

Foreword

Hi! I hope this guide will be able to answer all the queries you might have about coming to Ann Arbor. If you need more advice on any topic, do feel free to post on the SSA forums or ask your mentors. If you have any questions or comments pertaining to material posted here, please feel free to contact me at chsiong@umich.edu.

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 Manpower Committee, New Students' Welcome Program (NSWP) 2005
 University of Michigan Singapore Student Association

Pre-Departure

Documents to be brought:

i) Letter of Admission

ii) Valid international passport.

Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond the end of your intended stay in the US. Before leaving for the US, make a photocopy of the page containing your photograph and passport number. If your passport is lost or stolen, this will make it easier to replace the passport. Keep the photocopy in a safe place, but do not carry it with your passport. If your passport is lost or stolen, notify your embassy and the police immediately.

iii) F1 or J1 visa (within your passport)

The F-1 visa is for full-time students enrolled in an academic or language program. F-1 students may stay in the US for the full length of their academic program plus 60 days. F-1 students must maintain a full-time course load and complete their studies by the expiration date listed on the I-20 form. J-1 (Exchange Visitor Visa). The J-1 visa is issued for students needing practical training that is not available in their home country to complete their academic program. The training must be directly related to the academic program. The J-1 visa obligates the student to return to their home country for a minimum of two years after the end of their studies in the US before being eligible to apply for an immigrant (permanent residence) visa.

iv) I-20 form (issued by U of M)

Also keep at hand documents on sources of financial support (US immigration may ask for them. It is recommended that two sets be brought with you, and one set should be kept in your luggage).

v) I-94

The arrival/departure card that you have to fill up while on the plane. Keep the departure portion! It is asked for every time you leave the country.

vi) Exit permit from CMPB (guys).

Note: The US embassy will seal all the important documents, such as the financial support and I-20 form, in an envelope and attach it to your passport. The immigration

officer at your first port of entry in the US will open this envelope. Please be advised to keep a photocopy of all your documents to ease processing if you happen to lose any. You might not be able to find a photocopy machine until you actually reach the University itself.

Other Useful Documents and Items:

i) International Drivers Permit

Obtainable from the Automobile Association of Singapore (AAS). It might come in handy. Note that the Singapore driver's license is also widely accepted by most car rentals too.

ii) All academic certificates, awards, diplomas, transcripts that you have received

It is possible that one of these will earn you extra transfer credits. GCE A level, Royal School of Music (Grade 8) and the Trinity College certificates are ones known to have direct credit transfer. Make two photocopies of any important document. Leave one copy at home, and bring one copy with you, but keep it separate from the originals. Do get the copies certified correct.

If you have received a summary sheet of the advance placement credits (APs) awarded, bring that along with you. If you did not receive it before leaving Singapore, don't worry. Just bring along an extra copy of your certificates to make sure you get the APs.

iii) SAT, TOEFL, ACT and ACH

Scores would also be necessary for entry into certain faculties. If you took a course in GCE A Level that is new, make sure that you bring along your course syllabi so that the academic advisors at the University will be able to determine the amount that you have already covered and give you the appropriate amount of advanced credit.

iv) Any kind of credit cards

It is highly recommended to get a supplementary card from your parents in Singapore. A Singapore credit card is a good thing to have in case of an emergency. Not having a credit card is an inconvenience because they are useful for car rentals and hotel reservations. It may not be very easy for you to apply for credit cards in the US if you are under 18, not a US permanent resident, have no established credit history, or do not have a Social Security Number (SSN). The SSN can only be applied if you have a job, which means that it is almost impossible to apply for a US credit card until you find a job. Hence you will be stuck with your US debit card most of the time, and so it will be useful to have a Singapore credit card.

However, major credit card companies are reviewing their policies so that you no longer require a SSN to apply for a credit card. Instead, you might need to apply for the Individual Tax ID Numbers (ITIN). Nevertheless, this issue is still undergoing review presently and I will update the Guide once more information is out. Until then, it is highly recommended to get a Singapore supplementary credit card.

vi) International calling card/Singtel Worldcard for emergency use or initial use.

vii) Emergency money (US\$300 is sufficient)

Try to bring some loose cash along with you. Most banks take some time to process bank drafts (in some cases, even up to one whole week!). Small notes like \$20s will be useful. Traveler's cheque is also well accepted by many merchants. Do note that if you intend to get a handphone plan before having your parents

wire money over to you, then you might want to bring US\$600 more for deposit. This is because handphone companies do not sell their plans to people without a credit history (which you would most probably not have) or without a deposit.

Finally, review all Orientation information and other mailings from the University. You will find it useful to bring these documents with you. If you already know who your roommate(s) is/are, contact them to prevent doubling up on things like TVs, stereos and other appliances.

Important to note!

Once you are in the US, check your visa status carefully before traveling to other countries. Your visa must permit multiple entries. Otherwise, you might not be allowed to re-enter the US when you return from your trip. It is very difficult to get a new US visa outside your home country and the US if you've been denied re-entry into the US. For students on an F-1 visa, your passport must be valid for at least 6 months when you enter the US, and your I-20 must have been signed by the foreign student advisor at the International Center within the past twelve months. You must also have a valid F-1 visa stamped in your passport and carry documentation of financial support. The rules for students on a J-1 visa are similar, except the IAP-66 form must have been signed by your sponsor within the past year. But there are exceptions for students on both visas, especially for students who have changed their visa type while in the US or who come from certain countries, so check with your international student advisor before any trip outside the US, including trips to Canada or Mexico. There are also limits on the amount of time you may stay outside the US before your visa becomes invalid.

Note that if you are a Singapore passport holder, you should be allowed to enter US for up to a period of 90 days as a visitor without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), provided the passport is valid and machine-readable. Thus, it is possible to gain entry on these grounds even if you happen to lose your I-20. For more information on this, check out <http://singapore.usembassy.gov/consular/NIV/nonimmigrant.shtml#do>

What to bring:

Travel light! There is hardly an item (or its equivalent) that you will not be able to find at stores over there. Here is a list of things that you might want to consider bringing:

- i) Casual wear and lots of undergarments and socks.
- ii) A simple jacket/blazer/wind-breaker.

The weather only turns cold in October. If you already own a winter jacket made of denim or down feather, then you might want to bring it over to refrain from buying another one. However if you do not, we strongly suggest that you get them in the US, as they are cheaper, look nicer (helps you blend in with the rest of the students) and would not act as bulky luggage during your flight.

- iii) Water-resistant boots, such as those treated with Gore-Tex.

They are useful during winter for keeping your feet warm and dry, and preventing you from slipping in the snow. We recommend that you get them in the US for the same reasons mentioned above. For those who own army boots, it is also a viable option.

iv) Backpacks

They are useful and convenient for short trips during school breaks.

v) Your prescriptions and prescription medicines.

"Normal" medications can be purchased at drugstores. Bring all your medical and dental records (school health booklet would be nice), including immunization and vaccination records and prescriptions as well as insurance records (if you have purchased one before coming over).

vi) Prescription sunglasses/any eyeglasses or contacts

These are very expensive in the states. You may want to even bring a spare set in case. Contact lenses are subject to Federal regulations and require a prescription to be sold.

vii) Contact List

A list of the names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses of key contacts, both in the US and at home, including the contact information for friends and family who live in the US.

vii) Passport sized photos

It is worthwhile to bring lots of your best passport photographs in case you need to get a new passport or visa or for any other documentation. (e.g. Chinese proficiency test, International Student Card) Passport-sized photo taking in Ann Arbor is very expensive.

viii) Essential toiletries to last for the first couple of days.

ix) Multi adapter and transformer if you are bringing electrical appliances.

Note that the US uses a lower voltage than in Singapore (AC 110-120 Volts, 60 cycles). US plugs are flat vertical two pins. Also note the output wattage of the adapter. Videotapes recorded on foreign VCRs will not necessarily play correctly on American VCRs.

x) Other accessories

The following items may seem inconsequential, but you will find them very useful: pen and pad of paper, safety pins, paper clips, sewing kit, extra buttons, nylon cord, first aid kit, alarm clock or watch, calculator, flashlight, spare batteries, plastic bags, and duct tape.

