INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

Dear International Student:

Welcome! We are pleased that you have chosen Dalton State College to further your educational goals, and we wish you much success with this endeavor.

Our office, International Student Education, will be a very important source of information and support while you attend Dalton State College. Our staff is dedicated to providing high quality services and programs to enhance your academic, personal, and social experiences at our college and in the United States. Please do not hesitate to visit our office, email us, or call us when you have questions or concerns.

The University System of Georgia has prepared an International Student Manual that contains information that will be useful to you during your time in the United States and at Dalton State College! Please click this link to obtain this useful guide: **http://www.usg.edu/international_education/documents/USG_International_Student_Manual.pdf.**

Sincerely,

The Staff of International Student Education

For admission to a degree level program at Dalton State College, the following items are required:

1. Dalton State College application for admission
2. $50.00 non-refundable application fee
3. Proof of English language proficiency
4. Financial documents
5. A copy of the student's SAT scores
6. Proof of Immunizations
7. Official translated and evaluated high school and college transcripts.

To check your application status online please visit:
https://vader.daltonstate.edu:2001/pls/prod80/bwwkadst.P_GetID.

Obtaining Your Visa for Study at Dalton State College

Applying For A Student Visa

Paying The I-901(SEVIS) Fee

The SEVIS I-901 fee is mandated by the United States Congress to support the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) and the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). SEVIS is the automated system that keeps track of students and exchange visitors coming to the U.S.

Before applying for an F-1 or J-1 visa you must submit an I-901 form and accompanying fee. We recommend that you pay online and be sure to print several receipts. You will need this receipt or the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official paper receipt (referred to as an "I-797") when applying for your visa and entering the U.S. Please keep this receipt as a permanent record. To pay online go to **http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/.** For more information visit: **http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/faq.htm.**

The Process

Today, as in the past, most travelers to the U.S. must obtain a visa. The process includes application forms and possibly interviews that may take several weeks or longer. So, please allow extra time to avoid having to make repeat visits to the Embassy. While individual experiences may differ, here are the basic steps you should follow and what you can expect throughout the process.

Visit **http://travel.state.gov/visa/.** This Web site has important information about current visa policies and procedures. If you do not have access to the Internet, contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for further information.

Make an appointment to visit the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Wait times for appointments may be lengthy. Schedule your appointment as soon as possible. Be sure to ask what fees are required and how they can be paid. Application fees are non-refundable and must be paid before your appointment.

Get all your documentation ready. You will need:

- Passport (valid for at least 6 months from the anticipated start of classes)
- Applications - These can be obtained through an Embassy or Consulate or at **http://travel.state.gov/visa/**
- Documents to support your application

-Official Acceptance letter
-I-20 or DS-2019
-Financial documents

- Proof of payment of the SEVIS I-901 fee. You may use the receipt printed after you make on-line payment or the official I-797 receipt.

NOTE: The consular officer may require additional information or forms.

Submit your application, passport, and supporting documents to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Your application will be reviewed by the consular officer. For most applicants, the visa is issued within a few weeks. Remember, there is no guarantee of obtaining a visa.

In some cases, additional reviews will be required. Such reviews can include additional interviews, further requests for information, official registration and fingerprinting. This may add four to six weeks to the visa application processing time.

After you secure a visa, you may travel from your country to a port of entry in the U.S. In many cases, that port of entry will be the airport where you land. On the airplane, you will be asked to complete a short arrival/departure form called an I-94. Write your name in Standard English characters. It must match your name as it is shown on your passport and visa. The I-94 form is very important so be careful not to lose it!

When you deplane, follow directions for non-citizen entry. At the airport, a U.S. official will interview you and verify all of your paperwork. Once admitted, you will receive an immigration stamp – make sure the officer properly stamps your I-94 card! Then, you will proceed to baggage claim and U.S. Customs.

For a list of Web sites of U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide and for information about U.S. visa policies and procedures, visit **http://travel.state.gov/visa/**.

Preparing For The Visa Interview

Ties To Your Home Country

Under U.S. law, all applicants for nonimmigrant visas, such as student visas, are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not. You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. “Ties” to your home country are the things that bind you to your home town, homeland, or current place of residence: job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, investments, etc. If you are a prospective undergraduate, the interviewing officer may ask about your specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other relationships, educational objectives, grades, long-range plans, and career prospects in your home country. Each person’s situation is different, of course, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter which can guarantee visa issuance.

English

Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview, but do NOT prepare speeches!

Speak For Yourself

Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.

Know The Program And How It Fits Your Career Plans

If you are not able to articulate the reasons you will study in a particular program in the United States, you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to immigrate. You should also be able to explain how studying in the U.S. relates to your future professional career when you return home.

