,000/year |
| Student Assistant | 28 weeks | $40.00 per week |
| **Grand Total:** |  | **$10,070** |

**Budget Notes:**

*Program Costs:*

Some orientation activities will provide snacks, therefore, $200 will be set aside for those costs. In addition, while most printing will be done in-house (i.e. flyers, handouts), the International Student Handbook will be outsourced to a printer and will cost approximately $750. All in-house printing costs will be absorbed by the university’s supply budget.

*Personnel Costs:*
Part of the International Student Life Coordinator’s responsibilities requires he/she to work on the international student orientation. Therefore, his/her personnel cost will be 20% of their annual salary. Additionally, a student assistant will be hired for 5 hours a week. The student assistant wage is calculated based on minimum wage. If the student’s wage is $8 per hour and he/she works 5 hours a week, he/she will earn $40 per week. Assuming that there are four weeks in a month, and he/she works for the entire academic year for seven months (September, October, November, January, February, March, April), the student assistant’s wage will be $1,120.

**Profits:**

It is not expected that SUA will profit monetarily from the international student orientation. However, as an academic institution, SUA should benefit from higher utilization of services, higher retention rates from international students.

**EVALUATION PLAN**

With any program, it is important to conduct evaluations to determine if the planned activities have accomplished the goals and objectives of the program. The feedback will also be useful to improve the program in the future.

In order to receive the most real-time feedback, the International Student Life Coordinator will design a general evaluation form that can be passed out to participants at the end of each orientation activity (See Appendix H). This allows specific feedback for each activity. In addition to this evaluation, all freshmen international students will receive a link to an online evaluation survey at the end of their academic year to give feedback for the overall international student orientation program. The content of this survey will be developed as the time draws nearer to delivery since the complete orientation activities have yet to be finalized.
The International Student Life Coordinator will also conduct debriefs with each of the staff members that collaborated for the various workshops. They will go over the student evaluations and discuss modifications, if necessary, for the following year’s orientation. Also, at the end of the academic year, the International Student Life Coordinator will check with Health Services, Counseling Services, Writing Center, and other academic support services (such as language tutoring) to see if the use of services has increased among freshmen international students. The International Student Life Coordinator will also check with the Manager of International Student Services to see if the number of students taking a leave of absence due to health or academic reasons has decreased. He/she will also ask Core Professors to evaluate and compare the involvement and participation of international students in their classes compared to previous years. Based on all of the feedbacks, the International Student Life Coordinator will redesign the international student orientation program.

CONCLUSIONS/IMPlications

SUA has always been a student-centered progressive school that has continually sought to improve and advance its programs. Creating a comprehensive international student orientation program, based on the students’ needs, will further support the transition of the international students to SUA and give them additional tools to succeed further in their education. As a result, the retention rate of our international students will increase. It will help bring SUA up to speed with the current and best practices in the international education field, and will allow SUA to take a step closer to fulfilling the vision of becoming one of the top national liberal arts schools. The international student orientation curriculum’s goals will help students realize the University’s mission by ensuring they will experience a meaningful academic career as they navigate a new culture and an institutional culture in the United States.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.


APPENDIX A: CURRICULUM PLAN

Pre-departure Orientation

Objective:
- To provide practical and logistical information
- To provide general information about SUA and its surrounding community

Approach:
- Send pre-departure handout information containing the following:
  - Tips on preparing to come to US
  - FAQ on Money Matters
- Create new subpage called “Preparing to Come to SUA” under “New Student Orientation” page on Soka.edu website. Include links to
  - Pre-departure handout PDF
  - Links to SUA Campus Map
  - Links to past Undergraduate Catalog

International Student Orientation: Adjusting to Life in a Foreign Country

Objective:
- Meet International Student Life Coordinator
- Learn about taxes
- Alleviate worries about academic matters
- Become better prepared for cultural transition by learning about American cultural values
- Prepare students for culture shock by learning about cultural adjustment phases and learn tips on how to cope with it
- Learn about the professional services and other resources available for students
- Address students concerns/fears about their college experience

Agenda:
1. Welcome and introduction by International Student Life Coordinator
2. Brief overview of International Student Handbook
   - Touch on withheld taxes on financial aid
3. Cultural Assimilator activity (see below)
   - Be able to discuss how students would react from their own cultural perspective
   - Learn what is the most culturally appropriate way to react
4. PowerPoint presentation on phases of cultural adjustment process + tips on how to cope with culture shock
5. Show video of “Tips for International Students”
6. Promote about upcoming workshops
APPENDIX A: CURRICULUM PLAN

Sample Culture Assimilator Activity

1) Charlie and Minsoo are roommates. They were getting along great, until recently, when Charlie got a new girlfriend. Now, Charlie’s girlfriend comes over to their room all the time. They are lovey dovey with each other and the girlfriend often stays over night. This makes Minsoo feel awkward and uncomfortable staying in his room. However, he does not want to offend Charlie so he has not said anything. What should Minsoo do?

a) Stay away from his room. He could just live in the 24 hour study room.
b) Tell the Residential Hall Coordinator and have them intervene
c) Work up the courage to talk to him
d) Write Charlie a note since he feels awkward talking to him face to face

2) Susan, an American freshmen college student who loved learning about other cultures, had opted to have an international student as a roommate. She was paired up Selena from Argentina, and over the summer, they emailed back and forth a few times. The day of check-in, Susan waited in anticipation to meet Selena. As she was returning to her dorm from lunch with another classmate, Tom, Susan saw her roommate unloading her luggage. They excitedly greeted each other with hugs and kisses, the Latin American way of greeting. Susan immediately introduced Selena to Tom.

How should Selena greet Tom?

a) Since Susan was ok with the hugs and kisses, she can greet Tom the same way
b) Watch how Tom greets her and do the same thing
c) Everybody is friendly at SUA so Selena can hug him
APPENDIX A: CURRICULUM PLAN

Health and Wellness Series:
Objective:
- To familiarize international students to health services and counseling services
- To educate international students on how U.S. perceives “health”
- To gain health and wellness skills

Activities:
1. Health care in the United States (during summer block):
   a. Cover topics on American view of health and counseling
   b. Go over SUA Health Insurance policy
      i. Discuss what it mean to be healthy
      ii. Work with Health Services, Health and Wellness professor, and Counselor
2. Eating Well in the Cafeteria (during summer block)
   a. Discuss about proportions and tips on how to have a balanced diet
   b. Work with Bon Appetite (the food provider on campus), Health and Wellness professor
3. Time Management (second week of fall semester)
   a. Work with Counselor
4. How to Cope with Stress (third week of fall semester)
   a. Work with Counselor

Workshop on Study Skills
Objective:
- Gaining practical skills that will help them in their academics

Activities:
1. Work with Writing Center to provide workshops on study skills:
   - Skim Reading
   - Foundational Grammar
   - Critical Thinking
   - Oral Communication

Taxes Information
Objective:
- Prepare students to do their taxes by informing them what forms they need to fill out their taxes
- Increase usage and awareness of CINTAX

Activities:
1. Send a reminder email with a tips sheet
2. Meet with students who need ITIN
APPENDIX B: PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION

PREPARING FOR YOUR DEPARTURE

1. Pack clothing for Southern California Climate:
   Because SUA is so close to the beach, we enjoy a Mediterranean-type climate of sunny, warm summers and mild wet winters.

   Summer time (July-September) is probably the most hot and humid time of the year in Southern California. However, temperatures rarely exceed 85° F (29°C). In the morning and evening there are often strong ocean breezes and fog, so you may need a sweater or long sleeve shirt; but by early afternoon, it is warm and sunny, so you should be good with your regular shorts and shirts during the daytime.

   The month of October is a transitional month. Generally, October starts out quite warm, but by the end of the month, going into November, the weather is quite cool. You will need clothing for both cool and warm weather because you will never know what the temperature will be from day to day. It may be 83°F (28°C) one day and then 67°F (19°C) the next day.

   The beginning months of fall/winter season (November-February) will be between 60-70°F (15-20°C) so it will still be warm. The nights, however, can get quite cold. The temperature will drop into the 50s °F (10s°C) range in the evening around dinner time, and by dawn, the temperatures may drop into the 40s°F (4°C) range. However, it never snows in Southern California, unless it is in the mountains. You may want to pack a heavy coat, depending on how tolerant you are of the cold. The rainy season is also during this time so you will need an umbrella or raincoat to stay dry as you go to class.

   In the spring (March-June), it will be warm again during the daytime, reaching between 60-70°F (15-20°C), and it will be cool in the night. Since the temperature will fluctuate day to day, you will need both long and short sleeve shirts, and you will definitely need a sweater or a light jacket for the evenings.

   **Tip!** As you pack, make an itemized list of everything you have put in your suitcase, in case they are lost or stolen. Also make a list of items you will need to purchase once you arrive at SUA.

2. Check your electrical appliances
   Depending on what country you are coming from, your electrical appliances and gadgets may not be compatible in the United States. The U.S. voltage/frequency is 110V/60Hz. If your gadget comes with an adapter that is already compatible for world-wide usage, i.e. 110-240V/50-60Hz, then you are okay.
APPENDIX B: PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION

Also, you may want to bring a universal adapter from home. Although you will most likely be able to buy it from local stores (i.e. Target, Walmart, Radio Shack) they may or may not have the item in stock. It will definitely save you time and hassle if you bring one from home – just in case you need to urgently recharge your mobile phone or your digital camera. The pictures above are two examples of universal adapters. Please note that the U.S. appliance plug has “two vertical pins” (circled in red).