Label your luggage inside and out with your name and your dormitory's name and address. At this point, you might not know the actual hall and room number of your dorm, but it is fine if you just put your dorm's basic address. For those staying off-campus, try to obtain your actual address, or the leasing center of your housing at the very least. If your luggage is lost in transit, this will help the airline return it to you. Needless to say, critical documents, medicines, and other supplies should be carried in your carry-on luggage. It is also advisable that your carry-on bag include one change of clothing.

If you decide to send your belongings separately, your main options are by sea and by air. Shipping items by sea takes longer, but is also about half the cost of sending them by air. Allow eight weeks for items to arrive by sea, or one or two weeks for items shipped by air. You can even wait till you are settled in before getting additional items sent to you.

What not to bring:

i) A-levels textbooks

Some topics may overlap, but classes here follow closely to their assigned textbooks.

ii) Dictionaries and Thesaurus

They are bulky and heavy. If you do require them later, you can always purchase the American edition, which suits the context better.

iii) Stationery

There is nothing you won't be able to find at the book stores. Avoid bringing paper, and hole-punchers as the ones used over here are of a 3-hole type. If you want to bring a stapler, do bring plenty of staples as the ones here are also of a different type.

iv) Singapore IC

It will not be possible to use this in most places. However, for those of you who do not intend to get a driver's license, then this might come in handy (eg: go clubbing). Ultimately, you would want to get a Michigan driver's license as it is more accepted.

v) Food products, plants, pets and agricultural products

All food products, plants, pets and agricultural products are not allowed to be brought into the US. There are Chinese, Japanese and other Asian grocery stores in Ann Arbor that stock a considerable variety of Asian foodstuffs. (More information: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/travel/travel.html>)

vi) Too much money.

A combination of cash, bank drafts or other monetary instruments exceeding US \$10,000 has to be declared at immigration. It will be less troublesome and safer to forward money through electronic transfer. Details regarding this procedure can be obtained at your bank. Tuition payments are due at the end of September, so you have plenty of time to set up bank accounts when you arrive. Just bring enough to sustain your initial stay of a week before you set up you account and have money wired over.

vii) Bed-sheets, pillows, comforters

The size of the beds in the dormitories here are long-single ones, and you will not be able to find bed-sheets of that size in Singapore. You can purchase these items either from any department stores or most supermarkets like Meijer and Krogers (check up <http://www.mapquest.com> for maps and directions). Consult your mentor group for more details on how to purchase these items.

Flight Arrangements

1) Booking your ticket as soon as possible not only ensures sufficient space on airlines that are full of returning students, but also secures discounts. Northwest Airlines is recommended. The easiest way to Ann Arbor is to get a flight that does a transit outside of the US. That way, you do not have to undergo the immigration process at the first American city your plane lands in. For example, Northwest transits at Narita (Japan), then flies to Detroit Metro. The shortest flight is also best when you are carrying a lot of luggage.

If you will be traveling extensively around the US before school starts, ask your travel agent or airline about Visit USA. These discount tickets are offered by many major US airlines, including American, Delta, Northwest, TWA, United, and US Airways, to travelers from abroad. Visit USA tickets must be purchased before departing for the US. Consider if you want a return ticket or a single non-return ticket depending on when you plan to return to Singapore. FYI, prices of return tickets purchased from the US can vary from the cheap (US \$700 for Asiana Airlines, purchased from STA travel on-campus) to the expensive \$1400 for Singapore Airlines/Northwest flights. Thus, you should compare the fares on several major international carriers. Sometimes the US airlines are cheaper, and sometimes the major carriers serving your country are cheaper. Several US travel agencies specialize in student, and budget travel, including international travel. These include:

- STA Travel www.sta-travel.com
- Student Universe www.studentuniverse.com
- Travel CUTS www.travelcuts.com

The International Student Travel Confederation (ISTC) is the organization that sells the International Student Identity Card (ISIC). Their web site includes a list of the more than 6,000 discounts available to holders of the ISIC card and a list of locations worldwide that issue the card. For more information, check out <http://www.istc.org/sisp/index.htm>. They also provide a home page for the Student Air Travel Association (SATA) <http://www.aboutistc.org/sata/>.

There are also several guides to discount travel on the web. The most popular guides are:

- Travelocity (<http://www.travelocity.com>)
- TravelHUB (<http://www.travelhub.com>)

2) Get a frequent flyer card for your preferred air carrier.

3) Take note of the weight limitations regarding luggage. 2 pieces of luggage, not exceeding 32 kg per luggage (64kg total) and 1 hand luggage are allowed for each passenger. It is advisable to inform the airline prior and let them know that you are traveling to the US as an international student. You may get additional luggage allowance. However, take note that different airlines may have different weight limits. So be sure to contact your airlines and check with them regarding the dimension and weight limits. (Note: The above weight limits are for Northwest Airlines.)

<http://www.nwa.com/travel/tips/baggage.html>) In addition to your hand carry luggage, you may also bring a laptop and/or a coat.

4) Before reaching the airport,

i) Do not pack or bring prohibited items to the airport. These can be found here:

http://www.tsa.gov/public/interapp/editorial/editorial_1012.xml.

ii) Place valuables such as jewelry, cash and laptops in **hand carry luggage only**. You may label your laptop if you wish to.

iii) Avoid wearing clothing, jewelry and accessories that contain metal. Metal items may set off the alarm on the metal detector. Avoid wearing shoes that contain metal or have thick soles or heels. Many types of footwear will require additional screening even if the metal detector does not alarm.

iv) Put all undeveloped film and cameras with film in your hand carry luggage. Checked luggage screening equipment will damage undeveloped film. Photographic equipment restrictions can be found here:

http://www.tsa.gov/public/interapp/editorial/editorial_1248.xml

v) If you wish to lock your luggage, use a TSA-recognized lock. A list of Transportation Security Administration approved locks can be found here:

http://www.tsa.gov/public/interapp/editorial/editorial_multi_image_with_table_0234.xml. In case you do not have a TSA-recognize lock and still wish to lock your luggage to prevent theft, take note that TSA officers will not be held responsible for damaged locks.

vi) Do not bring lighters or prohibited matches to the airport. More information on approved lighters and matches are found here:

http://www.tsa.gov/public/interapp/editorial/editorial_multi_image_with_table_0099.xml.

vii) Do not pack wrapped gifts and do not bring wrapped gifts to the checkpoint. Wrap on arrival or ship your gifts prior to your departure. TSA may have to unwrap packages for security reasons.

5) At the airport,

i) Each adult traveler needs to keep available his/her airline boarding pass and government-issued photo ID until exiting the security checkpoint. Due to different airport configurations, at many airports you will be required to display these documents more than once.

ii) Place the following items **IN** your carry-on luggage or in a plastic bag prior to entering the screening checkpoint:

- Mobile phones
- Keys
- Loose change
- Money clips
- PDA's (personal data assistants)
- Large amounts of jewelry
- Metal hair decorations
- Large belt buckles

iii) Take your laptop and video cameras with cassettes **OUT** of their cases and place them in a bin provided at the checkpoint. As a hint, you might want to place your laptop at the very top of your hand carry luggage so that you do not have difficulties digging it out.

iv) Take **OFF** all outer coats, suit coats, jackets and blazers.

For more information, please refer to TSA's website at <http://www.tsa.gov/public/display?theme=175>

6) You can also mail a package to your dorm and they will hold it for you. You will be able to collect it when you arrive. However, be sure to label your package and email them to inform them about your package. Check out http://www.housing.umich.edu/movein/shipping_storage.html for more details. You can send packages within one week of your arrival, even if you are checking in early.

Medical and Dental Checkups

Medical and dental checkups are rather expensive in the US. Try to get your checkups, especially wisdom teeth extraction, done in Singapore before you leave. Bring medical records for (pre) existing conditions.

Insurance

The University requires all students to purchase health insurance and details will be given to you during your orientation. However, if you already have a policy and do not wish to purchase another one, bring your documents with you and show them to the advisors so that they may determine whether your policy meets the University's requirements.

Temporary housing (for you or visiting parents)

Choose from a wide number of Bed and Breakfast Hostels to Hotels. Unless they are located on-campus, it is advisable to rent a car for transport.

<http://www.umich.edu/~info/inside.html?http://www.umich.edu/~info/hotel.html>

Book early in order to secure a room in the Ann Arbor area! Orientation period is a busy time for hotels.

