

International Student Handbook

Mercer University

Atlanta and Macon, Georgia

Table of Contents

I.	The University and International Programs	
	The Mission of the University	1
	Statement of University Goals	1
	The Mission and Services of International Programs	1
II.	Academics	
	Keys to Academics Success	2
	Academic Integrity	5
	Academic Calendars	6
III.	Adjusting to American Culture	
	American Culture	7
	Social Relationships	9
	Language and Dialects	10
	Cultural Adjustment	11
	The Adjustment Process	12
	Return Anxiety, Reentry Shock, Reintegration	13
IV.	Laws and Policies	
	Driving in the United States	14
	Disciplinary Policies at Mercer University	18
	Crime Awareness and Campus Security	19
	Policy Prohibiting Alcohol and Firearms	22
	Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment	22
V.	Health Care	25
VI.	Housing and Other Campus Services	
	Housing	28
	ID Cards and Campus Services	30
VII.	Visa-Related Information	31
VIII.	Money Matters	
	Money and Banking	35
	Social Security	37
	Taxes	38
IX.	Important Phone Numbers	39

Welcome!

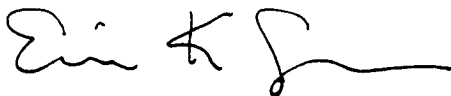
On behalf of the Office of International Programs, we would like to welcome you to Mercer University! We are very excited that you have chosen this university to be your “home” for the next few years! We are here to assist you in your personal, academic, and cultural transition to the university environment. Our office provides:

- 1) Orientation sessions and continuing education programs which specifically assist you in your transition to living in the United States and to being a student at Mercer University;
- 2) Explanation of immigration procedures and governmental policies which affect you as an international student and assistance in completing INS paperwork for program extensions, changes in status, reinstatement to student status, and moving to another educational level;
- 3) Assistance with the work authorization process for international students who seek employment on and off campus;
- 4) Assistance with personal or academic issues and referrals to appropriate offices or resources when needed.

Additionally, I strongly encourage you to become a member of Mercer's International Student Association (MISA) this year. Being a member of MISA will give you the opportunity to meet students from all around the world, interact with upperclass international students who have already made the transition to Mercer (they can be a great resource for you!), and to share your culture with others! MISA plans several social and educational programs throughout the year.

Finally, I hope you will take the time to read through this International Student Handbook. It will answer many of your initial questions about the academic and personal issues you may encounter as an international student here. I feel confident that you will find it a useful resource throughout your stay in the U.S. Again, please let us know how our office can assist you during your stay at Mercer, and I look forward to getting to know you!

Sincerely,



Eric K. Spears, Ph.D.
Director of International Education

The Mission of the University

Mercer University is a church-related institution of higher learning that seeks to achieve excellence and scholarly discipline in the field of liberal learning and professional knowledge. The University is guided by the historic principles of religious and intellectual freedom, while affirming religious and moral values that arise from the Judaeo-Christian understanding of the world.

Statement of University Goals

- To offer undergraduate, graduate and professional programs based upon a strong liberal arts foundation.
- To support a highly-qualified faculty that is student and teaching oriented and is engaged in scholarly, research and professional activities.
- To foster independent and critical thinking and a continuing interest in learning.
- To foster intellectual and spiritual freedom in an environment that encourages tolerance, compassion, understanding and responsibility.
- To offer a variety of intellectual, cultural, recreational and spiritual activities designed to enlarge capacity for improved judgment and moral, ethical and spiritual growth.
- To encourage the enrollment of qualified persons from diverse backgrounds and situations.
- To contribute campus resources in partnership with other institutions and agencies to improve the educational, social and economic development of the community.

Office of International Programs Mission Statement

Mercer University, in fulfilling its mission in teaching and the pursuit of vocation, recognizes the importance of international education. The Office of International Programs (OIP) has a special responsibility and commitment to promote international education and to provide Mercerians with opportunities to learn more about the world around them through study and research exchanges, study abroad programs, and other international educational opportunities. The Office of International Programs is also committed to providing the proper academic support for its international student and scholar community.

The Office of International Programs does the following:

- advises international students and scholars on immigration matters;
- liaisons with federal agencies with matters related to immigration;
- provides international student orientations;
- advises the Mercer International Student Association (MISA);
- and, coordinates study and research exchange programs.

The Office of International Programs (OIP) is responsible for the general welfare of international students at Mercer University. We are here to answer your questions and help you with any problem that you may have.

Keys to Academic Success

The academic system at Mercer and other institutions in the United States differ from most other systems in the world. To be a successful student, you will need to learn how the American classroom operates. Students, professors, academic advisors, and counselors will be able to answer questions for you, but here is a list of suggestions that you should keep in mind as you begin your studies at Mercer.

Evaluate Your Expectations:

Have realistic expectations for yourself as you begin your study here. You will need some time to adjust to your new lifestyle, the American culture, and Mercer. International students often earn lower grades than they are accustomed to during their first semester. As their language skills improve and they become accustomed to the university, their grades improve.

Study Skills:

In many countries, students are required to pass major tests for university admissions, and sometimes for graduation. In order to pass these tests, students have to memorize many facts, and students must study for hours every day in order to memorize everything.

Memorization is important, but in the United States, professors are happier when students can actually use facts to solve problems in new, creative, or unique ways. In short, memorizing facts is not enough. It is not necessary to memorize your books, but rather it is necessary to understand the concepts, and be prepared to apply and communicate the concepts to real-life situations.

Hard Work from the Beginning:

You may have to adapt your study habits to the American educational system. The system emphasizes continual evaluation in the form of tests, projects, quizzes, and participation in class discussions throughout the semester or term, not only on an exam at the end of the semester or term.

Attendance:

Almost every professor will have an attendance policy. If you miss too many classes or are late for too many classes, professors have the right to give you a failing grade for the course, no matter what your scores are. The professor will give you a syllabus at the beginning of every course: the syllabus is very important. Of course, if you are sick or have some emergency, your absence may be excused. You should be prepared to give some written evidence for this, such as a note from your doctor.

Syllabi (plural for “syllabus”):

The syllabus will describe your professor’s expectations of the class, assignments, projects, grading scale, attendance policy, and tests. You will be responsible for completing the material and following the rules listed on the syllabus.

Reading Effectively:

Almost every course in an American university requires the student to do a lot of reading. Professors will lecture, of course, but many times the students are expected to get new information from readings – and the professor will sometimes NOT give lectures on the information found in readings. Even if the professor doesn't give a lecture on a topic, if it is on the syllabus, you are still responsible for learning the information.

Reading is frequently the hardest task for a second language learner, but there are some good techniques for you to use:

Step One: SKIM over materials quickly, paying attention to the table of contents, the titles of chapters, the headings of various sections of the chapters, the first sentences of each paragraphs, and the summary sections.

Step Two: READ over the material again. This time read more carefully, looking for the main points, the conclusion, and the content.

Step Three: QUESTION what the writer has written. Ask:
“Why is the writer saying this?” “What is the evidence for that?”

Step Four: REVIEW the material. Look over your notes and try to retain the main points of the reading.

*** Ask your professor about anything you do not understand in your reading materials.**

Classroom Participation:

In many countries, students are expected to sit quietly and listen to the professor. Often, students are not encouraged to ask questions or say anything at all.

PROFESSORS IN THE UNITED STATES ARE DIFFERENT! Students are ENCOURAGED to ask questions and to voice their own opinions, even if they differ from the opinions of the professor! In the mind of an American professor, student comments and questions mean that the student is paying attention to the professor, and professors generally like that.

In some classes, you may be asked to prepare a short lecture or presentation to deliver to your class. Many such assignments are graded. It is normal to feel anxious about speaking in front of your professor and class. You should practice your presentation aloud to an audience of one or more, and ask for feedback before making class presentations. You can practice in front of your roommate or friends.

Many professors will include your class participation in the calculation of your final grade for the class. You will learn a tremendous amount from your participation and that of the other students in your classes.

Examinations:

You will take many examinations in your classes. Most classes have a mid-term and a final exam. There are two general types of test.

OBJECTIVE exams test the student's knowledge of particular facts. There are five different kinds of question commonly found on objective tests. You will want to learn to deal with each of them.