3. Take care of your health needs
Before leaving home, you need to handle three medical tasks:
   - Get the immunizations required for SUA (refer to Student Health History form)
   - Get a copy of your medical records, in English, if possible
   - Bring several weeks’ supply of your prescription medications

Also, if you need to get dental work done, get it done before you leave for SUA. SUA’s Student Health Insurance policy DOES NOT cover dental treatments. Getting dental work done in the U.S. without dental insurance is extremely expensive so it would be best to have your teeth checked before you leave.

4. Make photocopies
Students should make several photocopies of their important documents, leaving a set at home and taking several sets with them when they travel. Most important are photocopies of:
   - Passport (identification page)
   - Entry visa stamp page in passport
   - Form I-20 or DS2019
   - Credit cards
   - Important phone numbers
   - Other important document such as:
     - Financial affidavits
     - Scholarship award letters
     - Admission letters

   Tip! Remember to pack all important travel documents in carry-on, NOT in checked bags.

5. Convert your money
You will need cash/traveler’s checks for at least the first couple of days, until you are able to open a bank account. (Please see FAQ on Money Matters for more details). You will be able to convert currency at the airport, but you may want to check with your local bank for exchange rates.

6. Register for absentee ballots
If you are eligible to vote in your country and will have to vote from the U.S., register to obtain absentee ballots so you can mail in your vote.
APPENDIX B: PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION

FAQs ABOUT MONEY MATTERS

How much money should I bring to get started?
You should bring sufficient money in U.S. dollars for your transportation and immediate expenses (such as food) upon your arrival. While it is possible to exchange currency at the airport, you may want to inquire about the exchange rates at your local bank. We advise against bringing large amounts of cash. Approximately $500 in U.S. currency should be enough for the first few days, until you are able to open a bank account.

You may choose to bring large sums of money with you in the form of cash, money order, or traveler’s checks when entering the U.S. You may bring as much money as you wish into the U.S., however, any amounts of money exceeding the allowed $10,000 (U.S. dollars) maximum must be declared in advance. If you do not declare your money, the penalties for non-compliance can be severe.

How can I receive money from home?
If you are from a country which allows foreign exchange to be transferred directly, you should find a bank at home that can transfer funds to banks in California. Most major banks have international wire transfer services.

What is the most common way of paying tuition and other bills?
The most common forms of payment in the United States are credit cards and bank checks. SUA accepts most types of payment including checks (personal, money order, or bank certificate), credit card, wire transfer or cash. You will want to open a bank account as soon as you can. Bank representatives from banks near SUA will be on-campus the first couple of days to assist opening accounts. Among the banks in the immediate SUA neighborhoods are:

- Citibank
- JP Morgan Chase
- Bank of America
- Union Bank
- US Bank

You may want to check if any of the banks above have branches near you for easier money transfers.

Should I get a credit card?
If you are planning to use a credit card, we recommend you apply for a credit card in your home country before coming to SUA. In the U.S., you cannot get a credit card unless you have established credit, and many internationals get turned down because of this. Also, many people use credit card/debit card instead of cash.
Add a subpage called “Preparing to Come to SUA” after “Important Forms and Checklist” (Please see red arrow).
APPENDIX C: SOKA.EDU WEBSITE

Preparing to Come to SUA

Below are some things to consider and as you pack and prepare for your new college life at SUA:

- List of What to Bring (PDF)
- FAQ from Welcome Brochure (PDF)
- Directions from Airport

If you haven’t had the opportunity to visit SUA, take a look at our maps and photos to get familiar with our campus! It will be your new home for the next four years:

- Campus Map and Tour
- Campus Video
- 360-degree Photos of Campus
- Southern California attractions near SUA

While you will receive academic advising and learn how to register for classes during Orientation, you might be curious about the course offerings and curriculum. Below is a link to past Undergraduate Catalogs so you can get a sense of what has been offered in the past. You will receive this year’s catalog at Orientation.

- Undergraduate Catalog

For International Students:

It’s always difficult when you’re moving to a new environment, but it can be more difficult when you are moving from a different country. Below is a handout of additional tips for international students in preparation for your study abroad.

- Tips for International Students (PDF)
International Student Handbook

Soka University of America

September 2012
Welcome to Soka University of America!

I am so excited to welcome you to our SUA community. As an international student, you bring valuable perspectives both inside and outside of the classroom and your presence increases the intercultural awareness of our already rich and diverse community.

As the International Student Life Coordinator, I am dedicated to meeting your needs and familiarizing you with the services offered by the University. Most importantly, I want to assist you with adjusting to your new environment. To this end, this International Student Handbook has been compiled with the objective of centralizing information that will assist you with your transition to your life here at SUA. I hope that this handbook will serve as a useful reference guide.

Please keep in mind that while I have tried to include the most current information available, but information changes frequently. I welcome your feedback if you find incorrect or out of date information.

If you need any further assistance or information, please feel free to contact me at ext. 4138 or dueda@soka.edu, or even better, stop by my office at Ikeda Library 319. My office hours are from 9am-5pm Monday through Friday. I look forward to meeting and getting to know you.

Sincerely,

Diana Y. Ueda

International Student Life Coordinator
APPENDIX D: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

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Chapter 1: Academic Matters

The U.S. system of higher education may be quite different from that of your country. Even in the context of U.S. higher education system, SUA’s academic curriculum and environment is unique in that it is based on liberal arts curriculum with a very low student to faculty ratio. The purpose of a liberal arts curriculum is to insure both breadth and depth of learning. Students gain exposure to a broad range of subjects by taking courses in the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences.

Work Load
Four to five courses per semester may not seem like a lot; you may be used to taking more. However, SUA classes are demanding. Keep in mind that for every hour spent in class, you should expect to spend at least 3 hours outside of class studying, writing papers, or meeting with other classmates to coordinate group projects (i.e. if a course meets 2.5 hours a week, you should plan to spend at least 7-8 hours a week just preparing for that class). Also keep in mind that if your native language is not English, it might take you longer to complete readings, papers and other assignments.

Academic Culture, Classroom Atmosphere, Expectations at SUA
Everybody’s educational background is different. Therefore, your classroom setting and expectations may differ from those around you. Even for American students, SUA provides a unique atmosphere because of its size, liberal arts curriculum, and the educational philosophy behind it. Below are some tips for what is generally expected out of you for class.

You will be expected to:

- Attend classes regularly.
- Participate in class discussions. You may initially feel uncomfortable actively participating since you may be used to lecture-style classes. However, as a component of the final course grade, such active participation is normal and even expected. Because your class size is so small, your contribution is highly valued, so hopefully you will begin to feel more comfortable speaking up as the semester progresses.
- Keep up with regular reading and other homework assignments.
- Be evaluated throughout the course through assignments, quizzes, papers, and examinations. The final examination (if you have one) often makes up only a percentage of the final grade in a course.
- Seek professors during their office hours to ask questions or discuss topics outside of class.

The first day of class, you will receive a course syllabus, which is a document outlining the topics and assignments for each week. It will also tell you the professor’s expectation and how he/she will evaluate you in class. The syllabus will also include the professor’s contact information and office hours. If you have a question pertaining to the course or would like to discuss something with the professor, do not hesitate to visit his/her office during these designated hours, or make an appointment to meet with him/her at another time. Professors at SUA welcome
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communication with their students. If you do not understand or want more information, do not hesitate to seek clarification from your professors.

Academic Resources
There are multiple resources geared towards helping our students achieve academic success. This includes the Writing Center and its various workshops they offer, peer tutoring in various subject areas (language to math), and seeking out your professor during office hours.

Academic Honesty
Academic standards and practices may differ according to the country you are from. What is considered appropriate academic behavior in your home country might differ from what is appropriate in the U.S. Since you will be studying at SUA, it is vital for you to understand and act according to U.S. standards and practices. Failure to adhere to standards of honesty will result in sanctions. The following definitions will help you to understand the boundaries of academic dishonesty.

1. **Plagiarism.** Presenting the words or ideas of another person requires proper acknowledgement; failure to do so is plagiarism. This applies to direct quotations, paraphrases or summarized ideas; guidelines concerning standards for citation may be found in *The LEA Guide to Composition*, which is owned and used by all students from the time they take freshman Writing 101.

2. **Submission of the same work in two courses without explicit permission to do so.** Presenting all or part of the work done for one course in another course requires permission of the instructors of the involved courses. A related point is that paired courses, by design, often require submission of the same work in the two associated courses.

3. **Unauthorized collaboration.** In many course activities, other than examinations, collaboration is permitted and encouraged. Course syllabi and in-class instructions will usually identify situations where collaboration is prohibited, but the student shares responsibility for ascertaining whether collaboration is permitted. In cases where a student receives tutoring on a course topic, the student should consult the professor of the course to understand the permissible limits of the tutoring help.

4. **Cheating.** This is a very broad category encompassing a variety of forms of misrepresentation and fraud. Examples include sharing exam answers, presenting work done by another as one’s own, changing in any way work which may be reviewed in response to a grade reconsideration request, having a falsely identified person take an exam, or using notes, books and the like in closed-book examinations.

5. **Misrepresentation of experience or ability.** Providing false information concerning academic achievement or background in an area of study; for example, false reporting the substance of an internship.

6. **Falsification of records.** Any attempt to change grades or written records pertaining to assessment of a student’s academic achievement.
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7. Sabotage. Destruction of or deliberate inhibition of progress of another person’s work related to a course; this includes the destruction of shared resources such as library materials and computer software or hardware.

8. Complicity concerning any of the above. Any act which facilitates academic dishonesty is itself an act of academic dishonesty.

