



Informational Resource for International Students

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Starting an academic life in a new environment and an unfamiliar culture can be very exciting. It can also be confusing and even frightening. Be bold and remember you are not alone! There are many resources here on NMSU campus you can make use of as an international student, whether academically, socially or health wise. NMSU's International Students and Scholar Services (ISSS) encourages students to seek out and utilize these resources to help make the best of their personal and university experiences. This informational resource includes those available on campus as well as off-campus. It also includes USCIS-approved options for employment or internships opportunities for students during and after school.

On Campus Resources¹ for International Students

The International Student Network

The International Student Network is an email listserv. Joining the FSN is a great way for international students to stay connected to the NMSU and Las Cruces international community. By signing up to join the FSN, International Students can receive up to date information on important immigration related requirements and developments, as well learn about the webinars, events, community outreach projects and helpful resources both on and off campus. International students can also post to the FSN to look for roommates, find accommodation, sell items, advertise an event or club, and connect with other international students. You could even get a great deal on a vehicle!

Students interested in signing up for the FSN should send an email to ISSS@nmsu.edu and ask to be added to the listserv with their NMSU email

- [ICT](#) offers tech support, information on connecting to campus WIFI, local printers and computer labs, affordable computer rentals, and certain free software applications.
- [Campus Tutoring Services](#) : Get help from peer tutors on a range of subjects, including [free writing consultations](#) .Students can also sign up for private or group study rooms for important projects.
- The [Aggie Health & Wellness Center](#) is your first point of call when you need medical attention. Healthcare in the USA is very expensive. Fortunately, international students have international student's health insurance through NMSU. International students are encouraged to seek care from the Aggie Health and Wellness Center with their student insurance whenever they need to.

¹ Information on on-campus and off-campus resources was compiled with the help of Kylie Arrieta, Program Coordinator at NMSU's ISSS office.

- Being an international student can be stressful. Take advantage of the highly confidential and competent counselors who are ready to assist students who need **mental health support**. Individual and group counselling sessions via telehealth are available for students. Students are encouraged to learn more on the [Aggie Health & Wellness Center](#) website. Each NMSU student has up to 12 free counselling sessions.
- Are you a fan of the outdoors or would you like to explore outdoor hobbies? **NMSU Outdoor Recreation programs** normally provide NMSU students with opportunities to take scenic hiking, rock climbing or camping trips locally and out of state. Due to the COVID19 pandemic, these trips have been put on hold. [Outdoor Rec](#) provides important services to students, including outdoor gear rentals, affordable bike repair and bike rentals, and areas/ programs for personal fitness such as the Aquatics Center, Climbing wall and much more.
- [Petes pick up](#): Students who live on campus can utilize Pete’s Pick Up services everywhere and anytime for a **safe ride** to their car or dorm or a **free taxi ride** home ([Crimson Cab](#) 575-524-8294). Along with Pete’s Pick Up services, the Associated Students of NMSU help provide a [free shuttle ride](#) to and from the El Paso International Airport.
- [-Aggie Cupboard](#): provides **free non-perishable food items** to NMSU students, faculty, and staff at no cost. Only a current NMSU ID is needed to receive food from Aggie Cupboard. The Cupboard operates every 4th Tuesday of the month from 12:30-2:30 typically, and distributes from the Southwest corner of Preciado Park (near Gregg and Stewart street
- For international families with young children: [Myrna’s village](#) is a program at NMSU that offers **care and early education programs for children of students, faculty and staff**. Programs are available for children six weeks to 5 years old. Myrna’s Village is conveniently located on campus at 4101 Sam Steele Way.
- ISSS encourages international students to get involved with both academic and social groups to enrich their experience here at NMSU and strengthen their connections to campus.
There are many international student clubs such as The International Student Club, Chinese Student Association, Indian Student Association, Muslim Student Association, Korean Student Association, Nepalese Student Association, Iranian Student Organization, Bangladesh Student Association, Saudi Student Club.
These student clubs along with many other academic or social clubs have profiles and event information on the [presence app](#).