If you are arriving in Ann Arbor before the start of your housing lease and are traveling without your parents, the university provides temporary accommodation at affordable rates. See <http://housing.umich.edu/international/barbour.html> for temporary University housing. Do note that availability is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Emergency contacts

I will not be posting any phone numbers here, but please refer to the survival guide checklist for some numbers you can call if you need help in Ann Arbor. More details will be provided at the orientation in Singapore. Alternatively, you may contact your mentor for more details.

On the way to Ann Arbor...

To avoid jetlag, avoid caffeine and alcohol, but drink plenty of water during your flight. After you arrive at your destination, it is important to go to sleep at the normal time for your destination, and to walk around in the bright morning sunlight after you wake up. Most people take about 3 days to recover from jetlag.

When you arrive in the US, you will have to go through Customs and Immigration. They will ask you questions about your purpose for visiting the US. Your answer should be "Student". Keep your answers simple and direct. If they want to know the name of the school, tell them the name of the school, without any extraneous information. If they want more information, they will ask additional questions.

You may also be asked whether you are bringing in any food. As mentioned above, do not bring any food with you. Food you received on the plane should be left on the plane. It is forbidden to bring perishable foodstuffs, such as fruit, vegetables, and meat, or plants into the US. Also forbidden are articles made from certain protected species of animals. If you bring in more than US\$10,000 in US or foreign currency you must declare the amount to customs upon entering or leaving the country.

If you use medications that contain narcotics or which are administered by syringe, carry a signed prescription from your physician with the medicine. Also tell your physician that about your upcoming visit to the US, since he may have to prescribe alternate medications. (Some controlled substances are prohibited, even in medicine.) Penalties for smuggling narcotics are severe.

It would be prudent to take note of the following as well:

i) Flight delays

If you happen to miss a scheduled flight, go to the airline counter and they will arrange an alternative flight for you. Do stay calm under all circumstances.

ii) Missing Luggage

Show your luggage number at the luggage lost/claim counter and they will take care of everything. More importantly, remember to label your luggage with tags or stickers provided by the airlines (write your name, address and contact number).

iii) From Airport to Campus

Cabs and shuttles are available outside the international terminal. The fare will cost you around US\$40, though you can easily split the cost if you share with some friends or family members. Alternatively, you could rent a car from Thrifty's (<http://www.thrifty.com/Index.aspx>) or Enterprise (http://enterprise.com/car_rental/home.do) if you are coming with your parents. These agents have service phones at the airport. They can arrange for you to drop off the rental car at the airport when your parents leave. Ask them about the rate, insurance cost and the directions to campus. Maps can be obtained online at <http://www.mapquest.com>.

It is advisable to download and print a copy of the map of the school campus before going in order to find your dorm/residence. Useful maps of North and Central campuses can be found at this website:

<http://www.umich.edu/~newsinfo/maps.html>

Do note that you will be arriving at the new McNamara terminal if you are flying by Northwest. You can find more information or check out their new terminal at <http://www.metroairport.com/>. Note that the airport code is DTW. It is advisable to share a cab as it will be cheaper. Taxis are the easiest, fastest and most convenient way to get to the university campus. The bus/train system is might be slower and have longer waiting times. Take note that the below-mentioned taxi services require at least a one-day advance reservation. As mentioned earlier, it is quite cheap if you can share it with up to 3 more people (most taxis/vans can take up to 4 adults with 2 luggages per person). Also, try bargaining or asking for discounts before agreeing on the price. Some of the services do offer discounts for UofM students, especially if more of you are making reservations from the same taxi service.

Order Taxi Services:

Select Ride costs \$24 per person for a one-way trip. Call (734) 663-8898 locally or (866) 663-8898 nationally. For more information, check out

<http://www.selectride.com/>

Ken's Airport Shuttle Service costs \$51 one-way or \$97 round-trip to transport 1-4 people. Each subsequent person (after the 4th person) costs \$5 one-way and \$10 round-trip. They will pick up or drop off anywhere on campus. For more information, call (734) 941-7777.

Metro Connection costs \$39 for 1-4 people. Call Sam (888) 706-8080 or Raj (734) 347-4007 for more information.

Ann Arbor Metro costs \$35 one-way for 1-5 people (there is a \$4 discount for UM students). Call (734) 507-9220 for more information.

Accent Transportation Service costs \$39 one-way for 1-4 people. Call (734) 678-8090 for more information.

This information is from:

<http://www.annarbor.org/visitorsguide/transportation.asp#airt>

<http://www.umich.edu/~info/airport-transportation.html>

Driving:

If you are with you parents, you can consider these car rental companies. Do a search on www.mapquest.com for these companies, or check out <http://www.metroairport.com/transportation/> for more information and maps.



Alamo
338 Lucas Dr
Detroit, MI 48242
1-800-327-9633



Avis
295 Lucas Dr
Detroit, MI 48242
1-800-331-1212



Budget
287 Lucas Dr
Detroit, MI 48242
1-800-527-0700



Dollar
334 Lucas Dr
Detroit, MI 48242
1-800-421-6878



Enterprise
330 Lucas Dr
Detroit, MI 48242
1-800-325-8007



Hertz
289 Lucas Dr # 1
Detroit, MI 48242
1-800-654-3131



National
338 Lucas Dr
Detroit, MI 48242
1-800-227-7368

Arrival

Do not hesitate to call your mentors or seniors if you encounter any problems. Get their contact numbers (in Singapore and Ann Arbor) when you first meet them.

i) First Things to Do

If you are being fetched by friends or mentors, it is advisable to get your M-card immediately. This is because the card provides you with access to your dormitory; else you would have to call the Department of Public Safety for an officer to come by to let you in! The M-card is your school ID, and works like a smart card. You will need it to access your dorm doors at night, pay for your dorm meals and also to access the university computing facilities, etc. You may wish to apply for EntreePlus as you can use that to pay for your meals as well as laundry services at most of the residence halls. More details can be found on <http://www.mcard.umich.edu>. In case you have problems moving into your dorms, you may wish to contact the University officials. Their contacts can be found here: <http://www.housing.umich.edu/general/contact.html> (I suggest printing your respective dorm's contact number, or at least take down the front desk hotline.)

If you are taking a taxi from the airport, check yourself into your dorms first before getting your M-card. Ask the taxi driver to take you directly to your dorms (have the dorm's address ready). This way your luggage won't burden you should you choose to explore the town. Do not worry if doing so means that you'll miss the opening time for the M-card office and have to get your card the next day. Usually the dorms do not enforce M-card access at this time. The reason is because you wouldn't want to drag your luggage from the nearest M-Card office to your dorm if you choose to get your M-Card done before checking into your dorm. The distance to your dorm could be halfway across the University!

If you intend to arrive early, call the University for information regarding early arrival programs that are available. Call either the Office of New Student Programs at (734) 764-6413 or the Housing Information Office at (734) 764-3164. As stated above, the university also provides reasonable accommodation for students who arrive early. The per diem rate for a single is US\$31.00 + tax (includes bed with linen). The per diem rate for a double is US\$23.00/person + tax (includes two beds with linen). More information can be found at <http://housing.umich.edu/international/barbour.html>

Also, make a trip down to the nearest supermarket or departmental store (like Meijer) to buy your bedsheet, pillowcase, blanket/comforter etc. as the dorms do not provide them (unless you don't mind sleeping without pillows/bedsheet/blanket for your first night). Alternatively, you can bring your own but take note

that the size of the dorm mattress and pillows are bigger than the normal twin-sized mattresses that we have in Singapore.

ii) Maps

Maps are essential for getting around Ann Arbor. When you first arrive in Ann Arbor, get a pocket-size map of North and Central Campuses. You should be given one during your orientation. Anyway, here are some places where you can get maps of the area (see www.mapquest.com for additional information).

- a) International Center
- b) Campus Information Center at the Michigan Union
- c) Hotels and Motels
- d) Grocery stores

or go onto the following website to print copies: <http://www.umich.edu/~newsinfo/maps.html>

It would also be useful to print out copies of the bus routes. These can be found from http://www.parking.umich.edu/transit/bus_routes/index.html.

iii) Accommodation

Make sure you have a place to stay when you get to Ann Arbor. If you have registered for the Fall International Orientation and you are staying in one of the dorms, find out the earliest date you may check in. If you choose to stay on your own, we advise that you arrive in Ann Arbor 1-2 weeks in advance to look for housing. The student Housing Office will provide you with a list of approved housing agents on campus.