Students found responsible for an academic dishonesty violation may face one or more the following sanctions:
- Warning indicating to the student, faculty and administration knowledge of the incident
- Letter grade reduction on the assignment
- Failing grade for the assignment
- Failing grade for the course
- Suspension from the University for a specified minimum period of time
- Expulsion from the university

For more information about the sanctions, please consult the Undergraduate Catalog.
Chapter 2: Health and Safety

In order to do well in your academics, maintaining your health is very important. Staying healthy helps college students feel better and more confident. This helps in all aspects of college life including scholastic, social, and overall well-being. The resources below will help you to stay healthy, and in the event that you do get sick, it will guide you in what you can do.

SUA Health Services
SUA’s Student Health Clinic provides outpatient health services to help students maintain optimal health. All SUA students can visit the Student Health Clinic. There is no charge for office visits. It is located on the 4th floor of the Student Center (409), directly above the Mailroom. The Nurse Practitioner (NP) will provide medical services when you are ill and provide preventive health services when you are well. We encourage you to use these services. The NP collaborates via phone with an offsite supervising physician as needed. They can also assist you in finding specialists or with other healthcare related concerns.

Student Health Clinic
Student Center 409
(949) 480-4143
jbrodsky@soka.edu

Clinic Hours
Academic Year (August-May)
Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm (4:30pm is the last appointment)
Saturday, Sunday & Holidays: Closed

Appointments
Patients are usually seen on a walk-in, first-come, first served basis. However, students with more urgent needs may be seen sooner. We encourage all patients with more predictable health care needs (examinations, medication refills, older injuries, or long-term health problems) to make an appointment.

After Hours
For any health issues after Student Health Clinic hours, please contact a Residential Life staff via front office or duty phone number, and/or contact Campus Security at ext. 4100.

Emergency vs. Urgent Care
In the U.S. health care providers distinguish between emergency services and urgent care. Emergency services are those required for a serious injury or life-threatening illness. Urgent care is for problems that are less serious but need attention before a regular doctor appointment can be scheduled. Please note that unless you are hospitalized, you will be charged $100 for utilizing emergency services. Therefore, please go to urgent care FIRST. If urgent care is not open, then utilize emergency services in the hospital.
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*For urgent medical needs when the clinic is closed:*
Saddleback Family and Urgent Care Center - Lake Forest
Address: 22851 Lake Forest Drive, Lake Forest, CA 92630
Tel: 949-452-7544
Mon-Fri: 8am-8pm (6pm: last appointment)
Sat-Sun: 8am-4pm (2pm: last appointment)
Holidays: Closed

Saddleback Family and Urgent Care – Mission Viejo
Address: 23962 Alicia Parkway I-1, Mission Viejo, CA
Tel: 949-452-7699
Mon-Sun: 8am-8pm (7pm: last appointment)
Holidays: 8am-5pm (4pm: last appointment)

*For emergencies or urgent medical needs when Urgent Care Centers are closed:*
Saddleback Memorial Medical Center (SMMC)- Emergency Department
24451 Health Center Drive, Laguna Hills, CA 92653
Tel: 949 452-3564

Emergencies
Call 911 for *life-threatening* emergency on campus or off campus.

**Counseling Services**
Life can often be stressful and mentally exhaustive at college. Transition to a new geographic and cultural environment can feel overwhelming. You may experience feelings of homesickness, anxiety, confusion, or depression. Perhaps you need help with coping with a difficult roommate or learning how to manage your time. In such cases, it is common in the U.S., and often helpful, to talk with a professional about these personal matters affecting your daily life. Counseling is confidential, and there is no cost for students to utilize it.

**Counselor**
Anhthu Dang
Ikeda Library 309
(949) 480-4192
adang@soka.edu

**Office Hours:**
Tuesday & Thursdays: 12:00pm – 8:00pm
Wednesday, Friday, & Saturday: 10:00am - 6:00pm
Sunday & Monday: CLOSED

**Health Insurance**
SUA requires that all international students enroll in SUA’s health insurance plan, which covers accidents and sickness. The cost of health care in the U.S. is very high. A short stay in the hospital can cost thousands of dollars. Therefore, in order to protect international students against such expenses as much as possible, they are required to enroll in SUA’s health insurance.
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SUA’s health insurance plan provides payments for hospitalization, prescription medications and certain outpatient services. In most cases the costs will be fully paid but it is important to review the specifics of the insurance plan. Please make sure to take a look at the health insurance brochure, which can be found at http://portal.soka.edu/Areas/studentaffairs/residentiallife/Pages/StudentHealthServices.aspx. If you have any questions about coverage, please consult the Health Clinic.

Please note that dental care and eye exams are not covered by the student health insurance plan. Since dental and eye care is also quite expensive, it is best for you to have your eyes and teeth examined prior to arrival in the U.S. You should also purchase eyeglasses and contact lenses, and have any needed dental work (cavities, root canals, etc.) done before you arrive at SUA.

Finding Doctors/Specialists around Campus

Health Services staff can assist you in finding local specialists should you need specialty medical care. Please get a referral from Nurse Jackie before you go to the doctor.

With SUA’s health insurance, you can go to any provider; however, you can save money by seeing providers that participate in Health Net PPO network. Go to www.healthnet.com and click on “Provider Search” to locate participating providers.

How to Use Your Insurance

You should receive an insurance card in your mailbox from the insurance company, Health Net. If you do not receive a card form them, contact Diana Ueda (dueda@soka.edu) so she can arrange for the company to send you one. Keep this card with you at all times. All health care providers will ask you to show this card when you visit the doctor’s office, hospital or urgent care. If you cannot show that you have health insurance prior to treatment, many hospitals and physicians will refuse to treat you unless you provide payment up front.

When you visit the facility, ask the person who takes your card whether he/she will send the bill to the insurance company directly, or whether you must file a claim yourself. If you are treated for something for which you have to pay a portion (outside of your copay), the insurance company or the health care provider will inform you of how much it costs. It is extremely important that you save all bills associated with your visits for any medical care, in case you need to file a claim or challenge a bill or payment.

If you need to file a claim, Diana Ueda or Health Services staff can assist you.

Tips For Using Health Insurance

- ALWAYS carry your health insurance card.
- Carry some form of photo identification with you at all times.
- Review your health insurance benefits before you need them. By doing so, you will know what to expect at the time of need.
- Review your health insurance plan limitations and exclusions before you need the coverage. Again, this will help you know what to expect at the time of need.
- Know your deductible amount.
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- Know your co-pay amount.
- Know up to how much your insurance will pay for calendar year.

**Common Health Insurance Terms**
Below are some common terms you may encounter while reading your health insurance plan brochure:

- **PPO (Preferred Provider Organization):** A medical insurance plan that relies on a network of selected health-care providers: doctors, hospitals and other health-care professionals. These health-care providers have agreed to accept lower fees from the insurer for their services. As a result, your cost is lower than if you go outside the network.
- **Benefits:** The money the insurance company pays the health care facility if you become ill or injured.
- **Claim:** The procedure you use when requesting money from the insurance company. This is normally done on a “claim form”. Sometimes the health care facility will bill the insurance company directly. Other times, you must pay the health care costs yourself, and the insurance company must reimburse you later. When you request reimbursement, you are “filing a claim.”
- **Coverage:** These are conditions for which the insurance company will pay. Some insurance policies provide coverage for maternity, dental psychiatric care; others do not. See the definition for “exclusions.” These “exclusions” limit the coverage.
- **Co-pay/Deductible:** The portion of medical costs you are responsible for paying. If the plan indicates “$100 deductible,” this means you pay the first $100, and the insurance company then pays some, if not all, of the rest. If the policy indicates that you pay a “co-pay” cost then you pay that to the health care provider, who then bills the insurance company for the difference. If you do not fulfill your deductible, the co-pay may be higher until you pay the amount of the deductible. Most insurance policies require policyholders to pay a portion of the expenses; this decreases the cost of the insurance policy.
- **Dependents:** Your spouse and children. If you are here with your family, your insurance policy should offer coverage of your dependents.
- **Exclusions:** Conditions under which the insurance company will not pay. For example, if you are intoxicated or drunk, they may not pay for any injuries you experienced because you made the choice to become intoxicated. You will then have to pay for all care (including follow-up care) due to that specific injury or illness, out of your own finances.
- **In-Network:** A provider or health care facility that is part of a particular health plan’s network.
- **Network:** A group of doctors, hospitals and other providers contracted to provide services to insured individuals for less than their usual fees.
- **Out-of-Network:** Doctors, hospitals and other providers which are not part of a health plan’s network. If a plan uses a network, insured individuals usually pay more when they use an out-of-network provider.
- **Pre-Existing Condition:** An injury or condition for which the insured individual received medical treatment or had symptoms of typically within 12 months before the effective date of insurance coverage.
- **Policy:** The insurance contract and all the descriptions.
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- **Premium**: The price you pay for the insurance policy
- **Prior Authorization**: Verify the medical necessity of certain treatments
- **Provider**: Whoever is providing the health care service (i.e. doctor, clinic, hospital, etc.)
- **Referral**: A formal recommendation made by a primary health care provider for a patient to visit a special type of doctor or get specialty medical services. Referrals are often necessary for specialty doctor visits to be covered by insurance policies
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Safety on Campus
SUA is a secure place. Security cameras are located all around campus and are monitored throughout the day. In addition, emergency telephones are located throughout the major pedestrian areas and parking lots. They are equipped with a blue light that aids in their quick location at night. Please use these to report a criminal incident, a fire, or any other type of emergency. It will connect the caller directly to the Campus Security kiosk, which is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

While Campus Security will do their utmost to ensure the safety of its community, you can help maintain a safe environment by taking simple precautionary measures:

- Always lock your room door in residence halls, even when leaving for only a few minutes to go to the laundry room
- Deny strangers access to your residence hall by not letting in people behind you
- Do not leave your belongings unattended
- Report crimes and suspicious behaviors to Campus Security

For questions, contact Campus Security at 949-480-4100.