Off Campus Resources for International Students

- The American classroom culture is often international to many international students. Students may be used to less-interactive, strictly formal classroom structure and may find it difficult adjusting to learning in a less formal classroom atmosphere. These resources might help international students familiarize themselves with what to expect in a U.S classroom. [US college classroom culture](#), [Adjusting to a US classroom culture](#), [The U.S Classroom Culture Guide](#), [video on US classroom culture](#).
- [Aggie id](#): International students should be sure to get and keep track of their NMSU ID. Many businesses around town offer special discounts if you have a current NMSU ID including discounts on meals, drink sales, event and retail offers and more. Students can ask about an Aggie discount at the off-campus business they like to frequent.
- [Roadrunner transit](#) buses offer affordable transportation for students who live off campus or just need to get around town. The Roadrunner Transit system in partnership with NMSU, has a [drop off route through campus](#) for student's convenience. Check their website for bus schedules and routes.
- Many local churches including [FBC Las Cruces](#), [Chi Alpha](#), other religious organizations, and the [local mosque](#)-The Southern New Mexico Islamic Center, are welcoming places for international students from NMSU. They can offer community, connection, and helpful information on settling and living in Las Cruces.
- [English practice opportunity](#): NMSU's Christian Challenge hosts Conversational English Practice events monthly at 1313 E. University. At these events students can practice speaking with others in English on a variety of topics and enjoy tea and coffee. Some events include topical activities like pumpkin carving during Halloween, etc.
- Thrift stores for affordable school and household supplies: Students can check out the Good News Thrift Store, Second Chance Thrift store, The Salvation Army Family store, Goodwill and many other thrift stores near NMSU campus for savings on winter clothing, household gadgets and furniture. Good winter clothing is critical to get through the cold seasons.

H1B1 and Post-Graduation Immigration Options

Although International Student and Scholar Services does not process H1B1 applications or handle work related to this immigration area, ISSS helps to connect students with a presentation on post-graduation options put on each semester by the law office of Maney, Gordon, Zeller, P.A.

The section covers a range of immigration and employment options that may be available to students after graduation such as Employment-based green cards or H1B work visa. Students are given tips and advice for navigating different immigration processes. The presentation also includes a Q&A portion, where students can ask about their specific immigrations needs and situation.

The presentation does not have a fixed date each semester as it is based on the law firm's availability, but it does take place toward the middle to end of each semester. Interested students should sign up for the FSN and check back on the [International Students and Scholar Services](#) website for more information.

Work Authorization for International Students

There are two forms of work authorization for international students; **Curricular Practical Training or CPT** and **Optional Practical Training or OPT**. CPT is temporary employment to gain practical experience in a student's area of study such as the Field Practicum for students in the School of Social Work. Curricular practical training is available to F-1 students *before* completion of the educational objective (graduation) and is off-campus employment authorized by ISSS to students meeting the eligibility requirements.

Students interested in CPT and should email iss@nmsu.edu.

Webinars and Canvas course on CPT will be available in 2021. For news on dates of webinars and updates on the Canvas course, students should sign up for the FSN and check back on the [International Students and Scholar Services](#) website.

Optional Practical Training or OPT is a benefit for students in F-1 status who have been enrolled in their academic program for at least a full academic year and will graduate. OPT allows for 12 months of employment authorization and students are able to work in a job that is directly related to their degree program. International Student and Scholar Services holds at least three OPT workshops each semester, typically in November for fall semesters and April for spring semesters.

Helpful OPT links can be found here: [information guide](#) and [webinar](#)

An OPT canvas course will be created in Fall 2021, for students who would like to learn about OPT sooner and engage with OPT resource materials. Students interested in OPT should email

iss@nmsu.edu for the latest OPT information. Note that OPT have specific time-bound durations within which you can apply for it so do check with the ISSS office in the beginning of your last semester.

