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Introduction

The University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg Welcomes you to our campus!

This handbook has been prepared to assist international students at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg with initial settling and with adjustment to the University and the city of Greensburg. On behalf of all faculty and staff, we welcome you to the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg.

Please contact

Michele Shuey, Senior Academic Advisor for International Students, 724-836-7463 or email micheleg@pitt.edu
Life in the United States

Health Insurance and Health Care

Your student health fee provides access to routine services through the Student Health Service. However, health insurance is an absolute necessity for non-routine medical services. For those in J status, federal regulations require that you maintain health insurance coverage for yourself and any J2 dependents at all times while in the U.S.

Students who have assistantships, GSR positions, or fellowships will likely have health insurance provided as part of their compensations. Other students are welcome to purchase Supplemental Health Insurance through Student Health Service or a private company.

For more detailed information and to obtain an application for student health care coverage, please visit Patty LaMantia, ppl@pitt.edu or 724-836-9947, Health Center CH 216

Counseling Services

Counseling provides students a safe place to talk with an objective, caring professional who can offer fresh ways to interpret stressful or confusing issues. It gives students a chance to explore their feelings and learn new coping skills.

Services offered at the Counseling Center include:
- Individual personal counseling
- Group therapy, educational groups, and couples counseling
- Referrals for off-campus services, including evaluations and medication
- Consultation to those who are concerned about a student
- Educational presentations and outreach

Common reasons students meet with a counselor include:
- Difficulty adjusting to college or other changes
- Stress, anxiety, or panic attacks
- Depression and/or feeling of hopelessness
- Problems with eating and body image
- Relationship problems (dating, roommate, family, work)
- Grief and loss (end of a relationship, death of a loved one)

If something is big enough to concern you, it’s big enough to talk about with the counselor! Unexplained changes in behavior, mood swings, changes in appetite and sleep patterns, and difficulty concentrating are all indicators of a problem that counseling can help resolve – one that could affect academic performance is not addressed.
All Counseling Center services are free and completely confidential. No information is shared without a student’s written permission, with rare exceptions when there is a threat to someone’s safety.

Free Handouts and Brochures on a variety of mental health topics are available in the Counseling Center and on the wall display outside the office.

Counseling Center hours are Monday – Friday, 8:30am-5:00pm in 217 Chambers Hall. Evening hours are available. For more information or to schedule an appointment, stop in the office at 218 Chambers Hall, call the Counseling Center at 724-836-9870, or send an email to gaylep@pitt.edu

Immigration

The following section provides general information on key maintenance of status issues for international students in F1 or J1 status. If you have questions regarding your immigration status, please contact Michele Shuey. PLEASE DO NOT rely on friends, professors, or staff in your academic department for advice on immigration matters. While these people are well-intentioned, they usually do not know all the regulations pertaining to your immigration status and situation. Following bad advice may jeopardize your legal status in the U.S. or may cause you to lose opportunities available to you.

PLEASE NOTE: MANY U.S. Immigration regulations are changing. The information in this handbook was current when it was written but information may have changed since then. Always check with the OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES (OIS), www.ois.pitt.edu, in Oakland before traveling out of the U.S., transferring to another school, considering employment or completion of your studies. Also, consult the immigration section on the OIS website for the most current information.

KEY IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS

PASSPORT: You must maintain a valid passport at all times while in the U.S. When entering the U.S. or applying for a U.S. visa, your passport should be valid for at least 6 months into the future. If your passport will expire or is lost or stolen, you should contact your home country embassy in the U.S. for an extension or replacement passport.

VISA: A U.S. visa is an entry document only. It does not necessarily indicate the immigration status a person holds or how long they are permitted to remain in the U.S. F1 and J1 students from most countries are required to have a valid visa at the time they are requesting entry to the U.S. Once you have been admitted to the U.S. it is not a problem if it expires – your status is still valid as long as you have a valid I-94 and a valid I-20 or DS-2019.
**I-20/DS-2019:** In order for your I-20 or DS-2019 to remain a valid document, the dates must be valid and the information on it must accurately reflect the school and program of study in which you are enrolled. If any of your personal or academic information changes while you are a student, the form must be updated. If you will not complete your studies by the estimated completion date on the form, you must apply for an extension.