Safety in the U.S.
While Aliso Viejo is a relatively safe neighborhood, some violent incidents have been reported. Therefore, you should remain vigilant and be aware of your surroundings, and know what to do to stay safe.

Below are some safety tips that are good to keep in mind:

**Personal Safety**
- Stick to well-lit, well-traveled streets.
- Use the "buddy system", let friends or neighbors know where you are going, when you plan to return, and what routes you will take, and how you can be reached at your destination.
- Travel with a friend to and from your activities.
- Beware of who is walking next to you.
- Don’t walk close to bushes, parked cars, alleys, or suspicious acting people.
- Avoid “short cuts”, especially through dense, wooded areas, even during the day.
- Don’t jog at night or in the early morning off-campus.
- Don’t carry large amounts of cash or other valuable objects.
- Guard your purse, backpack, or wallet. This is especially the case if you are studying in a public space. Even if you leave for a moment, take your belongings with you.
- Walk in an alert and confident manner in parking lots and on the street.
- Have your car or ID key in hand before you reach the door.
- If you think someone is following you, switch directions or cross the street. Walk to an open store, restaurant or anyplace else with groups of people. If you are afraid, yell for help.
- Trust your instincts. If something or someone makes you uneasy, get away from that situation as quickly as possible any way you can.
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- Don’t hitchhike. Not only is it dangerous, in some cases, it is illegal.

Safety Using the ATM
- Try to use the automated teller machine (ATM) during the daytime. Have your card in hand and don’t approach the machine if you are uneasy about people nearby.
- Always watch for suspicious persons or activity around the ATM. If you notice anything strange, leave and find another machine. If you feel uneasy during your transaction, cancel it and leave.
- If you do use ATM after dark—don’t go alone. Park close by and lock your car. If the lights are out, leave and find another machine; report the situation to the bank.
- Stand close to the machine and cover the keypad so no one else can see your PIN number.
- Take all of your transaction receipts with you. Don’t throw them away at the ATM.
- Never accept help from strangers at the ATM. Ask the bank for assistance later.
- If you use a drive-up ATM, keep your vehicle doors locked and other windows up.
- Memorize your ATM PIN number. Don’t write it down or carry it with you.
- Never tell your PIN number to anyone.
- Never lend your ATM card to anyone.
- If you lose your ATM card, notify your bank or credit union immediately.

Safety in Motor Vehicles
- Always approach your vehicle with keys ready.
- Keep your car in good running condition. Check the gas gauge before you leave to make sure you have more than enough fuel to get where you are going and back.
- Windows should be up and doors locked when driving.
- Always roll up the windows and lock the car doors when you park the car, even if you are coming right back.
- Keep valuables out of plain view in your car. It is best not to keep valuable items in your car at all, even if in your trunk. Burglars can break into a car or its trunk in minutes.
- Always check your car’s interior and exterior before you get in and drive away. Avoid parking in isolated areas. Be especially alert in parking lots and parking garages. Attackers have been known to lie in wait for such an opportunity.
- Never pull your car over on a quiet road even if someone drives alongside your car pointing at the tires, etc. Always continue driving to a well-lit and crowded area before exiting your car. The problem might be a bluff and the other driver may want you to stop at the side of the road to —“help” you without a reason.
- Do not accept rides from strangers when you are stranded due to car trouble. If your car breaks down, raise the hood, and wait in your locked car for a law enforcement officer to arrive. If someone stops to help, ask him or her to call for assistance for you. Don’t go with a stranger to call for assistance.
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- If you think someone is following you, don’t go home. Drive to the nearest police or fire station. If you can’t find either of these, drive to a gas station or other open business, and ask for help.
- Never pick up hitchhikers – strangers on the side of the road who ask for rides.
Chapter 3: Living In the United States

Transportation
There are several transportation options available to you while attending SUA. Although driving is the most common (and easiest) way to get around, here are other ways to get around.

SUA Shuttle
SUA offers a free shuttle service, which leaves from the bottom of Gandhi steps, everyday between campus and local shopping areas. Please check the Portal for the latest complete shuttle schedule.

Public Transportation
The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) is a multi-modal transportation agency serving Orange County. It includes a network of buses and Metrolink rail services.

Bus Services
OCTA’s countywide system has 77 bus routes and 6,200 bus stops to get you to where you want to go in Orange County. The bus routes which pass by Aliso Viejo are Route 187, Route 87 and Route 490.

Riding the Bus

1) Use the system map (http://www.octa.net/bus-system-map) to find the bus stop you’ll leave from and the bus stop nearest to your destination. Find the route(s) that will connect the two points.

2) Once you know the route, you can use the online planner (http://www.octa.net/bus-trip-planning.aspx) to plan your trip. Be sure to arrive at the bus stop 15 minutes early so you don’t miss the bus.

3) Determine how much the trip will cost and how you will pay for it. If you plan to use the bus often, you should get a pass and save money. Passes can be purchased at local grocery stores (i.e. Ralphs, Vons, Stater Brothers). If you are planning to pay in cash as you board the bus, make sure to have exact change.
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MetroLink

OCTA’s Metrolink rail service has three lines with 11 stations in Orange County. Plus you can connect to Metrolink lines in Los Angeles, Ventura, San Bernardino and Riverside counties. The nearest Metrolink stations are Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo station or Irvine station, which are both located on the Orange County Line and Inland Empire-Orange County Line.

Please visit their website to see the schedule and lines:
http://www.metrolinktrains.com/

Riding Metrolink

4) Use the system map (http://www.metrolinktrains.com/map) to find the station you’ll leave from and the station nearest to your destination. Look for the name of the rail line that connects the two points.

5) Go to the schedules page of the station you are leaving from and pick a departure time. Be sure to arrive at the station 15 minutes early so you don’t miss your train. You can also use the online trip planner to plan a bus and rail trip.

6) Purchase your ticket from the ticket vending machine. Tickets are NOT sold on board. If you plan to take the Metrolink regularly, you should get a pass and save money. Look at the fares and passes section to see all the options that are available.

Nearest Metrolink station:
Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo Station
28200 Forbes Road
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677

Irvine Station
15215 Barranca Parkway
Irvine, CA 92611

Amtrak Trains
Orange County is also served by Amtrak with nearest departures originating from Laguna Niguel Station and Irvine Station

Irvine Station:
15215 Barranca Parkway
Irvine, CA 9261

Taxi/Shuttle Services

Taxi

You can request taxicab service in several ways, but most common is to call the company. The dispatcher will ask for your address, your phone number, and where you are going before telling you how long you should expect to wait for the cab.
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International students are often surprised by the high cost. You can ask the dispatcher for an estimated cost when you call them.

If you are trying to get to the airport, a taxi may not be the most economical way to get there. Other more inexpensive options are described below.

1(800)4MY-TAXI Yellow Cab
Book online: http://www.18004mytaxi.com/index.html
(714)258-1000

South OC Yellow Cab
23251 Peralta Dr # P
Laguna Hills, CA
(949) 951-4343

Yellow Cab
24861 Alicia Parkway
Laguna Hills, CA
(949) 206-0170

Shared Shuttle/Vans
A Shared Van is one of the most economical way to travel to and from airports. You will be sharing the shuttle with others who are traveling to the same airport, to the same part of the city. As a result, the cost is often half of what a taxi ride would cost.

Two shared ride van companies, Prime Time Shuttle (www.primeshuttle.com) and Super Shuttle (www.supershuttle.com) operate out of Los Angeles Airport (LAX) and are authorized to serve all Southern California counties. They also serve John Wayne Airport (SNA), as well. It will cost approximately $48-$51 one-way for one person from LAX; and approximately $23-$26 one-way for one person from John Wayne. These charges are approximate and do not include the 15% gratuity for the driver.

If you are taking the Shared Shuttle from LAX, look for the orange sign “Shared Ride Vans” outside the terminals on the Lower/Arrivals Level.

Although a reservation is not necessary, we highly recommend making one so you do not have to wait for a long period of time, especially if you are in a group. You will need to provide your flight information at the time of your reservation. For further information, please refer to their website, or contact them by telephone. Prime Time: (800) 733-8267 or Super Shuttle: (800) 258-3826.
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FLYAWAY
Another convenient and inexpensive way to get to/from LAX and Orange County is the FlyAway bus service. It is a non-stop bus service between LAX and Irvine Station. Although you will need to arrange your transportation to Irvine Station, it is the cheapest option.

Location: The LAX FlyAway operates from Bus Bay 1 at Irvine Station.
Irvine Station:
15215 Barranca Parkway
Irvine, CA 92618

All FlyAway buses drop-off passengers on the Upper/Departures Level of each terminal at LAX. Those who are taking the FlyAway from LAX to Irvine can board on the Lower/Arrivals Level in front of each terminal under the green “FlyAway, Buses and Long Distance Vans” signs.

GREEN FLYAWAY, BUSES & LONG DISTANCE VANS

Each bus is marked with its service location, so look for the one that is servicing to Irvine.

Cost: $25 one-way

Bus Schedule: Please check their website (http://www.lawa.org/welcome_LAX.aspx?id=292) for most current schedule. No reservations required.

Travel time: Depending on traffic conditions, travel time can be 60 minutes or more to Terminal 1. Passengers should select a departure time that permits arrival at LAX two hours before a domestic departure and three hours prior to an international departure.

