

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK SPRING 2014



## OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL ADMISSIONS AND PROGRAMS

281-283-2430  
OIAP@uhcl.edu

**UHCL**

The choice  
is clear.



## **WELCOME!!!**

Congratulations on your admission to University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL) and welcome aboard.

Being new to the place you may have many queries regarding deciding where to live, how to get around the city, or how to use a U.S. bank are some of the things that you need to know. All of these things may seem a bit overwhelming when you are also trying to adjust to your new institution and academic program. Therefore, we have created this International Student Handbook to answer some of your questions and help ease your transition.

We hope that you find the Handbook useful and informative. We have arranged it so that you can easily find the information you are seeking. Each section can be read separately, so there is no particular order that has to be followed when reading. However, it is strongly encouraged that you read the whole Handbook because there is useful information throughout its entirety. There is also an online version of this Handbook available at [www.uhcl.edu/OII](http://www.uhcl.edu/OII). Please feel free to browse our webpage to learn more about the additional resources and services available to you through Office of International Admissions and Programs (OIAP).

The OIAP staff is always available to assist students, so please feel free to visit us in the Bayou Building Room B2528.\*

\*The location of OIAP is to be changed shortly. Please continue to look at our website for an updated location.

Sincerely,

Sameer Pande, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

## **Office of International Admissions and Programs**

Welcome to the International World of the University of Houston-Clear Lake. The globe is rapidly expanding into an environment of unprecedented global interdependence and responsibility. Wherever you find yourself in the world: The U.S, China, Vietnam, Turkey, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Peru, Brazil, Indonesia, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, India, Sri Lanka or any of the countries represented at University of Houston - Clear Lake, you as a potential student or scholar will change the international environment with your presence. The world needs strong leadership to meet the challenges of an interdependent world. At UHCL, excellent educators from many parts of the world with expertise in many languages promote an education for diverse society. The location of UHCL in the city of Houston, with more than 80 consulates, offers an unprecedented opportunity where one can evolve towards world citizenship.

The Office of International Admissions and Programs welcomes prospective and current students, faculty and staff. We are pleased to discuss international issues and answer your questions. Together we work on an international passport of experience.

OIAP International Advisors serve current UHCL sponsored international students, dependents, and scholars. All immigration related services such as the processing of immigration documents, government reporting, status letters, change of status, and work authorization are handled by OIAP.

OIAP provides immigration workshops and seminars throughout the academic year to assist students and scholars in maintaining their immigration status. As a service to our international students and scholars, monthly emails are sent containing important immigration updates and reminders on maintaining lawful immigration status in the U.S.

Any questions about full-time enrollment requirements, restrictions on working in the U.S., traveling outside the U.S., and other rules and responsibilities connected to your immigration status should always be addressed to OIAP directly at [oiap@uhcl.edu](mailto:oiap@uhcl.edu).

The International Advisors look forward to assisting you. If you would like to meet with your Advisor, please schedule an appointment by calling 281.283.2430 or email [oiap@uhcl.edu](mailto:oiap@uhcl.edu).

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## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Section One – Practical Information.....    | 8  |
| Housing.....                                | 8  |
| Types of Housing .....                      | 8  |
| The Lease.....                              | 8  |
| Utilities.....                              | 8  |
| Furniture.....                              | 8  |
| Transportation.....                         | 9  |
| Private Car .....                           | 9  |
| Bicycles .....                              | 9  |
| UHCL Shuttle.....                           | 9  |
| Houston Public Transportation .....         | 9  |
| Air Travel.....                             | 9  |
| U.S. Identification Documents.....          | 10 |
| UHCL ID Cards.....                          | 10 |
| Driver's License.....                       | 10 |
| Texas ID .....                              | 10 |
| Safety and Security .....                   | 11 |
| Personal Safety .....                       | 11 |
| CARE Team .....                             | 12 |
| Identity Theft.....                         | 12 |
| Police and the Law.....                     | 12 |
| UHCL Police.....                            | 12 |
| Local & State Police .....                  | 12 |
| Management of Money.....                    | 13 |
| Banks and Banking Services.....             | 13 |
| Opening an Account .....                    | 13 |
| Personalized Checks .....                   | 13 |
| Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) .....      | 14 |
| Money Orders.....                           | 14 |
| Financial Assistance.....                   | 14 |
| Part-Time Employment & Assistantships ..... | 14 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Scholarships.....                            | 15 |
| Installment Plan.....                        | 15 |
| Federal Financial Assistance.....            | 15 |
| Purchasing Items .....                       | 15 |
| Food.....                                    | 16 |
| Alcoholic Beverages and Cigarettes .....     | 16 |
| Health & Medical Services.....               | 17 |
| Vaccinations .....                           | 17 |
| Student Health Services.....                 | 17 |
| Disability Services .....                    | 18 |
| Health Insurance Requirement .....           | 18 |
| What Happens When You Visit a Doctor? .....  | 18 |
| Postal Services .....                        | 18 |
| Zip Codes .....                              | 18 |
| Change of Address.....                       | 19 |
| Post Office Locations .....                  | 19 |
| Mail Classes & Sending Parcels Overseas..... | 19 |
| Coping with Texas Weather .....              | 19 |
| Major Storms.....                            | 19 |
| Hurricanes .....                             | 20 |
| Tornadoes.....                               | 20 |
| Section Two – Adjusting to the U.S. ....     | 21 |
| Dealing with “Culture Shock” .....           | 21 |
| What is it?.....                             | 21 |
| Coping with Culture Shock .....              | 21 |
| General Remarks on American Life .....       | 22 |
| Religion .....                               | 22 |
| Equality and Informality .....               | 22 |
| Time Consciousness.....                      | 22 |
| Hygiene.....                                 | 22 |
| Time Schedules.....                          | 23 |
| Dressing/Clothing Attire .....               | 23 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Practical Guidelines for Living in the U.S. .... | 24 |
| Ritual Greetings .....                           | 24 |
| Shaking Hands .....                              | 24 |
| Names and Titles .....                           | 24 |
| Relationships in the Workplace .....             | 25 |
| Social Gatherings .....                          | 26 |
| Section Three – Academics.....                   | 27 |
| Academic Honesty .....                           | 27 |
| Honesty Code .....                               | 27 |
| Understanding the Academic System .....          | 28 |
| The Semester System .....                        | 28 |
| Credits.....                                     | 28 |
| The Grading System.....                          | 28 |
| Graduation Requirements.....                     | 29 |
| Academic Probation .....                         | 29 |
| Academic Suspension .....                        | 29 |
| UHCL Reinstatement .....                         | 29 |
| Academic Advisors.....                           | 30 |
| Class Structure Styles.....                      | 30 |
| Lectures .....                                   | 30 |
| Seminars .....                                   | 30 |
| Laboratories.....                                | 30 |
| Ways to Assess Learning from Class.....          | 31 |
| Term Papers.....                                 | 31 |
| Examinations .....                               | 31 |
| Study Skills .....                               | 32 |
| Organizing Your Time .....                       | 32 |
| Reading Effectively .....                        | 32 |
| Derive as Much as Possible from Classes .....    | 33 |
| Academic & Personal Assistance .....             | 33 |
| Academic Resources.....                          | 33 |
| Personal Resources.....                          | 34 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Utilization of Resources.....                            | 34 |
| Section Four – Legal Rights and Responsibilities.....    | 35 |
| Summary of Your Legal Rights and Responsibilities.....   | 35 |
| Immigration Status .....                                 | 35 |
| Immigration Documents.....                               | 36 |
| I-20.....  | 36 |
| DS-2019 .....  | 36 |
| I-94 Card or Admission Stamp .....                       | 36 |
| Visa .....   | 37 |
| Passport .....   | 37 |
| F-1 Regulations Regarding Study and Work.....            | 38 |
| Examples of violations include: .....                    | 38 |
| F-1 Employment .....                                     | 39 |
| F-2 Regulations Regarding Study and Work.....            | 39 |
| Vocational or Recreational Part-time Study.....          | 39 |
| J-1 Regulations Regarding Study and Work.....            | 40 |
| J-1 visa regulations require students to: .....          | 40 |
| Two-Year Foreign Residence Requirement .....             | 40 |
| J-2 Regulations Regarding Study and Work.....            | 40 |
| Income Tax .....   | 41 |
| Choosing the Appropriate Tax Form .....                  | 42 |
| Where to Get Tax Forms .....                             | 42 |
| Documentation.....                                       | 42 |
| Getting Assistance in Filing Income Tax Returns.....     | 42 |
| Social Security.....                                     | 43 |
| Useful Links.....  | 43 |
| Section Five – Appendices .....                          | 44 |
| APPENDIX A - UHCL & Additional Resource Numbers.....     | 44 |
| APPENDIX B - Steps to Writing a Personalized Check ..... | 45 |
| APPENDIX C- Steps to Addressing an Envelope.....         | 46 |
| APPENDIX D - Hurricane Preparation Kit.....              | 47 |

## **Section One – Practical Information**

### **Housing**

Once you arrive in Houston, Texas, the first thing you need to do is find a place to live. There are many residential options near the school, but the most convenient is University Forest Apartments (UFA). UFA is the only on-campus housing option at UHCL. To learn more about UFA, please visit their website at [www.campushousing.com/uhcl](http://www.campushousing.com/uhcl). You may also contact them through phone or email at (281)-286-5959 and [UFA@uhcl.edu](mailto:UFA@uhcl.edu).

### **Types of Housing**

Apartments are the preferred type of housing for most students; however, there are also other choices. Some students choose to rent a room within someone's private residence, while others will rent a house together with other individuals.

### **The Lease**

More than likely, whatever housing option you choose, there will be a legal agreement called a lease that you will have to sign. A lease is a written agreement between a tenant (you) and landlord (person who rents the space to you), describing the rights and responsibilities of each of you. It is a binding legal document that makes the tenant responsible for minimal care of the rented property and for the monthly rent of a stated amount for a stated period of time. It specifies the landlord's responsibilities for maintenance and repair of the housing unit.

Since the lease contains very important information, it is crucial that you understand it before signing! Do not be afraid to ask questions. In the U.S., it is okay to question a legal agreement before you sign it; in fact, it is encouraged. It is very important that you understand all of the "fine print" because you will be held responsible for what is written once you sign the lease. If you do not feel comfortable reading it on your own, ask a friend to explain it to you before signing the lease.

### **Utilities**

If you choose an off-campus housing option, you will also have to choose utility service providers. Unless you are renting a room in someone's home or your apartment is "utilities included," you will have to call and arrange to turn on your gas, electricity, and water. Furthermore, you will have to call the local telephone company to have access to phone services. Local phone services are separate from international and long-distance phone services, so you will have to request those in addition. You may also choose to have a cell phone provider rather than a landline telephone at your apartment.

The leasing office and/or your landlord should be able to provide you with a list of local service providers. In addition, they should be able to provide you with a local telephone directory, or phone book, as it is commonly called. This is a good resource to have when you are searching for business and personal phone numbers (See Appendix A for a list of UHCL and off-campus resources).

### **Furniture**

Buying furniture for a new apartment can be a large undertaking. A listing of area furniture, department and discount furniture stores can be found in yellow pages (local phone book). Another choice is to seek furniture that has been previously owned. This type of furniture is often sold through used



furniture stores like the Goodwill and Salvation Army. Renting furniture is also an option. Generally, the items are in good condition, but you should examine each piece carefully before leasing it. Another place to check is the “For Sale” walls near the student entrance in the Bayou Building and Student Services Classroom Building (SSCB) where students post information on items they are selling. This bulletin board is operated by the Student Life Office (SLO); therefore, check with SLO for updates.

## **Transportation**

Another major concern now that you have arrived in Clear Lake is: how will you get around? There are a few methods of transportation available to you. Some are inexpensive, while others are more costly.

### **Private Car**

The predominant mode of transportation in Texas is private car. Most students at UHCL own their own vehicles; however, this is not always possible for international students. Many international students often find rides from other students in their classes. Others save money to purchase their own car.

### **Bicycles**

Bicycles are another alternative transportation for students living close to the university. Bicycles are not as prevalent in America as in other countries, but this area has several bike trails. If you purchase a bike, it is also good to purchase a helmet for personal safety and a lock to secure it when you are not riding.

### **UHCL Shuttle**

During academic semesters, a shuttle service is available to UHCL students. A UHCL mini-bus picks up students from several local apartment complexes and brings them to and from campus. The mini-bus makes runs Monday - Thursday and picks up/drops off outside the student entrance to the Bayou, SSCB, Delta, and Arbor buildings and the apartment complexes. Schedules may be obtained through the Student Life Office. For more details and a list of apartment complexes, contact the Student Life Office 281-283-2560 or via their website at [www.uhcl.edu/studentlife](http://www.uhcl.edu/studentlife).

### **Houston Public Transportation**

METRO, the city's bus service, has a route in the Clear Lake area. The Metro 246 Bay Area Route runs between downtown Houston and the Bay Area Park and Ride. The fare varies depending on the route and is payable upon entering the bus with exact change. The bus driver does not give change. A monthly bus pass may be purchased for \$38.60 from the METRO Rides Stores at 1900 Main Street, 1001 Travis Street, Sharpstown Mall, and the Galleria Mall. For more information, visit [www.ridemetro.org](http://www.ridemetro.org) or call 713-635-4000. Students get a discount price when using metro Q-card. For more information on discount prices and Q-cards check below or visit <http://www.ridemetro.org/Fareinfo/Default.aspx>.

### **Air Travel**

When flying to Houston, you probably flew into one of the two major airports in this area: Houston Hobby Airport (HOU) or George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH). For transportation to and from these airports, you can use a taxi service, shuttle service, or the Galveston Limousine Service (1-800-640-4826); you can visit their website [www.galvestonlimousineservice.com](http://www.galvestonlimousineservice.com).

## **U.S. Identification Documents**

Although it is not formally required, many people in the U.S. carry some type of identification card with them daily. For security purposes, it is becoming increasingly mandatory that you have a picture ID when handling everyday transactions. For example, an identification document is often needed when cashing checks or making purchases with checks or credit cards. A passport can be offered as proof of identity; however, passports are not familiar to all store clerks in this area. Most Americans use a driver's license or a Texas ID as an identification card.

### **UHCL ID Cards**

Every student is expected to obtain a UHCL ID card after completing his or her registration and tuition/fee payment. An ID card allows you to check out books in the library, use the computer labs, reserve a laptop, and receive discounts on events at the university. A new student should bring his/her paid fee statement to the Student Life Office (SSCB 1.204) to have an ID made. Every semester bring your paid fee statement to the office for a validation sticker. If your ID does not have a current validation sticker, you will not be able to use certain University resources.

### **Driver's License**

If you will be driving a car, you will need a valid Texas Driver's License. The fee for obtaining your Texas driver's license is \$25. However, before obtaining your driver's license you must pass a driving and a written test at the Department of Public Safety (DPS). Starting March 1, 2010, driver license applicants between the ages of 18 and 24 MUST complete an approved driver education course and a driving skills test to become a licensed driver in Texas. Applicants must submit a certificate proving that they successfully completed a driver education course approved by the Texas Education Agency. A driving safety course or drug and alcohol driving awareness program are not acceptable as driver education courses for this requirement. A list of approved courses can be found here: <http://www5.esc13.net/drivers/list-licensed-driving-safety-course-providers.html>. You can call (713) 681-6187 or visit their website at [www.txdps.state.tx.us](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us) for further information, location and office hours of the nearest office.