**I-94:** the I-94 is processed at the US port of entry. It should be stamped with the date and location of entry. There should be an additional notation indicating the status granted and the duration of your legal stay. For F1 and J1 students, the duration of stay should be noted as “D/S” rather than an actual date. This means that as long as you have a valid I-20 or DS-2019 and you are attending the school/program on the form, your stay has not expired. If you ever receive an I-94 with an actual date (MM/DD/YYYY) written on it, please see OIS right away.

**OTHER ISSUES**

**ENROLLMENT:** Those in F1 or J1 student status are required to be enrolled full-time during the academic year (fall and spring semesters). The summer term is considered a vacation period, and while students may register for classes during the summer, they are not required to do so in order to maintain legal status, provided they are eligible and intend to enroll the fall term. The University of Pittsburgh defines full-time enrollment as 12 credits per semester for undergraduate students. In some limited circumstances, students may be eligible to receive authorization to drop below full time enrollment. However, they must meet with Michele Shuey in Academic Advising, ML105, prior to dropping courses.

**EMPLOYMENT:** There are opportunities for both F1 and J1 students to be employed while in the US. Both are eligible for on-campus employment, restricted to 20 hours per week or less during the academic year, for on-campus employment. There is no limit to the number of hours per week during official school breaks or vacation periods (typically winter and summer breaks). J1 students must receive written authorization from OIS in Pittsburgh (or their J1 program sponsor if their DS-2019 was issued by an organization other than Pitt) prior to beginning on-campus employment.

Both F1 and J1 students may also be eligible for off-campus employment authorization. Authorization must be secured in advance. It is advisable to plan up to 3 months in advance to determine your eligibility, the application process, and amount of time needed to secure the authorization. Michele Shuey, Academic Advising, can meet with you to discuss your options.

**ADDRESS UPDATES:** F1 and J1 students are required to maintain a valid U.S. address and valid home country address at all times while in F1 or J1 status.
Address changes may be reported directly to OIS or through Student Services in the Pitt portal.

**Social Security Number & Working in the USA**

F1 and J1 students are not eligible for a US Social Security Number (SSN) unless they have evidence of an on-campus job or authorization for off-campus employment. The number is only needed if you are going to be employed in the US. For instructions on applying call the Greensburg Social Security office at 724-837-9718.

Once issued, the SSN is yours for life. Keep your SSN secure – your employment, and often times, financial history is very closely tied to this number. It should only be used for legitimate employment and financial purposes, but when in doubt, do NOT provide the number.

You will find that many companies and service providers, such as banks, cell phone companies, utility companies, request this number. However, in each case, there should be an alternative form of identification or documentation that you can provide to secure services.

Feel free to check with OIS if you have any issues or concerns related to the SSN.

**Taxes**

All F1 and J1 students are non-residents for tax purposes for the first 5 calendar years that they are in the U.S. Non-residents have a federal tax filing obligation – even if you did not earn any money in the U.S. If you earn income in the U.S., you will need to file federal, state, and local tax returns.

OIS provides the following tax assistance in February and March each year:

- Tax Volunteers
- Tax preparation software
- Web/Email Information
- IRS Information Session
Driver’s License

If you will be in the U.S. for more than one year and plan to drive while here, you should apply for a Pennsylvania driver’s license. If you will be in the U.S. for less than one year (i.e. the expiration date on your I-20 or DS-2019 is less than one year away), you are not eligible for a driver’s license. However, you may drive with a valid home country license and international driving permit.

There are three exams required as a part of the process: a medical exam (to be completed prior to going to the driver’s license center), a written exam (given at the driver’s license center), and finally a road test, where a Pennsylvania state police officer will evaluate your driving ability. Those with a valid license from another U.S. state may be exempt from these exams.