Multiple Choice: The student must choose from a series of answers, selecting the one that is most appropriate.

True or False: The student must read a statement and indicate whether it is true or false.

Matching: the student must match words, phrases, or statements from two columns.

Identification: The student must identify and briefly explain the significance of a name, term, or phrase.

Fill-in-the-blank: the student must fill in the blanks left in a phrase or statement in order to make the statement complete or correct.

SUBJECTIVE, or essay exams require you to write an essay in response to a question or statement. Subjective exams often focus on the "big picture" and test your ability to organize your thoughts and relate knowledge of a particular subject.

Term Papers: You will write many term papers and other essays while you are at Mercer. It is better – and often a requirement – to submit a typewritten or word-processed paper, rather than a handwritten one.

It is wise to complete papers before their due date, so there is time to ask another person or your professor for suggestions for improvement. Do not be afraid to ask your professor for clarification of his/her expectations for your term paper. Make an appointment with your professor to discuss the topic if you do not understand. Be sure to carefully proofread and spell-check your paper before giving it to your professor.

The Academic Resource Center (Macon Students):

The Academic Resource Center seeks to help members of the campus community to attain academic and career success by promoting independent, active, and lifelong learning; scholarly achievement; and personal development. The Academic Resource Center is located on the first floor of the Connell Student Center, directly across from the Undergraduate Admissions Office. Phone #: 301-2669; e-mail: arc@mercer.edu

Hours of Operation:

2 p.m. on Sundays through 5 p.m. on Fridays; closed on Saturdays.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is maintained through the Honor System, which will be discussed in the next section of this handbook.

When doing research and writing papers, you must always acknowledge your sources of information. To use information or quote someone without proper acknowledgement of this contribution is called “plagiarism,” and is considered a form of cheating. If you are not sure, always give credit if an idea is not your own. You will learn the preferred procedure for citing sources in your classes. The penalties for academic dishonesty are strict. Cheating most often means an automatic failing grade for a test or course.

Mercer University takes the honor system very seriously, and you should too.

American Professor Expectations of Successful Students:

1. Make independent decisions about course of study, research projects, etc.
2. Participate in classroom discussions (ask questions, share information with others)
3. Speak and write clearly in English.
4. Solve problems and think independently.
5. Demonstrate knowledge through a variety of types of tests or assignments.
6. Place less emphasis on memorization or intuition.
7. Be prepared to be continually evaluated.
8. Request assistance from professors or advisors during or after class, or from your classmates or the Learning Center.
9. Make appointments with the professors or advisors outside class hours.
10. Maintain personal or informal relationships with instructors or colleagues.
11. Read required and suggested readings before class lectures and discussions.
12. Cite the ideas of others used in your papers. If you quote “word for word” from another author, always give credit to the person who originally wrote the text.
13. Understand and remember ideas from class lectures (take notes, ask questions). If you have trouble with note taking, contact the Office of International Programs or the Learning Center.
14. Develop your own ideas and use evidence from class readings/lectures to support your ideas.

Academic Calendars

Atlanta English Language Institute:

<http://www2.mercer.edu/OIP/ELI/eliatlanta.htm>

Undergraduate and Graduate Academic Calendars for Atlanta & Macon:

<http://www.mercer.edu/registrar/calendars.htm>

Regional Academic Centers:

<http://www.mercer.edu/registrar/exted/index.html>

Macon Campus Undergraduate Academic Calendar

Fall 2006

Residence Halls Open (New International Students)	August 17
Residence Halls Open (Other New Students)	August 19
Residence Halls Open (Returning Students)	August 20
First Day of Class	August 22
Late Registration Period	August 22 – 25
Drop/Add Period	August 22 – 25
Labor Day Holiday	September 4
Fall Break	October 9 – 10
Last Day for Course Withdrawal	October 31
Advising Priority Registration for Spring 2007	November 6 – 17
Thanksgiving Holiday	November 22 – 24
Last Class Day	December 8
Final Exams	December 10, 12, 14 – 16
Residence Halls Close	December 17, 9am

SPRING 2007

Residence Halls Open (New International Students)	January 7
Residence Halls Open (All Other Students)	January 7
First Day of Class	January 9
Late Registration	January 9 - 12
Drop/Add Period	January 12
Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday	January 15
Mid Term	February 28
Spring Break	March 5 – 9
Last Day for Course Withdrawal	March 23
Advising Priority Registration	To be announced
Good Friday	April 6
Last Class Day	April 27
Final Exams	April 30 – May 1; May 3 – 5
Residence Halls Close	May 6, 9 am
Commencement	May 12

Graduate Students: Please check with your department for any variations from the above schedule within your graduate-level program.

American Culture – An Introduction

Time:

Americans see time as limited. They put great emphasis on being “on time.” It is important to be on time to classes, social events, public events, and appointments. Americans generally feel that time spent waiting is wasted and will resent having to wait. If you must miss an appointment or if you will be late, it is polite to telephone the person you were supposed to meet to cancel or delay your meeting.

Americans also generally prefer to complete one task before beginning another task. Americans resent it when people ask them to do more than one thing at a time. In American culture, it is considered rude to interrupt someone when they are doing something. It is better to let an American know you have arrived, and then politely wait until he or she has finished what he/she is doing.

Informality:

Although in some places the atmosphere is quite formal, in others, it is very informal. Treating guests informally is not being rude, but rather a way of taking you into the intimate circle of family and friends. For Americans, being asked to “help yourself,” or to serve yourself, is a great honor. Although Americans frequently address each other by given rather than family names, at first meeting, it is best to use a person’s title (Doctor, Professor, Mister, or Mrs.) unless invited to do otherwise. Typically in the South, it is very common to address older people as “Sir” (for a man) or “Ma’am” (for a woman).

Directness:

Being open and direct in expressing your desires, preferences, and feelings, or in discussing issues, events, and most ideas is considered proper in the United States. However, most Americans are generally hesitant to discuss religion, political beliefs, age, weight, or salary. Americans are particularly sensitive about their physical appearance. It is VERY rude to tell a person that he/she is overweight or fat, unless he/she is a very close friend.

It is important for you to be direct and honest with Americans in expressing your opinion, feelings, and preferences. If you feel uncomfortable about something you are asked to do, make your feelings known. For example, if you are asked to speak in front of a large group and would prefer not to do so, it is polite to decline the invitation to speak.

Competitiveness:

Americans place high value on achievement and success, and this leads them to compete with each other. You will find both friendly and not-so-friendly competition. Although competing is natural to many Americans, they also have a good sense of “teamwork” – cooperating with others toward a common goal.

Inquisitiveness:

Americans are generally very curious. American education encourages inquisitiveness and asking many questions. Try to be patient when an American asks you a question about your country, even if the question seems ridiculous. This is your chance to educate them about your culture. You will also learn a great deal about the United States by asking questions yourself.

Equality:

Americans are taught from childhood that “all people are equal.” This is called “egalitarianism,” and is a high social value. There are many “equal rights” movements among minorities. In general, Americans try to treat women and men, members of different racial and ethnic groups, and heterosexuals and homosexuals equally.

American society is very “pluralistic.” No other country in the world has so many different kinds of people living together in relative peace. Americans are very proud of the diversity of people who live here. It has been very difficult for Americans of different backgrounds to learn to tolerate each other and to live together peacefully.

However, like all societies, the United States has many people with rigid and prejudicial ideas about people, food, customs, and proper ways of living. For example, the role of women in the United States is changing. Women’s movements aim to insure that women have opportunities equal to those of men. Women play a very visible role in this country. You will find women business leaders, police officers, professors, and political leaders. Most people believe that one day the United States will have a woman president.

People of different race, religious beliefs, and national origins have full, legal, equal rights. Most members of the academic community will not tolerate racial or religious insults or jokes. In the university environment, racial or religious insults could get you into trouble.

One other note: you may encounter homosexual people in the United States. Many Americans' sense of equality informs their belief that homosexuals have the same legal and civil rights as any other citizen. Some Americans consider intolerant behavior toward homosexuals (insulting or abusing of homosexuals) as being ethically wrong. If you have questions or concerns about homosexuality, you should ask a trusted counselor or advisor.

