

Preparing for Your Arrival as an Exchange Student at Goucher College for Spring 2018

We are anxiously awaiting your arrival at Goucher College! I'm sure that you are getting excited as well and have many questions. I will try to address some of the most common ones below. As always if you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact Karen Sykes, International Student Adviser, at:

Email: karen.sykes@goucher.edu
Office telephone: 410.337.6270
WhatsApp: 410.905.7781



There are also two InterConnect Interns, Cat and Katie, who will help you with your transition as students with international backgrounds. They will be communicating with prior to your arrival. Meanwhile, they can be reached at:

Cat Meyer Garza
Catharina.MeyerGarza@mail.goucher.edu

Katie Thompson
Katherine.Thompson@mail.goucher.edu

When and where should I plan to arrive?

You should schedule your flight to arrive on **Thursday, January 25**. You should fly into **Baltimore-Washington International Airport**, also known as BWI/Thurgood Marshall airport, as this is **the closest airport to campus**. The second choice would be Washington-Dulles International Airport.

What should I expect in terms of the timeline between now and my arrival at Goucher?

We would like you to be aware of the following tasks and timeline:

- Your immigration form, Form I-20, is enclosed in this mailing along with instructions about applying for your F-1 Student visa. Please start on the **visa application process** as soon as possible.
- You should have submitted your **Housing Preference Form** along with your application. If not, please submit it as soon as possible. You will not likely learn of your housing arrangements until mid-January.
- Your **health forms** (medical records, current health information, physical exam and immunization record) should be sent to Student Health Services by December 1. If they are not received a minimum of 2 weeks prior to beginning the spring semester (January 15), there will be a \$100 late fee.
- The **schedule of courses** offered for the spring semester will be available online through <http://www.goucher.edu/registrar/course-information/>. Please send your course preferences to Elissa Zurbuchen, Assistant to the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies, at elissa.zurbuchen@goucher.edu by November 15. She will create your schedule based on

preferences, availability and workload balance. You will be able to go through the drop/add process once you are on campus.

- **Payment** for the spring semester is generally due the first week in January, depending on the date of your course registration. We recommend that international students utilize Flywire (www.flywire.com), a reasonably-priced method of wiring money directly to Goucher College. If you are receiving funds (government grants or loans) that are not available to you at that time, please contact Karen Sykes to arrange an alternate date.

What is included in my residence hall room?

Student housing will include a bed (no pillows, sheets or comforters), desk with chair, dresser, closet or wardrobe, venetian blinds, and lighting. Appliances such as refrigerators and microwaves are not provided in the rooms, but they can be rented. Appliances for residents use are available in the community room of most residence halls.

There are a limited number of bedding sets to borrow on the date of your arrival if you have an evening flight and don't have time to purchase a set. Also, one-semester exchange students are able to borrow a set for their time here with a deposit to ensure the return.

What should I bring with me?

You should bring seasonal clothing and shoes, bathing supplies, and a sheet or towel for your mattress in case you cannot purchase linens before your first night on campus, if you choose. An opportunity to purchase additional items for your room will be offered upon your arrival. We also recommend that you bring traditional clothing to wear for the International Festival and other events during your time in the U.S. **Be sure to put your immigration documents in your carry-on luggage!**

How much money should I be prepared to spend during the first month?

This answer will depend upon your circumstances, but listed below are some potential first-month expenditures and an expected price range:

- Setting up residence hall room: \$200-\$400 for sheets, blankets, pillow, towels, etc.
- Cell phone: \$150 and upwards, with monthly fees that vary from \$5 to \$60/month, depending on level of service
- Laptop: \$850 (refurbished) to \$1200 (new) for a MacBook Pro 13" (be sure to obtain an educational discount)
- Clothing: Minimal cost depending on what you bring; jeans \$30, T-shirts \$15
- Books and supplies: \$500, depending on major. In addition to looking in the bookstore, check online for books. Some campus favorites are www.amazon.com and www.bigwords.com/.



Where and when should I obtain U.S. money?

If you have a debit or credit card, you should be fine for most travel needs. However, you should obtain a small amount of U.S. money for small purchases and tip for the shuttle driver. If you want to bring a large amount of money to deposit into a new bank account, we suggest you purchase traveler's checks in U.S. Dollars before leaving your country. Traveler's checks are accepted as cash, but have tracking information that will allow for reimbursement of funds if they are lost or stolen.