In order to take the driving test, you will have to provide a car with insurance. A Driver's Handbook can be obtained at DPS to study for the written test. In order to take the driver's license examination, you must pay a fee of \$11 that allows you to re-take the test 3 times (please contact DPS prior to visiting because fee prices are subject to change). You can request to take a paper and pen test in your language instead of the computerized test that is in English. If you do not know how to drive, there are several driving schools in the Clear Lake area to assist you in learning. They are listed in the yellow pages and websites under "Driving Instruction."

### **Texas ID**

If you do not intend to drive while in the United States, you can apply for a Texas ID at the Department of Public Safety. A Texas ID costs \$16. This identification is extremely important when attempting to cash a check or transact other business if you do not have a driver's license.

\*Please note: In order to apply for a Texas ID or Texas Driver's License, you must wait 30 days after your I-20/DS-2019 start date. You are also required to show your I-20, I-94 or Admission Stamp, and valid passport in addition to the respective fees.

An additional requirement is proving your “Texas residency” by showing two acceptable documents that contain your name and residential address. One of the documents must prove that you have lived in Texas for at least 30 days. An example of how to prove your residency is with a utility statement (including electric, water, natural gas, and satellite TV, cable TV or non-cellular phone bill) dated within 90 days of the date of your application. For more information on application requirements, please visit the Texas DPS website: <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/DriverLicense/ApplyforLicense.htm>.

## **Safety and Security**

Moving to a new location can be fun, and Clear Lake is a nice area to relocate. However, when moving to any unfamiliar location, especially abroad, you have to be aware of safety and security issues. The Clear Lake area is relatively safe; however, no area is completely free of crime. Therefore, it is wise to take certain precautions to protect yourself and your property. Here are some specific suggestions:

### **Personal Safety**

- Keep your doors locked, even when you are at home.
- Secure all windows and other means of entrance when leaving your residence.
- Lock your car doors, even while driving.
- If someone knocks at your door or rings your doorbell, do not open the door until you have asked who is there. If you do not know the person and are not expecting them, you are not required to open the door unless you feel comfortable.
- Leave both an outside and an inside light on if you will be away from your room or apartment after dark.
- Use caution when crossing the streets if you are walking or riding a bicycle.
- Houston clubs/bars can be the scene of considerable “disorderly conduct,” especially on weekend nights. Use caution if you patronize them.
- Call the police if you are threatened or harassed in any manner. Dial 9-1-1 in case of emergency or call 281-218-3800 for the Clear Lake substation of the Houston Police Department. If you live at apartments surrounding UHCL and you feel threatened, you may also contact UHCL Campus Police (281-283-2222).
- Walk in groups of at least two, especially at night when possible. On-campus, if you are uncomfortable, call the UHCL Campus Police (281-283-2222). If you need assistance with your car, the campus police can help you to 'unlock ' your car, 'jump start' or help you to get to the gas station.

### **Protecting Valuables**

- At a public place: Do not leave valuables unattended, even briefly.
- Bicycles: If you park a bicycle outside, be sure you secure it to a bicycle rack with a sturdy lock and chain.
- If you take a vacation away from Houston for longer than a week, it is advisable that you arrange for a trusted friend to check your home while you are away.
- If you own many valuables, buy insurance for your household goods. Usually, those renting an apartment can purchase “Renter’s Insurance.”

## **CARE Team**

The CARE Team provides crisis response for the health and safety of UHCL's community members. If you or someone you know is in crisis, you can contact the CARE Team. You can call the CARE Team anytime at 281-283-2273 or submit an online request. Online requests are typically received within one business day (<http://prtl.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/DOS/Forms/CARE>).

All information is treated confidentially. Information is shared only with those people who need to know. You can remain anonymous. Your information is only available to the CARE Team unless you specify otherwise. Reminder: this is a free service to all students.

## **Identity Theft**

There is also a new type of personal security risk that all individuals need to be aware of: identity theft. "Identity theft" is where an individual's personal information (e.g., social security number, credit card numbers, passport, visa, etc.) are stolen and used by others. This can ruin your credit as well as make it difficult for you to prove your identity. It can be a lengthy process to have the false charges removed from your record. Please be very careful when giving out personal information. Always request a written explanation that justifies the requestor's need for your personal information.

Please note: It is very important to keep essential documents in a secured space. Do not share this information with strangers. Make copies of all important documents (e.g., passport, visa, I-20) and keep them in a secure location separate from the originals. Getting a safety deposit box (a secure box that you rent from your bank) or a fireproof box may be helpful.

## **Police and the Law**

### **UHCL Police**

UHCL has one of the safest campuses in the U.S. This is due in part by the great work our campus police provide. The mission of the UHCL Police is to, "...identify programs, methods and approaches to assist the institution toward achieving a reasonably safe and secure environment." The job of the campus police is to enforce all laws, but also to assist the campus community. The UHCL Police provides services such as escorts, vehicle assistance and lost and found. In case of emergency, the campus police should be one of the first resources you contact. They can be reached at 281-283-2222. For more information, please visit their website at [www.uhcl.edu/police](http://www.uhcl.edu/police).

### **Local & State Police**

When outside of the UHCL campus, there are local police jurisdictions within the Houston vicinity. The main role of the local police department is to uphold city, state, and federal laws and to perform certain social services for Houston residents. Local and state police are here to provide safety and security to all of those who reside in Texas.

Law enforcement agents uphold the rights of U.S. citizens, as well as those of international visitors. International students, who will be in the U.S. for a few years, should not feel that they are not also protected under the law. However, all people protected by the law also have a responsibility to it. Each individual living in this country is responsible to follow local, state, and federal laws. Those who do not can be legally penalized. A copy of the ordinances and laws that govern Houston residents is available at the Houston Public Library.



When you need to reach the police immediately, you can dial the numbers 9-1-1 on your telephone. This is a nationally recognized number to reach not only the police, but also ambulances and the fire department. This number should only be used in cases of serious emergency. For other issues you may call the Clear Lake police department at 281-218-3800.

Please note: Do not hesitate to contact campus police or local police if you are the victim of a crime. For example, if your residence is burglarized or you are physically assaulted or threatened, notify the proper authorities immediately. The police are here to protect your civil rights, but they can only do so if they are contacted. Please do not feel embarrassed or scared to contact them for serious situations.

## **Management of Money**

Most international students, like large numbers of American students, have limited monetary funds. It is best to manage your money wisely in order to make sure it lasts as long as possible. It is important to be cautious about spending money until you have become accustomed to the value of the dollar and have developed a thorough realization of what your essential living expenses will be. It may be helpful to track your expenditures for a few months until you become accustomed to your average spending.

### **Banks and Banking Services**

Please try not to carry large amounts of cash with you or at your residence because it could be lost or stolen. Instead, it is recommended that you open an account with a bank. There are several banks around the Clear Lake area (e.g. Bank of America, Chase Bank, Johnson Space Center Federal Credit Union (JSC), IBC, Wells Fargo etc.). You can call by telephone to ask about their banking hours and locations from the Greater Clear Lake area telephone directory, and choose one that is most convenient to you.

### **Opening an Account**

To open a bank account, call the bank and ask for the type of identification documents you need to provide. Once you have all proper documents, go to the bank of your choice and tell the receptionist that you would like to open an account. The receptionist will direct you to a person who can explain the types of accounts that are available. The two main types of bank accounts are checking accounts (called a 'current account' in some countries) and saving accounts. Banks also offer other forms of accounts and ways to save your money. Ask a bank representative to give you more information. It is highly recommended that you open a checking account because you receive personalized checks with these types of accounts.

### **Personalized Checks**

Although cash is accepted in most places, there are some businesses and places that will only accept a personal check or credit card. Generally, most bills (e.g. utilities, insurance, etc.) and rent have to be paid with a personal or cashier's check. Sending checks through the mail is the most convenient way to pay your bills, although electronic bill paying has become popular.

If you write a check to pay a bill, it is important to know if you have enough money in your account to cover the cost. Your check will "bounce" if you do not have sufficient funds in your account. When this happens, sometimes banks will allow the payment to go through anyway if you have an "overdraft"

option from another account (e.g. Savings Account). However, you may have to pay a service fee to your bank, as well as the original amount on the check. Another possibility is that the bank will not let the payment go through without enough funds, so not only will your bank charge you with a service fee, but also the person/ company will not be able to cash your original check. It is critical that you keep record of how much money you have in your account at all times. It is also important to discuss with your bank the different fees that you will be charged, so you will better understand your statement (to learn how to write a check, see Appendix B).

### **Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs)**

The automatic teller is a computerized device available for bank customers to make deposits or withdrawal cash at any time of the day and any day of the week. To operate an ATM, the customer needs a particular plastic card (also known as a debit card) and a personal identification number (PIN number) given by the bank when the card is issued. Instructions for operating the ATM are given on the machine itself. ATMs are located in many public places, as well as banks. UHCL also has two ATM's located on campus. Debit cards can also be used to make purchases where credit cards are accepted. If you have a credit card, you may be given a code by your credit card company that you may use as a PIN, allowing you to withdraw cash at an ATM machine.

Please note: If you withdraw money from an ATM that is not associated with your bank, you may be charged ATM fees from both your bank and the ATM.

### **Money Orders**

Another method of payment is to use a money order. A money order is a type of check intended to provide a safe alternative to sending cash in the mail. Money orders are typically sold at the Post Office, grocery stores, convenience stores, and some banks. A money order is purchased in advance for the amount desired, and therefore cannot "bounce" in the same manner as a check.

## **Financial Assistance**

For almost all students, financing their education is a very expensive undertaking! Although higher education is free in some countries, it is not in the U.S. and many students have to find means to supplement the cost. For international students, not all of the options offered to domestic students are available to them, but there are still opportunities for financial assistance.

### **Part-Time Employment & Assistantships**

One of the most common ways of helping to pay for your education is having a part-time job. International students are legally allowed only to work on-campus, unless they are using OPT or CPT (more details are in the Legal Rights & Responsibility section). Students may find part-time employment on-campus by watching for advertisements or via the Career Services website at [www.uhcl.edu/careerservices](http://www.uhcl.edu/careerservices). When applying for a position, it is helpful to request an application, complete it, and then wait to hear from the office.

Another option, specifically for graduate-level students, is seeking an assistantship (e.g. Research Assistant, Teaching Assistant, or Instructional Assistant). An assistantship is a special type of on-campus employment where a student works for a professor as an assistant or within an office. Visit your program's departmental office for more information.

## **Scholarships**

Scholarships are a way to receive educational funds for which you do not have to reimburse. They can be based on varied criteria (e.g., academic programs, scholastic achievements, etc.). Scholarships are divided into internal and external scholarships. Internal scholarships are those awards that are made by University committees and are processed through the Financial Aid Office (Student Services Classroom Bldg. 1.105). External scholarships are those awarded by foundations and organizations not necessarily related to the University. Students from around the country compete for many of those financial awards. All students are encouraged to seek these opportunities. Visit the Financial Aid Office website via [www.uhcl.edu/finaid](http://www.uhcl.edu/finaid) for further information.

## **Installment Plan**

If you cannot pay for your tuition in one large sum, you may be able to use an installment plan. At UHCL, fifty percent (50%) of the total tuition and fees, plus a \$15.00 installment plan fee are due by the fee payment deadline for the semester you are enrolled. Then, two subsequent payments must be made by the predetermined deadlines during the semester. For more information regarding UHCL's installment plan, please consult the Office of Student Business Services (Student Services Classroom Bldg. 1.103) 281-283-2170 or visit their website: [www.uhcl.edu/cashier](http://www.uhcl.edu/cashier). The installment plan is only available for the fall and spring semesters.

## **Federal Financial Assistance**

It is very uncommon, but some international students who have been full-time students at UHCL for one full academic year in good standing, may apply for financial assistance from the federal government. There has to be documented proof of extreme financial need. Please contact the Financial Aid Office at 281-283-2480 or visit their website at [www.uhcl.edu/finaid](http://www.uhcl.edu/finaid).

Please note: As an international student, you are admitted under the provision that you can reasonably afford to study at this institution and have funds to sustain your residing here, as stated in the affidavit of support you and/or your sponsor had to provide the university. It is highly advisable that you budget at least \$27,509 (an estimate of your tuition for two semesters) for annual living expenses that are noted on your I-20. The amount varies every year, for the most updated amount you can check the OIAP website ([www.uhcl.edu/OII](http://www.uhcl.edu/OII)) under Cost of Attendance. In addition, it is recommended that you have some U.S. currency available to you once you arrive, since you probably will not have a bank account when you first arrive.

## **Purchasing Items**

Most items (e.g., clothes, household products, electronics, non-prescription drugs, etc.) can be purchased from a variety of stores. Since prices and quality vary, it is helpful to become familiar with those stores where you can shop most conveniently and economically. Such information can be found by asking people who have lived in Houston, looking at advertisements in newspapers, and the "yellow pages" section of the telephone directory. You can ask a store employee whatever questions you wish about a product without being obligated to buy anything.

Prices in stores are fixed. A shopper does not “bargain” for a lower price with the store employee, except in the case of automobiles and large appliances. Many stores operate on a “self-service” basis. In these stores, the shopper uses one of the baskets or carts provided and select the merchandise desired. The merchandise is then taken to the cashier who totals the amount of the purchase, and adds the appropriate sales tax (in Houston that is 8.25% for most items).

If you need help in making your selections, you can have a clerk help you. Some salespersons may seem to be overly ‘friendly’ and strongly recommend that you purchase an item. You do not have to purchase any item that you do not want (as long as you have not mishandled or damaged it). When you do purchase something, it is advisable to keep the receipt that is given to you when you pay for the item. You will need the receipt if the item is defective or unsatisfactory, and you need to return it to the store where you bought it. The receipt proves you made the purchase so you can have your money returned.

## **Food**

There are two general types of food stores: “supermarkets/grocery stores” and “convenience stores.” A supermarket or grocery store tends to be larger in size and you can purchase groceries, paper goods, kitchen supplies, as well as health and beauty items. Some of the common supermarkets/grocery stores in Houston include: Kroger, Wal-Mart, Fiesta, Food Town, and H.E.B. A majority of convenience stores are attached to a gas station where you can purchase different snack foods; however, other items are very limited. These stores are usually smaller in size, have longer business hours, and the prices can occasionally be more expensive. Examples of convenience stores include: Shell, Valero, Chevron, and Exxon. Most people go shopping at the nearest supermarket/grocery store for food, and use convenience stores to purchase one or two items that are needed quickly. Foods from your country may not be available in the larger supermarkets/grocery stores, but it may be available at a specialty food store in the Houston or Clear Lake area. Raj Grocers Inc., Apna Bazar, and Hong Kong Market are some popular Asian markets. You can also ask other students from your country where they buy such foods.

The Student Life Office (located in SSCB 1.204) offers Grocery Trips every other Friday for UHCL students. Students can sign-up in the Student Life Office, and you can also contact them at 281-283-2560 or view their website, [www.uhcl.edu/studentlife](http://www.uhcl.edu/studentlife), to learn more about the Grocery Trip schedule.