Personal Hygiene:

Many Americans have a fairly sensitive sense of smell. Americans will often mask natural body odors with deodorants and perfumes. Excessive use of perfumes, however, can be equally offensive to anyone who is allergic to them. As a general rule, no odor is better than completely unmasked or excessively masked odors that may otherwise occur naturally.

Social Relationships

Friendships:

Friendships among Americans tend to be different than those among people from some other cultures. Americans may have a few very close friends, but they also develop many less intense social relationships with people. Americans tend to have many “friends” – people with whom they have work, class, social, or sexual relationships. The American concept of friendship is difficult to understand. Many international students feel some frustration in their attempts at forming and maintaining friendships with Americans. This is not meant to discourage you from making friends with Americans, it is only intended to make you aware that behavior between American friends might be different from what you would expect.

Public Displays of Affection (PDAs):

In normal situations, Americans tend to avoid “Public Displays of Affection”, or “PDAs” between friends of the same or different sex. In general, Americans do not hug or hold hands with their friends in public areas unless it is some special occasion. PDAs may lead to lead Americans to misunderstand the nature of your friendship when in public. In private, Americans may hug or hold hands with their friends.

Romantic partners may show PDA’s, but only within limits: hand holding and short kisses in public are OK, but prolonged kissing and other activities are considered offensive, and even strangers may ask them to stop.

Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships may seem very different from your own country. Dating is acceptable between people, and is usually arranged with an informal invitation from a man, although it is increasingly acceptable for a woman to give the invitation. Accepting or offering a “date” does not necessarily mean that you are interested in marriage, or a serious or sexual relationship. People often get together to go to movies or to dinner to have a good time and to get to know someone. Most Americans will date many people and regard them as friends.

In the United States, marriage normally happens only after a person has had several romantic relationships. Only the two people in the relationship can make decisions about carrying the relationship further: family members – including parents – have very little influence in any marriage decisions.

Sexual relationships are common when two people become romantically involved. Sexual relationships can be very difficult – and dangerous. You should take time to think, and get advice from a trusted friend, counselor or advisor before beginning a sexual relationship.

Language and Dialects

Spoken English may sound very fast to you. If you have trouble understanding a person, ask them to slow down or repeat what they said. Do not hesitate to ask questions. There are a number of spoken dialects in the United States. In Atlanta, you may hear people speaking with two or more dialects. The most common dialects are “Black English” (also called Ebonics), spoken by African Americans, and “Piedmont English,” spoken generally by white people. Both dialects can be difficult to understand for non-native speakers, but with patience, communication is possible, and very rewarding.

Americans who are not used to communicating with international students may behave strangely. Particularly, they may speak louder, move their arms and hands quickly, and in fact seem “angry.” This is not the case. Remember, Americans are very inquisitive, and are often eager to learn about your country and culture. Speaking loudly and moving the body is a natural human reaction to misunderstanding.

Americans, particularly students, use a great deal of “slang,” which is a trendy, culturally oriented, or informal way of speech. Often, slang cannot be understood without an explanation. If you don’t understand a word or phrase, ask what it means and how it is used. Most Americans will be amused by your attempt to understand, and will happily help you. Learning some slang will help you understand American culture better, and bond with our friends, roommates, and classmates.

Americans often abbreviate words. For example: the Stetson School of Business and Economics is often referred to as “SSBE,” Biology is referred to as “Bio,” and the English Language Institute is referred to as “ELI”.

Your Name

Your name is a very important part of you. Be patient while others learn how to say your name correctly. Some international students will choose an “Americanized” version of their name to make it easier for others to remember, but this is a matter of personal choice. You should not feel that you have to do this yourself, though you can if you would like to. Americans can learn to say your name properly, if not perfectly. They may even be proud to learn how to pronounce it correctly.

Cultural Adjustment

Moving to a New Culture is a Learning Experience. Each day at Mercer you will be learning many things outside and inside the classroom. You will learn how people of another culture view the world and their lives. There is value in experiencing and understanding a way of life different from your own. You will even learn things about your own culture that you never thought about before. This is a rare opportunity to not only broaden your views but to mature and establish your values. You will also be able to educate others about your culture. The best way to find out about something you do not understand is to ask questions. Do not hesitate to ask question -- even if the questions seem trivial or you think your English is not good. People are generally helpful, but they can't guess what you need to know. Ask Questions!

Culture Shock:

What is it? "Culture Shock" is the name given to the feelings of confusion that occur when a person leaves a familiar place to enter an unfamiliar one. You may not be able to convey your thoughts in English. Your family and friends are far away. There are academic and social symptoms of Culture Shock: People experience Culture Shock in varying degrees.

You may find that you...

- become nervous and unusually tired.
- want to sleep often.
- write many letters home.
- feel frustrated and hostile toward your host country
- become excessively angry over minor irritations.
- associate only with people from your own country

Coping With Culture Shock:

Here are some suggestions that may be helpful:

- Evaluate your expectations. Your reactions are products of the way things are here and the way you expected them to be. If you find yourself being confused or disappointed about something, ask yourself: What did I expect? Was my expectation reasonable?
- Keep an open mind. Try to understand that Americans are acting according to their cultural values. Avoid evaluating their behaviors by the standards of your country.
- Learn from the experience. You are here to explore a new way of life. You do not have to change your own values, but you should respect those of other people.

- Meet with the international student advisor when you have questions or need to speak with someone who will try to help you as you adjust to your new environment.

With your international student advisor, you can discuss any problems that you are having with making your adjustment. Students can also be a resource for each other in coping with life in a new culture.

The Adjustment Process

Summary of the Cross-Cultural Adjustment Cycle:

The following page describes the stages and symptoms of the adjustment process. Although individuals differ, it is important to know the stages and recognize symptoms.

Honeymoon Period

As a newcomer you are interested and excited by the new surroundings. Although you may be nervous, your excitement outweighs anxiety or concern.

Culture Shock

You feel overwhelmed by new problems and behaviors: Housing, transportation, food, language, and loneliness. Symptoms include:

- Fatigue resulting from continuously trying to understand and use a second language;
- Doubt about why you came to this place;
- Lack of self-confidence;
- Minor illnesses (colds, upset stomachs, etc).

Step One: Initial Adjustment

Soon, you find that everyday activities such as housing, meals, and transportation are no longer big problems for you.

Step Two: Mental Isolation

After you make the initial arrangements and adjustments for daily living, you will begin to look for personal relationships. Although you may be able to express basic ideas and feelings in a second language, you feel you cannot express yourself as well as you can in your native language. You feel like you have little or nothing in common with most people around you.

Symptoms of Mental Isolation

- Spending most of your time with people who speak the same language;
- Spending a lot of time alone;
- Being depressed;
- Abusing alcohol (on-campus use of alcohol is prohibited);
- Having persistent and intensely negative feelings toward the new environment and the people.

Step Three: Acceptance and Integration

A routine (work, school, social life) is established. You have accepted the customs, habits, food and characteristics of the friends, associates, and language of the U.S.

Return Anxiety, Reentry Shock, Reintegration

You may experience "Reverse Culture Shock" when you return to your home country. You will have to readjust to life in your home while assimilating the things you learned at Mercer and in U.S. culture.

Anytime you feel that you need to talk to someone about your cultural adjustment to Mercer & the USA, you can make an appointment with the Coordinator of International Student and Scholar Services in the Office of International Programs. He is available to listen to your problems and needs.

For cultural adjustments that are more serious and involve long-term depression or anxiety, you should make an appointment with a university counselor at 301-2862.

Driving a Car in the United States

Do You Need a Georgia Driver's License?

According to the Registry of Motor Vehicles, you must have a valid driver's license in order to operate a vehicle while living in Georgia. If you have an international driver's license, you may drive for up to one year in Georgia without getting a Georgia driver's license. If you do not have any kind of current driver's license, you must take an eye test, a written test and a road test in order to get a GA driver's license. It is possible to take the written exam in Spanish and possibly in other languages.

Free study booklets for the written exam are available at the Driver's License Office, which is located at Central City Park. There are several Driver's License offices around Atlanta.