Upon arrival, you may want to open a bank account. There is a Bank of America ATM located conveniently on campus and there is a full branch in the mall within walking distance to campus. You may want to consider opening an account at Bank of America prior to your departure to facilitate an easy financial transition.

To become familiar with currency used in the U.S., use the internet to access websites that provide examples of commonly used U.S. currency. The following site for children provides a money game for students to become familiar with the different values of U.S. currency and coins
<http://s0402089.edu.glogster.com/coin-identification-first-grade/> (Select Pocket Change.)

What will happen when I am inspected at the airport?

Like all entering visitors, you will be asked the reason you wish to enter the US and to provide information about your final destination. It is important that you tell the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer that you will be a student at Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland.

You should have the following available on your person to provide to the CBP Officer:



- Passport with valid F-1 visa (Canadian students do not require a visa)
- SEVIS fee printed confirmation of payment
- Form I-20 issued by Goucher College
- Evidence of financial resources
- The name and contact information for the Designated School Official: Karen Sykes, karen.sykes@goucher.edu or 410.337.6270.

Once your inspection is complete, the inspecting officer will take a digital photograph and fingerprints, stamp your passport and return your documents to you.

In the vast majority of cases, there will be no difficulty; however, if there is some problem with your documents the officer may pull you aside into secondary inspection to ask additional questions. If you are issued an I-515 with an expiration date of 30 days, see Karen Sykes as soon as possible once you arrive on campus.

Warning: Do NOT attempt to enter the US on a visitor visa (B-2) or under the visa waiver program. The US Immigration Service rarely authorizes a change of status from B-2 to F-1 and never authorizes a change of status from a visa waiver participant to F-1. You will be prevented from enrolling in school until you obtain F-1 status. Attending school as a visitor is a clear violation of US immigration law.

How can I get to the campus from the airport?

Goucher will be providing limited transportation from into **Baltimore-Washington International Airport** to Goucher on Thursday, January 25. The shuttle time(s) will be determined based on the flight schedule. Otherwise, the most convenient transportation option from the airport is the Super Shuttle. You should make a reservation at least 24 hours in advance. You can make reservations online at <http://www.supershuttle.com/Locations/BWIAirportShuttleBaltimore.aspx> or call them at 800-BLUE-VAN (258-3826). Their web site includes estimated costs, but you should expect to pay \$33-60 USD to get to campus, depending on traffic.

If you choose to arrive at Dulles International Airport, then “Go The Airport Shuttle, Inc.” can transport you from Dulles to BWI for approximately \$59, or from Dulles to Goucher College for approximately \$105. Once again, advanced reservations are required. Visit <http://www.theairportshuttle.com/> for additional information and to make reservations.

In the future, you may want to research taking the Maryland Transit Authority (MTA) local bus or light rail for a much cheaper price. This is not recommended for your first trip to campus due to the amount of luggage you will likely bring. You can find more information on the MTA website.

As soon as you have confirmed your travel plans for arrival to the country and Goucher College, please share your information through the InterConnect Arrival Form at: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSes6Wb8E7ufbZfid8QcvfFGRVGzuYRc4uUejjCQiw4AFoQ0A/viewform?usp=sf_link. (You can email karen.sykes@goucher.edu for the link.) Also, once we have everyone’s flight information, we will determine the best times for the shuttles and you will then be able to reserve a seat.

How can I contact my family?

The airport should have limited WiFi access to use mobile apps such as WhatsApp or Hangouts. Once you arrive on campus, you will be able to connect to the WiFi and use a video applications such as Skype or Face Time for free. In addition, you can make international calls by using calling cards, available in many gas stations and food stores from the phone is installed in common room of each residence hall for students to make outbound and emergency calls. If you do not already have a smart phone, once you are here you will likely want to obtain a cellular phone for all your communication needs.



How can I get in my room?

