

## **Orientation Information – International Student Welcome Brochure**

**I. Life and Customs in the United States:** Most of the following information to orient international students is derived from Education USA: Your Guide to US Higher Education and is available at the following website: <http://www.educationusa.info/pages/students/visa.php>.

### **Restaurants**

Restaurants in the United States range from inexpensive "fast-food" to very expensive restaurants. Some restaurants feature specialties of the region, others specialize in "ethnic" foods from various regions of the world. While some of these ethnic restaurants are very authentic, others have adapted their food to suit American tastes.

It is safe to eat in restaurants in the United States since they are regularly inspected for cleanliness and for compliance with health codes. It is also safe to drink water from a tap in the United States. Bottled water is usually available in American restaurants for an extra charge. To find out about restaurants in your community, consult the yellow pages in the local phone book or follow the recommendations of acquaintances and friends.

If you plan to eat at a formal restaurant, you should call a day or two in advance to make a reservation. Not all restaurants require reservations, but it is a good idea to check just in case they are necessary. This is especially true on weekends and holidays.

In general, the wording of an invitation to dine with someone in a restaurant will give a clue as to who will pay the bill. If someone says, "Would you please have dinner with me?" or "I would like to invite you to dinner," it usually means that you are to be a guest and that person will pay the bill. If someone says, "Would you like to have dinner together?" or "Do you want to grab a bite to eat?" it probably means that each will pay for what he or she eats and drinks and will contribute towards the tip for the waiter or waitress. If you are not sure how the bill will be paid, assume that you will pay your share.

### **Shopping**

Shopping is one of America's favorite pastimes. Even the smallest cities in the United States have shopping centers or "shopping malls" that contain a wide variety of stores and services. Stores usually open at 9:00 or 10:00 a.m., Monday through Saturday. They usually stay open until 9:00 p.m., but this can vary greatly depending on the area. Many smaller stores close at 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. Some stores are also open on Sunday, usually from noon until 5:00 p.m. Businesses usually work from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. Stores and businesses do not close at lunchtime as is customary in many other countries.

Stores in the United States are generally very customer-friendly. For example, it is usually quite easy and acceptable to return or exchange an item after you have purchased it. If you notice that the goods you purchased are damaged, that the clothing does not fit, or that you have bought the wrong item, you can usually go back to the store with the sales receipt and exchange these goods or get your money back. Keep your sales receipt from every purchase made until you are certain that you are content with the item or that it works properly

## Common Types of U.S. Stores

**The Campus Bookstore:** Almost every college and university operates a bookstore on campus. These bookstores carry required textbooks and supplies, a complete range of stationery items, and items of clothing with the university's emblem printed on them, as well as a variety of things needed or enjoyed by students. Most textbooks are available either new or used. Used books are considerably cheaper, but they may be damaged or marked in by the previous owner. It is important to keep the sales receipt when you make a purchase. If you drop the class or decide that you do not need the book, you may return the book for a full cash refund if you have not made marks in it and it is returned before an established deadline. At the end of the school term, if your textbooks are in good condition and you do not need them anymore, you can sell them back to the bookstore for a reduced price. If you are unsure if you should sell the book, ask the advice of the professor who taught the class. Some books are valuable for future reference.

**Supermarkets:** The supermarket, sometimes called the "grocery store," is a large store that sells all kinds of food, as well as a small selection of other things like pharmacy items, hardware, kitchen utensils, houseplants, food for pets, and sometimes even clothing. Prices in supermarkets are usually lower than in small, independent stores. Some supermarkets carry foreign foods, especially if they are located in an area with a large immigrant population. Get to know your local supermarkets, compare the prices and selection, and if you have any questions, ask the clerk at the checkout counter.

**Pharmacies:** In the United States, pharmacies are also called "drugstores" and usually offer a large selection of cosmetics, toiletries, stationery, and other items, as well as medicines. You may also purchase "nonprescription" (that is, not prescribed by a doctor) medication, such as aspirin and common cold remedies. Only a licensed pharmacist can sell prescription medication. Unlike in many countries, most medication in the United States can be obtained only with a doctor's written prescription, and it is not possible to simply ask the pharmacist for many types of medication.

**Department Stores:** Department stores have many different sections, or departments, where you can buy clothing, shoes, appliances, kitchen items, china, gifts, jewelry, and more. Department stores differ in price and quality.