Macon Students:

Macon Driver's License Office
Central City Park
Open Tuesday – Saturday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Atlanta Students:

Cobb County Driver's License Office
1605 County Services Parkway
Marietta, GA 30008
Open Tuesday – Saturday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

DeKalb County Driver's License Office
1296 Moreland Avenue
Atlanta, GA 30316
Open Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Fulton County Driver's License Offices
8610 Roswell Road, Suite 710
Atlanta, GA 30350
Open Tuesday – Saturday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

146 Memorial Drive
Atlanta, GA 30303
Open Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

5600 Stonewall Tell Road, Suite 104
College Park, GA 30349
Open Tuesday – Saturday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Gwinnett County Driver License Office
567 Swanson Drive
Lawrenceville, GA 30043
Open Tuesday – Saturday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

You can also get information from <http://www.dmv.ga.gov>

The driving exam is not available when it is raining or when roads are wet. A fee of \$15 will be charged after you pass your driver's license test.

What documents need to be presented to apply for a driver's license?

You need to bring your passport, I-20 or DS-2019, I-94, social security number and two forms of legal documents that print your name and address on them (such as bank statements or water/electricity bills, or a letter from your international student advisor). These two documents are needed in order to prove your residency in Georgia.

If you do not have a Social Security Card, the Driver's License Office will assign you a control number. If you have your international driver's license, you might also be required to forfeit your original driver's license that was issued in your own country.

Insurance:

To drive a car in Georgia, or anywhere else in the United States, you must have liability automobile insurance. It is illegal to drive without insurance coverage.

Insurance can be expensive. In general, younger, inexperienced drivers will pay more than older, experienced drivers, and men will pay more than women.

There are two basic types of insurance for automobiles: liability and collision.

Liability Insurance

If you have an accident, and it is your fault, liability insurance pays for damage to other cars, and pays for medical expenses for injured. Liability insurance is much less expensive than collision insurance, but if you have an accident and it's your fault, you are responsible for paying your own damages. You must have liability insurance.

Collision Coverage

Collision insurance pays for damage to your car, even if the accident is your own fault. Collision coverage is not required.

Drinking and Driving:

Drinking alcohol and driving a car is extremely **dangerous** and **illegal** in the United States. If the police catch you, and you have been drinking, you will be arrested, will have to go to court, and will have to pay a heavy penalty.

Additionally, if you have been drinking and you have an accident in which someone is killed, the law considers it a form of murder. It is possible that you could go to prison for up to twenty years if you kill a person while drunk. **DON'T DO IT!**

If you are out with a group of people, make sure that one person doesn't drink any alcohol. We call this person the "designated driver." He/she is responsible for making sure everyone gets home safely.

Remember: friends don't let friends drive drunk.

Avoiding Car Accidents

The only way to completely avoid the possibility of a car accident is to not drive. But even as a pedestrian (someone walking along the road), you still have to be careful about the many drivers who don't pay attention while they drive.

Assuming that you chose to drive, please drive defensively. A defensive driver understands that while he or she may be a safe driver, other drivers are not always paying attention to the road or to potential hazards. Many accidents occur or are caused by people who are focused on something other than their driving. To help avoid an accident, assume that other drivers are not always paying proper attention.

Some suggestions for safe driving:

- 1) Distractions to avoid:
 - a) do not eat while you drive;
 - b) do not talk on a telephone or cell phone while you drive (stop at a safe location off of the road before making or returning a call);
 - c) do not try to read a book or a newspaper or magazine article while you drive;
 - d) do not shave or put on makeup while you drive;
 - e) do not record notes on a tape-recorder while you drive;
 - f) do not listen to music so loud that you cannot hear well-enough to respond appropriately to emergency situations;
 - g) do not be pre-occupied with adjusting the radio settings while you drive. If the music you listen to makes you overly excited while driving, force yourself to listen to something that does not distract you or otherwise has a calming effect. (When you're driving across the country and you're in a place with no cars within miles of you, and you're concerned about staying awake, that's the time to put on some exciting music that will help keep you alert);
- 2) When driving at dawn or dusk (30 minutes before the sun comes up and 30 minutes before the sun goes down), turn your headlights on. This will help other drivers to see you, and it will help you to see any deer that are lurking in the bushes (your car's lights will reflect in their eyes);
- 3) When leaving a well-lighted gas station at night, be sure to turn your headlights on before driving again;
- 4) Whenever you have your windshield wipers on (as when it is raining), have your headlights on as well;

- 5) When you see a person signaling to turn right or left, do not assume that the person is going to make the turn. He or she may not know that they have left their signal on and may be intending to go straight;
- 6) Be cautious when entering an intersection. Some drivers run red lights and otherwise drive dangerously. Be sure not to drive like them;
- 7) Do not be in a hurry to get somewhere, and do not race another car for position in an area of traffic. Let the traffic go by and take your time;
- 8) Do not "tailgate" other drivers. Leave at least one car length between you and the driver in front of you for every 10 miles per hour that you're driving (i.e., if you are driving 60 miles per hour, allow for at least six car lengths between you and the driver in front of you.) If other drivers cut in between you and the driver in front of you, let them, and then back off so as to create an appropriate distance between you and the car that's ahead.
- 9) When driving in the rain, and especially in the rain at night, driver more slowly than you normally would.
- 10) Don't drive directly next to another car or truck for long periods of time, and do not drive in another driver's "blind spot." Either pass the car or truck that is next to you, or let them pass you. The reason: if the driver next to you suddenly decides to change lanes and does not know you are there, their car may hit yours.
- 11) Make room for cars that are entering the highway. Check your mirrors and merge left well before coming to a highway on-ramp that has cars entering the highway.

If you take a defensive driving course the cost of your insurance is likely to be less than if you don't take such a course. For more information about safe driving, please contact:

Atlanta:

Thomas Tyner, Director of the ELI	547-6188	tyner_t@mercer.edu
Ann Stewart, International Student Advisor	547-6109	stewart_al@mercer.edu

Macon:

Jim Kenaston, International Student Advisor	301-5964	kenaston_jb@mercer.edu
---	----------	------------------------

Disciplinary Policies

In general, student disciplinary issues are investigated and decided on a case-by-case basis by the Dean or Associate Dean of the college or school in which you are enrolled, by the Director of the ELI (Atlanta), or by an instructor of the ELI in consultation with the Director. Disciplinary decisions depend on the severity of the infraction, but could include reprimand, suspension of privileges, or expulsion from the ELI and Mercer University. Disciplinary decisions may be appealed to the Director of the ELI and the Director of the Office of International Programs.

One important exception:

Sexual harassment of any form will not be tolerated by Mercer University. Infractions involving elements of sexual harassment will be investigated by the Mercer University Sexual Harassment Advisory Board and the Mercer University Office of Human Resources. See the “Sexual Harassment” section of this bulletin for more details.

Student Grievance Policy:

If a student has a grievance (complaint) regarding another student, a teacher’s classroom practices or decisions, or a grade received from a teacher, the student may initiate a grievance. The procedure for grievances is as follows:

1. Take the grievance to the instructor involved. Do not take the grievance to any other teacher. He or she will listen to the grievance, and give his/her decision. If the decision is not satisfactory, then...
2. Take the grievance to the Associate Dean or Associate Director. He/she will investigate the grievance, and make a decision. If the decision is not satisfactory, then...
3. Take the grievance to the Director. He/she will investigate the grievance, and make a decision.

Important Note: You cannot be punished by anyone for making official grievances through the grievance policy.

Crime Awareness and Campus Security

Mercer University places a high priority on keeping its campus safe for its students, employees and visitors. The Mercer Police Department has primary responsibility for the security of the campus. Mercer Police officers are all certified by the Georgia Police Officer Standards and Training Council as having met the qualifications and training requirements for police officers in Georgia, and they are authorized to exercise law enforcement powers on the campus, including the power of arrest.

More information on campus security policies, crime prevention programs, and campus crime statistics is provided and distributed annually in a Crime Awareness and Campus Security Report for each campus and is available in the Human Resources Office and Mercer Police Office.

Mercer Police:

The Mercer Police Department has primary responsibility for the security of the campus. All Mercer Police officers are certified by the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council as having met the qualifications and training requirements for police officers in Georgia, and they are authorized to exercise law enforcement powers, including the power of arrest, on the campus.