You must take the following documentation with you to the driver’s license center:

- Driver’s License Letter from OIS
- Passport, I-94, and I-20 or DS-2019
- Social Security card OR letter from the Social Security office stating you are not eligible for an SSN
- Two documents verifying your Pennsylvania address (e.g., lease agreement, electric bill, cable bill)
- Driver’s license application form with medical exam section completed

Those who do not plan to drive, but will be here for more than one year, may wish to apply for a Pennsylvania state ID card. The card is a convenient, government-issued form of identification that you can use while in the US. The documentation required is the same as above but there are no exams.

Please see www.dmv.state.pa.us/ for the latest information on Pennsylvania driver’s licenses or state IDs.

Cell Phone

Many people in the United States, ranging from the young to the old, own a cell phone. Many people choose to have a cell phone instead of a phone in their home because it is often cheaper and more convenient. Americans will talk on their cell phones almost anywhere, although it is considered rude to talk on one’s phone when making a purchase in a store or watching a movie in a theater. There are a number of cell phone providers in the United States and most operate on a contractual basis, though some do offer plans that allow you to ‘pay as you go.’ Carriers are listed in alphabetical order.

AT&T
www.wireless.att.com
Cultural Issues

Food & Healthy Eating
Some people relocating to the United States may find it difficult to eat as healthy as they had in their home countries. Even with its countless fast food restaurants, the United States still offers a number of healthy alternatives. Healthy eating is a priority to many Americans and as a result many restaurants, including fast food places such as McDonald’s, offer healthy alternatives on their menus. Popular throughout the United States is the food pyramid which offers suggestions on the amount of different varieties of food an individual should eat on a daily basis. If you are struggling with knowing what to eat, the University Student Health offers students the opportunity to visit with a dietician for free. The website and phone number is listed below.

www.mypyramid.gov
www.webmd.com/food-recipes/tc/healthy-eating-overview

Student Health: www.studhlth.pitt.edu
Patty LaMantia, RN, MSN Health Center CH 216
ppl@pitt.edu

Slang Usage
Slang is informal language consisting of words and expressions that are not considered appropriate for formal occasions. Slang usage is very prevalent among college kids. If you hear a word spoken that you do not understand and cannot find in a dictionary, it is most likely a slang word. Do not be afraid to ask others what a certain word means, as it may be important that you understand the exact definition of a word in order to avoid certain situations. There are a number of websites that will provide you with a list of regularly used slang words—though they are by no means comprehensive as there are always new words being created and used.

Personal Hygiene
People in the United States usually bathe or shower at least once a day and put on fresh, clean clothing and deodorant after each shower or bath. To be clean and neat is more desirable than to have a wardrobe of expensive clothing.
If you are invited to an event, you should ask your host/hostess or another person about appropriate dress for the occasion. If you are going to someone’s home or to speak to a group, your national dress is usually appropriate or appreciated. You may be asked a lot of questions about the garments of your national dress, since dress is a good conversation topic.

www.webhealthcentre.com/general/ph index.asp

**Schedule Etiquette**

Americans tend to be very time conscious and place high value on promptness. If you are going to be more than ten minutes late for an appointment or meeting, you should telephone ahead to let the other party know.

**Tipping/Gratuity**

In the United States, it is customary and expected to tip your service providers as a way to show appreciation for their service. It should be kept in mind that tips are a way of expressing satisfaction and are given because many people, including servers and bartenders, do not make as much money as other employees because their pay is to be supplemented with the tips they make. Larger tips should be left for those who provide extraordinarily good service; smaller tips or no tip at all should be left when service is poor. All percentages are out of the entire price of what you are buying.