The first few days...

i) Opening a Bank Account

Open a bank account as soon as possible to avoid long queues towards the orientation period. Bank drafts and checks need about 5 days to a week to be endorsed. A "checking" account is absolutely necessary. Ask the bank staff to explain the details to you. The banks on campus can provide you with checking accounts, savings accounts, and 24-hour money machines at various locations. Most banks require a minimum deposit to open an account. Also, there are several types of checking and/or savings accounts so do check with the banks for details. Before going to bank, make sure that you have the following documents, which may be required by the bank.

1. Identification, i.e. passport and VISA.
2. Home Address. (Permanent & Current)

In general,

Savings Account: More Interest for spare money.

Checking Account: Interest rates are less or none but this is the money which you will be using via debit cards or cheques.

Your permanent ATM / Debit Card may take couple of days to reach you. These debit cards are also pseudo credit cards meaning they function exactly like a credit card with a card number provided by a major credit card company like Visa, but they are charged like NETS in Singapore, meaning, the amount you spend is directly deducted from your account. Check with the bank for the credit limit. Meanwhile, a temporary card is usually issued to be used at the ATM machines. Check out the link for more details: <http://www.umich.edu/~icenter/intlstudents/a2life/banksgen.html>

Ask your mentors for advice regarding which bank is suitable for you. Comerica has the most ATMs in and around campus but might charge a fee for that depending on how your accounts are being setup. Other banks, which are also conveniently located, include National City and TCF on Central, and the Credit Union on the North. Note that different banks charge differently for wire transfer of funds so do ask about that too. TCF is currently the official partner for our University ID card. This means that the University ID card can double as an ATM card if you bank with TCF.

ii) Pre-Orientation

1) As mentioned earlier, obtain your M-card as soon as possible. It is your school ID, and works like a smart card. You will need it to access your dorm doors at night, pay for your dorm meals and also to access the university computing facilities, etc. You may wish to apply for EntreePlus as you can use that to pay for your meals as well as laundry services at most of the residence halls. Ask for more details about EntreePlus at the M-card center.

M-card Center: 1000 Student Activities Building

E-mail: mcard@umich.edu

URL: <http://www.mcard.umich.edu>

Phone: (734) 93-MCARD

(There is an EntreePlus 'satellite' office in the Pierpont Commons up in North Campus)

2) Buy your daily inventories, stationary, food etc. You should be able to get most of those items at 24-hour supermarkets like Meijer or Krogers. These places are accessible by bus (see transport below for the list of buses that goes to Meijer or Krogers). Some of the essential stuff to buy are bed-sheets, pillowcases, desk lamps, and toiletries. You will get an idea of what you need when you check into your rooms at the Residence hall.

3) To learn the details of your university computer account, username and password, inquire at the ITD office at the basement of the Michigan Union, or ask the IT consultants at Angell Hall computing site. Without them, you will not be able to access the computing facilities on campus. Their website is <http://www.itd.umich.edu/>. Furthermore for engineering students, you would also want to set up your Computer Aided Engineering Network (CAEN) account. Check out <http://www.engin.umich.edu/caen/> for more details. Their office can be found at 2318 Duderstadt Center in North Campus.

iii) Orientation

By now, you should have received information on the Fall International Student Orientation and you should have registered for it. If not, approach the SSA committee members.

Attend all your orientation activities. International orientation is important as you will have to perform a mandatory check-in with the university (as required by US immigration regulations). At the same time, your health insurance will be applied for. Another important aspect of orientation is that they will show you the procedure for class registration via Wolverine Access (<http://wolverineaccess.umich.edu/>). Do not miss this session as registration can be confusing to the uninitiated! Before or while registering for classes, should you encounter problems, do not hesitate to approach the advisors or your mentors.

Keep in mind that international freshman register later than the rest of the enrolled students so you may not successfully register for the courses that what you want. Keep your options open by having alternative schedules or plans. Fulfill other requirements if your core concentration requirements cannot be met the first time round. For engineering, some space in freshman classes will be reserved for international students despite the class being full. Thus, do attend the scheduled mass registration where you will be given a place.

iv) Post Orientation

Now that orientation is over, try to finish whatever that is still undone on your pre-orientation list. After that you may want to consider these.

1) If you have not received advance credits on any advance courses that you have taken you can approach a foreign credit evaluator to ask if credits could be granted. LSA students should go to 1255 Angell Hall to see an academic advisor. Students belonging to the College of Engineering should go to the Lurie Advising Center at North Campus to ask for assistance. For engineering students, a minimum of C grade must be obtained for full transfer credit.

2) Textbooks: You can purchase all your required textbooks from the three major bookstores on campus. Used books are available at cheaper rates, though they are still expensive. Introductory textbooks are usually in plentiful supply. One of the cheaper ways to get your books will be to ask existing students if they have books to lend or sell. You can do so by subscribing/sending a mail to s-interact@umich.edu to offer to buy books. You should also check out www.orangesorbet.com too. Alternatively, you can beat the book rush by ordering online at www.amazon.com (check prices on the UK site as well), www.varsitybooks.com or www.university-textbooks.net.

The general advice is to register for classes first, then go to the book stores to find out what is the title, edition and author of the books being used by the particular section you are registered for (note that different sections of the same class might use different textbooks since they might be taught by different professors). Then, ask your family or friends to buy the books for you from Clementi bookstore and ship them over by any courier service. It is still cheaper despite the costs of shipping. In fact, if you can share the shipping service with a few buddies here, it gets even cheaper!

For those who do not want to wait for shipping, you may login to <https://marketplace.umich.edu>. This is an online buy/sell forum solely for the use of U of M students, staff and faculty. Before and during the first couple of weeks, many people will be frantically buying and selling used textbooks. Do check out the marketplace before you decide on shipping from Singapore, as occasionally, you might find better deals.

3) Familiarize yourself with the vicinity. Most university buildings are within walking distance, but getting to the North Campus needs a shuttle bus ride. Take the bus schedules found on the buses before they run out a few days later. You can also download them from <http://www.transportation.umich.edu/> (for U of M buses) and <http://www.theride.org/> (for Ann Arbor Transportation Authority buses).

4) Sometimes your student ID (M-card) may not be a valid form of identification, or a second identification might be necessary. Passports are accepted but are cumbersome. The most commonly used ID is the Michigan State Drivers License. It is also a form of verification for checks when you use them to purchase items. To apply, you will have to take a written test at the Secretary of State (SOS). A visual test will be given then too. However, do check your orientation package for events and schedules as the International Center might have scheduled a SOS officer to come down to campus to organize a mass written test. After the written test, make sure you collect brochures on driving test centers and schools from the SOS officer. This would come in handy when you want to schedule a practical test or lessons. Anyway, after a minimum of 30 days driving time (you do not have to actually drive, but you would have to wait 30 days), you can take the driving test and once you pass, you will obtain your license. Check out <http://www.umich.edu/~info/inside.html?http://www.umich.edu/~info/secstate.html> for more information.

5) For those with Singapore Drivers License or the international License, the 30-day practice period will be waived. However, you will still need to take the written and driving test. An appointment needs to be made to take the driving test.

6) If you do not intend to apply for the Michigan Driver License, you may want to decide to apply for the Michigan State ID. This will serve as a valid photo ID. Ask for details at the International Center. *Note that you have to produce 3 different forms of photo identification at time of application for the driver license test. The passport, visa in passport and M-card are commonly used for this. As for the Michigan State ID, one document that proves your residency here in Michigan will suffice. Refer to http://www.michigan.gov/sos/0,1607,7-127-1627_8668---,00.html for the list of acceptable documents. This State ID is as valid as a Driver's License.*

Starting life as a Freshman

i) Academics

Different degree programs offered by the various schools and colleges at the University possess different requirements. We encourage you to make full use of the advising services available to you: Peer Advising, LSA Advising, Engineering Advising, Concentration Advising and Resident Hall Advising. You can find out more by referring to the course bulletin for your respective school or college. Ask your mentors as well for some "insider insights". Try to talk to as many people as possible within your major to get a feel of the undergraduate courses.