You can reach Mercer Police by using one of the following phone numbers:

Atlanta

Mercer Police: 678-547-6358 or 770-458-0595
Emergency Line: 6911 (from any campus phone)
University Switchboard: 678-547-6000

Macon

Mercer Police: 478-301-HELP (4357)
Emergency Line: 2911 (from any campus phone)
University Switchboard: 478-301-2700

Violent Crime in the United States:

The United States does unfortunately have a lot of criminal activity inside its borders. This does not mean that you will be a victim of crime. In fact, with a little knowledge, it is possible to make your life in the United States much safer.

Although you live in Georgia and obey its laws, the Florida Citizen Safety Council has a helpful website (<http://legal.firn.edu/justice/safety.html>) that can give you a lot of information about the following topics:

- Protecting yourself when using a bank's automated teller machine (ATM)
- Protecting your business from burglary
- Protecting yourself from a carjacking
- Protecting yourself from motor vehicle theft
- Safeguarding your child
- Protecting yourself from home burglary
- Safeguarding your home
- Protecting yourself in parking garages
- Protecting yourself while shopping
- Safeguarding your home while on vacation
- Protecting yourself while walking at night

The Georgia State University Police Department offers the following tips for personal safety:

- Note the location of the emergency telephones that are located on campus
- Make sure your vehicle is in good working condition
- Try to keep at least a half tank of gas in your vehicle
- To avoid car jacking: when stopping in traffic, you should be able to see where the rear tires on the vehicle ahead of you touch the pavement
- In the event your car breaks down, do not leave it. If someone stops to help, roll the window down only enough to talk and ask them to call the police for you
- Try to avoid going out alone after dark. If you have to go out, be sure to call someone and let that person know when you are leaving and when you will return
- Consider the purchase of a cellular telephone
- Avoid parking in deserted areas. If possible, try to park under or near a street light
- Listen to your body warning you that something is not right and act on that warning

Fraud and Financial Crimes:

As in every other country, there are people who want to get your money, because they may think you do not understand certain business and cultural practices. Unfortunately, as an international student, there are people who want to take advantage of you. Taking someone's money through trickery is called "fraud." The National Crime Prevention Council has some suggestions. This information is from their website at <http://www.ncpc.org>.

It's not always easy to spot "con artists," who are people that want to trick you. They're smart, extremely persuasive, and aggressive. They invade your home by telephone and mail, advertise in well-known newspapers and magazines, and come to your door.

Most people think they're too smart to fall for a scam. But con artists rob all kinds of people - from investment counselors and doctors to teenagers and elderly widows - of billions of dollars every year.

Just remember... if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

You Can Protect Yourself!

- Never give a caller your credit card, phone card, Social Security, or bank account number over the phone. It's illegal for telemarketers to ask for these numbers to verify a prize or gift.
- Beware of 900 numbers. People who call 900 numbers to request instant credit often end up with a booklet on how to establish credit or a list of banks offering low-interest credit cards. Such calls can end up costing \$50 or more, but consumers rarely end up obtaining credit.
- Listen carefully to the name of a charity requesting money. Fraudulent charities often use names that sound like a reputable, well-known organization such as the American Cancer Association (instead of the American Cancer Society).
- Ask for a financial report before you donate; a reputable charity will always send you one. Investigate before you invest.
- Never make an investment with a stranger over the phone.
- Beware of promises that include the terms "get rich quick," or "a once in a lifetime opportunity."

Be a Wise Consumer

Don't buy health products or treatments that include: a promise for a quick and dramatic cure, testimonials, imprecise and non-medical language, appeals to emotion instead of reason, or a single product that cures many ills. Unprofessional medical advice can delay an ill person from getting timely treatment.

Look closely at offers that come in the mail. Con artists often use official-looking forms and bold graphics to lure victims. If you receive items in the mail that you didn't order, you are under no obligation to pay for them - throw them out, return them, or keep them.

Be suspicious of ads that promise quick cash working from your home. After you've paid for the supplies or a how-to book to get started, you often find there's no market for the product and there's no way to get your money back.

Use common sense in dealing with auto repairs. One mechanic convinced a woman that she needed to have the winter air in tires replaced with summer air! Get a written estimate, read it carefully, and never give the repair shop a blank check to "fix everything."

Protect Yourself From Telemarketing Fraud

Your best protection is to just hang up the phone. If you think that is rude, tell these callers politely that you are not interested, don't want to waste their time, and please don't call back - and then hang up.

If you find yourself caught up in a sales pitch, remember the federal government's Telemarketing Sales Rule. You have to be told the name of the company, the fact that it is a sales call, and what's being sold. If a prize is being offered, you have to be told immediately that there is no purchase necessary to win.

If the caller says you've won a prize, you cannot be asked to pay anything for it. You can't even be required to pay shipping charges. If it is a sweepstakes, the caller must tell you how to enter without making a purchase. You cannot be asked to pay in advance for services such as cleansing your credit record, finding you a loan, acquiring a prize they say you've won. You pay for services only if they're actually delivered.

You shouldn't be called before 8 a.m. or after 9 p.m. If you tell telemarketers not to call again, they can't. If they do, they have broken the law.

If you're guaranteed a refund, the caller has to tell you all the limitations.

And remember, don't give telemarketers your credit card number, your bank account number, Social Security number - or authorize bank drafts - ever.

You can add your phone number to a "No Call Registry" at <https://www.donotcall.gov/default.aspx>. Telemarketers should not call you after your phone number has been on the registry for at least 31 days.

Policy on Alcohol, Drugs, and Weapons

It is against the policy of the University to possess or use alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, or weapons on the campus or at university sponsored functions. Persons who violate this policy are subject to disciplinary action.

Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment

The University is committed to maintaining an environment in which the dignity and worth of all members of the institutional community are respected. Sexual harassment harms the environment the University seeks to maintain and is unequivocally prohibited. Moreover, sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and violates Federal laws, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Sexual harassment may involve the behavior of a person of either sex against a person of the opposite or same sex, when that behavior falls within the following definition.

Definition:

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when:

- submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or status in a course, program, or activity; or
- submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for an academic, employment or placement decision affecting the individual; or
- such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or educational experience or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment for working or learning.

Examples:

Examples of conduct prohibited by this policy include, but are not limited to:

- persistent, unwelcome flirtation, advances or propositions of a sexual nature;
- repeated insults, jokes, anecdotes or gestures that are commonly considered by people of a specific sex to be demeaning to that sex;
- repeated, unwelcome comments of a sexual nature about an individual's body or clothing or about sexual activity or speculations about previous sexual experience;
- unnecessary and unwelcome touching, such as patting, pinching, hugging or repeated brushing against an individual's body;
- direct or implied threats that submission to or rejection of requests for sexual favors will affect decisions regarding such matters as an individual's employment, work assignments or status, salary, academic standing, grades, receipt of financial aid, or letters of recommendation; and
- unwarranted use of sexually suggestive materials.

Responsibilities:

All members of the University community are responsible for ensuring that their conduct does not sexually harass any other member of the University community. This same responsibility extends to employees of third parties doing business with the University or on University premises and to campus visitors.

University administrators and supervisors have the further responsibility of preventing and eliminating sexual harassment within the areas they oversee. If administrators or supervisors know sexual harassment is occurring, receive a complaint of sexual harassment, or obtain other information indicating possible sexual harassment, they must take immediate steps to ensure the problem is addressed, even if the problem or alleged problem is not within their area of oversight.

Summary:

- Sexual harassment means bothering someone in a sexual way.
- Sexual harassment is behavior that is unwelcome, and in most cases, repeated.
- The goal of sexual harassment is not sexual pleasure, but gaining power over another.
- Sexual harassment interferes with work or the educational experience.

If you are experiencing sexual harassment, let someone know. You will be protected from retaliation. On the Atlanta campus, please contact a member of the Sexual Harassment Prevention Board:

Name	Department	Telephone Number
Dr. James Bartling	Pharmacy	678-547-6232
Ms. Judith Brook	Library	678-547-6274
Dr. Rick Carson	Theology	678-547-6026
Dr. Alice F. Collins	Business	678-547-6362
Ms. Diane Baca	Human Resources	678-547-6155

On the Macon campus, contact Dr. Jeffrey Henderson of the Department of Counseling and Student Development, located in the Linden House. Dr. Henderson may be reached at 478-301-2862. Or call the Crisis Line of Middle Georgia at 478-745-9292.