## **Alcoholic Beverages and Cigarettes**

A person must be able to prove he or she is at least 21 years of age to legally purchase or drink alcoholic beverages in the United States. Most supermarkets/grocery stores and convenience stores stock beer and wine in Houston. Liquor and specialty items can be found at local liquor stores listed in the yellow pages. In addition, you have to prove that you are at least 18 years of age if you plan on purchasing cigarettes or any other form of tobacco. It is illegal to provide and consume if under the age limit.



## **Health & Medical Services**

### **Vaccinations**

Beginning January 2012, Texas State law (SB 1107) mandates that all entering students under the age of 22 provide a certificate signed by a health care provider or an official immunization record verifying that a student has been vaccinated against bacterial meningitis, or has received a booster during the five years prior to registration.

*What is the time frame for the vaccine or booster?*

The date of the vaccination or receipt of the booster must fall within the last five years and at least 10 days before the start of the semester

*What documents are acceptable as proof of vaccination?*

A form containing the required information with the signature or stamp of a physician or his/her designee, or public health personnel

- Or -

A vaccination record from a country outside the U.S. will meet the requirements. However, if the vaccination record is in a language other than English, you will need to submit an English translation of the document

All documentation must include the month, date, and year that the vaccine or booster dose was administered. If you arrive early in the U.S. and need the vaccination, you may visit any Kroger Pharmacy to receive the vaccine. We also highly recommend that you obtain any other vaccinations you think will be beneficial to your health.

### **Student Health Services**

Remaining healthy is very important in assisting with your academic success. UHCL provides basic health care for its students and employees. All registered students are eligible for services provided by the office Student Health Services located in the SSCB 1.301. You may also contact them by phone at 281-283-2626. Students must have their current UHCL identification (ID) card with them when using services offered by this office. There is a modest fee associated with most visits and requests for prescription medication.

There is a part-time physician/doctor and 3 full-time nurses on staff in Student Health Services. Because the physician/doctor is part-time, please call in advance to make an appointment. If you have a medical problem requiring consultation, you will be referred to specialists in the area or to any other specialist you choose. If you have a medical problem requiring hospitalization and have the university insurance, you will be admitted to one of the hospitals on the insurance's Preferred Provider Hospital list.

The Student Health Center is open from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday - Thursday and 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. on Friday. Holiday and break schedules vary and will be posted on their website and outside their office. If you have a serious medical problem and need medical attention when the Student Health Center is not open, you may use local medical clinics that have extended hours or hospital emergency rooms. Please do not hesitate to contact Student Health Services for more details on the services they provide.

## **Disability Services**

Disability Services is also located next to Student Health Services. Disability Services assists students who have a physical or academic disability. For more information, visit the office or see the website <http://prtl.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/UAO>

## **Health Insurance Requirement**

It is federally required that all international students have health insurance. There is only one policy currently endorsed by the University. International students are automatically billed for the University policy unless they present evidence to International Advising that they have comparable insurance with another policy. J-1 students must provide health insurance for their families under federal government regulations. In order to have private insurance approved by International Advising, students must complete a waiver form by the deadline. For more information on the health insurance waiver and deadlines, please visit the following website: [www.uhcl.edu/OII](http://www.uhcl.edu/OII).

Student Health Insurance does not cover all medical expenses. It is imperative to read the insurance brochure that can be found in your orientation packets or can be picked up at the Office of Student Health Services (SSCB. 1.301).

## **What Happens When You Visit a Doctor?**

In the U.S., we have a very good healthcare system. When you go to see a doctor, you can expect to be asked many questions. The doctor will expect you to give details about your symptoms--what they feel like, whether they are more noticeable under some conditions than others, how long you have had them, and so on. The doctor will ask you what treatments you have already tried.

In the U.S. health care system, patients are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves by asking the doctors (or other care-givers) questions about their condition and its treatment. Patients are expected to ask about the costs of recommended treatment, and may be asked to participate in making decisions about treatment and medications.

## **Postal Services**

Mail in the United States may be handled somewhat differently than in your home country. It is delivered to residences Monday through Saturday, once daily. Mail you are sending out can be put in your mailbox for the mailman to pick up, deposited in one of the blue mailboxes located on many streets, or taken to the Post Office.

To send a letter, in the upper left corner you write your address so it can be sent back to you if the letter has to be returned for some reason. This should be written small. In the middle of the envelope, in large letters, you write the name and address (including city, state and zip code for domestic mail) of the person to whom you are mailing the letter or item. In the upper right corner, you place the appropriate postage needed to send the letter/item. (See Appendix C for more information on how to correctly address an envelope.)

## **Zip Codes**

The United States Post Office requires a Zip Code on every letter with a U.S. destination. This is a very important part of an address on a letter. It is usually a five- (sometimes nine-) digit number telling

what section of the U.S. the letter is going to. If you are unsure of a zip code, you can look in the US zip code book (public libraries usually hold copies) or you can search the U.S. Postal service website via [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com).

## **Change of Address**

Any change in physical address must be reported online to International Advising within ten days of your move. The online form can be found on the OIAP website at [www.uhcl.edu/OII](http://www.uhcl.edu/OII).

## **Post Office Locations**

There are a few local post offices in the Clear Lake vicinity. There are also businesses, such as the UPS Store, which provide similar services as the post office. The U.S. Post Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8:30 a.m. to noon on Saturdays.

At the university, individual stamps and stamp books are available for purchase in the UHCL bookstore. You can drop off your mail in Mailroom B0402 of the Bayou Building.

## **Mail Classes & Sending Parcels Overseas**

There are different levels of mail (e.g., first class, second class, priority, etc.). The fee for sending different types of mail varies depending on size, weight, and delivery date. Furthermore, when mailing parcels overseas, there are different regulations governing the types of packages mailed. The regulations concern such things as the contents of the parcels, their weight, their dimensions, and the manner in which they must be wrapped. The Post Office has information on the postal regulations of various countries. To avoid delays, it is wise to call the Post Office and request information about the requirements for mailing any package you wish to send out of the U.S.

## **Coping with Texas Weather**

The Clear Lake area of Houston is a beautiful region. The area features relatively mild winters and hot, humid summers. Winter temperatures generally range from 40s to 70s °F (4 to 21 °C), although sometimes they can be in the 'freezing' range below 32 °F/0 °C. Summer temperatures range from the 70s to 90s °F (21 to 32 °C). For international students not accustomed to a tropical environment, the summer months may take a period of adjustment. It is important to consume plenty of fluids during those hot periods.

Because of the varied weather in this area, it is advisable to have suitable articles of clothing. In the summer, comfortable, lightweight clothes made from breathable material (e.g., cotton, linen) are suggested. Due to summer rains, you are encouraged to have an umbrella and raincoat. Also, it is helpful to have sweaters and at least one heavy coat for the wintertime, as well as closed-toed shoes.

## **Major Storms**

The Houston-Gulf Coast region is susceptible to hurricanes, tornadoes, and heavy rains. With the heavy rains, this area is prone to flooding. If you are unsure of what to do if a storm or hurricane occurs, ask a local resident for his/her advice or refer to the OIAP Hurricane Evacuation packet in Appendix D. It is extremely important that you take severe storms and other weather incidents very seriously.

## **Hurricanes**

Hurricanes are dangerous occurrences that begin as tropical storms, but develop pronounced rotary circulation with a constant wind speed of 74 mph or more. They have three components: wind, heavy rains, and a storm surge. As they move over the Gulf of Mexico, they often gain strength and can cause severe damage and loss of life. We have evacuated international students twice: once in September 2005 for Hurricane Katrina and second in September 2008 for Hurricane Ike. Both hurricanes threatened the Clear Lake area and resulted in mandatory evacuations of UHCL students. In order to better serve our international students, we must make advanced plans to assure safe travel out of the UHCL area.

If you believe you will need to take advantage of any transportation that we may arrange, you are required to register with the Student Assistance Center (SAC) as soon as possible to ensure a spot. The forms are also available online at [www.uhcl.edu/deanofstudents](http://www.uhcl.edu/deanofstudents).

## **Tornadoes**

Tornadoes are powerful, twisting windstorms that can measure up to several hundred yards (or meters) in diameter and may produce winds of more than 300 m.p.h. Although not customary to this region, tornadoes often form after a hurricane has passed through the area. These storms usually occur in the spring and early summer and can be very destructive. When the National Weather Service issues a tornado “watch,” it means that weather conditions are reasonably likely to produce tornadoes. Tornado watches are broadcast on all radio and television stations. A tornado “warning” means that a tornado has actually been seen. If you hear a tornado warning, immediately seek shelter as indicated.

(Please see Appendix D for more information on how to prepare for hurricanes and tornadoes.)



## Section Two – Adjusting to the U.S.

### Dealing with “Culture Shock”

#### What is it?

Moving to a foreign land can be exciting, but it can also be scary. “Culture shock” or “culture fatigue” are the terms used to describe a feeling of disorientation or confusion that often occurs when a person leaves a familiar place and moves to an unfamiliar one. Coming to Houston/ Clear Lake from another country, you will encounter a multitude of new things. A lot of things will seem different than what you are used to and from what you expected. As a result of all this you may feel confused, unsure of yourself, and you may have some doubts about your decision to come here.

#### Coping with Culture Shock

Different people react differently to culture shock. In extreme cases, some become depressed or even physically ill. Others are stimulated by the new experiences that are open to them. Here are some ideas that might be helpful:

**Maintain your perspective.** Try to remember that thousands of people have come to Houston from other countries and have survived, so you can too.

**Evaluate your expectations.** Your reactions to the United States, Houston, and the UHCL are products both of the way things are here and of the way you expected them to be. If you find yourself feeling confused or disappointed about something, ask yourself: What did I expect? Why? Was my expectation reasonable? If you determine that your expectations were unreasonable, you can do much to reduce the amount of dissatisfaction you feel.

**Keep an open mind.** People in Houston might do or say things that people from your country would not do or say. But the people in Houston are acting according to their own set of values, not yours. Try to find out how they perceive what they are saying and doing, and try to avoid evaluating their behavior using the standards you would use in your own country.

**Learn from the experience.** Moving to a new culture can be the most fascinating and educational experience of your life. It gives you the opportunity to explore an entirely new way of living and compare it to your own. There is no better way to become aware of your own values and attitudes and to broaden your point of view. Here are some questions that you might try to answer as you encounter the local people: How do they make friends? How do friends treat each other? Who respects whom? How is respect shown? What attitudes do they have about their families? What is the relationship between males and females? Why do people spend their time the way they do? How do they deal with conflicts or disagreements?

There are countless other questions you can ask. You can compare the answers you get here to the answers you would get in your country if the same questions were asked. This will help you develop a better understanding of your own society and of the one where you are living now.

## **General Remarks on American Life**

Like any other society, American society has a diverse population. This society includes people representing large numbers of ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, age, occupational, and other types of groups. People in any of these various groups are likely to have ideas and opinions that differ from others. Even with this diversity, there are certain characteristics that, in general, describe attitudes and practices that are common among Americans and tend to distinguish Americans from people who have grown up in other cultures. Keep in mind that the following remarks are generalizations and are from a more Westernized perspective, and that you will find individuals who are exceptions to any or all of them.

### **Religion**

The U.S. was founded on the principle of freedom of religion. Therefore, you will find multiple religions practiced here, as well as varying levels of participation by people. Some people here attend a place of worship weekly and also participate in religiously influenced social and service activities. There are others who do not attend places of worship at all.

Please note: You have the right to practice your beliefs freely. Do not let others' misconceptions stop you from practicing what you are comfortable with.

### **Equality and Informality**

This country is based on the principle that each individual has equal standing under the law. That is one of the attractions of this nation to people from other countries. Even though the U.S. generally makes a great effort in this regard, there are instances when individuals choose not to follow this law. If you ever feel that you are being discriminated or harassed, you do have the right to speak on your own behalf. If you do not know the proper channels to go through, consult with a friend or a respected individual who knows American rights and laws.

Even though we are all equal, we do offer different levels of formality with people depending on educational achievement, authority, and age. Similar to most cultures, there are some people who receive more formal greetings; however, overall, the U.S. may seem more informal when compared to other cultures.

### **Time Consciousness**

Most Americans place considerable value on punctuality. They tend to organize their activities by means of schedules. It is very important for international students to pay attention to the schedules of other when attending events, meetings, gatherings, etc. Americans tend to be impatient when they are kept waiting and it can be seen as a sign of disrespect if someone is too late for an appointment.

### **Hygiene**

There are varied levels of hygienic practices within the U.S. However, there are some common Principles that are generally considered acceptable by most Americans. For example, as you can readily tell from television commercials, Americans have been taught that the natural body and breath smells are unpleasant to others. Most Americans bathe or shower daily (more often if they engage in vigorous exercise during the day), use an underarm deodorant to counteract the odor of perspiration, and brush their teeth with toothpaste at least twice daily (morning and evening) or after every meal. In

addition, they may rinse their mouths with a mouthwash or chew mints/gum in order to be sure their breath is free of food odors. It is very common for women to shave their legs and underarms and to use a small quantity of perfume each day. Many men use scented cologne or after-shave lotion to impart what they believe is a pleasant smell.

Most Americans will quickly back away from a person who has “body odor” or “bad breath.” This backing away may be the only signal that they are “offended” by another person’s breath or body odor. The topic of unpleasant odors is so sensitive that most Americans will not tell another person that he or she has “bad breath” or “body odor.”

Some international students come from places where the human body’s natural odors are considered quite acceptable, and where efforts to overcome those odors, at least on the part of men, are considered unnatural. Still other students come from places where personal cleanliness is considered more important than Americans consider it to be, and they may view most Americans as “dirty.”

Though this country is built upon accepting others’ cultures and backgrounds, it is also polite for those from other places to respect some of this society’s beliefs, as well. It may be helpful to adopt some of the hygiene practices while you are here. If you have any questions regarding certain hygienic practices, especially if they differ greatly from what you are accustomed, feel free to ask a trusted friend or campus administrator. Any staff member from Office of International Admissions & Programs (OIAP) would be glad to assist you.

## **Time Schedules**

In the U.S., most individuals work during the day. The “typical weekday” for an adult individual is work or school from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Generally, it is rude to call someone’s personal residence before 8 a.m. and/or after 10 p.m. unless they have given you permission.

University business hours are (with a few exceptions) 8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to noon on Friday during regular semesters. During winter or summer breaks, office hours may change. Most public businesses open at 9:00 a.m.; closing hours vary. Many businesses close at 5:00 or 5:30 p.m. Shopping centers are usually open until 9:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Most businesses are open on Saturday with varying hours and some are open on Sunday too.

## **Dressing/Clothing Attire**

The type of clothing that individuals wear depends on the environment or situation he or she is in. For the most part, it is acceptable to dress casually in everyday settings. For example, it is okay to dress in jeans, slacks, skirts, shorts, t-shirts, etc. in your classes unless your professor suggests otherwise. It is also acceptable for international students to dress in native attire, if you so choose. Business attire (e.g., suits, dresses) is expected in most workplaces; however, some businesses or work settings will accept what is known as “business casual.” Formal dress is usually reserved for special occasions, such as banquets, receptions, holiday parties, etc. When there is doubt about what to wear to an event, it is appropriate to ask someone for advice.