Most Singaporeans have about a year's worth of credits, assuming you had taken the 'A' levels. Thus, most of the time, general advising (e.g. Engineering Advising) at this point of time is not very useful because the advisors might not have an in-depth knowledge of your concentration courses. My advice would be for you to try to see a department advisor as soon as possible. This is especially important for most engineering disciplines as almost all the courses are time-intensive, thus it is advisable to distribute out all the courses evenly.

ii) Registering for Classes ~Wolverine Access ~

Using Wolverine Access (<http://www.wolverineaccess.umich.edu>), you can find out which classes are open, wait-listed, or have restrictions, as well as the time, date, and location of classes. All international students will attend sessions with their appointed academic advisers prior to class registration.

iii) Placement Exams

Placement exams are offered in Math, Chemistry, the foreign languages (Japanese, Chinese, French, German, Spanish etc) and Computer programming. You may also obtain foreign language credits based on your test scores. Usually, the foreign language requirement for LSA students will be waived if you have obtained a minimum of an O Level pass for that language. Clarify with your academic advisor if this requirement is not waived.

Engineering students will be required to take the Math and Chemistry tests in addition to the writing test. Note that there is a HSK Chinese Proficiency Exam offered annually that will allow engineering undergraduate students to earn 8 credits that can count towards their degree (can be counted as humanities or free electives). LSA students also can use this to receive certain exemptions.

iv) Starting Classes

Once you are registered for classes, there are a few important things to remember. The most important is to make sure you obtain all the information the instructor gives out at the first class. Usual items include a list of all the textbooks and reference materials, a list of readings and where these are found, as well as introductions of other instructional personnel who are assisting in the course. Instructors often distribute syllabi on the first day of class.

v) Financial Aid

Honestly, it is almost impossible for international students to get financial aid from the school. Graduate students, however, might find it easier to obtain grants from their departments. There are also quite a few grants and scholarships around that you may be eligible for. Check out these scholarship details at the International Center and do your own research.

vi) Campus Computing Facilities

The University offers extensive computing resources.
Information Technology Division (ITD)
Consulting: 764-HELP
Email: online.consulting@umich.edu
Account Information: 764-8000
URL: <http://www.itd.umich.edu/>

The Information Technology Division (ITD) coordinates general computing services for all students, faculty, and staff. Individual schools, colleges and units provide additional computing services. ITD services are also explained and computing accounts are made available at a central location during the Welcome to Michigan orientation at the beginning of fall term.

All Residence Halls have computing labs, known as the ResComp, which have both Macs and PCs. Other on-campus computer centers are located at Angell Hall, North University Building (NUBS), Michigan Union Basement, School of Education and the Shapiro Undergraduate Library in Central campus. There are also computers in almost all of the buildings on North campus. If you intend to purchase a computer, weigh your options, such as desktop or laptop, custom build or self-assembled.

In addition, there are on-line auction sites such as those on www.ebay.com, which offer computers for very reasonable prices. One will find that many computer-related items can be purchased from these on-line auctions for a fraction of what it would cost were you to buy directly from the companies or local stores. A variety of web sites now track mail order prices for computers and other equipment. The most popular sites are PriceWatch, PriceScan, StreetPrice, StreetPrices, ShopFind, BuyingGuide, PriceTrac, and Jungle. Some of these services will even display graphs showing how the price has changed over time.

vi) Living Community Programs

Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program In-Residence (UROP/UIR), Lloyd Hall Scholars Program (LHSP) and Residential College (RC) are examples of special programs that offer in their own ways a unique experience during your first year of university studies.

vii) Moving in

Make sure you get an inventory/damage checklist immediately upon moving in. Fill it out carefully to avoid being charged for damage you did not cause.

Meal Plans:

ENTREE

This is the standard meal plan that you automatically (default) select by choosing to live in one of the meal serving halls. There are a number of options for this meal plan. E.g. 18, 13 meal and 9 meal options. You will be in the 13 meal plan program by default if you are staying in a Residence Hall, but if you think you cannot finish so many meals in a week, you could request for the other meal plans when making your Mcard. Alternatively, you can opt for the 135-meals/term plan. You can eat as many meals a week as you want and at the end of the term, you will be refunded \$2 for every unfinished meal. If you do not wish to be restricted in terms of the number of meals you consume per week in the dorms, this is the plan for you.

ENTREE PLUS

This is the supplemental debit card option available to all residents in all residents' halls. It can be used in most residence hall copy machines and vending machines as well as in numerous residence hall laundry facilities. Points can also be use for purchases in the dining rooms and snack bars. In addition, one can purchase meals/food through the use of Entrée Plus at the residence halls as well as from the Michigan Underground and the Michigan League.

The Entree office
 100 Student Activities Building
 763-4632
 North Campus Entree
 B430 Pierpont Commons
 763-6294

PHONE FACILITIES

You can make international calls from your room. However, a cheaper way of calling home will be to employ the use of calling cards. Some phone card companies offer cheap rates to Singapore, like <http://www.phonecardsforsale.com/> and <http://www.onesuite.com/>. A word of precaution, do check and doubly-check the rates, terms and conditions, expiry (yes, some phone cards do expire) and local access numbers – you would not want to pay extra to call toll-free just because the phone card does not have a local access number to dial.

RESIDENCE HALL SERVICES

a) Front desk

The front desk in each residence hall has myriad functions and provides an array of services ranging from distribution of your mail and newspaper subscriptions to making change for vending and laundry machines, video games, and coin operated photocopiers. They also facilitate refrigerator rentals, distribute your keys, process room changes and room wait lists, and receive garments for professional dry cleaning.

b) Cable TV

Cable TV connections are installed in all residence halls. Approximately 55 channels are available to residents who pay a one-time subscription fee.

c) Refrigerator rental

In the lease packet you will find information about refrigerator rental. You may rent one from University Housing. However, it may actually make more sense for you to buy your own refrigerator if needed. A brand new bar refrigerator can be bought for about US\$50.

d) Laundry

There are coin-operated washers and dryers available in each hall, some of which accept Entree plus.

viii) Wolverine Access

Wolverine access is an electronic information service you may use to access your academic record and general University information. You can use Wolverine access on any computer at the Campus Computing Sites and it is also available on the World Wide Web at URL: <http://wolverineaccess.umich.edu/>

Information Available (non-exhaustive):

- a) [View Enrollment Appointment](#) (this tells you when you can start registering for classes)
- b) [Backpack/Registration](#) (you may backpack classes prior to registering, much like a wish list.)
- c) [View Grades](#)
- d) [View Unofficial Transcript](#)
- e) [Addresses/ Phone Numbers](#) / [Emergency Contacts](#)
- f) [View Account Summary](#)

Getting Started:

To use Wolverine Access, you will need a Uniqname and a Umich (Kerberos) password. To find out your password, stop by the following locations:

ITD Accounts Office, Michigan Union Computing Site

CAEN Hotline office, 2318 Duderstadt Center (Engineering students only)

ix) Health / Medical Services

a) Insurance:

It is compulsory for international students to have health insurance. Pay attention during your orientation for the health insurance application. They provide very good information on the health insurance that the University offers, especially procedures on what to do when you fall ill. You could also check with the international Center on this.

b) University Health Service:

UHS is the health care facility that offers many outpatient services in one building (excluding severe medical emergencies or procedures that require hospitalization) for all University students. The health service fee (incurred each semester as part of the student's tuition) covers most services provided at UHS, even when they are not covered by a student's private health insurance. Those services and products for which additional fees apply include pharmaceuticals, routine optometric care, eyewear, contact lenses, orthopedic devices and certain immunizations.

The university strongly encourages its students to have coverage under a private health insurance plan or one offered by the University itself, but this is not a requirement to receive care at UHS. The University does require all international students and their families to have health insurance coverage. For information about insurance requirements, contact the International Center. UHS health centers and hospitals could be found on <http://www2.med.umich.edu/healthcenters/>.

x) Transport

a) Public Transport

If you wish to go to nearby malls, you can take the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA) <http://www.theride.org/>. A bus guide that tells you the bus arrival times and the bus routes is available at the Michigan Union Information Counter and on the buses themselves. The bus fare is free if you show your M-Card, otherwise you will have to pay a fare of \$1 per ride. Note that only AATA buses (University buses don't!) will take you to Meijer or Krogers (big supermarkets), Briarwood Mall (where you can subscribe to a handphone plan) and Showcase Cinemas. Here is a non-exhaustive list of buses you might need to take note during your first few days.