**Discount Stores:** Discount stores are similar to department stores but generally offer lower prices because they buy in large quantities (sometimes older and discontinued models) and because the stores are large, economically built, and plain. At some discount stores, you must pay a membership fee and present your membership card to enter. You can find "bargains" (good buys) at discount stores if you shop with care.

## Greetings

- "How do you do," "Good morning," "Good afternoon," and "Good evening" are formal greetings; usually people will usually simply say "Hi" or "Hello."
- Upon meeting each other for the first time, men always shake hands, firmly. Women often shake hands with people they meet, but it is not universal. Upon leaving, Americans will usually say "Good-bye" or simply "Bye." More expressive salutations include "Have a nice day," "Nice to see you," or "See you later."

- Good friends, family members, or people in a romantic relationship might give each other a hug or even kiss upon meeting one another. This kind of greeting is reserved only for people who know each other very well and share a very close relationship.
- Remember that social customs might vary in different parts of the country and between younger and older people.

### **Use of Names**

- First names are more readily used in the United States than in other countries. It is almost always acceptable to use the first name of someone of approximately your same age or younger as soon as you meet the person.
- You should say "Mr." (for men) or "Ms." (for women) and the person's last name when talking to people in positions of authority, your professors, or your elders, unless they ask you to call them by their first name.
- Some American women prefer to be called "Ms." (pronounced "mizz") rather than "Miss" or "Mrs." This is a neutral form of address that can be used for married and unmarried women and can be useful if you do not know the marital status of the woman you are talking or writing to.
- It is not the custom in the United States to use "Mr.," "Mrs.," "Miss," or "Ms." with a first or given name. For example, if you meet someone whose name is Larry Jones, you would say "Mr. Jones" and not "Mr. Larry."
- The use of nicknames is fairly common in the United States. Being called by a nickname is not uncomplimentary if done in good taste, and is often considered as a sign of acceptance and affection.
- Do not be shy to ask people how they would like you to call them and to say what you would like them to call you. This will make introductions easier.

### **Friendliness and Friendships**

Americans are reputed to be friendly people. It is not uncommon for Americans to be informal and casual, even with perfect strangers. When in the United States, do not be surprised if somebody you do not know says "Hi!" to you for no reason. However, there is a difference between friendliness and friendships. As in any culture, it takes time for friendships and close relationships to form.

Americans' friendships tend to be shorter and more casual than friendships among people from some other cultures. It is not uncommon for Americans to have only one close friendship during their lifetime and to consider other friends to be merely social acquaintances. This attitude probably has something to do with American mobility and the fact that Americans do not like to be dependent on other people. They tend to compartmentalize friendships, having "friends at work," "friends on the basketball team," and "family friends," for example. Here are some other characteristics of Americans' behavior in social situations:

- Americans might refer to acquaintances or people they meet in class as "friends." However, there are different levels of friendship, and even if they call these people friends, they do not always have close emotional ties to them.
- In the United States, people often will ask, "How are you?" or "How are you doing?" when you meet them. These are usually polite phrases more than personal questions, and

they do not always expect an honest answer. If you are well acquainted with this person, you might say how you truly are feeling. If not, the accepted response is usually "Fine, thank you. How are you?" even if you are not feeling very well.

- Americans often communicate with touch, by putting a hand on somebody's shoulder to express warmth of feeling, by giving a nudge to express humor, or a pat on the back to express reassurance. Often they will hug when meeting. These friendly gestures are common and should not be interpreted as intrusive or disrespectful.
- Even if Americans tend to touch each other more often than in some other cultures, they usually maintain a relatively large physical distance between one another during conversations or social meetings. Everybody has a different "comfort zone" around them; do not be offended if an American takes a step back as you approach him or her in a conversation.
- Men and women often have long-term platonic relationships, which can surprise some foreign visitors. People of the opposite sex might go to the movies, a restaurant, a concert, or other event together without ever being romantically involved.
- Americans generally enjoy welcoming people into their homes and are pleased if you accept their hospitality. Do not hesitate or feel uncomfortable to accept invitations, even if you cannot reciprocate — they know you are away from home and will not expect you to do so.
- Participating in campus life is a good way to make friends. Every university offers various organizations, committees, sports clubs, academic societies, religious groups, and other activities where everyone with an interest can take part.

As in any culture, it takes time to make good friends. Just be patient, try to meet as many people as possible, and with time you may form friendships while in the United States that could last a lifetime.