## **Practical Guidelines for Living in the U.S.**

The comments in the preceding section are very general. In this section you will find more specific information about the behavior that Americans usually expect in certain situations.

### **Ritual Greetings**

When two people are first introduced, the dialogue may go: "How do you do?", and the response as "Fine, thank you. How are you?" or "Fine, thanks." A less formal greeting can be, "Hi. Glad to meet you." After the first meeting, there are two kinds of greetings. The more formal is "Good morning," "Good afternoon," "Good Evening," etc. The less formal is simply "Hello" or "Hi." Any of these greetings may be followed by "How are you?" The common response is "Fine, thank you." The American ritual parting remark is "good-bye," and "see you later" or "talk to you later" are more informal responses. Generally, these informal responses do not mean that the person saying it has a specific intention to see or talk to you later.

These ritual greetings are much shorter than those from many other countries. People from countries where ritual greetings are more elaborate may have a negative reaction to the American custom, thinking that it reflects coldness and lack of concern for other people. However, it is important to remember the short/informal greetings relate back to the ideology that all people are equal in the U.S.

### **Shaking Hands**

In formal introductions, individuals usually shake hands the first time they encounter one another. After the first meeting, shaking hands is relatively rare. However, if someone offers his or her hand to you, you should shake it. When Americans shake hands, they normally exert a small amount of pressure on each other's hands, move their clasped hands a bit upwards and downwards, and then release their grip, all the while looking directly into each other's eyes. People from other places where handshaking is customary may hold the other person hand more or less firmly than Americans do, and may sustain the contact for a shorter or a longer time than Americans generally do.

### **Names and Titles**

American names generally have three parts: first (or given) name, middle name or initial and last (family) name. In most cases, the first name appears first, then the middle name or initial (if it is used--often it is not), and finally the last name. For example, "I would like you to meet my teacher, Albert Einstein." However, on many forms and applications the last name is listed first followed by the first name and middle initial. For example, a person named John Douglas Jones would probably give his name as Jones, John D. on official forms.

First names are used in the U.S. more frequently than elsewhere. Some people may call each other by their first names immediately after they have met. These general rules apply:

- Address people of your own approximate age and status by first name. This would apply to fellow students and neighbors.
- If the other person is clearly older than you, you should use Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms. and their last name. For example, you would address Marlon Brando as "Mr. Brando." If the older person asks you to use his or her first name, you may then do so. An older person will probably address you by your first name; however, in a professional setting they may address you as Mr. or Ms. The

title Ms. (pronounced “Mizz”) is used for both unmarried and married females, and the most appropriate title to use with all women.

- If the other person has a title such as “Dean,” use that title and the last name. Any faculty member can be addressed as “Professor,” whether he or she holds the rank of assistant professor, associate professor, or full professor. If an individual has a PhD at the end of their name, it is best that you address them as “Doctor” (Dr.) and their last name.
- Using “nicknames” is fairly common among Americans. A nickname is usually a shortened version of someone’s first name or a name assigned because of certain physical characteristics, behavior patterns, etc. International students often acquire nicknames if their own names seem long or difficult to pronounce by Americans. For example, a student whose name is Nakagawa may request to be addressed as “Nak.” Being called by a nickname is usually friendly; however, you do not have to feel forced to be given a nickname or an “American” name unless you want to. You have every right to keep your native name and request that people address you by it.
- If you are in doubt about how to address a person, you may ask, “How should I address you?” Conversely, Americans may also not know the appropriate way to address you, and to avoid any confusion you may want to tell them, “You can call me .”

## **Relationships in the Workplace**

Cultural differences are reflected in the workplace as well as in other parts of society. Whether you have a student job, a research assistantship (RA) or teaching assistantship (TA), you will find that the basic American values are reflected in the behavior of the people around you. Individualism, equality, and efficiency are cultural values particularly noticeable in American workplaces.

In addition, each workplace has its own “culture.” An example of how work culture can be different is the emphasis of hierarchy in the workplace. Even with these differences, there are guidelines international students and scholars will want to follow if they want to be accepted by the Americans around them, and if they want to get promoted:

- Arrive at work punctually. If you must be late or miss work, notify your supervisor as soon as you can.
- Ask questions about any assignments or procedures you do not understand. Make sure you understand what you are expected to do before you start to do it. Do not say you understand or know how to do something that you truly do not.
- If you encounter difficulties in carrying out an assigned task, tell your supervisor immediately.
- Carefully follow any safety and health rules that pertain to your workplace.
- When appropriate, offer to help other employees with their tasks.
- Avoid treating your supervisor with what Americans would consider excessive deference or respect. For example, avoid saying “Yes, sir, yes, sir” repeatedly, and avoid bowing.
- Notice how other employees at your level address the supervisor and how they treat him or her, and try to follow their example.
- Be friendly and sociable with fellow employees. If you have opportunities to participate in outside-of-work social activities with co-workers, try to do so.
- Treat everyone in the work environment with respect, no matter the position they hold.
- When you are talking to people, look directly in their eyes from time to time; do not keep your eyes turned away from theirs.



- Periodically ask your supervisor, “How can I improve?”
- Show a “positive attitude.” That is, avoid complaining and gossiping, and be cheerful and constructive in your dealings with people.
- Consistently practice and improve your English.

Sometimes workers encounter problems associated with their jobs. For example, they might believe they are being treated unfairly or unreasonably, or that another employee’s behavior is making it difficult for them to carry out their responsibilities. When this happens among Americans, the general expectation is that the worker will first speak directly with the person with whom he or she has the problem. If there is no resolution, the next step is to talk to the supervisor. The supervisor will then address the problem or concern, and will discuss with their supervisor if needed. However, if you ever feel threatened by the individual, speak to your supervisor first.

## **Social Gatherings**

You will probably have opportunities to visit American homes for dinners, receptions, or parties. In general, you will notice what may seem to be a lack of attention to the formalities of a traditional host-guest relationship. Americans usually want their guests to “feel at home,” which to them means to feel relaxed and able to “act naturally,” as they presumably would in their own homes.

Visitors to American homes ought to be prepared to see the following things, some of which may be quite unfamiliar:

- Some Americans will invite strangers (people whom they have never met) into their homes if the person is an acquaintance of someone the American already knows.
- Visitors to an American home might be allowed or even encouraged to see any room of the house; however, do not go through someone’s home without being invited to do so.
- Some entertaining might take place in the kitchen. The kitchen is not the exclusive territory of the female of the house. Men might be seen helping in the kitchen, cooking and/or cleaning up. Men might even be seen wearing aprons.
- Children may get more attention than they would in some other countries. The children might be included in the social activity, particularly if the activity entails dinner. Children may take a fairly active part in the conversation, and may even get more attention than some of the adults do.
- The hosts might have pets, usually dogs or cats, who live in the house along with the human inhabitants, and who may be permitted to enter any part of the house and use any item of furniture as a resting place.
- The social interaction might involve much mixing of males and females. While it sometimes happens that females will form their own conversation groups and males theirs, there is no rigid sexual segregation at American social gatherings.

\*For more information, you can refer to the following resources:

**Books-** Passport USA: A Guide to American Business, Customs and Etiquette by Dean Engel  
The Etiquette of American Societies by James Knowles

**Websites:** [www.uwec.edu/counsel/pubs/shock.htm](http://www.uwec.edu/counsel/pubs/shock.htm)

[www.internationalstudents.org](http://www.internationalstudents.org)

[www.internationalstudent.com](http://www.internationalstudent.com)

## Section Three – Academics

### Academic Honesty

#### Honesty Code

UHCL's honesty code reflects the importance of academic integrity. In some cultures, students work together in groups in all courses and turn in the exact same assignments. That is NOT appropriate in most U.S. classes, unless the assignment specifically requires group efforts. In the U.S., turning in the exact same assignment as someone else or an assignment that you did not complete on your own is not proper behavior.

Many students in the U.S. get into trouble for what is called "cheating" or "plagiarism." "Cheating" means obtaining a significant amount of answers from another student or source on an assignment, quiz, or examination. "Plagiarism" refers specifically to the practice of copying from a book, publication, another person's assignment, website, etc. and not acknowledging that the information came from that source through proper citation. For example, there are a number of websites now that "sell" term papers, and it is WRONG to purchase these papers and pretend that you have written the information.

Do not look at other students' papers during an examination-- this is considered cheating. To "cheat" on an examination by getting answers from other students or from materials illicitly brought to the test can result in a "zero" grade for the examination, an "F" grade in the course, and disciplinary action.

In general, students in the U.S. academic system are expected to do their own academic work without getting excessive assistance from other people. This does not mean that you cannot ask other students to help with class work. It is permissible and sometimes even advisable to seek help in understanding what is happening in a class and what a specific assignment is about. It is not appropriate to have someone else do an assignment for you, or to copy answers or information from a publication in a way that makes it appear that the answers are ones you devised and composed yourself. That is considered cheating.

Here are some other things that are considered cheating:

- Copying other students' assignments
- Copying other students' answers to examination questions
- Taking notes or books to an examination and secretly referring to them for assistance while answering examination questions.

The consequences of cheating can be:

- A failing grade for the assignment or examination on which the cheating took place;
- A failing grade for the course in which the cheating occurred;
- Expulsion from the course Or from the University.

**\*Please note** that certain consequences may affect your visa status.

For more information, read the Academic Honesty Policy within the Student Life Policies handbook published by the Dean of Students' Office. This is the official UHCL statement on academic honesty. These policies are available online at [www.uhcl.edu](http://www.uhcl.edu) under the Students' Tab.

## Understanding the Academic System

You are at UHCL because you want to further your education! You would not have been admitted into UHCL if it were not believed that you are a quality student. However, the U.S. higher education system undoubtedly differs from your own. Please read the following section to get a better understanding of the U.S. higher education system, specifically at UHCL.

### The Semester System

The academic year at this university is composed of two semesters of approximately 16 weeks each. In addition, there are nine-, five-, and three- week summer sessions. While many U.S. universities use the semester system, some divide the academic year into shorter periods, either “quarters” or “trimesters.”

### Credits

The quantity of academic work a student does at the University is measured in “credits or credit hours.” The number of credits a course is worth usually depends on the number of hours per week that it meets. A “three-credit course,” for example, will meet three hours weekly for one semester. At the end of the semester, the student who has achieved a passing grade in the course has earned three credits. A student must earn a specified number of credits in order to graduate. This number varies for undergraduates and graduates. Information about graduation requirements can be found in the University's General Catalog.

## The Grading System

**\*The following information has been derived from the UHCL Course Catalog.**

The quality of a student's academic work is measured by means of “grades.” There are four “passing” grades, A, B, C, and D. There is one “failing” grade, F, at the undergraduate level. At the graduate level, only A and B are considered passing grades. The grade C is not acceptable for most graduate courses. Instructors should announce at the beginning of the semester which grading system they will use. Each grade carries a designated number of “points” per credit. If you would like a more detailed explanation on the grading system, please see the UHCL Course Catalog, which is made available to students each year from the Office of Admissions or Log In to E-Services.

Grades Points per Semester Hour

**A** Superior 4.000 **A-** 3.667 **B+** 3.333 **B** Above Average 3.000 **B-** 2.667 **C+** 2.333 **C** Average 2.000  
**C-** 1.667 **D+** 1.333 **D** Below Average 1.000 **D-** .667 **F** FAILING .000

**Please note:** Not all professors' use the +/- system.

A student's grade-point average (or G.P.A.) is calculated by dividing the number of credits earned into the number of grade points earned. For example, if a student has taken three courses, each for three hours of credit, and the grades include one A, one B, and one C, the G.P.A. would be 3.00. The calculation is like this:

Grade Credit Hours x Points = Total Points A 3 (credit hours) x 4 (points) =12; B 3 x 3 = 9; C 3 x 2 = 6  
Points (27)/Credits (9) = 3.00 G.P.A.

The “cumulative G.P.A.” is the G.P.A. a student has earned for all credit hours (courses) taken. There is a difference of opinion as to whether plus-minus grading will hurt or help a student's overall grades. The plus-minus grading system is intended to allow finer distinctions in evaluating academic work.

**Please note:** International students should be aware of their F-1 visa status when considering dropping classes. Students who find that they are in too many classes or that one or more of their classes are exceedingly difficult can “drop” those classes, and perhaps add others to replace them, if they act before the “drop-add deadlines” that are published in the Schedule of Courses. International students need to remember that U.S. immigration regulations require them to be registered “full time,” which mean being registered for at least 12 semester hours as an undergraduate or 9 hours as a graduate student during regular semesters. Only 3 semester credit hours of online coursework can count towards the full-time requirement.

## **Graduation Requirements**

Graduation requirements specify the number of credits you must earn, the minimum G.P.A. you must achieve, and the distribution of credits you must have from among different departments or fields of study. In addition, it is necessary to “apply for graduation” when you near the time that you will be completing your graduation requirements. Since graduation requirements vary among various divisions of the University, you should consult the General Catalog and your current Schedule of Courses for information. Questions can be addressed to your departmental office or to your academic advisor.

## **Academic Probation**

Students whose cumulative GPA falls below 2.00 (3.00 for graduate students) will be placed on academic probation. Students who are on academic probation must earn a minimum 2.00 semester GPA for graduate students) on course work each subsequent semester until the grade point deficiency is removed. It is critical that international students pay attention when they receive notice of academic probation! This is a serious warning that you are having academic difficulties that could lead to suspension.

## **Academic Suspension**

Students who are on academic probation and earn less than a minimum 2.00 semesters GPA (3.00 for graduate students) will be suspended from the university. During academic suspension, students may not enroll, audit, or visit classes at the university. Academic suspension will be noted permanently on students’ academic records. Furthermore, being suspended may affect your visa status since you cannot enroll at UHCL for an academic year.

## **UHCL Reinstatement**

Students who are suspended from the university for the first time may apply for reinstatement after one year of non-enrollment. Students on suspension for the second time are eligible to apply for reinstatement after two years of non-enrollment. Students who have been suspended three times are not eligible to apply for reinstatement. All academic suspensions are counted across careers/degrees (UGRD and GRAD) and not per career/degree. Students who are eligible and seek reinstatement must submit to the Associate Dean of the school to which they wish to return a written petition justifying their readiness to resume satisfactory academic work at the university.

\*Petitions for reinstatement must be submitted by the following dates:

|                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| Summer Semester | April 1    |
| Fall Semester   | July 1     |
| Spring Semester | November 1 |

## **Academic Advisors**

Your academic advisor is a faculty or staff member who helps you plan your program of studies in a way that will best enable you to fulfill your graduation requirements and at the same time tailor your studies to your interests. You can receive advising at the following offices:

School of Business (BUS) Bayou Rm. 2111, 281-283-3110

School of Science & Computer Engineering (SCE) Bayou Rm. 3611, 281-283-3711

School of Human Sciences and Humanities (HSH) Bayou Rm. 1539, 281-283-3334

School of Education (SOE) Bayou Rm. 1231, 281-283-3615

**Please note:** It is strongly encouraged that you speak with your academic advisor each semester before registering for courses. You should speak with them frequently to make sure your Candidate Plan of Study (CPS) is in order.