Parking: Free parking for 500 cars is available in the large lot adjacent to the parking structure at Irvine Station, 15215 Barranca Parkway. Look for the directional signs to the parking lot. Free parking for disabled travelers is available in the parking structure.
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Driving

Obtaining a California driver’s license or identification card:

Some of you may be thinking about getting a CA Driver’s License to drive a car. The following is a summary of what most international students must do to obtain it.

- Visit the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) website (http://www.dmv.ca.gov)
- Visit a DMV office (check the website for closest location and make an appointment for faster service)
- Complete application form DL 44. An original DL 44 form must be submitted
- Give a thumb print
- Have your picture taken
- Provide your social security number, if one is available
- Verify your birth date and legal presence
- Pay the $28 application fee (Reduced fee for identification card applications)
- Pass a vision exam (not necessary for identification card application)
- Pass the written exam (traffic laws and sign test) to obtain an interim driving license that you may use to start practicing for the driving test.
- Pass the driving test

If you have a license from another country, you will be required to take a driving test. If you have a license from another state, the driving test can be waived. You have three chances to pass the driving test.

Nearest DMV:
Laguna Hills DMV
23535 Moulton Parkway, Laguna Hills
(800) 777-0133

Written Test
The written exam consists of 36 questions and you have up to three chances to pass it. The written exam and vision exam may be taken on a walk-in basis. However, it is recommended to make an appointment online for faster service.

To help you prepare for the written and road test, the Driver’s License Handbook is available on the DMV website: http://dmv.ca.gov/pubs/pubs.htm. They also provide sample written tests.

Besides English, the basic Class C written driver license exam is also available in the following languages: Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Cambodian, Chinese, Croatian, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Hmong, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Persian/Farsi, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Spanish, Tagalog/Filipino, Thai, Tongan, Turkish, and Vietnamese.

Driving Test
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Once you pass the written exam, you will then be issued a permit. With the permit, you can practice driving. When you practice, you must have an accompanying adult who is 18 years of age or older, with a valid California license. This person must be close enough to you to take control of the vehicle if necessary. It is illegal for you to drive alone.

Many people take their driving test when they have not sufficiently prepared, or have not practiced enough, or have not practiced the right way. Consider going to driving school to learn how to drive correctly and safely. It costs approximately $300 for six hours of lessons (usually three 2-hour lessons). Please look at the end of this section for some listings.

The driving test will last about 20 minutes. The test consists of basic maneuvers you will encounter while driving such as: left and right turns, stops at controlled and uncontrolled intersections, straight line backing, lane changes, driving in regular street traffic, and in some cases driving on the freeway.

To take your driving test, you will need to:

- Make a driving test appointment. You may either make an appointment online (http://www.dmv.ca.gov) or call 1-800-777-0133 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday-Friday, to make a driving test appointment. (Driving tests are not given without an appointment.)
- Pass the test vehicle requirements
- Provide proof of financial responsibility

Test Vehicle Requirements

The vehicle you use for your driving test must be safe to drive. Before the test, the examiner checks for:

- two license plates. The rear plate must show current registration.
- both front and back turn signal lights and working brake lights.
- a working horn designed for the vehicle.
- tires with no bald spots.
- adequate brake pressure (you will be asked to step on the brake pedal to see if it works properly).
- a driver’s side window that rolls down.
- a windshield that allows a full unobstructed field of vision.
- two rear view mirrors (one must be on the outside, to the driver’s left).
- driver and front passenger doors that open from both the inside and outside.
- a secured glove compartment door so it doesn’t open during the test.
- a passenger seat permanently attached to the vehicle.
- working safety belts, if the vehicle was manufactured with safety belts.
- working emergency/parking brake.

Financial Responsibility

You must show that your vehicle is properly insured before the driving test begins (or the test will be postponed) by providing one of the following:
APPENDIX D: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

- A document with the liability insurance policy or surety bond number.
- An Assigned Risk insurance card with the name of the assigned insurance company, file number, and current coverage dates.
- Current insurance binder or copy of an insurance policy signed or countersigned by an insurance company representative.
- Rental car contract if the driver is listed on the contract as the insured.
- DMV-issued certificate of self-insurance or acknowledgment of cash deposit.
- Written confirmation from the insurer that the person is insured.

You have three chances to pass the driving test. If you fail, you may practice for a while, and then make another appointment. There is no waiting period, but you must make an appointment. If you fail to successfully complete the driving test on the first attempt, you must pay a $6 fee for each additional driving test that is administered under an application for an original or renewal driver license.

Driving Schools
We DO NOT endorse these companies in any way. They

AP Driving (www.apdriving.com)
(949) 910-4669

AA Teen Driving Academy (www.aateendriving.com)
(949) 768-6666

The Way Driving School (www.thewaydrivingschool.com)
(866) 843-9291
(949) 458-2594

SOC Driving (www.drivesoc.com)
(949) 770-6637

Owning a Car in California
Owning a car is expensive. Really think about the pros and cons of owning one before buying it. There is cost associated with purchasing, registering, insuring and maintaining the car.

If you own or lease a motor vehicle in California, you must meet certain obligations to keep your vehicle legally registered and safe for the road:
- Any vehicle to be drive on public roads must be insured
- Your car must pass the smog test
- Your car must be registered

Automobile Insurance
Drivers of automobiles, motorcycles, and other motor vehicles have a financial and legal responsibility in case of an accident that involves injury or death, damage to another vehicle, or property. DO NOT DRIVE WITHOUT INSURANCE! There can be very serious legal and financial consequences if you do not have insurance. Insure your vehicle first!
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Automobile Registration
If purchasing a new car, the dealer will take care of the registration and you will be mailed the license plates. Some used-car dealers will also take care of registering the cars they sell too. Ask them.

If you obtain or purchase a vehicle from a private party, you must transfer the ownership within 10 days. Submit the following to DMV:

- A properly endorsed and completed Certificate of Title or Application for Duplicate Title (REG 227). Also known as the “pink slip” must be signed by them, and your name indicated on it as the new owner.
- Smog certification (proof that the car meets the state requirement for the exhaust emissions) provided by the seller
- Use tax payment if required.
- Odometer Mileage Disclosure Statement if applicable.
- Appropriate DMV fees. This varies according to the model and age of the car.

After all of the above is submitted, the DMV will issue a temporary registration slip and ownership recorded. An official registration slip will be mailed to you. Used cars keep their license plates, so you do not need to remove them.

Renting a Car

For most car rental companies, the renter must be at least 25 years of age and hold a valid and current driver’s license. This includes a California driver’s license, a license from your home country (must be written out in the Latin alphabet), or an International Driver’s Permit (International Driver License).

It is recommended that international renters bring their passport when picking up their rental car.

If a renter is under 25 years of age, often the car rental company will charge an additional fee, between $15-$35/day. Some companies will not rent certain type of cars to persons under 25 years old.

Most car rental companies will offer collision coverage damage insurance. This is usually an additional fee. As noted above, all vehicles MUST be insured to be driven on the road. If you do not purchase the rental companies insurance, you must be able to provide proof of your own insurance. If the rental car is damaged during the rental period, the company will charge the renter for the cost of the damage.

Nearest Rental Car Companies:

Enterprise
24401 Ridge Route, 109a, Laguna Hills, CA
(949) 830-7221
APPENDIX D: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

Budget Rent A Car
23020 Lake Forest Dr # 160, Laguna Hills, CA  
(949) 855-8691

Avis Rent-A-Car
23866 Aliso Creek Rd  
Laguna Niguel, CA  
(949) 362-9187

Hertz
24001 Via Fabricante Ste 1001  
Mission Viejo, CA  
(949) 472-4290

Key Driving Laws and Tips

Seat Belt Law:
In California, everyone in a car must wear a safety restraint. With a few exceptions, everyone riding in a car must be contained by an approved safety restraint system (seat belts and/or safety seats). Some passengers may be exempted from this requirement due to medical issues if they have a letter from their doctor excusing them from the seat belt law.

Passengers who are at least 16 years old can be cited for failing to comply with the law. Drivers are responsible for their own conduct along with their passenger’s behavior, and can be cited for any seat-belt violation that occurs within their vehicle.

Hands-free Law:
Drivers are required to use hands-free equipment while talking on their cellular telephones. You can stay in compliance by purchasing hands-free kit equipment.

If you are caught violating this law, you will be charged the following fees plus additional penalty assessments:
• First Offense: $20
• Any Subsequent Conviction: $50

However, the additional penalty assessments can end up tripling or more the total fee amount. According to the Uniform Bail and Penalty Schedule, with the addition of penalty assessments, a first offense is $76 and a second offense is $190.

The conviction will appear on your driving record, but points will not be added. Also keep in mind, the law still applies if you are visiting the state of California and get caught talking on your phone while operating a vehicle.

Texting while driving also falls under this law.
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Text Messaging
As of January 1, 2009 a law against driving while reading, writing or sending a text message went into effect. This applies to all forms of text-based communication, including e-mail and instant messaging.
This law pertains to all drivers, regardless of age or state of residence.

If caught, you will be charged:
• $20 for first offense
• $50 for each subsequent offense

Be aware that after penalty assessments are weighed in, fines could actually more than triple. According to the Uniform Bail and Penalty Schedule, with the addition of penalty assessments, a first offense is $76 and a second offense is $190.

What to Do If a Police Officer Stops Your Car
• When you see the flashing lights behind you, stop your car on the side of the road as soon as it is safe. Note: Flashing lights can come from top of the police car or from the side.
• Do not get out of your car. Wait for the officer to come to your car. Then lower the window.
• The police officer will ask to see your driver’s license and your automobile registration.
• Let the officer tell you why you were stopped.
• Cooperate and be courteous.
• Do not try to pay your fine in cash to the police officer. If the officer misunderstands you, they may think you are trying to bribe him. Pay all fines by mail or to the clerk of a court.

