

Preparing for Your Arrival as an Exchange Student at Goucher College for Spring 2022

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 in the Office of Global Education at:

Email: karen.sykes@goucher.edu

Office telephone: 410.337.6270

WhatsApp: +1-410-905-7781

Zoom: [Schedule an appointment](#)



When can I begin the visa application process?

Students can begin the visa application process 120 days prior to the program start date of the Form I-20. Visa interview appointment dates will depend on local conditions, so you should monitor the website of your intended embassy or consulate. You can find embassy or consulate websites [here](#) and visa interview wait times [here](#). The Office of Global Education encourages you to schedule your visa appointment as soon as possible due to anticipated backlogs and delays.

What is the CDC guidance regarding international travel and testing/quarantine?

Recommendations from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can be found [here](#). The first recommendation is to plan ahead. If you are eligible, get fully vaccinated for COVID-19. Wait 2 weeks after getting your second vaccine dose to travel—it takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination. Take steps to reduce any higher-risk activities 14 days before your trip and be sure to follow all precautionary measures including mask wearing, social distancing and good hygiene.

All air passengers coming to the United States are required to have a negative COVID-19 test result or documentation of recovery from COVID-19 before boarding a flight to the United States. Travelers must get tested with a [viral test](#) 1-3 days before they travel and keep a copy of their test results with them during travel in case they are requested.

Upon arrival students must get tested 3-5 days after travel **AND** self-quarantine for 7 days after travel. Currently, Maryland does not have any further restrictions.

Will Goucher College require students to be vaccinated?

Given the clearly demonstrated track record of these vaccines in preventing COVID-19 — anywhere from 74% to 95% effective — and our desire to continue in-person instruction on our residential campus, Goucher College will be requiring students to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Goucher is also requiring

that students be vaccinated for the flu, once available. More information will be distributed to students at the start of the semester.

The college is accepting all FDA and WHO-approved vaccines and will grant a temporary extension to those who are unable to obtain full vaccination status prior to mid-January. International students who arrive in the U.S. and want to obtain a vaccine in Maryland will be able to access one of the FDA-approved vaccines through the [Baltimore County vaccination program](#) or local pharmacies.

When and where should I plan to arrive?

The **program start date on the Form I-20 is Thursday, January 27, 2022**. This report date ensures that students are able to attend **InterConnect**, the international student orientation program, on **Friday, January 28** which will cover topics such as culture, the American classroom, stereotypes and diversity in the US, health insurance, and safety. The **First Year Experience** orientation program for all incoming students will be held on **January 29 and 30**.

Students should fly into **Baltimore-Washington International Airport**, also known as BWI/Thurgood Marshall airport, as this is **the closest airport to campus** at approximately a 20-minute drive. The second choice would be Washington-Dulles International Airport, which is approximately 2.5 hours from campus by shuttle.

Will I be able to move into the residence halls immediately upon arrival?

Fully vaccinated students will be able to move into their residence hall room. Unvaccinated students may need to self-quarantine in a separate location on campus, if necessary.

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 I-20 will be shared with you electronically along with instructions about applying for your F-1 Student visa. Please start on the **visa application process** as soon as possible. (Normally, I-20's are printed and mailed; currently we are allowed to email the documents as an accommodation due to COVID-19.)
- You will receive information about the New Student Portal in December. The portal will inform you of tasks that must be completed such as submitting your housing preferences, uploading health records and accessing your billing statement.
- **Payment** for the fall semester is generally due the first week in January, depending on the date of your course registration. We recommend that international students utilize [Flywire](#), 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 Twin XL Long mattress (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. More information can be found on the [Office of Residential Life](#).

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. You may decide to bring a cell phone with you from home. Please note that AT&T and T-Mobile networks use GSM, the technology that is used in most of the world. Cell phone providers such as Cricket or Mint offer bring-your-own-phone programs that include the purchase of a reasonably-priced SIM card, allowing you access to AT&T or T-Mobile networks.
- 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. Textbooks are not sold on campus and must be ordered online. Some campus favorites are www.amazon.com, www.chegg.com/textbooks/ and www.bigwords.com/. Be sure to look at used options or rentals as the most cost-effective options.



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.

You may want to research banking options before you arrival to determine whether you would like to open an account with an international bank such as Bank of America or HSBC or the bank that has an ATM on campus and local branch near Goucher, Suntrust. If you or your parents want to deposit funds into new bank account, we suggest you check with your home bank about options such as bank-to-bank transfers or wiring funds.

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 an exchange 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 J-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?

The most convenient way to get to campus is to arrange a taxi, Uber or Lyft.

Although less convenient, it is more cost-effective transportation to reserve a shuttle service. [Super Shuttle](#) can transport you from Baltimore-Washington International Airport (BWI) to campus for approximately \$60 and from Washington Reagan National (DCA) to campus for approximately \$115. Cost estimates can be found on their website. You should make a reservation at least 24 hours in advance. "[Go The Airport Shuttle, Inc.](#)" can transport you from BWI to Goucher College for approximately \$95, from Reagan National (DCA) for \$155, or Dulles International (IAD) to for \$190. Once again, cost estimates based on your specific trip can be found on their website. You should make a reservation at least 24 hours in advance.

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.

Regardless of how you plan to get from the airport to campus, please share your information through the InterConnect [Arrival Form](#).

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 video applications such as Skype or Face Time for free. 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?

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 Campus 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 Campus Safety can be reached at 410-337-6112.

Where can I buy things for my room?

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 items for your personal needs. 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](#).



Where will I eat prior to utilizing my meal plan?

Food will be provided through InterConnect and the First Year Experience orientation programs. If needed, Goucher College is conveniently located near food markets and off-campus restaurants in the Towson area, and there are a number of delivery services, if necessary.

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 many other countries. Baltimore County recently began a free shuttle service around Towson, called the Loop. In addition, public transportation is operated through the Maryland Transit Authority (MTA). You can find information on bus routes, the light rail system and [MARC train](#) on their web site. Alternatively, you can catch a taxi, Uber or Lyft.

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; there are a limited number of reciprocity agreements which may also benefit you. If you would like to know more about the requirements and costs, you can visit the [Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration](#).

Will I be able to work?

On-campus positions are limited for students and these positions are competitive. The College uses an online system, Handshake, to connect potential employers with applicants. You can access Handshake through the [Career Education Office](#) (CEO) web site and create an account, which will allow you to view and apply for available jobs.

See the College's student employment policy on the CEO web site for further details on limitations. For F-1 students, on-campus employment is limited to 20 hours per week or less while school is in session per federal immigration regulations, but may be up to 29 hours per week when school is not in session such as the summer or winter breaks. J-1 students should consult their program sponsor (UGRAD Pakistan or ISEP).

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 academic year is expected to be around \$1,700 for the spring/summer. You can enroll for coverage to begin January 20 through August 19, 2022. 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 purchased a different plan through your study abroad office, you should be fine. While no recommendations can be provided, there are some companies that focus on providing health insurance to international students.

- [ISO Insurance](#) (International Student Insurance)
- [IMG](#)
- [iNext International Insurance](#)
- [International Student Insurance](#)

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

What else should I think about in advance regarding my health?

Please consider doing the following:

- Submit medical forms.
- Complete any necessary vaccinations and/or tests.
- Bring an ample supply of any regular medications, if possible.
- Bring documentation of any prescription medication.
- Bring a copy of any eye prescription.
- Consider also securing dental and/or vision insurance.

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.

We look forward to meeting you!