## **Class Structure Styles**

### **Lectures**

The most common method of instruction here is the classroom lecture. The lectures are supplemented by classroom discussion (especially when classes are small), by reading assignments in textbooks or library books, and perhaps by periodic written assignments, and also by “discussion sections.” This is a common practice in large, undergraduate classes where graduate teaching assistants aid the professor who presents lectures.

It is important for the student to contribute to the discussion in the classroom. In some societies it is “disrespectful” for students to question or challenge the teacher/instructor. However, in the U.S. questioning or challenging the teacher is viewed as a healthy sign of interest, attention, and independent thinking. In many classes, your grade may be determined in part by your contribution to class discussion. If you sit in “respectful” silence, it is likely to be assumed that you are not interested in what is being said in the class, or that you do not understand it.

When classes are too large to permit questions and discussion, or if for some other reason you do not have the opportunity to raise questions in class, you can visit privately with professors during their office hours or make an appointment to see them. Explain to them your cultural background, so that they have an awareness of your personal history. Professors usually announce their office hours on the first day of class or has it listed on their syllabus. In the case of large, undergraduate classes, there are usually graduate teaching assistants (TAs) who are available to answer questions.

### **Seminars**

The seminar is a small class, typical at the graduate level. It is likely to be devoted entirely to discussion. Students are often required to prepare presentations for the seminar based on their independent reading or research.

### **Laboratories**

Many courses require work in a laboratory, where the theory that is learned in a classroom is then applied to practical problems.

## Ways to Assess Learning from Class

### Term Papers

In many courses you will be required to write a “term paper” (often called simply a “paper”). A term paper is based on study or research you have done in the library or laboratory. Your professor will usually assign a term paper in the early part of the course. You are expected to work on it during the semester, and submit it near the end. The grade you receive on the term paper may constitute a significant portion of your grade for the course. It is wise to complete term papers in advance of their due date so there is time to ask another person or the UHCL Writing Center to review your paper and suggest revisions.

Almost all major assignments are expected to be word-processed (or typed), unless the professor dictates otherwise. If you do not own your own personal computer or typewriter, the University has computing laboratories where you can type and print your assignments.

In preparing term papers and doing assignments for your classes, you are likely to use the library more than you have in the past. American university libraries tend to be larger than university libraries elsewhere, and students use them very regularly. It is essential to learn how to use the library. The library has trained employees who are happy to answer your questions about the library's organization, the location of specific materials, bibliographies, and so on.

### Examinations

You will have many examinations. Nearly every class has a “final examination” at the end of the semester. Most have a “mid-term examination” near the middle of the semester. There may be additional “tests” or “quizzes” given with greater frequency, perhaps even weekly. All these tests are designed to assure that students are doing the work that is assigned to them, and to measure how much they are learning.

There are two general types of tests, objective and subjective. An objective examination tests the student's knowledge of particular facts. International students often have great difficulty with objective examinations, not because they do not know the material on which the test is based, but because they are unfamiliar with the format of the test and because their knowledge of English may not be enough to enable them to distinguish subtle differences in meaning. There are six different kinds of questions commonly found on objective examinations. You will want to learn to deal with each of them:

**Multiple choice** - The student must choose from among a series of answers, selecting the one (or more) that is most appropriate.

**True and False** - The student must read a statement and indicate whether it is true or false.

**Matching** - The student must match words, phrases or statements from two columns.

**Identification** - The student must identify and briefly explain the significance of a name, term, or phrase.

**Blanks** - The student must fill in the blanks left in a phrase or statement in order to make it complete and correct.

**Subjective examinations** - Sometimes called “essay questions,” require the student to write an essay in response to a question or statement. This kind of examination tests a student's ability to organize and relate his knowledge of a particular subject.

## Study Skills

Remember that the U.S. educational system rewards students who can study a large amount of material concerning a broad range of subjects, who can synthesize material from many sources, and who can take examinations effectively. These activities require skills that can be learned. Some of these skills are mentioned and briefly discussed here. However, if you need more in depth information, please visit the Counseling Services (Student Services Classroom Building 3.103) for resources that can assist you.

### Organizing Your Time

You will have a large amount of work to do and a limited amount of time in which to do it. In this situation, you need to use your time effectively. A good way to do that is to make yourself a weekly study schedule. Allot specified periods of time each day for studying. (As a general guideline: Undergraduates can assume they will need to spend at least two hours studying for each one hour they spend in class. Graduate students can assume at least three hours, and perhaps more.) Look at the course outlines (or “syllabuses”) you get at the beginning of the term and notice how much you will need to read and how many things you will have to write for each class during the semester. Fill in your study schedule accordingly. Then follow the study schedule. If it appears later that your schedule is out of balance, with too much time devoted to some courses and not enough to others, modify your schedule and adhere to the new one.

### Reading Effectively

When you see the length of the reading lists your instructors give you, you will realize that it is not possible to memorize all of your reading materials for the semester, or even to study them in reasonable depth. That is not what you are expected to do. Instead, you should be able to summarize the content of each reading and relate what one author has written to other author’s concepts. To draw the main points from a large number of readings, here are some things you can do:

**Skim** - “Skimming” means looking over a reading quickly, paying attention to the table of contents (if it is an entire book), the titles of the chapters, the headings of the various sections of the chapter, the “topic sentences” that begin most paragraphs, and the summary paragraphs or sections.

**Read** - Go over the material again, this time more carefully, looking for the main points, the conclusions, and the intentions. Write notes on the main points following the outline of the reading.

**Questions** - Rather than passively accepting what the writer has written, ask yourself questions about it. “Why is the writer saying this?” “What is the evidence for that?” “Does that agree with what this same writer said earlier, or with what another writer on the same subject said?”

**Review** - Skim it again. Look at your notes again. Try to retain in your mind the main points of the readings.



## **Derive as Much as Possible from Classes**

Since attendance and participation in classes is such an important part of the U.S. academic system, it is prudent to try to gain as much from your classes as you can. Here are some suggestions that will help you:

**Read in Advance:** If you have reading assignments that relate to a lecture you will hear in a class, do the reading before the class, so you will understand the lecture better. From the reading you might have questions to ask in the class.

**Take Notes:** Write down the main points that the lecturer makes. Many lecturers will use phrases that will help you identify the points they think are important and that you should note. Examples of such phrases are, "There are three major reasons for this. The first is...", "The next major development was...", and "The main thing to keep in mind about this is...."

**Review:** After the class, go over your notes. Fill in things you left out. Mark things you still have questions about. Before class, spend ten to fifteen minutes reviewing your notes from the previous class. This helps you retain information and makes last-minute studying less necessary.

**Get Help:** If you have specific questions or if you are having general difficulty understanding what is happening in a class, get help. Talk to the teacher or the graduate teaching assistant. Try to find another student in the class who seems to understand better and who is willing to answer your questions. It is not inappropriate to seek assistance from the professor or visit him/her during their scheduled office hours, if you have specific questions on how you can improve.

**Do not be discouraged:** International students, especially new ones, will inevitably have some difficulties understanding what is happening in at least some of their classes. Many things contribute to this: The teacher talks too fast and/or does not give well-organized presentations; fellow students' comments are incomprehensible because they use so much slang; the entire setting seems strange and confusing. As time passes and you have more experience, these difficulties will diminish. Be patient.

## **Academic & Personal Assistance**

### **Academic Resources**

There are several on-campus resources available to you while studying at UHCL. The Writing Center (281-283-2910; SSCB. 2.105) and the Math Center (281-283-3883; SSCB. 2.101) offer services that can assist you with those two academic areas. Another important resource is the Student Success Center (281-283-2643; SSCB 3.312), which can provide you with a tutor to assist with a specific course subject. You can also attend group study sessions known as Supplemental Instruction (SI) sessions. Remember these services are available to all students, and have been paid for by your tuition and fees. UHCL also has Disability Services (281-283-2648; SSCB. 1.301) that can assist students who have documented learning challenges. You can schedule a confidential meeting with Disability Services to learn how they can assist you. If you are interested in any of these services or have questions, we recommend that you call in advance to make an appointment.

If you are feeling overwhelmed or are having serious difficulties with your academics, you can stop by Counseling Services (281-283-2580; SSCB. 3.103) and request to see a counselor. Counselors will have information on how to improve your study skills, manage your time effectively, handle test-taking anxiety, etc. Handouts on many aspects of academic skills are also available outside of the office.

In addition, it is encouraged that you speak with your professors and teaching assistants (TAs) because they can recommend additional assistance if you are struggling with the course material.

### **Personal Resources**

As mentioned above, there are numerous resources available to provide academic assistance at UHCL. There are also resources available to you when you are having personal difficulties. You can visit OIAP, Dean of Students (SSCB. 1.201), Student Assistance Center (SSCB 1.101), or other offices under the Student Services Division if you are not sure where to go and what question to ask. Depending on the type of issue you are facing, you may be referred to Counseling Services. Beyond providing you with academic assistance, the trained and licensed counselors in this office can assist you short-term when you are having other types of personal difficulties. Interactions with Counseling Services are strictly confidential.

### **Utilization of Resources**

Some students, domestic and international, do not take advantage of academic assistance resources because they think that there will be a stigma (negative opinion) associated with them if they seek help from university resources. This is NOT true! In fact, the smartest thing a student can do if he or she is having academic difficulties is to seek assistance rather than do poorly in a class for a whole semester. You are paying for this education, and must take advantage of all the resources available to you to while pursuing your degree.

**Please note:** All offices on this campus are here to assist your development as a student, so please do not be shy if you are in need of any kind of help.

## Section Four – Legal Rights and Responsibilities

### Summary of Your Legal Rights and Responsibilities

All University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL) international students are required to abide by strict regulations outlined by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and enforced by UHCL. It is extremely important students understand and comply with all regulations and understand the immigration rules and regulations that affect ones stay in the U.S. International Advising can guide you regarding these rules, procedures and regulations. By failing to comply with these regulations, you put your lawful immigration status in jeopardy. Please note that immigration regulations change quickly and sometimes without notice. Please refer to the International Advising website and monthly e-mails for updated information.

### Immigration Status

Every individual who uses a visa to enter the United States is granted an immigration status upon admission to the country. An individual's immigration status may be defined as the purpose and duration of the individual's presence in the United States. Different rules and regulations have been established by DHS that are specific to each immigration status. An individual who is granted a particular status must abide by these rules in order to maintain that legal status. Failure to follow these rules may result in the violation or loss of that legal status. As a UHCL international student, it is important that you understand your rights and responsibilities. Please be sure to read information carefully and ask your International Student Advisor about any questions or concerns you may have. Remember, it is **YOUR** responsibility to maintain your lawful immigration status.

If an individual violates or loses their immigration status, the individual is no longer legally present in the United States and is no longer eligible for the benefits of that immigration status, which may include employment and travel in and out of the United States. To regain legal status in the U.S., an individual may either request reinstatement of that status by filing an application with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) or by departing the United States and re-entering the country, at which time the individual may be granted a new legal status.

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is a part of the National Security Investigations Division and acts as a bridge for government organizations that have an interest in information on nonimmigrants whose primary reason for coming to the United States is to be students. On behalf of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), SEVP manages schools, nonimmigrant students and their dependents in the F -1 visa classification. The Department of State (DOS) manages Exchange Visitor Programs, nonimmigrant exchange visitors and their dependents in the J visa classification. Both SEVP and DOS use the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) to track and monitor schools; exchange visitor programs; F and J nonimmigrants while they visit the U.S. and participate in the U.S. education system.

The Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) requires International Advising to regularly report all events in the life of a student. Therefore, it is vital that students stay in contact with International Advising and uphold all of the requirements listed here in order to maintain their status and avoid unintentional violations. The government may change or extend immigration regulations at any time. It is the student's responsibility to remain informed. International Advising provides workshops, on-going communication, and guidance that are convenient and valuable sources of information.

## **Immigration Documents**

### **I-20**

This document is issued through the Student and Exchange Visitors Information System (SEVIS) by a university Designated School Official (DSO). This document shows an F-1's information regarding the school of attendance, academic program, sponsor, off-campus work authorizations, travel authorizations, and program duration. It is essential for students to keep this document up to date and ensure that all information is accurate. Once a student enters the country, the I-20 in combination with the I-94 or Admission Stamp provides documentation showing the legal status of the student. It is possible to make changes to the I-20 throughout a student's stay in the U.S.

### **DS-2019**

Form DS-2019, "Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status" is a Department of State controlled document that can only be produced through SEVIS by a University Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer. The Form DS-2019 is the basic document required to support an application for an exchange visitor visa (J-1). This 2-page document reflects a J-1's information regarding the school of attendance, academic program, sponsor, work authorizations, travel authorizations, and program duration. It is essential for students to keep this document up to date. It is the responsibility of the student to make sure that all information is accurate. Once a student enters the country, the DS-2019 in combination with the I-94 card or Admission Stamp provides documentation showing the legal status of the student. It is possible to make changes to the DS-2019 throughout a student's stay in the U.S.

### **I-94 Card or Admission Stamp**

The I-94 card or Admission Stamp is also known as the Arrival/Departure Record. It serves as the registration form for individuals admitted to the U.S. as a non-immigrant. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) issues the stamp when individuals arrive to the U.S. The CBP officer will endorse the passport with the date, place of arrival, status (F, J, H, L, etc.), and length of authorized stay. This is a Non-immigrants official record of legal entry to the U.S. and permission to remain in the U.S. F-1 and J-1 students should receive duration of status (D/S) on their Admission Stamp. This means that for the duration of a student's status they may remain in the U.S. without a specific expiration date. The amount of time an F-1 and J-1 student is allowed to remain in the U.S. is thus given by the I-20/DS-2019 if students have D/S on their Admission Stamp. Students who enter the country with a specific departure date on their Admission Stamp (there is no D/S) should immediately make an appointment to see their International Student Advisor in OIAP.

Customs and Border Protection have automated the I-94 process for all travelers applying for admission at U.S. ports of entry. Air and sea travelers no longer need to complete the paper Form I-94. To obtain your I-94 number and admission information, students may complete the I-94 arrival/departure record at [www.CBP.gov/I94](http://www.CBP.gov/I94). The online form is only for those who were not issued an I-94 card.

## Visa

The visa is a document issued by the Department of State at U.S. embassies and Consulates abroad. Non-immigrants cannot apply for visas inside of the U.S. This document is a sticker that is attached to a non-immigrant's passport. The visa indicates what non-immigrant category an individual can request entry to the U.S. The visa sticker does not guarantee entry to the U.S., but it allows the visa holder to request admission in a particular category. The visa is valid for an assigned duration and can be issued for multiple or single entries. Non-immigrants can have multiple visas in their passport. At the time of entry, the non-immigrant should present the visa to the CBP Officer that they want to enter under. At the time of entry, the CBP Officer determines if the non-immigrant qualifies for entry under that particular visa status.

The visa sticker can expire while a non-immigrant is in the U.S. It is the end date on the I-94 card or Admission Stamp that determines how long an individual can stay in the U.S. For F-1 students who have D/S on their I-94 or Admission Stamp, they will be able to stay as long as their I-20 or DS-2019 allows. F-1 and J-1 visa holders can remain in the U.S. legally with an expired F-1 or J-1 visa. F-1 and J-1 visas are not required for Canadians, Bermudians, certain Bahamian nationals and British subjects resident in the Bahamas citizens, and certain British subjects resident in the Cayman Islands or in the Turks and Caicos Islands for entry to the U.S. as international students, but are required for all other nationalities. Expired visa stickers must be renewed before students can re-enter the U.S.