What to Do When You Get Into a Car Accident
It’s pretty hard to remember what to do after the initial shock and surprise of an accident. Car accidents happen to many responsible drivers. If you are involved in a car accident, follow these tips to make sure you are prepared

Take Safety Measures
• Stop your vehicle and move it to a safe nearby location.
• Check to see if anyone is injured. Call 911 for medical assistance.
• Do not leave the scene of the accident.
• Make sure everyone involved moves to a safe location.
• Contact the police. They will let you know if an officer needs to be present at the scene.

Collect Information
Exchange contact information with everyone involved, including:
• Name
• Address (including email)
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Below is a list of the major cell phone companies and their nearest store listings. Research the companies through their websites or in person before you make a decision.

**ATT**
Website: http://www.wireless.att.com/

26811 Aliso Creek Rd.
Aliso Viejo, CA
(949) 425-0600

**Sprint**
Website: http://www.sprint.com
No prepaid plans

26921 Aliso Creek Rd. Ste. A
Aliso Viejo, CA
(949) 448-5100

**T-Mobile**
Website: http://www.t-mobile.com
Prepaid Plan Information: http://www.t-mobile.com/shop/plans/

26541 Aliso Creek Rd.
Aliso Viejo, CA
(949) 448-0136

**Verizon Wireless**
Website: http://www.verizonwireless.com
Prepaid Plan Information: http://www.verizonwireless.com/b2c/store/controller?item=prepay&item&controller=home&controller=prepayOverview

27040 Alicia Parkway
Laguna Niguel, CA
(949) 831-3955

**Other resources:**

**SKYPE**
With the free download from http://www.skype.com, you can talk to your family or friends who are also online with no charge using your computer. You will need to install SKYPE, and set up a microphone and headsets/speakers. You can also call from your computer to regular phones (including international calls) with reasonable fees. Other services include free online chat and free video calls (if you have a webcam).
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Instant Messenger Applications
You can talk to people using instant text messages by installing instant messenger applications such as AOL, ICQ, MSN, Yahoo, or Google.


Shopping
There are many types of stores you can go to buy what you need. As you familiarize yourself with Aliso Viejo and its neighboring cities, you will undoubtedly learn more about local shopping. In the meantime, here are some descriptions of the types of stores and places nearby SUA to help you.

Directories of Stores Nearby

Shopping Malls and Centers
Shopping malls are large indoor shopping centers, which are anchored by several major department stores with aisles of specialty stores and kiosks between them. Usually there are places to eat, such as the food court, which contain fast-food places, and some chain restaurants with table dining. A smaller version of the shopping mall is a strip mall, which usually has four or five stores in a row and off-street parking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mall</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laguna Hills Mall</td>
<td>24155 Laguna Hills Mall # 900 Laguna Hills</td>
<td>(949) 586-8283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Viejo Mall</td>
<td>555 The Shops at Mission Viejo</td>
<td>(949) 364-1832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irvine Spectrum Center</td>
<td>71 Fortune Drive Irvine</td>
<td>(949) 753-5180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Department Stores
Department stores sell shoes, clothing, appliances, furniture, fabrics, dishes, pots and pans, linens, towels, and toys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Store</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kohl's</td>
<td>27380 Heather Ridge Rd, Laguna Niguel</td>
<td>(949) 349-0023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macy's</td>
<td>24100 Laguna Hills Mall, Laguna Hills, CA</td>
<td>(949) 586-1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sears</td>
<td>24300 Laguna Hills Mall Laguna Hills, CA</td>
<td>(949) 206-4700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discount department stores, such as Target and Walmart, sell fair-to-good-quality items for discount prices.
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Target
26932 La Paz Road Aliso Viejo

TJ Maxx
26771 Aliso Creek Road Aliso Viejo (949) 349-9364

Walmart
27470 Alicia Pkwy Laguna Niguel (949) 360-0758

Hardware Stores
Hardware stores sell many household goods, small appliances, and tools. There are
hardware stores near each of the campuses. Target also sells many hardware items.

Lowe’s Home Improvement
26501 Aliso Creek Road Aliso Viejo (949) 616-7725

Home Depot
27401 La Paz Rd Laguna Niguel (949) 831-3698

Pharmacies
Pharmacies are the only places that sell doctor-prescribed medicines. Many drugs may
only be obtained with a doctor’s prescription in the United States. If you get a
prescription from a doctor, you may have it filled at a drugstore or at the pharmacy.
There are also many drug store chains as well as pharmacies within supermarkets and
discount stores.

Non-prescription drugs, often called “over-the-counter” medications—aspirin, cold
tablets, vitamins, some contraceptives (e.g., condoms), etc., are in plain view on drug
store shelves. If you do not see the item you are looking for, ask the pharmacist for help.
Pharmacies near SUA are:

CVS
26891 Aliso Creek Road Aliso Viejo (949) 360-4081

Walgreens
26531 Aliso Creek Road Aliso Viejo (949) 448-0082

Grocery Stores/Supermarkets
Grocery stores sell all types of food—fresh, frozen, and canned—“staples,” and spices.
Some also sell toiletries such as shampoo, toothpaste, and paper products such as toilet
paper, paper towels, sanitary napkins, facial tissues, paper plates, and paper cups.
Supermarkets are bigger grocery stores which stock larger varieties and quantities of
foods.

Trader Joe’s
26541 Aliso Creek Road Aliso Viejo (949) 643-5531

Ralphs
26901 Aliso Creek Road Aliso Viejo (949) 362-3727

Vons
27320 Alicia Pkwy Laguna Niguel (949) 448-9244
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Farmers' Market
Outdoor or “farmers” markets are open every weekend. You may buy fresh fruits, vegetables, and plants, many locally grown. Other items including meats, bread, and flowers are also available.

*Laguna Hills*
Laguna Hills Mall Parking Lot, the 5 Freeway and El Toro Road
Fridays - 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. (rain or shine)

*Laguna Niguel*
Plaza De La Paz Shopping Center on the Corner of La Paz and Pacific Park
Sundays - 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. (rain or shine)

Ethnic Grocery Stores:
Sometimes you may have a craving for foods from your own country. Below are some ethnic grocery stores near SUA.

**Latin American:**

*Mercado Corona* 25351 Alicia Parkway Suite C Laguna Hills, CA 92653 (949) 581-8365

**South African and British:**

*African Hut* 27601 Forbes Road #2 Laguna Niguel CA 92677 (949) 582-9546

**Japanese:**

*Mitsuwa Marketplace* 665 Paularino Avenue Costa Mesa, CA 92626 (714) 557-6699
*Marukai* 2975 Harbor Blvd Costa Mesa, CA 92626 (714) 751-8433

**Chinese:**

*99 Ranch Market* 15333 Culver Drive, Irvine, CA 92606 (949) 651-8899

**Korean:**

*Zion Market* 4800 Irvine Boulevard Irvine, CA 92606 (714) 832-5600

**Indian:**

*H-mart* 2600-2100 Alton Pkwy Irvine, CA 92606 (949) 833-0111

**Persian/Middle Eastern:**

*Nina's Indian and British Groceries & Restaurant* 23542 El Toro Rd Lake Forest, CA 92630 (949) 583-2789

*Jordan Market* 24771 Alicia Pkwy, Ste A Laguna Hills, CA 92653 (949) 770-3111
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Things to Know When Shopping

Sales Tax
Unlike prices in Europe, which include VAT (the Value Added Tax), marked prices here DO NOT include state sales taxes. The sales tax in California is about 7.75%. So if you see a sweater marked $100, for example, you must add another $8 for tax. You will pay these sales taxes on almost everything you buy in stores and restaurants, form books to computers to sandwiches. Remember, taxes are NOT included in the posted price.

Returns
While in some countries it may be unheard of to return bought items, it is a common accepted practice in the U.S. Nearly all retailers allow you to return products, not just defective ones but those you simply decide you don’t want. Perhaps the clothes you bought don’t fit or the new lamp doesn’t look good in your room. Stores generally allow you to return these items, as long as they are returned promptly and in new condition. They may offer you a replacement, refund the purchase price, or offer you a “store credit” (a voucher that can be only used to buy stuff in that store). Each seller’s exact policies are different, so you should ask in advance.

Tipping
When you go out, one of the important social etiquettes in the U.S. is to tip or give gratuity. Standards vary, but generally, tips are given for services rendered in the restaurant, bar, and taxi industries. It is always better to leave tips in cash, handing them directly to the person you are tipping, whenever possible.

- waiters: 15-17% of bill before tax, 20% at a 5-star restaurant or for large parties (at a fancy restaurant check to make sure service is not included in the bill)
- taxi drivers: 15% of total bill, no less than 25 cents
- hairdressers/manicurist: 15%
- shampooer: $1-$2
- Masseuse: 10% - 20%
- pizza delivery person: $1-2 for short distance, $2-3 for longer distance
- airport skycap - $1-2 per bag
- bellhop: $10 for carrying luggage, $5 for showing you to your room
- room service: 15% of the bill
- furniture delivery - $5-10 minimum, up to $20 for very heavy or large items
Chapter 4: Money Matters

Banking

You should set up a local checking account as soon as possible. You can use your account to deposit scholarship funds, receive wire transfers, withdraw cash, and pay bills, either electronically or by personal check. Most students only need a basic checking account. Below are some key services that banks offer.

Checking Accounts

You deposit your money and buy personal checks to pay for bills. Useful if you have bills to pay on a regular basis (credit card, phone, rent, utilities). There is usually no minimum balance required but no interest earned either. A monthly fee may be charged. Some checking accounts earn interest but usually require a larger opening balance.