Be Brief
Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impressions they form during the first minute of the interview. Consequently, what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers to the officer's questions short and to the point.

Additional Documentation
It should be immediately clear to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. Remember that you will have two to three minutes of interview time, if you're lucky.

Not All Countries Are Equal
Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the U.S. as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their study in the U.S.

Employment
Your main purpose in coming to the United States should be to study, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. While many students do work during their studies, such employment is incidental to their main purpose of completing their U.S. education. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program. In addition, if your spouse is also applying for an accompanying F-2 visa, be aware that F-2 dependents cannot, under any circumstances, be employed in the U.S. If asked, be prepared to address what your spouse intends to do with his or her time while in the U.S. F-2s may do volunteer work and may participate in part-time study that is a vocational or recreational in nature.

Dependents Remaining At Home
If your spouse and children are remaining behind in your country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be an especially tricky area if you are the primary source of income for your family. If the consular officer gains the impression that your family will need you to remit money from the United States in order to support themselves, your student visa application will almost certainly be denied. If your family does decide to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at the same post where you applied for your visa.

Maintain A Positive Attitude
Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied a student visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and try to get the reason you were denied in writing.

Preparing For Departure

Pre-departure (Immigration)
Note the program start date on your I-20 form and read the remarks. You must arrive in the U.S. no more than 30 days before the program start date and no later than the program start date.

Schedule long layovers between connecting flights. You will normally be checked through Customs and Border Protecting (CBP) quickly. However, if the CBP officer cannot clear you in a minute or so, you will be sent to Secondary Inspection. Don't panic. This doesn't mean that you are being accused of anything. Usually, there's just something that needs further clarification. However, Secondary Inspection often requires a wait of approximately two hours.

Collect your immigration and supporting documents into a packet. (Do not pack them into checked luggage!) Be prepared to show the following to the inspecting officer at the port of entry:

- Passport, valid for at least six months (Important note: your passport must remain valid at all times while you are in the U.S.)
- Form I-20 or DS-2019 issued by Dalton State College
- Receipt for the I-901 (SEVIS) fee
- Evidence of financial resources
- Name and contact information for your "Designated School Official (DSO)" or "Responsible Officer (RO)"
- If you're bringing dependents, each dependent must have an I-20 or DS-2019 of their own

What To Pack
Deciding what to pack can be challenging. Check the luggage restrictions for your airline as overweight luggage can be very costly. Also know that there are many places in Dalton to purchase needed items.

Arriving in the United States and at Dalton State College

Arriving In The USA

Complete the entry paperwork (Customs Declaration and Arrival Departure Record) in flight. If arriving by land or sea, you will complete these at the border crossing.

Present the following to the CBP officer:
- Passport
- I-20 or DS-2019 issued by Dalton State College
- Arrival Departure Record (I-94)
- Customs Declaration

Have other supporting documents (see checklist above) where you can easily access them in case the CBP officer requires additional documentation.

Check the CBP officer's notations to your I-94, I-20 or DS-2019 and passport. Entry requirements differ greatly for the various visa categories and errors are occasionally made. These errors can create significant inconvenience for you later. If you see an error, politely ask to have it corrected before you leave. Otherwise, you will have to travel to Atlanta, Georgia, at a

later date to correct the error. Atlanta is 2 hours from Dalton and there is no public transportation between these cities.

Verify that all documents received the Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection stamp. Verify:

- The arrival date is correct and legible and that it is the same date on all documents
- The class was entered as “F-1 or J-1.”
- A date was not entered beside “until.” It should be marked “D/S” for duration of status. However, if it was left blank, that should not create a problem.

Important: Secure your I-94 card in your passport. This document verifies that you legally entered the country and in which status you entered!

Arriving at Dalton State

Once arriving at Dalton State go to Enrollment Services and see the Admission Specialist. Bring your passport, I-94 card, and I-20 or DS-2019. The Admission specialist will make copies of your documents and assist you with registering for New Student Orientation and schedule your International Student Orientation. Important: Both student orientations are mandatory and all International students are required to attend both sessions.

2012 New Student Orientation Schedule

Check-in & Roadrunner Card (Westcott Hall)

Campus Resource Fair (Lower Level Pope Student Center)

Welcome (Goodroe Auditorium)

SOAR Family Meeting #1 (Follow Your SOAR Leader)

0 **Roadrunner Card & Higher One** (Goodroe Auditorium)

45 **Faculty Hot Seat** (Goodroe Auditorium)

15 **Three, 25 minute Rotating Sessions** (Follow your SOAR Leader)

Resources (Sequoya 102)

ife (Goodroe Auditorium)

Aid (Memorial 130)

0 **Feast with Faculty** (Upper Level Pope Student Center)