Different types of visa stickers are specific to status, so students seeking F-1 status upon re-entry should arrive with an F-1 visa. Students seeking J-1 status upon re-entry should arrive with a J-1 visa. In some instances, expired visas can be used for re-entry to the U.S. if only traveling to Canada, Mexico, and adjacent Caribbean islands (except for Cuba). More information is found on the Immigration and Customs Enforcement website at [http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq\\_f2.htm](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq_f2.htm).

## Passport

Passports are legal documents issued by students' countries of legal citizenship. Passports are required for entry to the U.S., issuance of a U.S. visa, off-campus work authorization, driver's license, etc. Upon entry to the U.S., the CBP will ask to look at passports. It is vital that students have passports that are valid 6 months into the future. Passports can be extended while students are traveling home for breaks or at foreign embassies or consulates in the U.S. Students are responsible for extending or requesting a new passport.

## **F-1 Regulations Regarding Study and Work**

This may be the most important information you will read while you are in the U.S. Please read the information thoroughly and carefully. It is your responsibility to know and follow F-1 regulations.

- Maintain full-time enrollment (Undergraduate – 12 semester credit hours and Graduates – 9 semester credit hours). All concurrent enrollment must be approved and documented. Only one online class or three online credit hours can count towards full-time enrollment per semester.
- Carry a valid I-20 and know your I-20 expiration date. Contact your International Advisor immediately to discuss changes to your I-20 and/or program extensions.
- Report change of address online to your International Advisor within 10 days of the change.
- Notify International Advisors immediately prior to any changes to include: enrollment status (credit hours), immigration status, address, major area of study, school transfer, leave of absence, or a permanent return to your home country. All information is reported to DHS.
- Accept only part-time on-campus employment during the fall and spring semesters (part-time is defined as up to 20 hours per week). Obtain work authorization through OIAP and (if appropriate) United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) for all off- campus employment. Your academic department and OIAP must approve internships and co-ops in writing before you begin working. Employment must be directly related to your field of study.
- Working without payment is not the same as volunteering. OIAP recommends that you discuss the details of any volunteer opportunities before participating.
- Abide by University rules requiring disclosure of information and prohibition of criminal activity.
- Ensure your passport is valid for up to 6 months into the future.
- Obtain travel signatures on your I-20 to re-enter the U.S. Submit travel signature requests at least one week prior to your departure or at least one week prior to the University closing for the holidays.
- Abide by the F-1 grace period rules.
- Follow all DHS F-1 rules and regulations. For more information, visit: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students>.

### **Examples of violations include:**

- Failure to maintain a full course load without prior authorization for a reduction from OIAP
- Failure to enroll by the date specified by the University
- Participation in unauthorized employment during your stay
- Failure to update your I-20 when you have changed your academic major
- Enrolling in more online classes than allowed to meet the full-time requirement
- Failure to leave the U.S. following completion of your program or program-related employment

## **F-1 Employment**

**Working or accepting employment in the U.S. without proper authorization is considered a serious violation of immigration status, which can affect your ability to remain in the U.S. Employment is considered the rendering of services for compensation. This includes financial compensation as well as other types of compensation, such as meals, housing, books, or any type of reimbursement for transportation, lodging, etc.**

**ALWAYS contact your International Advisor before accepting any employment off-campus.**

F-1 Students are not required to obtain prior approval to work on-campus. During the fall and spring semesters, international students are only permitted to work 20 hours/week on campus. Full-time employment (40 hours/week) is only permitted during semester breaks, spring break, winter holiday, and the summer term.

- All authorizations for off-campus employment must first be filed and approved by OIAP and the United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS).
- Internships and co-ops must be approved by the academic department and OIAP in writing. The internship/co-op must be directly related to your degree program.
- Working without payment is not the same as volunteering. OIAP recommends that you discuss the details of any volunteer opportunities with an International Student Advisor before participating.
- Please contact your International Advisors at [intladvicing@uhcl.edu](mailto:intladvising@uhcl.edu) if you ever have any questions concerning employment.

## **F-2 Regulations Regarding Study and Work**

Dependents are spouse or children of an F-1 student under the age of 21. With sufficient financial documents, spouses and children can be issued I-20s to obtain F-2 visas. This visa status is not eligible for full-time study or degree seeking study. The only exception to this is in the case of an F-2 child enrolled in either an elementary or a secondary school (kindergarten through 12th grade).

F-2 dependents may not work on or off-campus under any circumstances.

### **Vocational or Recreational Part-time Study**

An F-2 spouse or child may be involved in part-time study, if this study is vocational or recreational in nature. Vocational or recreational includes study that is incidental to the F-2 status. This study is for the purpose of pursuing a hobby or interest, such as an English language course or a tennis class. Any full-time study, even if recreational in nature, is prohibited and is a violation of the F-2 status. Even part time study that counts towards a degree requirement, leads to a specific educational or professional objective, or satisfies a prerequisite would not be incidental to the F-2 status and is considered a violation of status.



## **J-1 Regulations Regarding Study and Work**

The primary purpose of the J Exchange Visitor Program is to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchanges. International educational and cultural exchanges are one of the most effective means of developing lasting and meaningful relationships. J-1 visa holders can include students, professors and research scholars, short-term scholars, specialists, trainee interns, and foreign medical graduates. The University of Houston-Clear Lake does not sponsor all categories of J-1 visa holders. The university mainly sponsors J-1 Students and Scholars. It is your responsibility to know and follow J-1 regulations.

J-1 students are eligible to remain in the U.S. for the duration of their full-time academic program. With the permission from the J-1 sponsor, J-1 students can work on-campus and work in an "academic training" job for at most 18 months during and/or after the completion of their studies

### **J-1 visa regulations require students to:**

- Attend the school stated on the DS-2019
- Enroll in a full course of study (12 credits for undergraduate, 9 credits for graduate) and make reasonable progress towards a degree
- Follow certain procedures for: extension of stay, change of level, and institution transfer
- Limit employment to 20 hours per week while school is in session, 40 hours during academic breaks
- Obtain authorization for all employment
- Report address changes within 10 days of the change
- Maintain required health insurance

### **Two-Year Foreign Residence Requirement**

Some Exchange Visitors holders are subject to what is called the two-year home country physical presence requirement. This "two-year residence" requirement applies to J-1s if they receive any funding (including nominal travel grants) from a foreign government or the U.S. government. This residence requirement applies to J-1s if their profession is listed on the "Exchange Visitor's Skills List." This list is updated by the Department of State.

An exchange visitor who is subject to this requirement must reside for an aggregate of two (2) years in his or her country of nationality, last legal permanent residence, or have the requirement waived before being eligible for other U.S. immigration statuses, including H, L, or permanent resident status.

### **J-2 Regulations Regarding Study and Work**

J-2 dependents are spouses or children of under the age of 21 of a J-1. With sufficient financial documentation, spouses and children can be issued a DS-2019 to obtain a J-2 visa. There are no restrictions for J-2 visa holders regarding studying. J-2 visa holders may be eligible for permission to work from OIAP and USCIS. For more information on work authorization, J-1s should contact their International Student Advisor.

## Income Tax

If you were a nonresident alien student, teacher, or trainee who was temporarily present in the United States on an "F","J","M," or "Q" visa, you are considered engaged in a trade or business in the United States. You must file Form 1040NR (or Form 1040NR-EZ) only if you have income that is subject to tax, such as wages, tips, scholarship and fellowship grants, dividends, etc. Refer to the IRS Foreign Students and Scholars page for more information <http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/International-Taxpayers/Foreign-Students-and-Scholars>.

Foreign students and foreign scholars have special filing requirements for U.S. federal income tax returns.

1. There is no minimum dollar amount of income, which triggers a filing requirement for a nonresident alien, including foreign students or foreign scholars.
2. Filing IS
  - a. A taxable scholarship or fellowship, as described in Chapter 1 of Publication 970, Tax Benefits for Education;
  - b. Income partially or totally exempt from tax under the terms of a tax treaty; and/or
  - c. Any other income, which is taxable under the Internal Revenue Code. required by nonresident alien students and scholars who have.
3. Filing IS NOT required by nonresident alien students and scholars who have income ONLY from:
  - a. Foreign sources,
  - b. Interest Income from:
    - i. a U.S. bank
    - ii. a U.S. savings & loan institution
    - iii. a U.S. credit union
    - iv. a U.S. insurance company
    - v. an investment, which generates Portfolio Interest (Described in Chapter 3 "Exclusions From Gross Income" - "Interest Income" – "Portfolio interest" of Publication 519, U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens)
  - c. A scholarship or fellowship, which is entirely a Tax Free Scholarship or Fellowship as described in Chapter 1 of Publication 970, Tax Benefits for Education; and/or
  - d. Any other income, which is nontaxable under the Internal Revenue Code. However, income, which is not taxable because of an income tax treaty, must be reported on a U.S. income tax return even though no income tax is due on the U.S. income tax return.

All international students who have earned income from U.S. sources must file income tax forms by **April 15**. Visit the [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) website for further information.

## **Choosing the Appropriate Tax Form**

In order to choose the federal tax form that is appropriate for you, you must know whether you are classified as a “resident alien for tax purposes” or a “non-resident alien for tax purposes.” In general, international students are classified as non-residents for tax purposes. Non-residents use an income tax form called 1040 NR or 1040 NR EZ, as well as Form 8843.

## **Where to Get Tax Forms**

Tax forms and instructions are usually available in bank lobbies, public libraries, and Post Offices. If you have previously filed an income tax return; a new one will be mailed to you in the following year. You can also download tax forms from the IRS’ web site: [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

## **Documentation**

It is a good idea to keep complete records of your financial transactions. Without good records, completing your income tax returns can be difficult. If you seek assistance from someone else in preparing your income tax returns, that person will need thorough records of your income and expenditures. Keep a copy of any income tax form you submit.

## **Getting Assistance in Filing Income Tax Returns**

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is the U.S. agency responsible for collecting income taxes. You may address questions to the IRS by calling 1-800-829-1040, toll free or visiting [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). You may also want to search online for websites specializing in immigration legal issues.

There are a number of businesses that will assist taxpayers in preparing their income tax returns for a fee. You can find them online under “Tax Return Preparation”. There are also free services that can be found to assist you. Usually, community centers, large universities, or public libraries offer free tax help January through April.

OIAP staff cannot provide assistance in preparing tax returns. Income tax laws and procedures are complex and ever-changing. Only a trained person whose business it is to remain up-to-date concerning those laws and procedures can help you.

Source: <http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/International-Taxpayers/Foreign-Student-Foreign-Scholar-Filing-Requirements-for-U.S.-Federal-Income-Tax-Form-1040NR-or-1040NR-EZ>

## **Social Security**

The Social Security Administration (SSA) will generally issue a Social Security Number (SSN) to noncitizens only if they are authorized to be employed in the United States.

Noncitizens who are authorized to work can apply for an SSN at an SSA local office. The duties of the SSA local office include interviewing SSN applicants, reviewing identity, immigration, and work authorization documents, verifying immigration status with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and keying information into the agency's automated data system.

SSA will not process an application for an F-1 student if the start date of on-campus work authorization or CPT is more than 30 days in the future. For OPT based SSN applications, SSA will not process the application if the employment authorization card (EAD) "valid from" date is any time in the future (i.e., the EAD start date must be reached).

F-1 students who apply for an SSN on the basis of on-campus employment incident to their F-1 status require a letter from their DSO and documentation from their on-campus employer, to prove that the student is engaging in, or has secured, specific on-campus employment.

J-1 College/University Students, J-1 Student Interns, and J-1 International Visitors must present a letter from the exchange program's Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer authorizing employment, in addition to their Form I-94 card or I-94 number printout and Form DS-2019.

### **Useful Links**

Customs and Border Protection - <http://www.cbp.gov>

Department of Public Safety (driver's license) - <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us>

Department of State - <http://www.state.gov>

Diversity Visa Lottery - <https://www.dvlottery.state.gov>

Foreign Embassies & Consulates in the U.S. - <http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/dpl/32122.htm>

Immigration and Customs Enforcement - <http://www.ice.gov>

Internal Revenue Service (taxes) - <http://www.irs.gov>

Office of International Admissions and Programs – <http://www.uhcl.edu/oii>

Social Security Administration - <http://www.ssa.gov>

Embassies and Consulates - <http://www.usembassy.gov>

Citizenship and Immigration Services - [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)

## Section Five – Appendices

### APPENDIX A - UHCL & Additional Resource Numbers

#### Academic Advising:

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| School of Business                       | 281-283-3110 |
| School of Education                      | 281-283-3600 |
| School of Human Science & Humanities     | 281-283-3334 |
| School of Science & Computer Engineering | 281-283-3711 |

#### UHCL Offices:

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Associate Vice President for Student Services | 281-283-3025 |
| Dean of Students                              | 281-283-2567 |
| Student Assistance Center                     | 281-283-2722 |
| Student Information & Assistance Office       | 281-283-2614 |
| Student Success Center                        | 281-283-2643 |
| Student Life Office                           | 281-283-2560 |
| Counseling Services                           | 281-283-2580 |
| Career Services                               | 281-283-2590 |
| Disability Services                           | 281-283-2648 |
| Health Center                                 | 281-283-2626 |
| Intercultural Student Services                | 281-283-2575 |
| Office of Financial Aid and Scholarship       | 281-283-2480 |
| UHCL Library                                  | 281-283-3900 |

#### UHCL Computer Labs

**281-283-2908**

|                              |              |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| Writing Center               | 281-283-2910 |
| Math Center                  | 281-283-3883 |
| University Forest Apartments | 281-286-5959 |
| UHCL Emergency Hotline       | 281-283-2221 |
| UHCL Police                  | 281-283-2222 |

#### Additional Resources

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| <b>Emergency:</b> Fire and Police Departments | 911            |
| Social Security Administration                | 1-800-772-1213 |
| Texas Department of Public Safety             | 281-486-8242   |
| Houston Police Department- Clear Lake         | 281-218-3800   |
| Clear Lake Emergency Medical                  | 281-488-0022   |
| Webster Volunteer Fire Department             | 281-332-3133   |
| Clear Lake Regional Medical Center            | 281-332-2511   |
| AAA Taxi Service                              | 281-338-7133   |
| Galveston Limousine                           | 1-800-640-4826 |
| Electric Company Choices                      | 1-866-797-4839 |
| Reliant Energy (Electricity)                  | 713-207-7777   |
| Center Point Energy (Gas)                     | 713-659-2111   |
| Gexa Energy                                   | 713- 961-9399  |
| AT&T Telephone Company                        | 1-888-294-8433 |
| Verizon Wireless Company                      | 1-800-837-4966 |
| Sprint Mobile                                 | 1-888-211-4727 |
| T-Mobile                                      | 1-800-866-2453 |
| Clear Lake City Water Authority               | 281-488-1164   |

## APPENDIX B - Steps to Writing a Personalized Check

1. Write the date on which you are "issuing" the check.
2. Write the name of the person or business to which you are making the payment in the space labeled, "Pay to the Order of".
3. In the little box, write the amount of the payment in Arabic numerals. Put the first numeral directly after the dollar sign, not leaving any space for another person to alter the amount of the check by writing in an additional numeral.
4. On the next line, spell out the number of dollars included in the payment, and write the number of cents in the form of a fraction (e.g., 50/100 means 50 cents out of the 100 cents in a dollar). Begin writing on the far left end of the line, and fill the entire line with your writing or draw a horizontal line through the remaining space so that no one can add numbers to the line.
5. Sign your name as it is printed on the check.
6. Note the purpose of the payment on the line marked "memo," if you need the information for budgeting.

