INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR SERVICES
The University of Alabama at Birmingham

PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION
Spring 2019

WELCOME TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM! The following information provides you with the basic details you need to prepare for your arrival at UAB and what to do when you arrive in the US. You can arrive in the US up to 30 days prior to the Program Start Date listed on your Form I-20/DS-2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earliest day to arrive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latest recommended day to arrive</td>
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<tr>
<td>International Student Orientation</td>
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<td>Classes begin</td>
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PLEASE BE AWARE THAT GRADUATE DEPARTMENTS MAY HAVE SEPARATE ORIENTATION PROGRAMS AND REQUIREMENTS. PLEASE CONTACT YOUR DEPARTMENT DIRECTLY FOR FURTHER DETAILS.

INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION AND OTHER REQUIRED PROGRAMS

All new and transferring degree-seeking graduate students (both master’s and PhD) must attend International Orientation covering immigration rights and responsibilities, university programs, and cultural adjustment. Attendance is mandatory. International Orientation will take place on Friday, January 4th at 1:30pm at the International Center on the second floor of Sterne Library:

917 13th Street South
Birmingham, AL 35205

You must reserve a seat at orientation by emailing the International Student and Scholar Services Office at isss@uab.edu by Friday, December 28. To enter the building for orientation, please use the ramp near the Starbucks on the 14th Street side of the library.

Your school may also require you to attend a separate orientation session. Contact your school directly to learn details of any program-specific orientation sessions.

ARRIVAL IN BIRMINGHAM

Transportation from the Birmingham or Atlanta Airport

If you plan to fly into the Atlanta airport (approximately 2.5 hours from Birmingham by car), reserve a shuttle service in advance to drive you to Birmingham (prices vary). MegaBus (www.megabus.com) also runs between Birmingham and Atlanta.
If you fly into Birmingham, take a taxi from the airport to your apartment, hotel, or other temporary accommodation. A taxi should cost $15.00-$20.00. Be sure to say you are a UAB student and be prepared to give the driver a printout of your destination.

If you did not arrange lodging before arriving in Birmingham, we suggest staying at one of the recommended short-term accommodation locations below. UAB has negotiated special, lower rates with them. Contact the hotel upon your arrival and tell the taxi driver to take you to that location. If your flight arrives very late at night or on a weekend or New Year’s Day when ISSS is closed, you may wish to stay at one of the airport hotels (look for a shuttle bus from the airport to the hotel). On the next weekday, take a taxi to UAB. You can provide the ISSS office address (917 13th Street South) as a destination from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

### SHORT-TERM ACCOMMODATIONS

**Located within walking distance of UAB**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doubletree</td>
<td>808 20th Street South</td>
<td>(205) 933-9000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Indigo</td>
<td>1023 20th Street South</td>
<td>(205) 933-9555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homewood Suites</td>
<td>1016 20th Street South</td>
<td>(205) 703-9920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilton Garden Inn</td>
<td>250 18th Street South</td>
<td>(205) 322-7937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtyard by Marriott</td>
<td>19th Street &amp; 5th Avenue</td>
<td>(205) 254-0004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriott Residence Inn</td>
<td>821 20th Street South</td>
<td>(205) 731-9595</td>
</tr>
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**Furnished Short-Term Apartments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Contact Email</th>
<th>Rates</th>
<th>Deposit</th>
<th>Administrative Fee</th>
<th>Application Fee Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Place</td>
<td>951 18th Street South</td>
<td>(205) 933-2822</td>
<td><a href="mailto:leasing@theplace.com">leasing@theplace.com</a></td>
<td>$825-$1,799 per month</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>$35</td>
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$200 deposit + $100 administrative fee + $35 application fee required
MONEY

Bringing Funds to the United States

Bring money with you in a readily convertible form. DO NOT TRAVEL WITH LARGE AMOUNTS OF CASH!! We recommend carrying your funds in the form of traveler’s checks or cashier’s checks payable from a New York-based bank. International checks can take up to 10-15 days for funding to become available. If applicable, plan ahead with your sponsor to insure that your funds are available as needed. Denominations over $100 can be more difficult to use at some establishments that expect smaller bills. In some countries, you can now bring pre-paid credit cards that work like a credit or debit card, but are protected like traveler’s checks. Check with your local international banking institution to see what is available. Tuition and fees must be paid on time. For full details on payment deadlines, go to www.uab.edu/students/paying-for-college/when-to-pay.

Living Expenses and Opening a US Bank Account

You must provide a US Social Security number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) in order to open an account at a US bank. However, the Social Security Administration will not issue your SSN until it verifies your visa status with USCIS, which can take 10-15 business days. Furthermore, not all international students are eligible to receive an SSN: only those who are employed in an on-campus job can get an SSN. Others must apply for an ITIN.