Academic Advising #1: Meeting by Major (Various Locations)
Mathematics, and Technology (Sequoya 102)
(Memorial 131)
ı (Memorial 114)
Health Professions (Memorial 130)
Liberal Arts (Memorial 110)

Student Conduct, Roadrunner Respect & Public Safety (Goodroe Auditorium)

SOAR Family Meeting #2 (Follow your SOAR Leader)

Break out session (Choose one of the following)

Bookstore & Roadrunner Café (Memorial 130)

Campus Recreation (Goodroe Auditorium)

Study Abroad (Memorial 110)

Housing (Goodroe Auditorium)

Dalton State Athletics (Goodroe Auditorium)

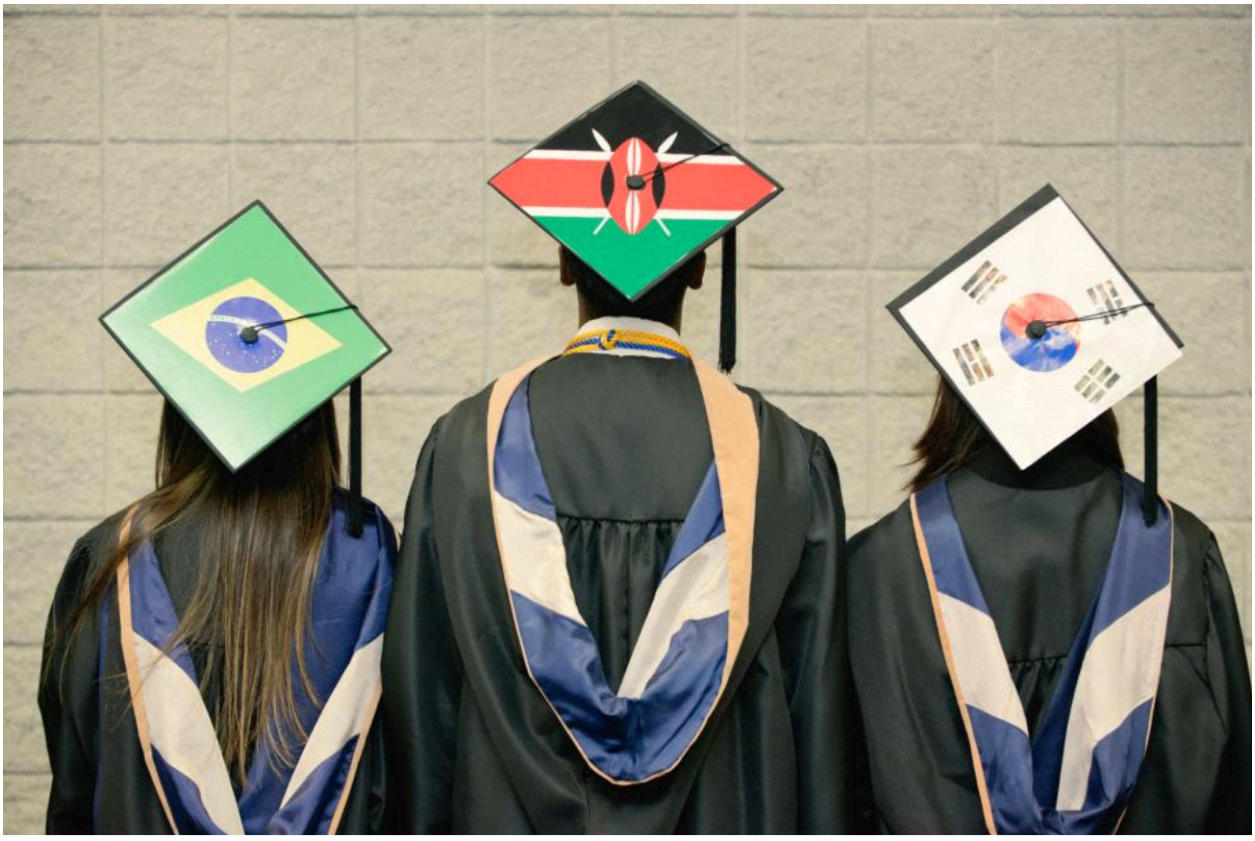
emic Advising #2: Registering for Classes (Various Locations)
Sciences, Mathematics, and Technology (Sequoya 114)
Business (Liberal Arts 313)
Education (Tech 202)
Liberal Arts (Liberal Arts 307)
Health Professions (Tech 211)

Evaluations & Pick Up Roadrunner Cards (Library Learning Commons)

, 5:00 **Campus Tours** (Meet SOAR Leader in Memorial Hall Lobby)

In your International Student Education orientation session, we will go over with you how to maintain your status while attending Dalton State College.