Below are several helpful web sites that address this topic as well:

- **The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) – 1-800-656-HOPE**
<http://www.rainn.org/>
- **Myths and Facts about Sexual Violence**
<http://www.usdoj.gov/ovw/>
- **Facts and Statistics**
<http://www.geocities.com/sapacmu/statistics.htm>
- **Date Rape Drugs**
http://www.geocities.com/sapacmu/date_rape_drugs.htm
- **Stop Campus Rape**
http://webits3.appstate.edu/apples/life/Rape/stop_rape.htm
- **National Women’s Health Information Center**
<http://www.4woman.gov/faq/sexualassault.htm>

Health Care

Basic Information:

Health care in the United States is a very complicated – and often expensive – thing. Health care can be so expensive that many people cannot afford it, unless they have health insurance.

There are three basic places to obtain health care: public clinics, private physicians, and hospitals.

Public clinics offer services for low or no cost, but services are very limited, and often require long waits.

Private physicians offer most services, but the price can be high. Most private physicians accept health insurance for payment. Normally, you must make an appointment to see a private physician.

Hospitals provide advanced health care services, including emergency medical service. Hospital services are very expensive. In cases of emergencies, you can go to any hospital, and they must treat you – even if you cannot pay. All hospitals will accept health insurance.

Campus Health Care Services (CHCS)

Campus health care maintains a small clinic on the campus. Nurses staff the clinic, and they can take care of most minor illnesses and injuries. If you require the attention of a doctor or dentist, they will also make arrangements for you. CHCS will also help you get your health insurance to pay for medical services. Mercer University requires that all non-immigrant international students enroll in the Mercer Student Health Services Program. International students will receive their application and health sheets on orientation day. You should have your enrollment form turned in to your international student advisor before your classes start. The Mercer Health Care Plan covers basic health care services. There may be some small charges for services.

Immunizations

Measles, Mumps and Rubella:

All students in the State of Georgia are required by law to give evidence of immunizations against or immunity from Mumps, Measles, and Rubella. The vaccines are called “MMR,” and two vaccines are required, the second vaccine coming 30 days after the first one. Students may already have had these vaccines as a child. In Spanish, the MMR is called “Triple,” and in French it is called the “ROR.” If you can give evidence that you have had these, then you will not have to take them again.

Students who have not had the MMR series of shots should go to a local Public Health Center to obtain these vaccines where the cost per vaccine is relatively low. Your international student advisor can provide you with directions to the Public Health Center nearest you.

PPD Skin Tests:

Mercer University also requires all students to get a PPD skin test for Tuberculosis. The skin test is a painless procedure that shows if you have been exposed to tuberculosis, a dangerous disease

in many parts of the world. Most new students are given this test on placement testing day. Everyone must have this test, even if you have received the BCG vaccine in the past.

Basically the campus nurse will place a small drop of liquid under your skin. Two days later, the nurses will look at the skin to see if there are any reactions. If students have reactions, they may be required to go to a doctor to get a chest x-ray. Students with F-1 or J-1 visas do not have to pay for the x-rays.

There is a charge of \$19.00 for the PPD skin test.

For more information about immunization requirements, and for downloadable immunization forms, please visit the Student Health Services web page at <http://www.mercer.edu/shc/index.html>

Health Insurance

All international students (with a current passport and a J-1 or F-1 visa who are temporarily residing outside their home country while actively engaged in education at Mercer University) are by default insured under the *International Health Insurance Plan*. Under U.S. law a health insurance plan is required for international students. Mercer University will bill you for it automatically, unless you show proof of a comparable (equivalent) alternative insurance. The insurance plan will pay most of the cost for doctors, hospitals, and medicines you may need if you get sick or have a serious accident.

While registered for classes at Mercer University you are covered by this insurance, unless you show proof of a comparable (equivalent) alternative insurance. If you take a session off and are not registered for classes, you are not covered by this insurance. The cost of the insurance is added to your tuition bill, unless you show proof of an alternative insurance.

If you are a citizen or permanent resident of the United States, or if you have any other kind of visa, (B2, L1, etc...) you are not automatically covered under this insurance. However, you may purchase this health insurance for a reduced price. See the assistant director for more information.

Dental Insurance

Dental care is expensive in the United States. Although dental care is not covered under the Mercer Health Plan, reduced-price (student) dental insurance plans are available.

If You Get Sick

If you have an accident or emergency on campus, call the Mercer Police at extension 6911 (Atlanta campus), or at extension 4357 (Macon campus). If you have an accident off campus, call 911 for help, or go to the nearest hospital with an emergency room. Other health emergency contact information is listed at <http://www.mercer.edu/uro/Health/emergency.htm>.

For non-emergency illnesses, Student Health Services is located on the second floor of the Duvall building (Atlanta campus), or at 1550 College St. (Macon campus). Student Health Services is open Monday through Friday, and the hours are listed at <http://www.mercer.edu/shc/index.html>.

Nurses will be there during all business hours. Doctors are available there as well, and the nurses will refer you to see a Student Health Services doctor or a Mercer Health System doctor if needed, depending on your situation. Your health insurance card is not needed at the Student Health Services, but if you are referred to a Mercer Health System doctor or to the hospital, you will need your health insurance card. You do not need to make an appointment prior to the visit -- just walk in during business hours. For further information, you can call Student Health Services at 678-547-6130 (Atlanta campus) or at 478-301-2696 (Macon campus).

Note: You are eligible for health benefits only during those semesters when you are enrolled in classes.

Housing

On-Campus Housing:

Atlanta Campus

On-campus housing is available only for individuals who are enrolled as full-time, degree seeking students. Housing contracts are in effect for one academic year. English Language Institute students are not eligible for on-campus housing until they finish the ELI, and register in an academic program in the University.

Macon Campus

Please visit the Macon Campus Residence Life web page for information on residence requirements, room or apartment applications and contract information, deposit requirements, meal plans, and other matters related to living on campus in Macon.

Off-Campus Housing:

Apartments for rent are listed in all of the local newspapers. The listings are arranged alphabetically by town or locality. Here are some common abbreviations used in apartment advertisements:

air or a/c = air conditioned
avail = available
ba = bathroom
br = bedroom
blk = block
CAC = central air condition
co-ed = female and male
cpt. = carpet
d&d = dishwasher & garbage disposal
din rm = dining room
empl = employed
fl = floor
hse = house
loc. = location

mo = month
kit = kitchen
liv rm = living room
por = porch
renov = renovated
req = required
sec dep = security deposit
stu = studio, one room apartment
utils = utilities
wl = with laundry facilities
w/d = washer and dryer
wlw = wall-to-wall carpeting
yd = yard

Renting an Apartment

Most landlords require tenants to sign a lease, which is a legally binding agreement or contract outlining the conditions which both the landlord and the tenant agree to meet. Leases are often for one year, although it is sometimes possible to arrange a lease for a shorter period of time. Once you sign a lease you are legally obligated to pay the full amount whether you occupy the apartment or not. Landlords will often require a security deposit, which is usually equal to another month's rent. The security deposit will be returned to you when your lease has ended, provided that there has been no damage to the property. Any existing damage when you move into the apartment must be documented in writing by the landlord, so you will not be penalized for it.

Renter's Property Insurance:

Anyone living in a rented apartment should consider having personal property insurance to cover property loss. Personal property insurance may be obtained through private companies. Personal property insurance covers personal liability even when you are not in your apartment or house. For example, if you are bicycling and hit someone, this insurance covers your liability. Insurance usually covers personal liability up to \$100,000 automatically; this amount can be increased to \$500,000 with little extra cost. When discussing your coverage with an insurance representative, you should mention any special conditions such as subletting, roommate coverage, or additional coverage for expensive items like jewelry, personal computers, and stereo equipment so that appropriate conditions can be considered.

Suggested Questions for Landlords:

- How much is the monthly rent?
- How much is the security deposit?
- What is included in the rent? Utilities? If not, what is the average monthly cost of utilities?
- Is it furnished?
- Can I use the kitchen?
- Will I share the room with anybody?
- How many people are sharing the house? Are they all males or females?
- Is smoking permitted?
- How far is it from the house (or apartment) to the bus stop?
- Monthly Lease: Is it renewable automatically?
- Yearly Lease: Is it renewable automatically?
- How much is the deposit?
- Is there any laundry facility available?
- What notice is required to terminate the agreement?
- Parking: Is there a lot? A garage?
- On-Street Parking? Are spaces assigned?
- Is there any additional charge for parking?