Because the United States is a highly active society, full of movement and change, people always seem to be on the go. In this highly charged atmosphere, Americans can sometimes seem brusque or impatient. They want to get to know you as quickly as possible and then move on to something else. Sometimes, early on, they will ask you questions that you may feel are very personal. No insult is intended; the questions usually grow out of their genuine interest or curiosity and their impatience to get to the heart of the matter. And the same goes for you. If you do not understand certain American behavior or you want to know more about what makes Americans "tick," do not hesitate to ask them questions about themselves. Americans are usually eager to explain all about their country or anything American in which you might be interested. So much so in fact, that you may become tired of listening. Americans also tend to be uncomfortable with silence during a conversation. They would rather talk about the weather or the latest sports scores, for example, than deal with silence.

On the other hand, do not expect Americans to be knowledgeable about international geography or world affairs unless something directly involves the United States. Because the United States is geographically distant from many other nations, some Americans tend not to be aware of what goes on in other parts of the world.

## **Social Invitations**

Americans tend to be very polite people. This is often expressed in conversations. It is common for an American to end a conversation by saying: "Let's get together sometime," "Come by for a visit when you have a chance," or "Let's meet for coffee." However, these invitations are usually not intended to be taken literally. An invitation is not firm unless a time and place is set.

- If you have accepted an invitation or if a meeting has been set, Americans usually expect you to arrive at the agreed location at the right time. It is considered impolite to accept an invitation and not show up or to arrive more than 10 to 20 minutes late. Americans tend to be quite punctual. If you have to cancel an appointment or know that you will not be able to be on time, you should call your friend or host to cancel or reschedule.
- If you are invited to a person's home for a party or dinner, it would be a good idea to ask if this will be a formal, semiformal, or casual occasion, since the way you dress can be considered important for certain events.
- When formally invited to someone's home, it is considerate to bring a gift to your host. Common gifts are a bottle of wine, a box of chocolates, or flowers. No gift is expected when friends visit each other casually.
- Thank your host or hostess when you leave. It is considerate to send a thank you note as well or to telephone your thanks the following day.

## **Dating and Relationships**

For many international students, American dating and relationship rituals can be one of the most difficult things to understand. Unlike many other cultures, American culture does not have an accepted pattern of behavior that regulates romantic relationships. While not universally true, you may find the following general comments useful.

- Men and women generally treat each other as equals and in an informal, casual way. There is often friendly teasing between men and women.
- Traditionally, men ask women on dates, but it is considered acceptable for a woman to ask a man out.
- Expenses on a date are sometimes paid by one person or sometimes split between the two. The man will usually offer to pay but will usually not protest if the woman offers to pay in part.
- Going on a date in American society is to express the desire to get to know the other person better. It does not assume any kind of sexual involvement. It is unacceptable — and in some cases even criminal — to impose one's sexual desires on another person. Make sure you respect the other person's wishes and, likewise, make sure you are not forced to do something you do not want to do.
- Homosexual relationships, even if not widespread, are commonplace in the United States. While many people are still uncomfortable with gays (homosexual men) or lesbians (homosexual women), it is usually not accepted to discriminate or make derogatory comments against them. If you are gay or lesbian, you will be able to find organizations, newspapers, and magazines targeted to you in most American cities and on some university campuses. If you are not homosexual and somebody of the same sex expresses an interest, do not be offended; just decline politely.

- Remember that every situation is different and must be approached with consideration for the other person's standards, values, and sensitivities. Remember as well that HIV, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases are present in the United States, and you should always take the necessary precautions to protect yourself from infection.

### **Personal Hygiene**

Every culture has accepted standards when it comes to personal hygiene. Foreign visitors should therefore be aware of what Americans consider appropriate and proper hygiene practices. For some, American standards might seem exaggerated, unnatural, or even offensive. However, if you want to fit in more easily, you will want to adopt the practices that prevail in the United States, even though doing so might not be easy. Here are a few tips and suggestions:

- As a general rule, Americans usually consider that the odors that the human body naturally produces — the odors of perspiration or breath, for example — are unpleasant. Americans usually wash with soap at least once a day to control body odors and brush their teeth with toothpaste at least in the morning and evening. In addition, they use underarm deodorant/antiperspirant to control perspiration odors, and they wash their hair as often as necessary to keep it from becoming oily.
- While the practice is not universal, many people use perfume, cologne, mouthwash, and other scented products to give themselves an odor that others will presumably find pleasant. However, Americans generally do not like others to use "too much" of a scented product. Too much means that the smell is discernible from more than a meter or two away.
- Most American women, though not all, shave the hair from their underarms and their lower legs. Women also wear varying amounts of makeup on their faces. The amount of makeup considered acceptable is based solely on personal tastes and preferences. However, some women do not shave their body hair or wear any makeup at all, and they still fit in, without problem, in American society. It is a matter of personal choice.
- Clothing should not emit bodily odors. The American practice is to wash clothing that has taken on the smell of the wearer's perspiration before it is worn again.
- The basic idea is that you should be clean. Makeup, perfume, and cologne are not necessary for social acceptance, but cleanliness is definitely expected.