- Waiter/Waitress in a Restaurant 15-20%
- Food Delivery Driver 15-20%
- Bartender 15-20%
- Taxi Driver 15%
- Haircut 15%

You should never tip police officers, physicians, government or University employees. It may be interpreted as a bribe, which is illegal. You do not tip bus drivers, theatre ushers, museum guides, salespeople, employees at fast food restaurants, or hotel clerks.
Life in Greensburg
Transportation

**Buses**
Public transportation in Greensburg is run by the Westmoreland Transit. Buses operate throughout Westmoreland County. For schedules visit the Westmoreland Transit website or call 1-800-221-9282

[www.westmorelandtransit.com/](http://www.westmorelandtransit.com/)

**Taxis**
Taxis in Greensburg are available on only a “call-first” basis. Even if you see one on the street, it will not stop to pick you up. You must call and arrange for one to pick you up. Be sure to know the address of the place you wish to go. Prices vary for taxies depending on the company, but be prepared to pay a base price plus a price per mile.

Yellow Cab: 724-838-0700

**Trains and Grayhound Buses**
You can find out information on Amtrak trains at their website or call 724-834-2310

[www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com)

You can find out information on Greyhound buses at their website or call 1-800-000-0000

[www.greyhound.com](http://www.greyhound.com)
Activities
Greensburg has many exciting activities to get involved in year round. To learn more about these activities visit our online Greensburg guide at: www.greensburg.pa.us

Shopping
Many stores have sales or specials when the cost of some of their merchandise is temporarily reduced. In addition to purchasing sale items, shoppers also can use coupons to save money. Coupons for cents off a product are usually found in newspapers.

Most stores will allow you to return or exchange an item, particularly if they are damaged or do not fit. You should save your receipts because they are required to return or exchange an item. Always note what the store’s return/exchange policy is as these policies vary from store to store.

Grocery Stores/Supermarket
Most food shopping in America is done in a grocery store. They sell a general line of food products, such as canned and frozen foods; fresh fruits and vegetables; fresh and prepared meats, fish, and poultry; and nonfood grocery products. Within Greensburg there are a number of different grocery store chains.

Giant Eagle: www.gianteagle.com
Shop n Save: www.shopnsavefood.com
Walmart: www.walmart.com

Malls
Many Americans love to shop and can often be found spending their free time in a mall. A mall houses many different stores that cater to a number of different needs. Items found most commonly at a mall consist of clothing, shoes, décor and books.

Westmoreland Mall: www.westmorelandmall.com
Banking

Checking Account
A checking account makes it convenient to pay for items without carrying around a large amount of cash. With a checking account you are issued checks and often a debit card which can be used to make purchases in most stores. Many banks, such as PNC, offer free checking accounts to students.

Savings Account
A savings account allows a person to put money they will not need right away on reserve. The money then draws interest. Interest rates vary from bank to bank and depending on how much money you place into the account. The money placed into a savings account is not as easily accessed as money placed into a checking account.

Debit Card vs. Credit Card
While a debit card and a credit card look similar, the way in which they work is very different. A debit card is usually issued with a checking account and is a way for you to access money that you already have in a checking account. A credit card is usually issued by a credit card company and allows you to pay for things with money you do not yet have. Credit cards usually involve an interest fee that is charged on purchases you make.

Banks in the Greensburg Area

Citizens Bank
400 S. Main Street
Greensburg, PA 15601
724-832-5970
www.citizensbank.com

National City Bank
125 S. Main Street
Greensburg, PA 15601
724-837-8200
www.nationalcity.com
Community Resources

Newspapers/Magazines

Greensburg’s local daily newspaper is the *Tribune Review*, available at no cost to the students. The paper is delivered every day to campus and can be found in each Residence Hall area as well as Chamber Hall lobby. Foreign newspapers and magazines are available in Millstein Library.

Season/Average Temperatures

Temperature is measured in degrees Fahrenheit in the United States as opposed to degrees Centigrade used more commonly around the world.

Conversion Formula:  

\[(F \text{ degree} – 32) \times \frac{5}{9} = C \text{ degree}\]

Greensburg possesses a climate with abundant precipitation throughout the year and four strongly defined seasons.

Average High Temperature (July): 82.5° F  
Average Low Temperature (January): 20.8° F
Learning Resources Center

The Learning Resources Center, located in the Millstein Library Building, is the home of the Writing center, Study-Skills Center, Disability-Resources Center, and Tutoring Center.