Maintaining Your Status



Like all other countries, the United States has laws and regulations governing people who are temporarily within its borders. Enforcing U.S. immigration laws is the job of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The staff of International Student Education (ISE) are not immigration agents, but we do have a responsibility to report certain kinds of information about F-1 students to immigration. Therefore, it is important for you to understand the immigration regulations related to your non-immigrant status. Ignorance of the law is not a legitimate reason for failing to obey these rules. The staff of International Student Education will provide information about immigration rules and regulations, and we are available to help you understand how to fulfill your legal obligations during your stay in the U.S. However, it is your responsibility to be aware of the rules regarding your F-1 status and to pay careful attention to immigration related requirements.

The following is a list of rules and guidelines to help you understand and maintain your student status:

Maintain full-time student status
Students in F-1 student status must register for and complete a minimum of 12 credit hours fall and spring semester. Summer term is optional for continuing students, and they may choose to either take fewer than 12 credits or not to enroll in classes at all during the summer. Students who enroll at Dalton State College for the first time during summer are usually required to register full-time.

Your enrollment is monitored and reported to the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), so it is very important that you register and stay enrolled full-time throughout the semester. There are no excused absences from classes, but you should contact your teacher if you will be absent and explain why. Dropping below a full course load without appropriate approval from an International Student Advisor in ISE will result in your I-20 being terminated as well as problems with your immigration status.

On-line classes
F-1 students are permitted to enroll in a maximum of 3 credit hours on-line to count toward full-time enrollment during the fall and spring semesters. This
means that you must enroll in a minimum of 9 credit hours on-campus if you take 3 credit hours on-line.

Do not work without authorization
An F-1 student may accept employment on campus. Employment is limited to twenty (20) hours per week while school is in session. Any other type of employment will require special authorization from immigration. Working off-campus without authorization is a serious violation of your student visa status and could put you at risk for deportation.

Keep your passport valid
The U.S. government requires that you keep your passport valid at all times. Your passport must be extended or renewed by your government. If your passport is going to expire in less than 6 months, contact your home country embassy or consulate to find out how to renew your passport. For a list of addresses and phone numbers of embassies in the United States, go to embassy.org/embassies/. If your F-1 visa is still valid when you are being issued an extension or renewal of your passport you should request the return of your old passport. The old passport with a valid visa together with the new passport can be used for re-entry to the U.S. Otherwise; you will need to apply for a new F-1 visa in your home country on your next trip home.

Keep your I-20 valid at all times
Please take note that your I-20 has an expiration date. Check the “completion of studies date” on your I-20 (#5). If your I-20 will expire soon, speak to an international student advisor at International Student Education. If you plan to continue your studies, we may issue another I-20 with a later completion date. You are responsible for requesting an extension of your I-20 from ISE at least 4 weeks BEFORE the I-20 expires. Failure to extend your I-20 before it expires is a violation of status.

Do not worry if your F-1 visa expires
The F-1 visa in your passport is a permit to enter the United States; it does not tell you how long you are permitted to stay. Do not worry if it expires while you are in the U.S. However, the next time you travel outside the U.S. (except for short trips to Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean) you will need to go to the U.S. embassy or consulate to get a new F-1 visa. This should be requested in your home country. Be prepared to show a valid I-20, updated financial

documents, and a current DSC academic transcript to the consular office when requesting a new F-1 visa. International Student Education can also provide you with a letter for the embassy.

Please note that F-1 visas can only be obtained at U.S. consulates/embassies outside the United States.

Maintain adequate health insurance
The University System of Georgia requires that all F-1 students maintain adequate health insurance. This is to protect you from the unexpected costs of an accident or illness. The fee for your health insurance must be paid when you pay for tuition each semester.

Report address changes
You are required to report any change of your address or telephone number to International Student Education immediately. Immigration rules require that you report an address change within 10 days of moving.

Tuition and fee payment
All tuition and fees are due when you register for classes or before the fee payment deadline. Failure to make tuition payments by the deadline will result in your classes being dropped and could result in you falling out of status.

Get good advice
If you have questions about your visa status, come talk to an international student advisor in our office. Immigration rules and regulations are complex and are under constant revision. Friends, family, and faculty advisors may have good intentions and will sometimes try to advise you about your status, but they are not always dependable sources of information about immigration rules. Following wrong advice could have very negative consequences for your immigration status. So, play it safe. Keep in touch and ask for advice from International Student Education when you need it.

Getting Involved on Campus

Dalton State College offers a wide variety of academic, social, and cultural programs and activities to address the many diverse interests and backgrounds of its student population. We encourage you to explore the many opportunities to get involved in campus activities. Getting involved in campus activities is a great way to “get connected” and to meet people and feel more a part of the DSC community.

In addition to the campus-wide events, International Students can be involved with our International Education Committee, International Education Week, and the campus International Club.