### **II. Local Community Resources:**

The communities of Mayville and Portland are located in the beautiful and serene valley of the Goose River in Traill County, North Dakota. "Country living" with all of the advantages of an urban community can be found here. Progressive communities, a great educational system including a state university, recreation facilities for people of all ages, safe environment, wide variety of housing, and excellent city services are available. Our ideal location makes it possible for residents to travel to the larger metropolitan areas of Grand Forks in only 40 minutes, or Fargo in only 60 minutes. Our heritage is agriculture, but we have also established information technology, manufacturing and health services as an integral part of our diverse economy. A great place to live and work, our communities truly are . . . "the way America is supposed to be!" For more information about the communities of Mayville and Portland, refer to this website: <http://www.mayvilleportland.com/?page=about-us>.

- Combined population of approximately 2500.
- Approximately 200 businesses
- Excellent K-Adult educational system
  - Mayville State University brings higher education, diversity and culture to our community: Bachelors and Associate Degrees - Technology Emphasis - ALL students provided with notebook computers - Business, Information Technology, Education and Liberal Arts programs
  - MPCG School District (K-12): Progressive, Highly rated
- Recreation opportunities for all ages: Extensive park system includes 6 parks - top-rated Mayville Golf Course - biking and walking trails - tennis courts - 6 baseball and softball fields - new indoor hockey/ice arena - new water park - collegiate sports programs - racquetball/handball courts - bowling - competition-level horseshoe court - archery club - boating, fishing, hunting - horse arena - camping - cross-country skiing - extensive snowmobile trails
- Performing arts facility - Northern Lights Art Gallery - Goose River Heritage Museum
- Broadband internet access abounds! We have two major carriers of high-speed internet providing both cable and DSL services!
- Seven restaurants (All smoke-free) – local owned motel - Six “night spots” (two smoke-free)
- Nine churches located within our cities, plus several rural churches
- Wide variety of housing available, including the new Riverwood Lots development
- Health care includes award-winning hospital, clinic, optometrist, dentist, chiropractor

**Medical Centers: An impressive array of medical and health care services is available in the Mayville-Portland community.** The region is served by Sanford Union Hospital, a modern community hospital that was recently ranked as one of the top 100 rural hospitals in the United States, and which is affiliated with Fargo-based Sanford Medical Center of the largest regional medical facilities in the upper Midwest.

In addition, residents can take advantage of a fully staffed Mayville Sanford Clinic is operated by full-time physicians and nurses who live in the area. Specialists from Fargo also periodically visit patients at the clinic.

Health care services include:

- Sanford Union Hospital
- Mayville Sanford Clinic
- Two Physicians, one Nurse Practitioner, one Physician Assistant and over 15 consulting specialists.
- Rexine Family Eyecare
- Goose River Dental Clinic
- Omdalen Chiropractic Clinic
- Luther Memorial Nursing Home with attached new congregate housing and assisted living facilities

**Public Schools:** Mayville-Portland residents invest substantially in their region's future by providing solid educational offerings for their children and young adults. A well-trained workforce is the key to a successful future. Accordingly, you'll find advanced educational facilities at all of the schools in Mayville and Portland, as well as an impressive group of talented teachers and administrators. Educators at the **May-Port CG Public Schools** are committed to academic excellence at the elementary, middle, and high schools in the area. Currently, more than 700 students are enrolled in grades K-12 in the Mayville-Portland-Clifford-Galesburg Public Schools.

**Parks and Recreational Facilities:** The area's recreational facilities include the Mayville Water Park; the Al Meyer Sports Complex at MSU that houses a baseball diamond, Jerome Berg Field for football, a track, and tennis courts; and the 9-hole Mayville Golf Club, which offers area golfers a beautifully maintained, lush course and comfortable clubhouse facilities. The MayPort Community Center is the region's newest indoor hockey/ice skating arena., The Community Center is an excellent indoor ice arena and activities center. Consider the area's extensive park system and recreational facilities. You'll find places for fun and relaxation in parks such as Portland's Centennial Park and Mayville's Island Park, which is a favorite spot for area residents. **These two progressive communities boast a total of six parks!** In addition to just enjoying the scenic beauty of these parks, the more active outdoor lovers will also find some hiking and biking trails.