Free Tutoring in various subject areas is available. (Tutoring depends upon availability of tutors and funding. The Center cannot guarantee that a tutor will be immediately available for the subject that you have in mind.)

Walk-in help with academic matters is also available. You do not need an appointment. However, when you stop by without an appointment, please bear with us. Dr. Lou Ann Sears, the Center director, maybe helping someone else or on her way to a meeting, etc.

You are welcome to take the free handouts, borrow the videotapes and audiocassettes, use the tutorial software (pre-algebra, grammar, paper writing, study skills, etc.), and use the computers for paper writing, and other academic pursuits.

The Center (Provides disability resources for registered students)
The Center is open during the Fall and Spring terms Monday through Friday 8:30am-4:30pm. Call for Summer Hours. These hours are subject to change. (See bulletin board outside the Center.) Hours for April through June will be posted on the bulletin board.
For further information, call (724) 836-7098, TTY (724) 836-7128

Writing Center
The Writing Center is designed to help students during every step of the writing process. A multitude of handouts and books is available for students’ use. Drop-in tutoring for composition is available several hours each week. If you are ever experiencing any difficulties writing a paper, or if you would simply like feedback from a tutor, please feel free to stop by the Learning Resources Center for help.

Tutoring Services
The Learning Resources Center offers free tutoring services to all University students. Tutors are faculty-recommended Pitt-Greensburg students who have earned an “A” in the course. If the center does not currently have a tutor for the course you have in mind, it will try to get one.
Study Strategies
Pamphlets and handouts are available at the Learning Resources center. One-on-one help is also available.

Pitt Student I.D.
All University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg students must have a bar-coded University I.D. card. The I.D. card is required to checkout library materials, to use campus facilities and to receive other University services. Students must be registered for classes to apply for an I.D. card. To receive an I.D. card, students must present another form of identification such as their valid passport or their current class schedule. Any questions, please contact Office of Student Services (CH219)

Sports
The University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg gives any student that would like a chance to get involved in sports through its intramural programs. The Intramural program has been designed to offer a variety of activities in order to meet the diverse needs of the University community. At Pitt-Greensburg, intramurals is “Sports for All.” Intramural and recreation programs offer participants fun, relaxation and personal satisfaction. Intramurals are a vital part of the total educational experience at Pitt-Greensburg. Please see Student Services, Chambers Hall 219 for more information.

Safety
The University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg is greatly concerned with the safety of its students, employees, and visitors. Measures such as safety lights around campus building and walkways, and a network of emergency phones create a safer, more accessible, and more secure campus. Please keep in mind that safety and crime prevention are shared responsibilities. Use common sense and good judgment as you make your way around campus. Be watchful and alert, and never hesitate to ask for help. Dale Blasko, University of Pittsburgh – Greensburg Police Department, (724) 836-9866, dab139@pitt.edu
## Campus Resource List

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Telephone Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>Millstein Library 105</td>
<td>724-836-9940 Michele Shuey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus Police</td>
<td>Security, SSC</td>
<td>724-836-9865 Dale Blasko</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>Chambers Hall 219-G</td>
<td>724-836-7182 Beth Tiedemann</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counseling Center</td>
<td>Chambers Hall 217</td>
<td>724-836-9870 Gayle Pamerleau</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning Resources Center</td>
<td>Millstein Library 2nd Floor</td>
<td>724-836-7098 Lou Ann Sears</td>
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<tr>
<td>Millstein Library</td>
<td>Millstein Library</td>
<td>724-836-9687</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Registrar’s Office</td>
<td>Millstein Library</td>
<td>(724)836-9899 Linda Smith</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Residence Life</td>
<td>Chambers Hall</td>
<td>(724) 836-9953 Troy Ross</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Financial Services</td>
<td>Millstein Library</td>
<td>(724)836-7167 Brandi Darr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Government(SGA)</td>
<td>Chambers Hall 212A</td>
<td>(724)836-9879</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Health Services</td>
<td>Chambers Hall 216</td>
<td>(724)836-9947 Patti LaMantia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>Village Hall</td>
<td>(724) 836-9905 Sheila Confer</td>
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