Bus No. 1 – Plymouth road mall (Krogers, China Merchandise)

Bus No. 2 - Plymouth road mall (Krogers, China Merchandise)

Bus No. 6 – Briarwood mall, Krogers (another branch), Meijer, Target, Best Buy, Showcase Cinema

Bus No. 12A/B – Maple Village (Secretary of State)

Bus No. 22 – Meijer (another branch), Showcase Cinema (10 min walk though)

b) Buying Bicycles

Bicycles are useful for commuting within Central Campus buildings especially if you have a tight schedule. In fact, a lot of students cycle to classes. However, do bear in mind that it is dangerous to cycle when there is snow and ice on the ground. Both new and used bikes can be obtained from the Campus Bike and Toy Store, at South University Avenue. Better priced bikes are also available at Meijer, Target and Toys-R-Us. Don't worry about transporting back your bike from the shop, because you can always mount your bike onto the bus and ride it, instead of having to cycle back. Look around before you make your purchase, there

are quite a few stores. You can also check <https://marketplace.umich.edu> for used bikes. Also, do look out for flyers and brochures at the bus stops. They normally have used bikes for sale (among other things). It is also highly recommended that you register for your bicycle at the police station upon purchase in the event that should your bike go missing, there will be a chance that it will be relocated by the authorities. The cost is minimal and it is an investment worth considering. If you are willing to wait, however, you can register it for free during Festifall. Otherwise, it's a small charge for any other time of the year.

c) University (blue) buses

The University operates its own free bus system that transports commuters among North and Central and South Campuses. There are various different routes so do check out the route details at the main bus stops (e.g. CC Little) or online at http://www.transportation.umich.edu/transit/bus_routes/index.html. All your classes should be accessible by buses which come at around 5 minutes intervals during peak hours and 20 minutes during off-peak hours including weekends. Buses run late into the night and UMICH provides late night transportation up to 2am and beyond.

d) Buying a car

Cars are generally inexpensive as compared to Singapore. However, parking on campus is quite limited – in fact, very limited. So if you do decide to buy a car, do ensure you have somewhere to park it. Cars are great for long distance travel anywhere outside of Ann Arbor. You may either go for a brand new car, a used one or lease a car, depending on what your budgets are. You may be looking for nice looking, economical, good mileage, but looking at the variety of cars moving around, you will easy get puzzled on:

Which car to buy?

Where can I get a good deal?

What should be the start of bargain?

Which car has a good powerful engine?

How can I manage to have payment of the car?

This is just normal.

Before buying you may enhance your knowledge by understanding the following:

Lease: Pay the specified amount regularly, like rent and return the car back after the time of lease is over. (Simplest Definition, although you may have various kind of options, which can be seen/read/understood at the Car Shop)

Rent: Almost new cars are given for rent. These rates are high as compared to lease, good for short term. Like a week to a month, again depends on you financial statistics..

Buy: Buying brand new car. FYI, It is not a good idea to upgrade the base model of car, instead, buy upper model in the same car as it will be economical and fixed in factory. Some model name examples are:

Honda DX (base), LX (medium), EX upper

Compact Model - Honda Civic Full Size - Honda Accord

Toyota DX (base)

Compact - Toyota Tercel Mid Size - Toyota Corola Full Size - Toyota Camry.

1. Don't compare the price of various companies, but consider the specific models first.
2. Kelly Blue Book has become industry defacto-standard for reference prices. This information can be found in the library or on the net. Here are the links you may refer to find out the details of the cars you are interested in. On these sites you will find,

1. The listing of cars for sale, make, model & year wise.
2. Technical specification of cars categorized nicely and also referred directly.
3. Technical and/or Performance Reviews.

Car Reference Sites:

www.1stopauto.com

www.kbb.com

www.autobytel.com
www.edmunds.com
www.autopricing.com
www.usedcars.com
www.carprice.com
www.carprices.com
www.carbuyingtips.com
www.cars.com

Some very good deals do appear in the classified ads in newspapers, so do check them out often. Furthermore, University students, faculty members and staff post car ads on news boards, pillars or basically any bulletins on a frequent basis. In fact, it might be even more convenient for those of you who are interested in buying used cars as the seller can be easily contacted on-campus.

AAA Membership

AAA (called Triple A) is the American Automobile Association. This is an excellent organization serving millions of people in America. For a nominal annual fee you can get a lot of helpful services like roadside assistance, jump-start etc. Whether you own a car, rent it or lease it, AAA membership is of great help and every one must have it. Visit their web-site for more details: <http://www.aaa.com/>

Consult your seniors! They have gone through the car hunt and can probably give you good advice about the suitability of the car that you are considering, (sports cars are tempting, but they can be tough to handle in Ann Arbor winter conditions) as well as possibly even alerting you about the good car deals.

xi) The International Center

603 East Madison Street 764-9310
B510 Pierpont Commons 936-4180

Due to renovation and upgrading, the International Center is currently temporarily located in 3 locations, each provided different services. To get a list of the services, refer to <http://www.umich.edu/%7Eicenter/about/index.html>. The main summer service center is in South Quad (just across the street from their permanent office). They will move back to their main office right across South Quad and in the same building as the Michigan Union and West Quad come September 12th 2005.

The International Center offers information, advice, and referrals for members of the University community who are participating in or considering an international experience. The Center provides programs and individual consulting about options for overseas study, scholarships, internships, work, volunteering, travel, and international careers. International student ID cards and other items for inexpensive travel are also available here.

International students may inquire at the International Center for information and advice about visa and immigration issues, employment, cross-cultural issues, taxation, health insurance, and other concerns. The center offers programs throughout the year on these and other topics of interest and also hosts social events for American and international students and scholars.

During the first few days of orientation, several talks on health services and insurance will be held at the center. These are useful and do attend them if you can. Refer to the orientation schedule for the time and dates, or just pop in at the center to ask for details.

The center also holds written tests for Drivers applying for their Drivers License during the first few weeks of the fall term. Again, do not hesitate to ask the staff for details.

Miscellaneous information

i) Weather and Time

Temperatures are most often reported in Fahrenheit, and occasionally also in Celsius. To convert Fahrenheit to Celsius, subtract 32 and multiply the result by 5/9. Climate varies considerably across the United States. You will probably need an umbrella, even in Las Vegas or Los Angeles. In the northern cities, such as Boston, Chicago, Pittsburgh, New York, Seattle, Washington, Denver, and Minneapolis you will need cold weather and snow gear. In the southern states, such as California and Florida, summers may be very hot and the winters mild. Depending on the part of the country, temperatures during the summer will run from the 70s through the 90s.

Ann Arbor gets extremely cold during winter. Fall (autumn) arrives around late September and the temperature gradually falls to 10-20 degrees Fahrenheit in the daytime. Snow starts falling around early to mid November and the daytime temperature may fall to -20 degrees Fahrenheit or even lower in mid winter (January to February). Spring comes late, usually in April. A good weather monitoring program can be found in <http://www.weather.com/index.html>.

As for winter clothing, some brands include North Face, Columbia and Solstice. Selecting the right apparel is sometimes almost an art in itself. Your mentors are the best sources of information.

The United States has four main time zones: Pacific Standard Time (PST), Mountain Standard Time (MST), Central Standard Time (CST), and Eastern Standard Time (EST). When it is 9:00 am in California (PST) it is 10:00 am in Denver (MST), 11:00 am in Chicago (CST), and 12:00 noon in New York (EST). Alaska is one hour earlier than California, and Hawaii is two hours earlier. Puerto Rico is in the Atlantic Standard Time zone, one hour after New York. If you are on the east coast of the US and calling someone on the west coast, they are probably still asleep at 9:00 am your time. If you are on the west coast and calling someone on the east coast, they are probably eating dinner at 4:00 pm your time. The following table lists the states that occur in each time zone. States that span two time zones are italicized.