International first-year students who arrive on campus earlier than the domestic first-year students will be able to access their room beginning Thursday, January 25 in order to attend the InterConnect program. The Office of Residence Life has room assignments and keys available for enrolled students. **The Office of Residence Life will disburse keys during normal office hours; the Office of Public Safety will disburse them after hours for students who have communicated their anticipated arrival date and time. Both offices are located on the ground floor of Heubeck Hall.** The Office of Public Safety can be reached at 410-337-6112. If you plan to arrive earlier than the January 25, your room may be available or you can make temporary housing arrangements at a hotel in the Towson area.

Where can I buy things for my room?



A shopping trip for international students is generally provided as part of the InterConnect program; however, you may need to buy items prior to that scheduled event. General consumer goods stores, Wal-Mart and Target, as well as a bedding and kitchen store, Bed, Bath & Beyond are located at Towson Place within a mile of campus (near Goucher Boulevard and Joppa Road). There you can purchase most of your personal needs items. In addition, you can find several

stores inside Towson Town Center Mall for the same purpose. The mall is located close to campus. You may use traveler's checks, cash, credit or debit cards to pay for the items you select. For a list of items you might want to purchase, please see the following Residence Life web site:

<http://www.goucher.edu/student-life/living-on-campus/what-to-bring>.

Where will I eat prior to utilizing my meal plan?

The Center for Race, Equity and Identity (Athenaeum, Room 422) has a full kitchen that is available for student use. Sandwiches, chips, and fruit will be available for the arrival day of Thursday, January 25. Goucher College is conveniently located near food markets and off-campus restaurants in the Towson area, where you may purchase food. Please walk with others when going off campus. Meals will be provided through the orientation programs beginning Friday, January 26. Meal plans become active on Monday, January 29.

How will I get around the Baltimore area without a car?



It is important to know that U.S. public transportation is not as well developed as it is in some other countries. Public transportation is operated through the Maryland Transit Authority (MTA). You can find information about bus routes, the light rail system and MARC train on their web site at: <http://mta.maryland.gov/>. In addition, the College Town Shuttle provides students with a campus ID bus service to nearby shopping (Towson Place and Towson Town Center Mall). They generally

only run when classes are in session, not during breaks. Their schedule can be found at:

<http://www.baltimorecollegetown.org/shuttle/view-schedule/>. As a last resort, you can arrange for a taxi.

If you are interested in driving in the U.S., it may be worth obtaining a home country driver's license and an international driver's license (which is essentially a translation), as well as a certified copy of your driving record (only if you plan to obtain a license shortly after arrival). This can make the process of obtaining a U.S. license easier and there are a limited number of reciprocity agreements. If you would like to know more about the requirements and costs, you can visit <http://www.mva.maryland.gov/>.

Will I be able to work?

Employment will be limited to on-campus employment. The number of on-campus positions is limited for students and these positions are competitive. The College uses an online system, Goucher Recruit, to connect potential employers with applicants. You can access Goucher Recruit through the Career Development Office web site at <http://www.goucher.edu/career-development-office> and create an account, which will allow you to view and apply for available jobs.

See the College's student employment policy on their web site for further details on limitations. On-campus employment is limited to 20 hours per week or less while school is in session per federal regulations, but may be up to 29 hours per week when school is not in session such as the summer or winter breaks.

What should I know about health insurance prior to arrival?

All students must have health insurance. The College has negotiated a plan with United Health Care which is a comprehensive policy that covers most of the services that a student would possibly need. The cost for the spring/summer is \$922 and you can enroll for coverage to begin January 27 through August 19, 2018 by following the links beginning at <http://www.goucher.edu/billing/goucher-health-insurance>. If you choose to use this plan, it will be added to your billing account and will likely be due later than the tuition bill.

If you would prefer to purchase a different plan, you can submit a waiver request through the same web site prior to February 28, 2018. While no recommendations can be provided, there are some companies that focus on providing health insurance to international students. A few companies that I am aware of include:

- Envisage International Corporation: www.internationalstudentinsurance.com
- ISO Insurance: <https://www.isoa.org/>
- IMG: <http://www.imglobal.com/en/img-insurance/international-student-insurance/student-health-advantage.aspx>
- HTH Worldwide: <https://www.hthstudents.com/>



Student athletes must have health insurance before they can begin training with the team.

Is there a club for international students?

Yes! If you would like for me to share your name and email information with the club president, please send me a message at karen.sykes@goucher.edu.