Until you can apply for either of these numbers, you will need access to at least $2,000 in living expenses, even if you are funded by UAB. It can take at least 30 days to receive your first stipend payment. If you are funded by a departmental assistantship, you must be prepared for possible delay in payment. Learn more about applying for an SSN/ITIN here.

Transferring Money

Two alternative ways to bring your tuition money to the US are via wire transfer and Flywire, a UAB-approved partnership for wire through a third-party vendor. These methods eliminate the need to carry large amounts of funds. Wire money only after you know you are coming to UAB and have obtained a student visa: refunding internationally is by check, so it is a slow process. UAB has partnered with Flywire (www.flywire.com/pay/uab), a third-party vendor, to save you money on your international student payments. Flywire converts your currency to US dollars and sends the specified amount to UAB. Once UAB receives the funds, you will get a confirmation email.

If you wish to send a wire transfer, contact Student Accounting (jim@uab.edu):

UAB Financial Affairs - Student Accounting
1700 University Boulevard, LHL Ground Floor G10, Birmingham, AL 35294-0013
Phone: (205) 934-3570  Toll Free: (888) 255-8734
Use the following information for the wire transfer:

Bank: ACH Information
Regions Bank
PO Box 11007
Birmingham, AL 35222
Routing #: 062000019, University of Alabama at Birmingham
Account #: 00-0065463
SWIFT Code: UPNBUS44 (International Transfers only)

PLEASE REFERENCE THAT THE MONEY IS FOR STUDENT TUITION & FEES AND INCLUDE STUDENT’S NAME AND STUDENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER. ALSO STATE THAT INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR SERVICES MUST BE CONTACTED.

IMMUNIZATIONS AND HEALTH INSURANCE

Immunizations

UAB requires all international students to provide proof of certain immunizations (measles, mumps, rubella (“MMR”); tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis; varicella, 2 tuberculin skin tests or 1 TB blood test, and for those 21 years and younger, meningitis). After you are admitted, you will receive an email from your department explaining the clearance process for immunizations. This will also give you specific information on how to log in to the online patient portal, complete the required forms, and submit your immunization documentation. You must have a BlazerID to access the patient portal. If you have not created your BlazerID, go to www.uab.edu/blazerid. Students enrolled in certain programs (including Medicine, Nursing, Optometry, and Dentistry, as well as some Health Related Professions programs) are also required to show documentation of 3 Hepatitis B vaccines, a Hepatitis B surface antibody blood titer, and a physical examination within 12 months prior to matriculation. Also, please find attached the medical clearance forms to be completed as much as possible before your arrival.

***ALL TB testing (skin, blood, or chest X-ray) must be performed in the United States within 3 months prior to matriculation.***

If you do not have the required vaccinations prior to your arrival, Student Health & Wellness can administer the immunizations for a fee. Learn more about the medical clearance process here. Please note that you will not be able to register for classes until you provide your medical records and proof of health insurance.

Student Health Service

All international students must participate in the UAB Student Health Service. VIVA student health insurance provides a comprehensive policy including a vision rider allowing for annual eye exams and discounts on eyeglasses. Participation in VIVA student health is required
regardless of whether or not you have UAB health insurance. Student Health & Wellness runs a clinic providing student access to physicians and nurses and will be your primary health care provider while you are studying at UAB. Student Health Service fees are paid once each term.

**Health Insurance (fees subject to change every fall semester)**

International students must obtain student health insurance while at UAB. In order to use insurance you already have, you must present your insurance policy to the Student Health Service. The policy must be in English and detail the specific benefits provided. The Director of Student Health & Wellness will decide whether your insurance policy is comparable to UAB’s and decide if you can complete a waiver of UAB Student Health Insurance. To obtain a waiver of UAB insurance, your outside plan must provide, at a minimum:

- Physician and hospital coverage with providers in Alabama
- Minimum of $1 million lifetime maximum for major medical
- Transplant coverage
- Medical evacuation
- Repatriation of remains

If your health insurance does not meet the above requirements and your waiver request is denied, you will be automatically billed for UAB United Student Health Insurance (currently $1,966 per academic year, including summer). UAB’s health insurance is paid biannually in the fall and spring semesters and provides benefits for a full year. The spring semester payment also covers summer. Students who arrive during summer will pay a pro-rated fee based upon the number of months remaining in the year. Insurance fees are listed on the Student Health website and may increase without prior notice. For waiver questions, please contact Candace Ragsdale, crags@uab.edu.

**Medical Records and Prescriptions**

If you take prescription medications, ask your doctor for a copy of the prescription to bring with you. If you wear glasses or contact lenses, bring a second pair or a copy of the prescription. Also ask your doctor for a copy of any vital medical records you may need to use in the US.