**Arts:** The **GRASSROOTS Arts Council** was formed in May 2006 to promote the arts in the Mayville, Portland and surrounding communities. Its initial project is the publication of an arts calendar as a central source for arts events in Mayville-Portland and the surrounding communities. Northern Lights Art Gallery is located on the Mayville State University campus and features exhibitions from fall through spring. The Mayville State University Theatre performances happen in the 2nd floor original "Old Main Theatre". Each year the Mayville State University and Community Fine Arts Series brings performers of the highest quality to the community.

**Banks and Financial Institutions:** Addresses and phone numbers of local financial institutions that offer banking services include:

|   |                                |                         |                |
|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| <a href="#">Portland Credit Union</a>           | 213 Parke Ave                  | Portland ND, 58274      | (701) 788-3025 |
| <a href="#">Goose River Bank-Mayville</a>       | 44 West Main St                | Mayville ND, 58257      | (701) 788-3110 |
| <a href="#">Gate City Federal Savings Bank</a>  | 11 1st St SE                   | Mayville ND, 58257      | (701) 786-2219 |
| <a href="#">First and Farmers Bank-Portland</a> | 509 Parke Avenue<br>PO Box 158 | Portland ND, 58274-0158 | (701) 788-3791 |
| <a href="#">First and Farmers Bank-Mayville</a> | 124 Center Ave S               | Mayville ND, 58257      | (701) 788-9030 |

#### **IV. Rules for International Students enrolled at Mayville State University:**

The United States welcomes international students who come to study in our nation. While you're enjoying your time in America, it is very important that you understand and comply with the requirements governing your stay to ensure that you don't jeopardize your immigration status. By maintaining immigration status and keeping school administrators and sponsoring officials well informed, students residing in America have the opportunity to benefit from the outstanding academic and cultural programs of the United States.

Failing to maintain your status could result in serious consequences and may affect your ability to remain in or return to the United States. If you're an international student or exchange visitor studying in the United States, know your responsibilities.

You must register with The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) which is the computerized system that collects and maintains information on the current status of non-immigrant students, exchange visitors, and their dependents during their stay in the United States. Work with your designated school officials or exchange visitor responsible officers to ensure that your data in SEVIS is accurate and updated. In addition, these officials can help you better understand the requirements governing your immigration status and help you avoid making choices that might jeopardize your status.

Every visa is issued for a particular purpose and for a specific class of visitor. Each visa classification has a set of requirements that the visa holder must follow and maintain. Those who follow the requirements maintain their status and ensure their ability to remain in the United States. Those who do not follow the requirements violate their status and are considered "out of status." Failure to maintain status can result in arrest, and violators may be required to leave the United States. Violation of status also can affect the prospect of readmission to the United States for a period of time. Most people who violate the terms of their status are barred from lawfully returning to the United States for years.

By violating the requirements that govern your immigration status, you may jeopardize your ability to remain in the United States as a student or exchange visitor. Examples of violations include the following:

- Failure to enroll by the date specified by your school.
- Unauthorized employment during your stay.
- Failure to leave the United States following completion of your course or program-related employment.
- Failure to maintain a full course load without prior authorization for a reduction from your designated school official.

## **V. Contact information for International Students:**

All inquiries and correspondence about the status of international students should be sent to the address below. The Responsible Officer and Alternate Responsible Officers should be contacted for information about any questions related to students' visa status and/or rules and regulations for international students studying at Mayville State.

Sponsor Address: International Student Admissions  
Mayville State University  
330 3<sup>rd</sup> St. NE  
Mayville, ND 58257

Pamela Braaten: Responsible Officer and Registrar  
Old Main 114 Phone: 701-788-4773

Jacque Moore: Alternate Responsible Officer and Admissions Assistant  
Old Main 102 Phone: 701-788-4763

Connie Kaldor: International Student Advisor  
Old Main 102 Phone: 701-788-4721

## **VI. Campus Map**

Go to <http://www.mayvillestate.edu/Documents/Commencement/campusmap2010-2011.pdf> to view a campus map.

## **VII. Availability of Scholarships**

A limited number of international scholarships covering a portion of your tuition are available to admitted students. To apply, complete the Application for International Student Scholarship found at <http://www.mayvillestate.edu/Documents/Int%20and%20Canadian%20Students/international scholarshipapplication.pdf>.