ID Cards and Campus Services

ID Cards:

Atlanta Campus

Student Identification Cards, also known as “Bear Cards,” can be obtained from the Mercer University Police Department, Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM until 3:00 PM.

Macon Campus

Information about “Bear Cards” is available through Auxiliary Services at <http://www.mercer.edu/auxiliary/>

Mercer University campuses have a student cafeteria, a bookstore, a copy center (Atlanta), and numerous vending machines. The Bear Card can be used to make purchases in most of these facilities.

Students must present their Bear Cards when using the campus exercise facilities, open computer labs, or library facilities.

Students can put money on account with the Bear Card, and use the card to purchase items on campus. Money can be placed on account in either the Bursar’s office or in the Library. There is a charge to replace lost ID cards.

Parking:

If you drive to school, you'll have to have a parking decal on your car in order to park on campus without getting a parking violation ticket. On the Atlanta campus, parking decal applications are available at the ELI Office. On the Macon campus, parking decal applications are available the Mercer Police Department.

Please note that it is strictly forbidden to drive or park on walkways or anyplace designed for pedestrians. Your car may be towed if you park in the wrong place.

Public Transportation:

The Mercer University Atlanta campus is accessible by public transportation. The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, MARTA, provides public transportation in the central Atlanta area. MARTA is a system of both buses and light rail. For schedule and fee information you can call MARTA at 404-848-4711, or find all of the information at the MARTA website <http://www.itsmarta.com>.

The Macon campus of Mercer University is served by the city’s bus system, which costs as little as 25 cents per ride (for the downtown Mitsi-trolley), and up to 75 cents per ride for the service’s “regular” routes.

Legal Information

Government Regulations:

The following summary of U.S. immigration is provided to give you basic information about your non-immigrant visa status. Be sure to carefully read the sections below that apply to you. Please remember that it is your responsibility to know and follow the regulations under which you may study, work, or stay in the U.S. If you have any questions about your visa status, contact either the ELI main office on the Atlanta campus at 678-547-6151, or the Office of International Programs on the Macon campus at 478-301-5964. An International Student Advisor will answer your questions or refer you to the appropriate office or agency for information. Friends, faculty advisors, and others may be well intentioned in their advising on visa information, but they are not always dependable sources of information on matters so crucial to your stay in the U.S.

Your Passport:

Your passport is an international travel document issued to you by your government. The U.S. government expects you to keep your passport valid at all times. Check the expiration date on your passport. If you have less than six months remaining on the passport, you should request an extension. If needed by your embassy, your international student advisor will provide, at your request, a letter to affirm your student status. If your U.S. visa is still valid and you are being issued a new passport, you should request the return of your expired passport. By keeping the passports together, the valid visa can be used for reentry to the United States. Otherwise you will need to apply for a new visa the next time you leave the country.

Your Visa:

This is a stamp or seal placed in your passport by a U.S. Consular officer abroad. The visa notes the purpose of your visit, the last date you can enter the United States, and how many entries you will be allowed. The visa is a permit to enter the United States. The visa does not indicate how long you will be permitted to stay and a visa does not have to be valid in order to remain in the United States. A visa can be obtained ONLY at U.S. Consulates outside the United States. The exception to this is for individuals who have adjusted their status to H-1 while in the United States.

There are many different categories of visas. The type of visa is determined by the purpose of the visitor's entry into the U.S. Most of Mercer's international students are on F-1 student or J-1 exchange visitor visas.

Your I-94 (Arrival/Departure Card):

This small white card was issued by the immigration officer at the port-of-entry and stapled to the passport. It confirms that you were lawfully admitted to the U.S.

The I-94 shows how long you are permitted to stay in the United States. For F and J visa holders, "D/S" is noted instead of a specific date in the right hand- corner. "D/S" stands for "duration of status" and operates in conjunction with the I-20 or DS-2019. This means you are permitted to stay as long as you are maintaining your status as a student. (See section on 'maintaining your student status'.)

Other visa holders will have a specific date in the right-hand corner. To remain past this time, you must file for an extension before the expiration date. Be sure not to confuse the I-94 with your visa.

Student or Exchange Visitor Status

An F-1 visa (and F-1 student status) may be granted to an individual "who is a foreign student qualified to pursue a full course of study" at an academic or language institution authorized to admit foreign students. When applying for an F-1 visa, the individual must prove to a U.S. consular official that he or she wishes to enter the U.S. temporarily and solely for the purpose of study. The applicant must have a permanent residence in a foreign country and have no intention of abandoning his or her home country. F-2 visa holders are dependents of F-1 students.

A J-1 visa (and J-1 exchange visitor status) may be granted to exchange students and other categories of exchange visitors. The guidelines for applying for a J-1 visa are similar to that of the F-1 visa, though a two year home residency requirement may be imposed on J-1 exchange visitors and their J-2 dependents, according to the exchange visitor's home country and their area of skill. J-2 dependents may apply for a work permit once they are in the U.S.

Maintaining Your Student Status:

After entering the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 status, the student must satisfy certain requirements to remain in status. You must:

- 1) keep your passport and I-20 (or DS-2019) valid all at times; (See your immigration counselor if you need to extend the completion of studies date on your document.)
- 2) attend the school to which you were authorized by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS);
- 3) register for and complete a full-time course of study in the fall and spring semesters;
- 4) limit employment, both on campus and off, to a total of 20 hours per week while school is in session;
- 5) never work off-campus without written authorization from your International Student Advisor and/or INS.

A Full Course of Study

A full-time course of study is defined at Mercer as 12 credit hours per semester for undergraduate and 9 credit hours for graduate students. Students enrolled in English Language studies are required to enroll in courses which include at least 20 clock hours in class or lab each week. Mercer Law School and Medical School students should contact the school directly for these requirements.

Note: Failing to maintain your status can result in serious penalties! Be sure to see your international student advisor before dropping a class that would leave you with less than a full course of study.

Exceptions to the Full Course of Study Requirement:

There are some situations in which F-1 students are considered to be maintaining status even if they are not registered full-time; for example: summer vacation, medical problems, teaching or research assistantships, etc. If you have any questions, you should consult your international student advisor.

When Dropping a Class:

If you register for a class but do not attend, or if you stop attending class without officially dropping, you are likely to receive an "F" in the class and lower your GPA. Legally, whether you attend or not, you are financially responsible for classes not dropped. From the perspective of the University, a seat is reserved for each student within each class. There may be other students on a waiting list who are denied the opportunity to register, even though a registered student has no plans of attending or paying.

In other cases, a student may register and attend classes, but make no payment arrangements. This results in the student's account becoming delinquent and his/her records being placed on hold so that he/she isn't eligible to register for more classes, receive transcripts, or graduate.

In order to prevent this from happening, we are enforcing the University policy that is stated on page 40 of the official University bulletin. Specifically, the class schedules of students who do not make acceptable payment arrangements with Mercer One by the last day of drop/add, are subject to cancellation. Should a student seek, and be granted reinstatement, he/she will be assessed a \$25 reinstatement fee and a \$25 late payment fee. Either full payment, an official third-party billing voucher, enrollment in a Mercer Payment Plan, or proof of sufficient approved financial aid will be required at the time of reinstatement.

We sincerely hope you will understand why the enforcement of this policy is necessary. With the cost of quality education soaring, we must assure that those who wish to enroll in, and pay for classes, are assured that a seat will be available to them.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Mercer One office for clarification.

Employment Opportunities

Students holding F-1 status have a number of opportunities for employment to supplement their classroom experience and personal funds. Although there are several options, it is critical that students have the appropriate form of work authorization and do not exceed the number of hours per week authorized. Students holding an F-1 visa are only permitted to work up to 20 hours per week during the academic year. For accurate information, call

Ann Stewart at 678-547-6109 / stewart_al@mercer.edu (Atlanta campus), or
Jim Kenaston at 478-301-5964 / kenaston_jb@mercer.edu (Macon campus).