**ENGLISH TESTING**

UAB requires all students to demonstrate the ability to read, write, understand, and speak effectively in English. Graduate students in certain programs (e.g., Public Health, Chemistry, and some engineering departments) may receive an email about additional English skill assessment. Please notify Amy Snow at amsnow@uab.edu if you receive such an email and require clearance for class registration.

**ACADEMIC ADVISING**

Contact your school directly to obtain the name of your graduate advisor or mentor.
ISSS cannot provide academic advice other than ensuring that all international graduate students enroll in at least 9 credit hours per semester (at least 6 of which must be face-to-face, not online). These hour thresholds are set by US immigration regulations.

**ARTICULATION: TRANSFERRING INTERNATIONAL COURSE CREDITS TO UAB**

If you completed college-level courses outside the United States, you completed a transcript evaluation when applying to UAB. Those credits were applied to your UAB transcript as “elective” credit hours, which do not count toward your UAB degree. If you want those courses to count towards your UAB degree requirements (not just as electives), you must have the individual courses matched with UAB course offerings through a process known as articulation. Articulation is mandatory if you wish to transfer credits to fulfill UAB degree requirements. To begin the articulation process, email the International Admissions team at intladmin@uab.edu.

**HOUSING**

**On-Campus Housing**

All first-year freshmen must live on campus in a UAB residence hall (dorm). On-campus housing is also reserved for J-1 exchange students visiting UAB from one of our partner institutions in the UK, Japan, Australia, and Spain. You must apply online at www.uab.edu/students/housing/apply. Contact Student Housing & Residence Life at (205) 996-0400 or email studenthousing@uab.edu with questions. We strongly encourage early application, as housing is severely limited. Sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students should plan to live off campus in an apartment or rental house, since UAB campus housing is extremely limited.

**Off-Campus Housing**

Upon arrival in Birmingham, you can obtain information about housing, leases, and household goods in the Compass or at this link: https://offcampushousing.uab.edu/. Current students often help new arrivals find a place to live off-campus. There are also many websites available to assist you with finding local housing. Check out listings online at www.apartmentfinder.com. The Southside, Highland, Forest Park, Lakeview, and downtown Loft District neighborhoods are within reasonable walking distance of most of campus. Within a short driving distance are the suburban neighborhoods of Homewood, Mountain Brook, and Vestavia.

Monthly rates for unfurnished off-campus housing ranges from $450 to $750. Renters or “tenants” usually have to pay for their own utilities (i.e., electricity, water, and internet), and you must pay a deposit to each utility company in order to receive service. Most landlords (property owners) require a deposit (usually the amount of one month’s rent) that may be refunded after the tenant moves out if no damage has occurred. Take these fees into consideration when planning your budget.

Whether you live off-campus or on-campus, we recommend purchasing renters insurance. Read more about it in the Compass.
HELPFUL TIPS

Weather and What to Wear

The temperature in Birmingham averages 27° C in the summer and 9° C in the winter. Summer is hot and extremely humid, but you may wish to carry a light sweater to wear in our air-conditioned buildings. Fall will transition to cooler temperatures, and a light jacket will suffice for a few weeks. Bring a heavy jacket or coat for our short winter (December through February). It may be less expensive to bring these clothes with you, or ask your family to ship additional bulky clothing to you later.

University students dress quite informally. Women wear skirts, shorts, or jeans with t-shirts, blouses, or sweaters. Men wear shorts or jeans with sport shirts, t-shirts, or sweaters. Both men and women wear jeans. You may want to bring an item of traditional dress from your country to wear on special occasions.

International Driver License

If you intend to drive while in the US, we recommended bringing an International Driver License (IDL) from your home country or country of residence. An IDL is accepted in all US states. An IDL is valid for 12 months, after which you must apply for an Alabama driver license if you wish to continue driving in the US. If you are coming for a short-term exchange (fewer than 180 days), you are ineligible for an Alabama driver license and must use an IDL.

INTERNATIONAL MENTORS

UAB created the International Mentors (IM) Program to assist our international students with their transition to life in the United States. Every international student who wants one is assigned to a mentor. IMs are here to assist you with immersion into southern American culture, the Birmingham community, and life at UAB. IMs are chosen after a highly selective and careful process to assure they are interested in promoting diversity and the needs of international students. UAB’s Office of Multicultural and Diversity Affairs arranges IMs for international undergraduates, and UAB’s Graduate Student Association pairs IMs with international graduate students. If you wish to be paired with an IM, please email us at isss@uab.edu.

Again, congratulations on your admission to UAB. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us. We at International Student & Scholar Services look forward to meeting you!