Immediately after you write a check you should record all the information from it on your check register. This includes the check number (personalized checks are numbered consecutively), the date the check is written, the name of the payee (that is, the person or business to whom the payment is being made), the amount of the check, and the fee for the check, if there is one. Then calculate the balance remaining in your account.

Some banks issue checkbooks that have carbon sheets behind each check. This affords you a record of each check without having to enter the information in a check register. You may keep a running balance on the check carbon. It is important to remember to calculate in fees and deposits on the carbons also.

Each month your bank will send you a statement of your account, showing the canceled checks you have written and they have paid. You should make sure your record of the amount remaining in your account coincides with the bank's record. The statement will reflect amounts subtracted from your account by the bank for service charges or for printing personalized checks. You should enter these amounts in your check register.

The image shows a sample check from 'YourBank'. The check is dated August 1, 2002, and is payable to the University of Houston - Clear Lake for \$320.13. The amount is written in words as 'Three hundred twenty and 13/100 DOLLARS'. The check number is 1026. The bank account number is 123456789101. The ABA or Bank Routing Number is 123456789. The check is signed 'Your Signature' and has a memo line that says 'For Fall tuition'.

YOUR NAME  
123 Your St.  
Your Town, CA 12345

Date: August 1, 2002

Pay to the Order of University of Houston - Clear Lake

Three hundred twenty and  $\frac{13}{100}$  DOLLARS

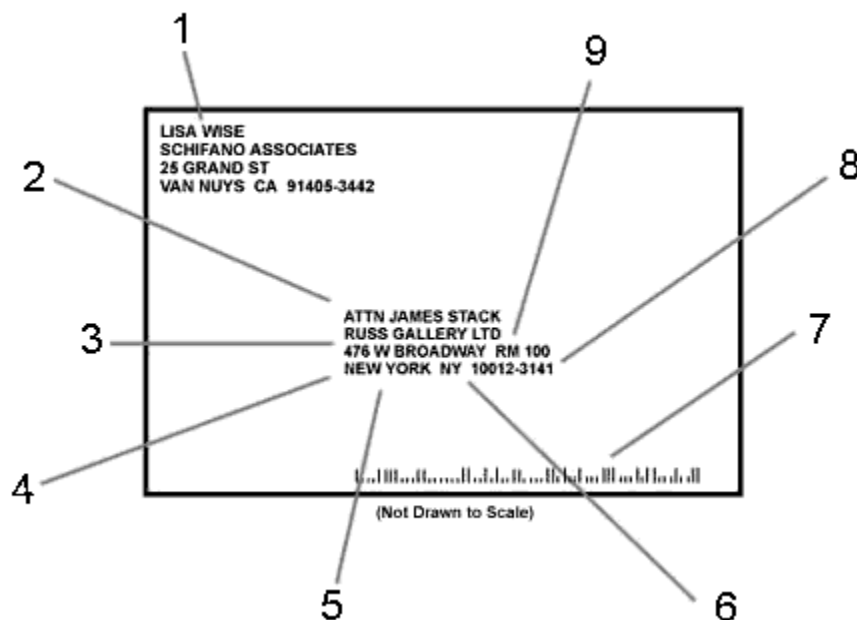
**YourBank**

For Fall tuition

123456789 123456789101 1026

ABA or Bank Routing Number Bank Account Number Check Number

## APPENDIX C- Steps to Addressing an Envelope



1. Be sure to always include a return address (your address).
2. The attention line always goes above all others in the address.
3. The delivery address line includes the street address, the post office box number, rural route or highway contract route and box number.
4. Print addresses in capital letters, in 10- or 12-point type (14 is OK) in sans serif with uniform thickness and free of punctuation.
5. If N (North), S (South), E (East), or W (West) is part of the address, be sure to include it.
6. Standard state abbreviations are very important. (i.e. the standard abbreviation for Texas is TX)
7. During mail processing, a bar code is placed on letter-size mail by the post office in the lower- right corner. In some cases, customers apply their own bar code in the lower-right corner or in the address block.
8. Reserve the last line for the city, state and ZIP code.
9. Include the ST (Street), AVE (Avenue), DR (Drive), LN (Lane), PL (Place), RD (Road), or CIR (Circle) and the RM (Room), STE (Suite) or APT (Apartment).

*\*Adapted from Sul Ross State University's Department of Business Affairs.*



## APPENDIX D - Hurricane Preparation Kit

### Are you prepared for Houston's Hurricane Season?

Living in the Clear Lake area can be beautiful. Generally, this area has a nice, warm climate. However, the Gulf coast is also subject to tropical depressions and hurricanes. These severe storms can be very dangerous and should be taken very seriously. Hurricane season begins June 1st and ends November 30th. Students, particularly those without access to vehicles, need to give real thought to what they will do if there is a hurricane. Please prepare a plan. Even though it is quite probable that we will not have a hurricane this season, it is strongly advised to be prepared because they can occur without warning. The best source of accurate, up-to-date information as to whether UH-Clear Lake is open is the UHCL Hotline, 281-283-2221.

### Common Terms & Definitions Used

**Tropical Disturbance** - A moving area of thunderstorms originating in the tropics and maintaining its identity for 24 hours or more.

**Tropical Depression** - An organized system of thunderstorms with a constant wind speed of 38 (miles per hour).

**Tropical Storm** - An organized system of strong thunderstorms with a defined counterclockwise circulation and a constant wind speed that ranges from 39-73 mph.

**Hurricane** - An intense tropical weather system with a pronounced rotary circulation and a constant wind speed of 74 mph or more. A hurricane has three components that include wind, heavy rains, and a storm surge.

**Storm Surge** - A large dome of salt water often 50-100 miles wide that sweeps across the coastline near where the eye of the storm crosses the coast. The storm surge is the greatest threat to life and property along the immediate coast.

**Hurricane Watch** - Issued when the threat of a hurricane is possible within a 24-36 hour period. Hurricane conditions are possible in the specified area of the WATCH.

**Hurricane Warning**: Issued when hurricane conditions are expected within 24 hours or less. Immediate action should be taken to protect life and property.

**Hurricane Alert** - Landfall of the storm eye is expected within 68 hours.

**Eye of the Storm** - Direct center of the storm, usually 20-30 miles in diameter.

**Storm classification (Saffir-Simpson Scale)** - To make comparisons of hurricanes easier, and to make the predicted hazards of approaching hurricanes clearer to emergency forces, hurricanes use a disaster-potential scale, which assigns storms to five categories. The winds are used in the determination of the category:

**Category 1 storm** - a storm intensity classification where wind speed is 74-95 mph, damage is typically minimal and the storm surge is 4 to 7 feet,

**Category 2 storm** - a storm intensity classification where wind speed is 96-110 mph, damage is typically moderate and the storm surge is 6 to 12 feet,

**Category 3 storm** - a storm intensity classification where wind speed is 111-130 mph, damage is typically extensive and the storm surge is 9 to 18 feet,

**Category 4 storm** - a storm intensity classification where wind speed is 131-155 mph, damage is typically extreme and the storm surge is 13 to 24 feet,

**Category 5 storm** - a storm intensity classification where wind speed is 156 mph and greater, damage is typically catastrophic and the storm surge is in excess of 18 feet.

## **Preparation Checklist - Things to do/prepare before a Hurricane**

- Plan a flood-free evacuation route in case you are asked to evacuate.
- Identify location where you will go if evacuation is mandated.
- Keep a road map, in case roads are closed.
- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio or local radio or TV stations for instructions.
- Purchase and have the following emergency supplies on hand including:
- Non-perishable food for at least 5-6 days
- Water – 2 quarts to 1 gallon per day per person
- Manual can opener; Canned Foods: soup, tuna, vegetables, fruits, etc.
- Cereal, bread; Snacks: cookies, crackers, etc.
- Snack spreads: peanut butter, jelly, cheese spread, hummus, etc.
- Duct tape, insect repellent spray, candles
- Toilet paper, paper towels
- Ice chests, paper plates, plastic cups, forks, knives, spoons
- Flashlights & extra batteries
- Battery-operated radio/television & extra batteries
- Essential medicines, prescriptions & eyeglasses
- First aid kit
- Cash & Credit cards

*See page 48 for a more detailed list of emergency supplies.*

### **If Hurricane Watch is Issued** (There is a threat of hurricane conditions within 24-36 hours):

- Monitor radio/TV for updates.
- Make sure your Storm Kit is adequately equipped with the proper emergency supplies and important documents.
- Gas up your vehicle, in case of an evacuation notice – fill your gas tank!
- Bring in outdoor objects such as lawn furniture, toys and garden tools.
- Secure outside furniture, plants, and tools.
- Review evacuation plans.

### **If Hurricane Warning is issued** (Hurricane winds of 74 mph or greater or dangerously high water and rough seas are expected in 24 hours or less):

- Listen to the radio/TV for updates and official instructions.
- Store water in clean bathtubs, jugs and bottles.
- Store valuables & personal papers in waterproof containers.
- Stay inside, away from windows, skylights and glass doors.
- Turn refrigerator and freezer to coldest setting to keep stored food fresh longer if power is knocked out.
- If power goes out, unplug all appliances, TVs, stereos and computers to reduce potential damage from a power surge when electricity is restored.
- Stay inside, away from windows, skylights, & glass doors.
- Store drinking water in clean bathtubs, jugs & bottles.
- Keep flashlights handy.

## **Shelter in Place**

### **If a Hurricane or Flood Threatens and You Stay**

- If your house is flooded, do not try to swim or wade to safety. Stay calm and wait.
- If you are not advised to evacuate, stay indoors and away from windows, skylights and glass doors, even if they are covered. A small interior room without windows on the first floor is usually the safest place.
- Secure buildings by closing and boarding up each window of your home. Tape is not adequate.
- Close all interior doors. Secure and brace external doors.
- If in a mobile home, check tie-downs and evacuate immediately. Historically, manufactured homes suffer the greatest amount of damage during hurricanes. Prior to 1994, most manufactured homes were not designed to withstand even moderate winds.
- Moor your boat securely, or move it to a designated safe place.
- In case of flooding, move emergency supplies and valuables to the highest area inside your residence. If water has already entered your residence, do not turn off the electricity. Get out of the water.
- Turn off propane tanks.

### **After a Hurricane**

- Wait until an area is declared safe before entering.
- Check or make sure your landlord checks gas, water, electrical lines and appliances for damage.
- Don't use telephones except in emergencies.
- Use portable radio/TV for information.
- If you smell gas, leave your house and call your gas supplier.
- Stay tuned to TV or local radio stations for advice and instruction about emergency medical aid, food, and housing availability, and other forms of assistance.
- Avoid loose or dangling wires and power lines.
- Stay away from riverbanks, bayous, streams, flooded roads and washed-out bridges until a potential flooding are past.
- Open refrigerators and freezers only when necessary. A freezer without power should keep food in satisfactory condition up to 36 hours if it is kept closed. Wrapping a freezer in blankets will help insulate it.
- Watch out for animals, especially poisonous snakes that may have come into buildings with floodwaters.
- Watch for loose plaster, drywall and ceilings that could fall.
- Avoid drinking or preparing food with tap water until you are certain it is not contaminated.

### **Survival Kit Supplies**

Here is a minimum suggested list of survival kit supplies. Ensure at least a three days (72 hours) supply for each person. Do not forget pets where applicable.

- Non-perishable food for at least 5-6 days
- Water – 2 quarts to 1 gallon per day per person
- Canned Foods: soup, tuna, vegetables, fruits, etc.

- Snacks: cookies, crackers, etc.
- Snack spreads: peanut butter, jelly, cheese spread, hummus, etc.
- Cereal, bread
- Duct tape, insect repellent spray, candles
- Toilet paper, paper towels
- Ice chests, paper plates, plastic cups, forks, knives, spoons
- Flashlights & extra batteries
- Non-electric/Manual can opener
- Battery-operated radio/television preferably a NOAA weather radio & extra batteries
- First Aid kit/essential medicines, prescriptions & eyeglasses
- Proper identification / immunization records
- Cash & credit cards or checks. Banks and ATMs may not be open or available for extended periods
- Blankets / pillows, etc.
- Clothing - seasonal / rain gear/ sturdy shoes
- Special Items - for babies and the elderly
- Toiletries / hygiene items / moist (baby) wipes
- Road maps- evacuations routes and alternates
- Keys
- Toys, books and games
- Important documents - in a waterproof container
- Insurance, medical records, bank account numbers, Social Security card, etc.
- Tools - keep a set with you during the storm
- Vehicle fuel tanks filled
- Pet care items
- Pet cage or carrier, muzzle and leash

### **Evacuation Before a Hurricane**

UHCL is not a Hurricane shelter. Students with vehicles are asked to share rides with those who do not have vehicles. If students cannot arrange for transportation, UHCL will provide a limited service. You must register if you want to avail of this service and complete a Travel Waiver Form. You will be notified if a Voluntary Evacuation is ordered, make sure your contact information is updated.

You must bring with you the following items when you evacuate:

- UHCL Student ID, Passport, I-20, other immigration documents, cash, clothes for 5-6 days, insurance information and a 2-week supply of medicines
- Also bring a pillow, blanket, towels, and toiletries for your personal use
- Please be aware if an evacuation occurs during a religious event (i.e. Ramadan). You will want to bring any necessary religious items (i.e. prayer mat).
- Only one suitcase & one carry-on for valuable such as laptops, cameras, etc... per person are allowed

***IF AN EVACUATION IS REQUIRED, BUSES WILL LEAVE FROM THE STUDENT SERVICES BUILDING (SSCB) PARKING LOT***

## **If you are Evacuating on Your Own**

You do not need to wait for a governmental order to evacuate. If the current status is “shelter in place”, you may still decide to leave town on your own.

- Deciding to evacuate without official orders is purely on a voluntary basis.
- The university will not provide transportation during a voluntary evacuation.
- You must provide your own transportation and accommodations.
- Prepare for a long trip by bringing 5-6 days of water, non-perishable foods and toiletries.
- Pack and secure your important documents (e.g. visas, passport, I-20, driving license, auto insurance cards, health insurance card, etc.)
- Carry sufficient cash for expenditures – there may be electrical outages preventing you from using ATM machines or credit card readers.
- Communicate your destination and arrival to a close friend and/or your emergency contact person.
- If the university DOES NOT close and you decide to VOLUNTARILY evacuate, you will be held responsible for your course work with each individual professor.
- Leave early to avoid heavy traffic.
- Evacuate in daylight when possible.
- Stay away from floodwaters, never drive through them.

## **If you are Evacuating with the University**

The university will provide transportation to a safe location to UHCL students who do not have a means to evacuate themselves. Space is limited, so it is essential to register for this service as soon as possible.