Types of F-1 Student Employment Authorizations**On-Campus Employment:**

Students maintaining F-1 status are permitted to work on the Mercer campus for a maximum of 20 hours per week during the academic year.

During the summer and when school is not in session, students can work full time (not limited to 40 hours per week by USCIS). To find out more about on-campus opportunities, visit Career Services, and Financial Aid.

Off-Campus Employment (Not Available to ELI Students):

For an F-1 student to be eligible for off-campus employment, the student must have been continuously and lawfully enrolled in an USCIS approved institution for one academic year or nine months. The information below is a brief description of all the types of off-campus job descriptions. If you need more detailed information, please contact your international student advisor -

Type 1: Curricular Practical Training (CPT):

Participation in a cooperative education program, training for which you receive academic credit, or training which is required for your degree may be authorized as curricular practical training. Any student who works for one year or more in full-time curricular practical training is not eligible optional practical training.

Working without work authorization or working too many hours results in loss of F-1 student status

Type 2: Optional Practical Training (OPT):

Students holding F-1 status may apply for a total of twelve months of OPT. With the completion of a second, higher level degree international students may apply for a second year of optional practical training. The training can only be authorized for the major field of study indicated on the current I-20.

Type 3: Severe Economic Hardship:

F-1 students are eligible to apply for off-campus employment based on severe economic hardship provided that:

- 1) they are in good standing and carrying a full course of study;
- 2) they can demonstrate unforeseen severe economic hardship;
- 3) employment opportunities on campus are unavailable or insufficient;
- 4) they have been in F-1 status for one academic year; and
- 5) acceptance of employment will not interfere with the student's carrying a full course of study.

To apply for Economic Hardship work authorization, see your international student advisor.

Note: J-1 students interested in off-campus work authorization should contact:

Ann Stewart at 678-547-6109 / stewart_al@mercer.edu (Atlanta campus), or
Jim Kenaston at 478-301-5964 / kenaston_jb@mercer.edu (Macon campus).

For information on H-1 visas or permanent residence, contact an immigration attorney.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT IMMIGRATION ISSUES, TALK TO THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADVISOR! PLEASE DO NOT RELY ON YOUR FRIENDS FOR ADVICE: INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM FRIENDS IS MOST FREQUENTLY WRONG!

Money and Banking

United States Currency:

U.S. Currency is based on the decimal system, with 100 cents to each dollar. Metal coins include pennies (\$.01), nickels (\$.05) dimes (\$.10), quarters (\$.25), half-dollars (\$.50), and dollars (\$1.00). Paper currency comes in \$1.00, \$2.00, \$5.00, \$10.00, \$20.00, \$50.00, and \$100.00 denominations. The \$2.00 bill and \$.50 coin are very rare, but there you may see them from time to time. All U.S. paper currency and most coins have an image of a former president. There are two versions of the \$1.00 coin, and both have images of women: Susan B. Anthony, or Sacagawea. Both women are heroes to the American people.

Most Americans do not keep large amounts of cash with them or in their homes. Americans prefer to keep their money in the bank, where it is much safer.

Banking:

Banks offer many services, including checking and savings accounts. It is advisable to open an account at a commercial bank. This will give you access to your money easily and safely for paying any bills by check. Also, all banks can accept wire transfers from your family overseas, and automatically post the money to your account. There is usually a charge for this service, and you should check with your bank to find out how much it is.

Your bank will send you a statement every month. Your bank statement will contain copies of checks you have written, plus a list of all transactions you made that month. It is important to check your statement every month. You must let your bank know about any mistakes you find, so the bank can correct them. Banks in the United States have a responsibility to protect your account, and mistakes are very rare. However, they will quickly correct any mistakes once you report them.

Most banks in the Atlanta and Macon area offer the same general services, but many Mercer students choose Wachovia Bank, as Wachovia has an ATM, or bank machine located on campus.

Opening an Account:

You will need to show at least two forms of identification with your photograph. You should take your passport and I-94 card with you to open your account. **YOU DO NOT NEED A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER** to open a normal savings or checking account, however, you do need one to obtain an ATM, Check Card, or Credit Card. If you deposit a large amount of money in a savings or some checking accounts, the bank will usually pay you interest. Consult with the bank personnel about the different kinds of accounts available to you.

Writing Checks:

Checks are essential in conducting business in the United States. If you lose your checks and quickly notify the bank, the bank will protect your account. Also, your cancelled checks serve as receipts, and your monthly statements from the bank will indicate how you are spending your money.

NEVER sign a blank check and give it to another person. Make sure that everything is filled out properly.

When you are writing checks at stores, you will be asked for some form of ID, usually a driver's license with current address.

ATM:

Most banks offer the computerized services of a 24-hour Automated Teller Machine, also known as an ATM. You will be given a small plastic card to use this service. This card, along with your Personal Identification Number (PIN) will allow you to conduct transactions with the bank (deposits, withdrawals, check your balance, transfer money between accounts, etc.) **DO NOT GIVE YOUR PIN NUMBER TO ANYONE! EVEN THE BANK!**

If you use your ATM card at your bank, there is no charge for the service. If you use your ATM card at another bank's ATM, you will be charged a fee, usually between \$1.50 and \$2.00.

Social Security Numbers

What is “Social Security”?

Social Security is a retirement and medical benefits program administered by the United States government. It is financed by mandatory contributions from employers and employees.

International students on an F-1 or J-1 visa do not need to have a Social Security Number (SSN) unless they are working. People will ask you for your Social Security Number at the Bursar's office, the Registrar's office, the bank, etc. When a Mercer staff member asks you for that number, give them your Student ID number (on your bear card). When someone at a bank asks you for an SSN, tell him or her you are an international student and you do not have one. It is not necessary to have a Social Security Number to have a bank account in the US, although it is necessary to have a social security number to obtain an ATM, Debit, or Credit Card.

A SOCIAL SECURITY CARD DOES NOT GIVE YOU PERMISSION TO WORK IN THE UNITED STATES!

Who is eligible to apply for a Social Security Card?

An F-1 or J-1 visa holder who is approved to work on or off campus and has found employment may apply for a Social Security Card.

NOTE: If you have found a job, your employer will usually require you to have a Social Security number in order to pay your taxes according to federal government regulations.

Documents required to obtain a Social Security Card:

You must bring your passport, I-20 or DS-2019, and the documents given to you by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Examples of USCIS documents are: Form I-94, Form I-151, or Form I-551. Photocopies of these forms are not accepted.

You must also provide evidence of legal employment. Please contact your international student advisor about this, as he or she can provide you with a letter that establishes your eligibility for on-campus employment, and for off-campus employment if this applies to you.

Where can you obtain a Social Security Card?

Atlanta

The Social Security office is located at 55 Marietta Street, next to the INS office and very close to the Five Points MARTA station. The telephone number is 800-772-1213.

Macon

The Social Security office is located at 3530 Riverside Drive. The telephone number is 478-477-7950.

Both Social Security offices are very busy, so you should plan to arrive early. There is no fee for this service.

Taxes

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) expects your compliance with U.S. tax regulations that apply to international students and scholars. If you have a paying job or a scholarship, you must file federal and state tax return with IRS. The forms must be filed between January 1st and April 15th of each year. Depending upon the amount of your job or scholarship income and any tax treaties that the United States has with your country, you may or may not owe taxes.

The Office of International Programs will arrange to conduct a tax information session during the spring semester. It is your responsibility to gather the necessary materials and complete and return these forms to the IRS.

For more information, contact your international student advisor, or visit the IRS web site at <http://www.irs.ustreas.gov>. This web site will give you access to all IRS forms and publications. For instance, if you want to find out about U.S. tax treaties with your country, go to the web site, select Forms and Pubs, then select Publications Online, and then select Publication 901 - US Tax Treaties.

Macon - Important Phone Numbers:

Mercer Police	301-4357
International Programs	
Eric Spears, Director	301-5901
Lenny Rushin, Int'l. Programs Office Clerk	301-2573
Jim Kenaston, Int'l. Student Advisor	301-5964
Counseling and Student Development	301-2862
Dr. Jeffrey Henderson	
First Year Programs & Academic Advising	
Tony Kemp	301-2078
Residence Life	301-2687
Student Health Services	301-2696