You need to keep a careful record of how much money you have in the bank and the amount of the checks you write. Writing checks for more than the amount you have in your account results in fines and other penalties.

Savings Accounts

These accounts are designed for saving money over a long period of time. Interest is paid on the balance of these accounts. You typically cannot write checks on these accounts. You can, however, open both accounts and transfer funds from your savings to your checking account.

ATM Cards

These cards offer deposit and withdrawal service 24 hours a day through automated teller machines (ATM). ATMs are often located outside of banks. There is an ATM on campus in the student center. Use caution when withdrawing funds at an ATM outside, especially after dark. Also, you need to keep your personal identification number (PIN) associated with bankcards confidential so that only you have access to your account. If you lose your ATM card, you should report it to your bank immediately.

Debit cards

Debit cards allow you to pay for goods and services directly from your bank account, reducing the need for cash. You can request a debit card when you open your checking or savings account or later if you decide you would like one.

Credit Cards

These convenient cards allow you to make purchases and to pay for them at a later date. There is typically an annual fee attached and you pay interest (around 18%) on any unpaid balance. These charges can add up. Most international students find it difficult to get a credit card in the U.S. because they have not established a credit history and because they are not U.S. residents.
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Things to Consider When Choosing a Bank

- **Location**: Look for a branch near SUA campus. A list of nearby banks is provided at the end of this section.

- **Services needed**: Checking or savings accounts, safe deposit boxes, overseas wire transfers, foreign currency conversion, etc.

- **Accessibility**: Saturday banking hours, availability of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs).

- **Requirements**: Minimum balances (initial and maintained), monthly fees.

- **Interest rates**: For invested funds.

Larger banks tend to offer more comprehensive international services: wire transfers, international drafts, foreign currency exchange, and foreign traveler’s checks. It may take longer to complete such transactions at smaller banks.

Opening an Account:

U.S. financial institutions are required to verify the identity of every individual who opens a bank account. Below is the minimal information a bank must obtain from you before allowing you to open an account:

- Your name
- Your date of birth
- Your street address – no P.O. Box
- An identification number

An identification number can be one or more of the following:

- A taxpayer ID number (Social Security number or individual taxpayer ID number)
- Passport number and country of issuance
- Alien identification card number
- Any other government-issued document evidencing nationality or residence and bearing a photograph or similar safeguard.

**What to Bring When Opening an Account**

- Money to deposit
- Your passport and one other form of identification
- Immigration Visa
- Mailing address in the U.S.: Be sure you know all address details (street name and number, mailbox number, town zip code). Bring proof that this is your address, like a bill or letter you have received there.
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Financial Institutions near SUA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capstone Credit Union</td>
<td>3 Polaris Way, Aliso Viejo</td>
<td>(949) 716-5746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank of America</td>
<td>26831 Aliso Creek Rd., Aliso Viejo</td>
<td>(949) 349-1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chase</td>
<td>26821 Aliso Creek Rd., Aliso Viejo</td>
<td>(949) 349-1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citibank</td>
<td>26916 La Paz Road, Aliso Viejo</td>
<td>(800) 627-3999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Bank</td>
<td>26901 Aliso Creek Rd., Aliso Viejo</td>
<td>(949) 360-5800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Bank</td>
<td>27211 La Paz Road, Laguna Niguel</td>
<td>(949) 448-8550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wells Fargo</td>
<td>27250 Alicia Pkwy, Laguna Niguel</td>
<td>(949) 831-0128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writing and Cashing Checks

Writing personal checks may be new for you. In the U.S., you may pay bills by personal check. You can also often buy things in stores and pay for restaurants by check (as long as you have a credit card and/or picture identification with you, too). Although on-line bill paying and credit card payments are becoming more popular, most people need to use checks occasionally.

Remember to write down the amount of every check you write, and subtract it from the amount of money you have in the account. Your checkbook will have a place to keep this record. The exact amount of money you have may be difficult to track because of services fees being subtracted and/or interest being added.

Watch carefully, though, because if you write a check for an amount you do not have (called an overdraft, or a bounced check.), you will have a penalty fee. This is true even if you have plenty of money in another type of account in the same bank. Some banks offer reserve credit (or overdraft protection)—they will cover the amount of the bounced check and charge you interest for this "loan." However, it is often difficult to get this protection if you do not have income or a credit history in this country.

Understanding the Pre-printed Information on Your Checks

It is important to understand the information that is already printed on your checks so you can write checks accurately and completely. Below is a diagram of all the pieces of information you will find on a check:
APPENDIX D: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

What You Will Need to Complete:
To complete your checks, you will need to fill in the following pieces of information:

1. The date.
2. The “Pay to the Order” of line. This is where you write the name of the person or company to whom you will give the check. After writing the name, you can draw a line to the end. This prevents anyone from adding an additional name on your check.
3. The dollar amount of the check in numbers. Such as $8.15
4. The dollar amount of the check in words. Such as Eight and 15/100. After writing out the amount of the check, draw a line to the end. This prevents anyone from adding an additional amount after what you have written.
5. The memo section. This area is optional. You can use this area to remind yourself why you wrote the check or to record the account number of the bill you are paying.
6. The signature line.

What is on the Check That You Will Need to Know:

7. Your name and address. Your phone number is sometimes included.
8. Your bank’s number and branch.
9. Routing number.
10. Account number.

What is On The Back of Your Check:
There is also important information printed on the back of your checks:
The back of the check has an endorsement area. Endorsing a check means to sign the back of the check to make it "cashed." For example, if you receive a check, you would endorse, or sign, the back of the check to deposit the amount into your bank account or get the amount in cash.
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Taxes

What is a Tax Return?

In the United States, federal income taxes are prepaid by our employer(s) based on the estimate of liability provided by the employee on the Form W-4 (usually completed by the employee at the time of hire). The taxes paid by the employer are then withheld from the employee’s paychecks. Since the amount withheld is only an estimate, employees are given a yearly opportunity to reconcile the amount taken out with how much was owed. The name of the form on which the reconciliation is made is called the “tax return.” A tax return is filed with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), an agency of the U.S. government. In some cases, filing the tax return results in a refund from the IRS because the amount of money withheld was higher than necessary. However, sometimes a taxpayer does not have enough withheld and must send a payment to the IRS with his/her tax return.

Tax Information for International Students

If you are an international or exchange student who was present in the United States in the past tax year, you may be required by law to file one or more U.S. Federal and State Tax forms even if you have had no U.S. source of income. The good news is that if you earned income in the U.S., you may be eligible for a tax refund if you overpaid or a complete reimbursement based on tax treaties. The U.S. tax year runs from January 1st to December 31st, with a filing deadline of April 15th.

Taxes are often complicated – even for those native to the United States. Unless a person has received training from the IRS to give tax advice, it is against the law to do so. SUA staff is NOT authorized to advise on tax matters.

However, SUA is providing a free tax preparation software to assist you in preparing your federal income taxes called CINTAX. This can be accessed through our portal.

Tax Filing Resources

Federal Tax Information
Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
(800) TAX-FORM (to order forms)
(800) 829-1040 (tax questions)
Web address: www.irs.gov

IRS Taxpayer Assistance Center
Laguna Niguel Office
24000 Avila Rd.
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677
(949) 389-4002

California State Income Tax
Franchise Tax Board (FTB)
APPENDIX D: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

On-Campus Jobs

International students are, by law, only eligible to apply for on-campus jobs. You CANNOT work off-campus. On-campus employment is limited to 20 hours/week during the school year and can be full-time during official college breaks.

How to apply for on-campus jobs

1. Choose a job from the Jobs Available listing on the SUA Portal (Areas→Human Resource, click on Student Employment on left hand navigation→Fall 2011 Jobs)

2. From the SUA Portal, print out the Student Employment Application Form. Attach a resume to the application form. If you need help with writing a cover letter and/or resume, please contact the Manager of Career Services, Jennifer Cunningham at j cunningham@soka.edu or call her at ext. 4191 to schedule an appointment to meet with her.

3. Return the application form to the Human Resources Office (Founders Hall 315) prior to the deadline date for the position you are applying for. There is a black box on the wall of Founders 315 where applications can be dropped.

4. Human Resources (HR) will forward your application to the Area(s) you are applying to.

5. If you are applying to more than one job, please submit one application form per job and attach a resume to each of the applications.

Notification of interview selection:
HR or the Area that you applied for will notify you via email or phone if you have been selected to interview.

Notification of employment offer:
HR will notify you via email if you have been offered the job.

Employment Orientation:
Once notified of your employment offer, you will need to schedule a time for your employment orientation with HR. Please bring with you evidence of your U.S. citizenship or proof of your legal right to live and work in this country to your orientation. We are required by federal law to examine documentation of your employment eligibility within three business days after you being work. If you are an international student without a Social Security card, you would have to apply for a Social Security card first in order to be legal to work. HR will give international students the necessary letters to apply for a Social Security card only after having been notified that the student got a job on campus. After you have completed orientation you will meet with your Area supervisor to coordinate your work schedule. You will not be able to work until you have completed orientation.

***Please note: You may apply for multiple positions on campus; however, you are only permitted to have one job on campus at a time. The only exception is the Tour Guide job. If you are a tour guide, you can have another job on campus.