Some Aspects of US Culture You Should Know

Expression in and Outside the Classroom

The American culture generally upholds free and assertive individual expression. In the American classroom, participation in class discussions is highly encouraged and expected by professors. Students often share their opinions in an informal manner. This might not be the case in many countries where college teaching styles are more of a formal lecture type. It is important to know as an international student that freely expressing your thoughts is not a sign of disrespect. It is often expected that individuals speak assertively and make eye contact when speaking both in and outside the classroom. Remember to use polite language and stay away from derogatory language. Also, remember that you can and should always ask for help from your professors about assignments and any other thing you might need help with within the classroom. This is not seen as intrusive. Rather, it is interpreted as being interested in the subject.

The Social Work program feels that it is important to be inclusive in expression and communication and if you feel uncomfortable in this form of communication make sure to reach out to your professors and begin a dialogue to increase collaboration in communication.

When addressing people you do not know.

When you are addressing someone you do not know, whether in person, by phone, or by email, use their last name and their title if known. For example, if you are addressing a professor who holds a doctorate, you may address them as “Dr. Green”. If you are not sure what their title is, address them by just their full name. Do not assume titles. For instance, you may say “Hello John Green”. It is not disrespectful. When you meet people for the first time, they usually will let you know how they would like to be addressed. If not, you can ask them. Most American professors ask students to call them by their first name. Also, be mindful of people’s pronouns so you can refer to them correctly.

Time value

Some cultures have a more relaxed concept of time. People can show up some minutes late and it may be perfectly normal. America however is a fast-paced society and people here tend to frown on tardiness. If you have an appointment with someone at noon, you must try to show

up at noon. If for some reason you will be running late, make sure to notify the person ahead of time. It is seen as rude if you show up late without a prior notice.

Personal space

Many people in America generally require personal space. When you are speaking to people, stand at about 2 feet away. Do not get too close to people while speaking to them as that is offensive and can be interpreted as an intrusion of privacy and personal space.

Speaking English

Many international students speak English as a second language. Often their first language's intonation affects the tempo and pronunciation of words when speaking English. It is common to have trouble understanding the way professors speak in the first few months, but it will get better with time. Do not be afraid to ask for clarification whenever you need to. In the same way, it is common to receive requests by others to repeat what you say. Take time to speak slowly for more effective communication.

Contacting people

It is general etiquette that you do not contact people in formal settings after 9 pm and before 9 am. Also, do not call a person's phone more than twice. Leave a message if they do not respond. If it is your first time contacting them, be sure to include your name, how you got their contact and the reason you are contacting them.

Gatherings: Informal and formal

Most Americans are friendly. It is common to receive invitations to social gatherings. Always dress appropriately and take a gift with you for the host or hostess of the gathering if there is any. In some cultures, such as Ghana, when someone invites you to lunch, it is usually the one who invites who pays for the food. In the American culture, prepare to pay for your food if you are invited to eat outside with people. It is usually the norm for everyone in a group of colleagues to pay for their own food.

Do not attend a formal gathering such as a dinner or a wedding without an invitation. It is seen as rude.

Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in many public spaces such as restaurants, buses, trains, airplanes, schools, and hospitals. Noncompliance can result in heavy fines and even arrests in some cases.

Safety

Personal safety is of top priority in the US. Be aware of your surroundings always. Try to notice exit doors in buildings you use often in case of fire. Always have your cellphone with you to call 911 when you feel unsafe or suspect suspicious activity. Do not walk alone in dark places at night. If you must, take a friend along. Practice online safety by using appropriate privacy settings and reporting any suspected stalking. Many international students have been unsuspecting victims of various forms of scams. Be careful not to give any personal information

to a person you do not know, whether by phone, in-person, online or email no matter who they claim to be. If something sounds too good to be true, it most likely is. If you are in doubt about the genuineness of any correspondence, contact the International Students' office for help.

Resources for Faculty: Teaching International Students.

International students have unique challenges and require assistance to transition smoothly into the American educational culture. A comprehensive resource from the University of Kansas' website on how faculty and staff can engage effectively with international students in the American classroom can be found [here](#). It includes strategies to be incorporated in syllabus structure, teaching and interactions to foster cross-cultural conversations and cultural inclusivity.