Time Zone States

Eastern: - Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia

Central: - Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin

Mountain: - Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wyoming

Pacific: - California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington

Singapore is 13 hours ahead of Michigan, Ann Arbor during fall and winter, and 12 hours during spring and summer. During Daylight Savings Time, clocks are set forward one hour. (i.e. instead of +13, its +12 now) It begins on the first Sunday in April and ends on the last Sunday in October. The mnemonic "Spring Forward, Fall Back" will help you remember how to set your clocks.

ii) Books/Texts

Plan on spending approximately US\$400 per term on textbooks if you buy your text books here. With all of the textbook stores around, check around for the lowest prices or scout around for people willing to sell/lend second hand copies. Do not buy the text unless you have registered for classes. Whenever you buy the

texts, be sure to ask how long you have to return the books because the professors might change the texts, or you might find a cheaper seller etc. Most instructors will put copies of the reading material on reserve at the Shapiro Undergraduate Library. If you cannot afford to buy texts, this is a convenient alternative. But be warned, the deadlines are very short-lived (2-4 hours usually) and near exam periods, they are checked out more often. Course-packs, which are the instructors' compiled notes, are almost always non-returnable. Many of the books are available in Singapore, either at Clementi bookstore or NUS Co-op. Check out your respective departments' book list for a comprehensive guide on what textbooks a particular class uses. These guides are not 100% finalized and it is up to the Professors' discretion to change the textbooks at their whim and fancy. But generally, they are quite up to date. Another alternative is to buy your textbooks online. Refer to the websites mentioned above for more details.

iii) Food/Shopping

There is no Chinatown here, but Chinese food is available on/near campus (Dinersty, China Gate, Kai Garden, Lucky Kitchen etc). Halal food, Vegetarian food, Japanese food, Jewish food, Italian food, Mediterranean food and Indian food are also available (for example, try the restaurants located along Main Street). There are Chinese Grocery stores on campus, so it is not necessary to bring any cooking ingredients there.

Some Recommended Malls:

- a) Arborland Mall
Washtenaw Ave at US-23
- b) Briarwood Mall (Hudsons, J.C. Penny, Sears, Jacobsons)
State Street at I-94
- c) Cranbrook Village Shopping Center (Mervyns, Office Depot)
Ann Arbor-Saline Rd at I-94
- d) Kerrytown
400 block of N. fifth Avenue
- e) Maple Village Shopping Center (Kmart, Dunhams, Franks)
N. Maple at Jackson Rd.
- f) Oak Valley Village Center (Target, Best Buy, Meijer)
Ann Arbor-Saline Rd at I-94
- g) Plymouth Road Mall (Rite Aid, Merchant of Vino)
Plymouth road at Huron Parkway
- h) Traver Village (Kroger, Blockbuster video)
Plymouth Rd at Nixon Rd

iv) Maintaining a legal Visa status and valid I-20 after arrival

If you are on a F-1 visa and you are not able to complete your studies by the expiration date on the I-20 form, apply to the school's Foreign Student Advisor for an extension at least 30 days before expiration. Extensions are normally granted for academic and medical reasons so long as there have been no violations of visa status.

Do note that there might be a difference in the expiration date of your student Visa and I-20. They are two completely different and separate documents, and should be treated as such. It is unlawful to stay in the US if your I-20 (plus 60 days grace period) has expired and/or your passport will expire within the next 6 months. Basically, you are given 60 more days to do touring, packing your stuff etc. for your I-20. However, you will not be able to extend your I-20 (supposing you need an extra semester to finish your studies) once you hit into your 60 days grace period. Instead, you will have to go through the whole, long, tedious procedure all over again! If you do have to extend your I-20 for any reasons whatsoever, do so at least 30 days before expiration. As for your passport, it must be valid for more than 6 months at any and every point of time during your stay here in the US. So if your passport expires in December and you are still studying in the US in July of the same year, then that is unlawful. Also, if your I-20 expires or your passport is expiring within 6 months when you are outside the US (eg: going back to Singapore during the

summer or hopping over to Canada for the weekend), then you will not be allowed back into the US with these documents.

However, it is slightly different for the Visa. Apparently, you can still stay in the US even if your student Visa has expired, but the moment you leave the US, you will not be permitted to return. There are some countries like Canada and Mexico that are exceptions to this rule, but ultimately, you will want to make sure that your Visa does not expire sooner than your I-20 (which is normally longer than your I-20). Check out the International Center's website for more details on maintaining lawful status at <http://www.umich.edu/%7Eicenter/intlstudents/legalinfo/index.html#visa> If you are unsure of any details, do not hesitate to contact the International Center. It is better to play it safe than be sorry. The bottomline is simple: Know when they expire and extend the date at least a month before they do!

For those who are considering a transfer, it is possible to transfer schools after arrival on an F-1 visa. You will need to notify your current school of the transfer and obtain an I-20 form from the new school. You will complete the student certification section of the I-20 and must deliver it to the foreign student advisor at the new school within 15 days of beginning attendance at the new school.

If you are changing majors at your current school, you do not need to notify the INS. If you are changing degree programs (e.g., from a bachelors degree to a masters degree program), however, you will need to get a new I-20 and submit it to the foreign student advisor within 15 days of beginning the new program.

Finally, before leaving the US to go home during the summer (or even holidaying in Canada), make sure you get page 3 of the I-20 signed by a Designated School Official (DSO) at the IC. The signature is valid for one year following the signature date. Without this signature, you cannot return to the US even if your I-20, Visa and passport are all valid. This signature is needed as long as you travel out of the US.

v) Full/ Part time work

Getting a job is not an effective means of financing an education in the US. There are numerous restrictions on employment of international students, and some types of visas prohibit it entirely. Some international students are limited to on-campus employment.

Sometimes even if you are able to find work, you might not be able to get a job that pays well enough to cover all your expenses. The typical on-campus job will pay no more than \$1,000 to \$2,000 during the school year, and a slightly higher amount during the summer vacation.

If you are studying on an F-1 visa, you may not accept off-campus employment during the first year of study. You may, however, take an on-campus job to help pay the bills. You are limited to 20 hours a week while school is in session, provided that you do not displace a US resident. (The test for displacement is whether the position is normally filled by students.)

Graduate students who are participating in a cooperative education program are sometimes allowed to work for an off-campus employer who has an educational affiliation or research contract with the school. The employment must be required for the degree.

Full time employment is allowed during vacations if you will be returning to school at the end of the vacation period. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) permission is not required to receive on-campus employment. Furthermore, you do not need authorization from an international student advisor if you are working on-campus. However, you must first apply for a Social Security Number (SSN). The SSN is intended to accurately record your earnings in this country and you may not apply for one unless you have fulfilled some strict requirements. Refer to http://www.umich.edu/%7Eicenter/intlstudents/a2life/sscard_F1.html for more information.

After the first year, you may seek off-campus employment or internships during the summer. These are highly sought after as the work experience would be very useful in your career. To apply for off-campus employment, you must obtain a Curricular Practical Training (CPT). There are a few procedures in

applying for one and you may either call the International Center or Engineering Career Resource Center (ECRC, for engineering students) or check out their websites:

<http://www.umich.edu/%7Eicenter/intlstudents/employ/cptinfo.html>

<http://career.engin.umich.edu/>

Do note that only after getting approval for your CPT will you be allowed to apply for SSN. Also, do not use the CPT as a means to extend your graduation date on your I-20. CPT is only allowed prior to graduating and cannot be done in your final semester.

After you graduate, you might wish to work temporarily in the US. To do so, you will need to obtain an Optical Practical Training (OPT) for the first year, and a H-1B working permit for subsequent years. Your degree must be in the area of expertise required for the position. You must have an offer of employment from a US employer. The employer must file paperwork to petition for H-1B status for you. For any additional information on visas and work, please contact the International Center (see above) or visit

<http://www.umich.edu/%7Eicenter/intlstudents/employ/optinfo.html>

Once again, do note that only after getting approval for your OPT will you be allowed to apply for SSN.

vi) Taxes

In general, F-1 students must file federal tax forms every year they are in the U.S. The deadlines to file the forms are April 15, if money is earned (this includes money earned from graduate student assistantships), and June 15, if no money is earned. However, you do not need to worry too much about this as the International Center will conduct workshops and send emails out on procedures of how to file your taxes.

vii) Calendar Dates

In the United States, dates are written as month/day/year. This is the opposite of the Singaporean/British method, in which dates are written day/month/year. So while 4/3/67 would be March 4, 1967 in Europe, it is April 3, 1967 in the United States. It is best to write out dates using the month name in order to avoid confusion.

viii) American Holidays

The American calendar is filled with numerous holidays. The following table shows some of the more popular holidays. Most non-essential government offices will be closed on these days. (Fire, Ambulance and Police are always open.) Banks and post offices also tend to be closed on these days, and many businesses will give their employees the day off. It is best to refer to your M-Planner (which would be given to you during orientation) to check which holidays the University does not hold classes.