Positions are posted throughout the year, so please continue to check the SUA Portal.
### Appendix: Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Questions About...</th>
<th>Contact...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Academic Matters    | • Your professor, if the concern relates to a particular course  
• Your academic advisor  
• Dean of Faculty - Ed Feasel  
• Academic Department (AD) |
| 2. Transcripts and Verification of Enrollment | • Registrar - Nancy Yoshimura |
| 3. Financial Matters   | • Financial Aid – Cindy Cohen  
• Student Accounts - Eiko Vogtman |
| 4. Health Care and Insurance | • Student Health Clinic – Nurse Jackie Brodsky  
• Counselor - Anhthu Dang |
| 5. Internships and Career Counseling | • Internships – Andy Marcos  
• Career Services – Jennifer Cunningham |
| 6. Student Employment  | • Human Resources (for on-campus jobs) – Jacky Shiroma  
• Career Services (for off campus jobs) – Jennifer Cunningham |
| 7. Personal Problems   | • Director of Student Services – Hyon Moon  
• Director of Residential Life – Michelle Hobby-Mears  
• International Student Life Coordinator - Diana Ueda  
• Counselor - Anhthu Dang |
| 8. Bus Schedules       | • Shuttle Schedule under Portal  
• Director of Transportation – Cliff Mosher |
| 9. Campus Activities   | • Student Activities – Julian Velarde  
• Announcements and Campus Calendar under the Portal  
• Soka Student Union (SSU) |
| 10. Visa/Immigration Matters | • Director of Student Services - Margaret Kasahara |
| 11. Information Technology (IT) | • IT Helpdesk – Ext. 4134 |
| 12. Campus Security    | • Security Kiosk - Ext. 4100  
• Director of Security and Safety - Cliff Mosher |
APPENDIX E: CINTAX TIPS

CINTAX Tips

1. CINTAX is an online system; however, you will not be able to file your tax return electronically. After you have completed your return you will need to print, sign and mail the forms by April 15th.

2. Have all of your documents regarding your current and prior visits to the U.S. available. This would include your DS-2019 or I-20 as well as your I-94 and entry/exit dates.

3. You will need to have all of your income documents available to you. These include:
   a. 1099 - reports on income received that did not have taxes withdrawn by the employer. It is the responsibility of the employee to pay taxes on this. The 1099 form is also used by banks to report interest, but usually this is not included in tax returns.
   b. W-2 - reports income received that had taxes automatically withdrawn from the employer.
   c. 1042-S - reports on all types of stipends, scholarships, grants, fellowships and other awards

4. Plan to spend approximately 30 minutes to completing the process. Having all of the required documents handy and making sure the printer is working will make the process much easier.

5. All information entered into CINTAX is encrypted and secured via SSL technology.

6. You will be asked for your email address in completing the forms. CINTAX does not use the email address for any purpose other than contacting you if an error has occurred with their tax return preparation. CINTAX assures that all of the information is secure and will not be distributed or used by anyone other than CINTAX.

7. Over 70% of the errors and inquiries are due to entering an incorrect password. Be careful and accurate when accessing CINTAX.

8. If there are any problems, send an email to the CINTAX Support Center at support@cintax.us. CINTAX will only answer questions via email.
APPENDIX F: STUDENT ASSISTANT AD

Need: 1 student
Area: Student Affairs/International Student Life
Supervisor: Diana Ueda
Hours: 5 hours per week
Position: Student Assistant

Description: Responsibilities include but are not limited to: making copies; designing flyers and other promotional materials; posting flyers and promoting activities; assisting International Student Life Coordinator with logistical details for international student orientation and other administrative duties.

Student must have basic understanding of Microsoft Office products and Adobe Photoshop. Must be responsible, detailed oriented and creative. Please bring samples of your creative work.
Environmental Health & Safety

Building Evacuation Planning

Emergency building evacuation may be necessary in case of fire, earthquake, bomb threat, or other emergency condition. The following procedures have been set up to deal with these emergencies. Call 911 and then call Campus Security at ext # 4160 or # 4117.

Building Evacuation

Each major building should have a standing committee responsible for emergency building evacuation. It is the responsibility of the building manager to establish this committee and act as its chair. The Building Evacuation Committee is made up of at least one evacuation monitor for each floor of the building. For large buildings, monitors should be designated for each wing or sub-unit of the floor.

When the evacuation alarm (fire alarm) is sounded, monitors will report to their assigned areas and assist people in finding the exits. They will see that all occupants evacuate the building and facilitate the movement of those individuals requiring assistance. The evacuation plan should include a description of where to meet outside the building.

Fire Alarm Tests

Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) is responsible for coordinating annual tests of the fire alarms in buildings. These tests may be combined with building evacuation drills discussed below.

Emergency Evacuation Drill

Evacuation drills train personnel for the actual event, and the regular scheduling of such drills is encouraged. The Building Evacuation Committee plans and monitors evacuation drills in cooperation with EH&S at ext # 4235.

Persons Needing Assistance

During both evacuation drills and actual emergency evacuations, persons needing assistance should be helped to the nearest fire escape window or stairway door, for their increased protection and to make rescue easier for trained emergency personnel. In no case should such action obstruct the exit ways for others or subject the participants to injury.

Employee Responsibility

Each building occupant should learn the location and operation of fire alarms and fire extinguishers in the work area. Employees are authorized and have the responsibility to use them in an actual emergency. Each employee should know the location of at least two exits in the building location and be able to find exits in total darkness. Fire doors should never be blocked open. Each building occupant must learn to recognize the evacuation alarm and know how to call the fire department (911).

Soka University of America
Environmental Health & Safety

Fire Emergencies

Fire Emergency Procedures

The following fire emergency procedures should be followed by all Soka University personnel in the event of a fire or explosion.

If you discover a fire or see smoke:

1. **Activate the fire alarm system** by pulling the nearest fire alarm.
2. **Remove all personnel** (students, visitors and employees) from the immediate danger area.
3. **Report the situation by dialing ext. 4100 or 4117** (SUA Security) and report:
   - EXACT location of the fire (building, floor and room number)
   - Type of fire (electrical, flammable liquid, trash, etc.)
   - Extent of fire (severity of fire and/or amount of smoke)
   - Your name and telephone number
4. If you feel comfortable with the situation, attempt to extinguish the fire using the proper fire extinguisher.
5. **Confine the fire** and smoke by closing all windows and doors.
6. **DO NOT LOCK THE DOOR. LEAVE THE CORRIDOR AND ROOM LIGHTS ON.**
7. If possible, shut off all non-essential oxygen, gas and electrical appliances in the area and remove any hazardous materials.
8. **Evacuate the building** using the nearest enclosed stairway or ground exit.
9. Re-enter the building only after the all clear is signaled by Fire Department or Campus Security.

Building personnel should work as a team to accomplish the above procedures.

Every lab or principal department should appoint a person who is responsible for advising fire fighters or Environmental Health & Safety personnel of any hazardous materials (toxins, explosives, flammables, radioactive materials) that may be involved in the fire.

Soka University of America
If the fire alarm sounds in your building:

1. Contact Campus Security at ext. 4100 or 4117, to ensure the alarm was received.
2. Evacuate the building using the nearest enclosed stairway or ground exit. Be sure to take personal belongings such as purses, briefcases and keys with you.
3. Re-enter the building only after the building is signaled all clear by Fire Department or Campus Security.

Fire Extinguishers:

Fire extinguishers are inspected and maintained by facilities personnel. If a fire extinguisher is discharged in your area, please contact facilities at ext. 4099, so the extinguisher may be replaced.
Environmental Health & Safety

Medical Emergencies

Major Medical Emergencies

- If it is not practical to move the ill or injured individual, call Campus Security at ext. 4100 or 4117 and they will obtain an ambulance and escort it to the location of the emergency.
- Place a 911 call and then call campus security at ext. 4100 or 4117.
- For job sustained injury/illness, all patients should be taken to designated Hospital’s Emergency Room, or their own hospital of choice. Hospital personnel should be told it is an on-the-job injury, if applicable. Proof of employment, such as a campus ID card, will be required. A First Report of Injury Form must also be filed with the Human Resources Department, ext. 4161.
- When the injury or illness involves a chemical, a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) should accompany the victim to the hospital. (Copies available in work area.)
- The procedure outlined above applies to all individuals receiving pay from Soka University who are injured or become ill while performing an activity that directly benefits Soka University. If transportation is unavailable within the injured person’s department, a request may be made to the Campus Security to provide such.
- Students who are injured/become ill and who might require hospitalization should go to the nearest Hospital’s Emergency Room.

Minor Medical Emergencies

- On-the-job, minor medical injuries/illness (i.e., falls, cuts, sprains and strains) involving employees should be reported immediately to the injured person’s supervisor. The supervisor must fill out a First Report of Injury Form (available from Human Resources or the Environmental Health & Safety Department). If medical attention is required, the injured person should be taken to designated Hospital’s Emergency Room, or their physician of choice.
- Students who incur a minor injury during normal class/working hours should be referred to the Student Health Services, ext. 4143.

Psychiatric Emergencies

For psychiatric emergencies, call the SUA Counseling Center Office at 949-480-4148.
APPENDIX G: CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Reporting Accidents

To report an accident, "near miss" or hazardous situation on campus not involving an injury, contact the Environmental Health & Safety Department, ext. 4235. Complete an Accident/Incident Report Form and submit it to your Department Head and the Environmental Health & Safety Department. Forms are available from EH&S.
APPENDIX H: EVALUATION FORM

Evaluation Form

Please take the time to tell us how we did. Your feedback will be greatly appreciated.

1) Please check the box that corresponds to how you feel about the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The information provided in this workshop was helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The topic was relevant</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information and knowledge contained in this workshop met my expectation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Please explain why you felt the way above:
   a. What was helpful or not helpful about the workshop?

   b. How was the presented topic relevant to you?

   c. If the workshop did not meet your expectation, what were you hoping to get out of it?

   d. What did you get out of this workshop, if anything

3) Any suggestion? How could we improve this workshop?