- Students must pre-register at [www.uhcl.edu/deanofstudents](http://www.uhcl.edu/deanofstudents).
- In addition to registering, several forms must be completed and returned to the Student Assistance Center (SAC). Forms are located at the same website.
- Evacuations can happen with very little notice. It is important that you make preparations now by making a list of items you would take with you.
- Students are limited to one suitcase and one carry-on for valuables such as laptops, cameras, etc.
- Plan for 5-6 days of being away from your home (law agencies will allow residents to return after hurricane passes and roads are clear, power lines are secured, etc.).
- Bring more than enough medications: at least for 2 weeks is optimal.
- You must bring your own blanket and pillow; they will not be provided.
- Other items to bring include: towel and toiletries, clothes, reading material, important documents and cash.
- Bus ride to evacuation location may be long. Bring snacks, water, DVDs, movies.
- You will be held accountable to both UHCL student code of conduct and that of the host university.
- You will be responsible to UHCL chaperones and must follow their instructions.
- Be prepared to return to less than desirable conditions when approval to come home is given: you may find no electricity, damage to your residence, no available food.

## Important Phone Numbers

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>EMERGENCY SERVICES</b>   |  |
| Evacuation Information  | 1-800-452-9292                             |
| Emergency Only  | 911  |
| HPD Dispatch  | 713-884-3131                               |
| Fire Department   | 911  |
| City of Houston Services  | 311  |
| Clear Lake Emergency Medical  | 281-488-0022                               |
| Poison Control Center   | 1-800-POISON-1                             |
| Shelter and Other Services  | 713-526-8300                               |
| Road and bayou conditions, Areas to be evacuated (Tran Star)          | 713-881-3000                               |
| City of Houston Office of Emergency Management                        | 713-884-4500                               |
| Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)                            | 1-800-621-3362                             |
| Galveston County Office of Emergency Mgmt.                            | 281-309-5002                               |
| <b>NON-EMERGENCY NUMBERS</b>  |  |
| American Red Cross  | 713-526-8300                               |
| Clear Lake Substation   | 281-218-3800                               |
| Constable <u>PhilSandlin</u>  | 281-479-2525                               |
| Sheriff   | 281-488-4717                               |
| Nassau Bay Police Dept.   | 281-333-2212                               |
| Houston Fire Dept.  | 713-884-3144                               |
| Pets (SPCA)   | 713-869-7722 (day)<br>713-880-4357 (night) |
| <b>UTILITIES</b>  |  |
| Center Point Energy (Natural gas)                                     |  |
| 1. Customer Service   | 713-659-2111<br>(1-800-752-8036)           |
| 2. Report a Gas Leak  | 1-888-876-5786                             |
| Center Point Energy (Electricity)                                     |  |
| 1. Customer Service / Report a Power Outage / Report Down Power Lines | 713-207-2222<br>(1-800-332-7143)           |
| <b>HOSPITALS</b>  |  |
| Christus St. John   | 281-333-5503                               |
| Clear Lake Regional Med. Ctr.   | 281-332-2511                               |
| Memorial Southeast  | 281-929-6100                               |
| <b>TDD (Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf)</b>                  |  |
| <b>Numbers for the Hearing Impaired</b>                               |  |
| City of Houston Emergency Number                                      | 713-437-6867                               |
| Center Point Energy Deaf Services                                     | 713-207-5187                               |
| Houston Police  | 713-374-6528                               |
| Harris County Sheriff's Office  | 713-221-6000                               |
| FEMA  | 1-800-462-7585                             |

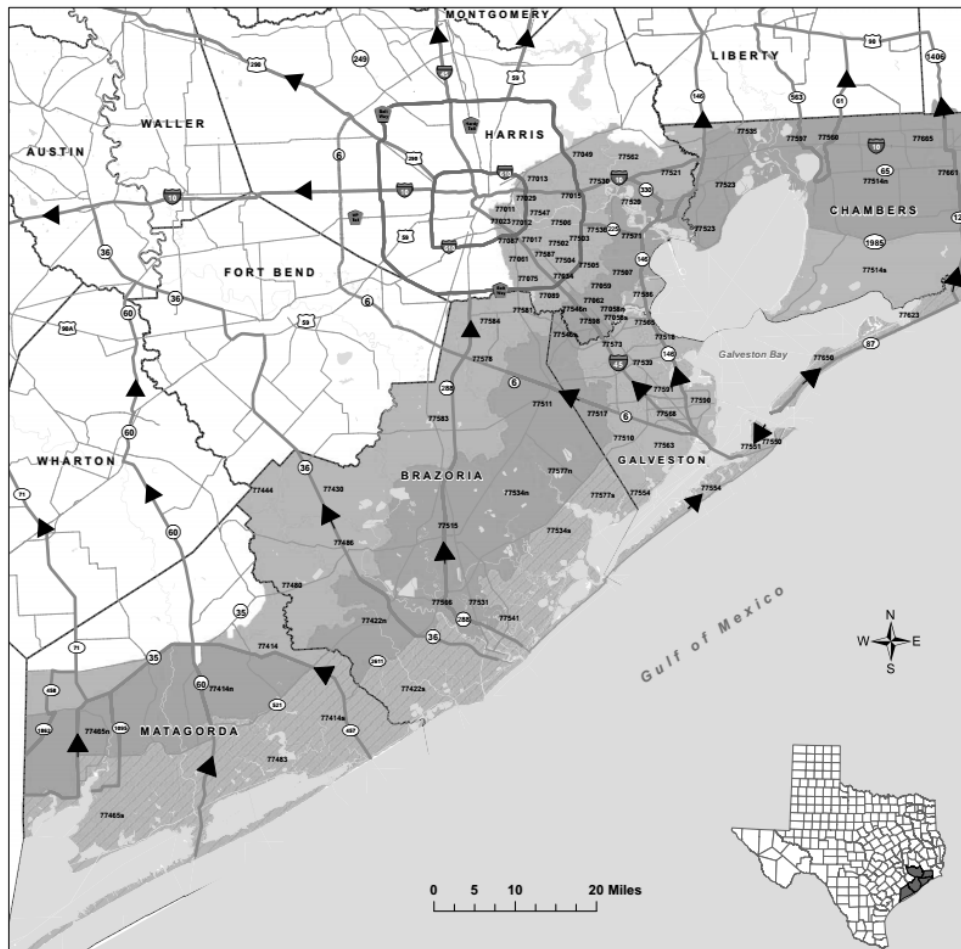
## Important Websites

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Interactive Hurricane Tracking Map         | <a href="http://www.weatherblog.abc13.com">www.weatherblog.abc13.com</a>   |
| Hurricane Forecast Discussion              | <a href="http://www.weatherblog.abc13.com">www.weatherblog.abc13.com</a>   |
| Real-time Weather updates                  | <a href="http://www.twitter.com/abc13weather">www.twitter.com/abc13weather</a><br><a href="http://www.facebook.com/abc13weather">www.facebook.com/abc13weather</a> |
| Evacuation Information                     | <a href="http://www.texasonline.com">www.texasonline.com</a><br><a href="http://www.txdot.gov">www.txdot.gov</a>   |
| National Hurricane Center                  | <a href="http://www.nhc.noaa.gov">www.nhc.noaa.gov</a>   |
| Houston-Galveston National Weather Service | <a href="http://www.srh.noaa.gov/hgx">www.srh.noaa.gov/hgx</a>   |
| Galveston County Office of Emergency Mgmt  | <a href="http://www.gcoem.org">www.gcoem.org</a>   |
| FEMA                                       | <a href="http://www.fema.gov/hazard/hurricane">www.fema.gov/hazard/hurricane</a>   |
| American Red Cross                         | <a href="http://www.redcross.org">www.redcross.org</a>   |

## Evacuation Zone Map

Hurricane Evacuation Zones and Routes

<http://www.houstonoem.org/go/doc/4027/1080643/Hurricane-Evacuation>



**Brazoria, Chambers, Galveston, Harris and Matagorda Hurricane Evacuation Zip-Zones Coastal, A, B, C**

| Zip-Zone Coastal |        |        |        |       |
|------------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 77414a           | 77483  | 77550  | 77577a | 77650 |
| 77422a           | 77534b | 77551  | 77517  |       |
| 77465a           | 77541  | 77554  | 77623  |       |
| Zip-Zone A       |        |        |        |       |
| 77058a           | 77518  | 77565  | 77586  |       |
| 77510            | 77539  | 77568  | 77590  |       |
| 77514a           | 77563  | 77573  | 77591  |       |
| Zip-Zone B       |        |        |        |       |
| 77058n           | 77507  | 77522  | 77560  | 77661 |
| 77059            | 77511  | 77523  | 77566  | 77665 |
| 77062            | 77514n | 77531  | 77571  |       |
| 77414n           | 77515  | 77534n | 77576  |       |
| 77422n           | 77517  | 77546n | 77597  |       |
| 77465n           | 77520  | 77546a | 77598  |       |
| Zip-Zone C       |        |        |        |       |
| 77011            | 77034  | 77444  | 77505  | 77562 |
| 77012            | 77049  | 77463  | 77506  | 77578 |
| 77013            | 77061  | 77480  | 77521  | 77581 |
| 77015            | 77075  | 77486  | 77530  | 77583 |
| 77017            | 77087  | 77502  | 77535  | 77584 |
| 77023            | 77089  | 77503  | 77536  | 77587 |
| 77029            | 77430  | 77504  | 77547  |       |

### Route Designation

- ← Evacuation Corridors
- Evacuation Connections
- Other Roads
- County Boundary



Expiration Date: December 2012  
Map Created by:  
Houston-Galveston Area Council

**UHCL IS LOCATED IN ZONE B. See pages 58, 59, 60.**

#### Important Tips

Your needs and those of your family should be the primary factors considered when determining the timing of your evacuation. If you must evacuate, do not delay your departure in anticipation of the opening of the contraflow lanes. Should the contraflow be activated, citizens will be advised through local radio and television stations. All citizens should prepare a plan well in advance of the evacuation.

#### The following steps are recommended:

- ✓ Assemble your disaster supplies kit with items such as flashlights, cell phones, extra batteries, battery chargers, portable radio, first aid kit, emergency water and food, medical supplies and equipment, non-electric can opener, highway map, important documents, such as insurance and medical information, etc.
  - ✓ Secure your home against disaster to help reduce damages. Cover windows with shielding materials. Secure or put up any loose objects from around your home.
  - ✓ If you cannot take your pets with you, make provisions for them.
  - ✓ Know your area's evacuation plan/routes before you leave home ([www.texasonline.com](http://www.texasonline.com)).
  - ✓ Fill your vehicle with gas as early as possible. Take only the vehicle necessary to transport you and your family to safety. Extra vehicles create congestion.
  - ✓ Bring extra cash in case banks are closed and ATMs are not working.
  - ✓ Notify family and friends (especially those out the area) of your plan and your destination.
  - ✓ Develop an emergency plan in case family members are separated. Instruct all evacuating family members of the name and contact information of your designated out-of-area friend or family.
  - ✓ Ensure children know how and when to call 9-1-1.
  - ✓ Evacuate, traveling safely to your destination.
  - ✓ Expect travel times to destinations to be significantly longer than normal.
- After the storm, listen to local officials for the all-clear signal before returning home. Check for information at [www.texasonline.com](http://www.texasonline.com).

**Do not try to drive through standing water. Just a few inches can float a vehicle.**

#### Fender-Bender?

State law requires motorists to move fender-bender accidents out of the travel lanes to the shoulder of the road. To keep all travel lanes and shoulders clear, however, disabled vehicles on the shoulder will be relocated to the next exit ramp where further assistance may be available.

More information on hurricane preparedness and evacuation safety is available from the following:

#### Shelters and Special Needs

Call 2-1-1

#### Emergency Alert Stations

Houston: KTRH 740 AM

Dallas: WBAP 820 AM

#### State of Texas

[www.texasonline.com](http://www.texasonline.com)

#### Texas Department of Transportation

[www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

#### Highway Road Conditions and Evacuation Routes

[www.drivetexas.org](http://www.drivetexas.org)

1-800-452-9292

#### Texas Department of Public Safety

[www.txdps.state.tx.us](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us)

#### Governor's Division of Emergency Management

[www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem)

#### American Red Cross

[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

1-800-RED-CROSS (733-2767)

For Emergencies: Call 9-1-1

Rev. 05/15/2013

## HOUSTON TO DALLAS TEXAS



### Hurricane Evacuation Contraflow Route

### Motorist Advisory

**Evacuation Plans May or May Not  
Include Activating Contraflow Lanes**





### Important Tips

Your needs and those of your family should be the primary factors considered when determining the timing of your evacuation. If you must evacuate, do not delay your departure in anticipation of the opening of the contraflow lanes. Should the contraflow be activated, citizens will be advised through local radio and television stations. All citizens should prepare a plan well in advance of the evacuation.

#### The following steps are recommended:

- ✓ Assemble your disaster supplies kit with items such as flashlights, cell phones, extra batteries, battery chargers, portable radio, first aid kit, emergency water and food, medical supplies and equipment, non-electric can opener, highway map, important documents, such as insurance and medical information, etc.
  - ✓ Secure your home against disaster to help reduce damages. Cover windows with shielding materials. Secure or put up any loose objects from around your home.
  - ✓ If you cannot take your pets with you, make provisions for them.
  - ✓ Know your area's evacuation plan/routes before you leave home ([www.texasonline.com](http://www.texasonline.com)).
  - ✓ Fill your vehicle with gas as early as possible. Take only the vehicle necessary to transport you and your family to safety. Extra vehicles create congestion.
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  - ✓ Develop an emergency plan in case family members are separated. Instruct all evacuating family members of the name and contact information of your designated out-of-area friend or family.
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  - ✓ Evacuate, traveling safely to your destination.
  - ✓ Expect travel times to destinations to be significantly longer than normal.
- After the storm, listen to local officials for the all-clear signal before returning home. Check for information at [www.texasonline.com](http://www.texasonline.com).

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More information on hurricane preparedness and evacuation safety is available from the following:

#### Shelters and Special Needs

Call 2-1-1

#### Emergency Alert Stations

Houston: KTRH 740 AM

San Antonio: WOAI 1200 AM

#### State of Texas

[www.texasonline.com](http://www.texasonline.com)

#### Texas Department of Transportation

[www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

#### Highway Road Conditions and Evacuation Routes

[www.drivetexas.org](http://www.drivetexas.org)

**1-800-452-9292**

#### Texas Department of Public Safety

[www.txdps.state.tx.us](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us)

#### Governor's Division of Emergency Management

[www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem)

#### American Red Cross

[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

**1-800-RED-CROSS (733-2767)**

For Emergencies: Call 9-1-1

Rev. 06/01/2012

## HOUSTON TO SAN ANTONIO

### TEXAS



### Hurricane Evacuation Contraflow Route

### Motorist Advisory

**Evacuation Plans May or May Not  
Include Activating Contraflow Lanes**



# Office of International Admissions and Programs

## Visit Us At

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Houston, Texas 77058

| Office Hours | Houston Central Time |
|--------------|----------------------|
| Monday       | 08:00AM to 05:00PM   |
| Tuesday      | 08:00AM to 05:00PM   |
| Wednesday    | 08:00AM to 05:00PM   |
| Thursday     | 08:00AM to 05:00PM   |
| Friday       | 08:00AM to 05:00PM   |

# GO UHCL HAWKS!