Holiday Date:-

New Year's Day - January 1

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - Third Monday in January

Ground Hog Day - February 2

Valentine's Day - February 14

President's Day - Third Monday in February

St. Patrick's Day - March 17

April Fool's Day - April 1

Patriots Day - Third Monday in April

Good Friday - Friday before Easter Sunday

Mother's Day - Second Sunday in May

Memorial Day - Last Monday in May

Flag Day - June 14

Father's Day - Third Sunday in June

Independence Day - July 4

Labor Day - First Monday in September

Columbus Day - Second Monday in October

Halloween - October 31
Election Day - Tuesday after the first Monday in November
Veterans Day - November 11
Thanksgiving - Fourth Thursday in November
Christmas Day - December 25

It is also important to be aware of the holidays of people of other religious faiths. For example, important Jewish holidays include Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Sukkoth, Chanukah, and Passover. Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, and Sukkoth occur in the fall. Chanukah occurs in December, near Christmas. Passover occurs in March or April, near Easter.

ix) Alcohol

The legal drinking age in the United States is 21 years. Bars and liquor stores will require proof of age, such as a driver's license, before selling you any alcohol.

x) Sales tax and restaurant tips

There is no national sales tax in the US, but each state has its own sales tax. The sales tax is charged as a percentage surcharge on purchases, and is printed on the receipt. Rates differ from state to state. Rates may even differ within a state. Unprepared food such as groceries is exempt from sales tax, but prepared food purchased in a restaurant is not. Clothing and medicine may also be exempt from sales tax. Michigan has no additional local sales tax. Our tax rate is 6.00%.

Tips are also expected to be given whenever you dine in a restaurant or order delivery. The expected tip is 15%, but you can either pay more or less (or none) depending on the quality of the service. However, you are not expected to pay tip if the restaurant is self-service (eg: Fast food outlets, certain Chinese eateries etc.).

xi) Shopping/Banking

Most stores will open between 9:00 and 10:00 am and close at 5:00 or 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Banks tend to close at 3:00 or 4:00 pm, restaurants at 8:00 or 9:00 pm, and bars at 11:00 pm to 1:00 am. Stores in shopping malls keep longer hours, with the typical mall store being open 10:00 am to 9:00 pm, Monday through Saturday, and noon to 5:00 pm on Sunday.

When most stores in a shopping area close at 5:00 or 6:00 pm weekdays, there will usually be one day a week when they open late or close early. The designated day varies from community to community. Some stores will be open on Saturdays. A smaller number of stores will be open on Sunday. Stores with Sunday hours tend to open between 10:00 am and noon, and to close at 5:00 or 6:00 pm, even if they are open until 9:00 or 10:00 pm the rest of the week.

Large grocery store chains are usually open 24 hours a day, (e.g. Meijer). Some pharmacies will also be open 24 hours. Always ask seniors for shopping tips and to benefit from price matching, return policies and discounts certain stores may have.

xii) Emergency/ Safety

Dialing 911 on any phone will connect you to emergency services such as ambulance, fire, and police. You do not need to put money in a pay phone to dial 911. In cities that do not provide 9-1-1 service, there may be a specific local telephone number. Likewise, your college or university will have an on-campus emergency service with its own telephone number. You should memorize these telephone numbers.

Another way to get emergency help is to dial 0, which reaches a telephone operator. Tell the operator that you have an emergency and the street address and city where help is needed. The operator will connect you to the appropriate emergency service.

Violent crime in the United States has been decreasing in recent years, and you are more likely to be a victim of a crime against property than a crime against person. Our Ann Arbor college campus tends to be very safe. However, the following general common sense rules will help prevent you from becoming the victim of a crime.

a) Tips for the Home. Remember to lock the doors and close the windows to your apartment when you are not at home. When you first move into the apartment, have a locksmith change the locks, since you don't know who might have a key to the apartment. It is best to install jimmy-proof locks, because the interlocking jaws on such locks prevent a thief from spreading the frame of the door with a crowbar. You should also install window locks or stops on all the windows, especially if you are renting a first-floor apartment. Some people even run lights and a radio on timers, to give the impression that someone is home all day.

b) Tips for the Car. Keep your car doors locked at all times. Get a map (very important!) and know where you are going and how to get there before you leave on a trip. If you are involved in an accident, stay in your car with the doors locked until the police arrive. Some criminals will deliberately cause a minor accident in order to rob or hurt you, especially if you seem lost. Likewise, if you pass an accident or someone needing assistance, don't stop. If you are on a busy street or highway, someone with a cellular phone will call the police to summon help. Always park your car in a well-lit area. Never leave valuable articles or packages on the seat; lock them in the trunk. Before getting in your car, look at the back seat to make sure nobody is hiding there.

c) Walking at Night. Don't walk alone at night. Try to walk with a group of friends. If your school offers an escort service, use it. Walk on busy well-lit streets and avoid poorly lit and deserted areas. If you are lost, walk as though you know where you are going and stop at the police station or a gas station for directions. Do not hitchhike, especially if you are female. It is not safe. If you happen to study late in the Shapiro undergraduate library or Duderstadt Center, you can even get free taxi services that ferry you from the library right to your door step. Check out the late night transportation information when you attend the orientation.

d) Crossing the Street. In the United States cars drive on the right side of the street, not the left. So on most streets cars will be approaching you from your left. Many international students have been hit by cars because they expect the cars to approach from the right. Always cross the street at a corner and look both ways before crossing the street.

e) Pickpockets. A pickpocket can work in many surroundings, especially at the airport, bus station, or other places with large crowds. They might bump into you or spill something on you to distract you while an accomplice steals your bag. They might use a knife to cut open the bottom of your backpack or bag and steal the contents without your knowledge.

Don't give money to panhandlers. There are public agencies and charities that provide food, shelter, and job assistance to the poor. A panhandler will probably spend the money on alcohol and illegal drugs. Most likely their appearance and story is a carefully contrived lie. Panhandlers often collect several hundred dollars a day from gullible students.

The following are a few precautions to help protect you from pickpockets and thieves:

- Put your wallet and important documents in your front pocket, not your back pocket. Pocketbooks should have a strong strap and be worn across the front of the body, not over a shoulder.
- At the airport, use a luggage cart if you are having trouble managing your bags. Hold onto your bags tightly.
- Avoid crowds.
- Keep photocopies of important documents at home, since this will make it easier to replace them if they are lost or stolen.
- Keep some money separate from your purse or wallet to use in an emergency or if your other money is stolen. For example, if your wallet is in one pocket, keep a \$20 bill in the other or in your sock.

· Be alert as you walk. Keep your head up and be aware of your surroundings.

xiii) Useful Links

Here is a list of useful and important links to the University of Michigan Homepage. Please refer to it to get a more detailed look at course descriptions, the requirements of the different schools, housing information and so forth. Before coming here, you should familiarize yourself with the university's web page and take some time to explore it.

1. University of Michigan Homepage: www.umich.edu
2. U of M Campus Information Center: www.umich.edu/~info
3. International Center: www.umich.edu/~icenter
4. College of Engineering: www.engin.umich.edu
5. School Of Literature, Science and Arts: www.lsa.umich.edu
6. Stephen M. Ross Business School: www.bus.umich.edu
7. Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning: www.caup.umich.edu
8. Office of the Registrar: www.umich.edu/~regoff
9. University Health Service: www.uhs.umich.edu
10. Office of Financial Aid: www.finaid.umich.edu
11. University Housing: www.housing.umich.edu
12. U of M Transportation Services: www.transportation.umich.edu
13. Job postings at U of M: www.umich.edu/~jobs
14. Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/urop/>
15. Residential computing at U of M: <http://rescomp.umich.edu>
16. Recreational Sports at U of M: www.recsports.umich.edu
17. U of M Singapore Student's Association: <http://www.umssa.org/>

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