

International Student Guide Clarke University

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Advisors

One of the first people you will meet with, once you arrive, will be your **Academic Advisor**. Your advisor will help you to choose your classes every semester and to plan your steps towards graduation. Though choosing your classes is your responsibility, your advisor can provide valuable guidance in making the right decisions. Your advisor can also assist you with any problems you may have with coursework or to find help with other concerns. It is a good idea to develop a good relationship with your advisor, so that you are comfortable in asking questions and seeking advice.

You will also need to depend upon your **Designated School Official** for assistance with maintaining your status as an international student and to help with any applications or paperwork required by the U.S. government. *You can find assistance in the Student Life Office.*

Activities

CONNECT (Orientation Weekend)

The Office of Engagement and Intercultural Programs sponsors an orientation every fall, giving new undergraduate students an opportunity to learn more about Clarke University and to meet other students. Orientation is an important experience and a great way to get involved at Clarke quickly. The International student designated school official (PDSO) hosts a special session for international students prior to orientation, to provide important information about requirements for students and adjustment issues.

Graduate international student orientation will be provided by the graduate department.

There are many activities for students throughout the year. Getting involved in the community helps you to develop your leadership skills, interact with students from different backgrounds and cultures, and increase your feeling of “belonging” in the Clarke community. **CSA**, the Clarke Student Association, oversees most organizations and activities led by students. **CAB** (Clarke Activities Board) is a student organization which sponsors many entertainment and social events throughout the year. You are encouraged to get involved in the planning of special events or to participate in these activities. **Arts at Clarke** also provides programming of the more traditional sort, sponsoring exhibitions in the gallery and hosting American and international performers of dance and music. If you are interested in athletics, you will find a full range of sports which all full-time students may play. You can try out for a varsity team to compete against other

universities or play intramural sports in which all teams are composed of Clarke students. Or, if you just like to watch sports, most games and events are free of charge to Clarke students!

BVM

Some of the instructors and administrators that you will meet will be BVM sisters. Clarke University was founded in 1843 by Mary Frances Clarke, foundress of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM), and a group of BVM Sisters. They moved from Philadelphia to Dubuque, a pioneer town of fur trappers and lead miners, to establish one of the first women's boarding schools west of the Mississippi River.

Today's students have inherited a rich tradition spanning more than 150 years, a history that has seen the campus change with the addition of new buildings, co-ed residence halls, and a competitive athletic program. Through change and adversity, Clarke's mission of education has remained constant. This tradition is now yours to embrace and pass on to those who will follow.

Banking Services

You may find it necessary to open a bank account here in Dubuque. There are several banks and credit unions available to you. The services offered by the different institutions are relatively the same in quality and choices. Student Life can assist you in deciding which bank or credit union will meet your needs. You may wish to open a checking account or a savings account, or both. There are two **Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs)** on campus, one in Mary Josita Hall and the other in the Student Activity Center. You can use the ATMs to make withdrawals and deposits to your accounts.

Counseling

The Clarke University Counseling Center is a Student Life department devoted to providing **free counseling** and supportive services to the Clarke Community. The Counseling Center is here to assist the students in their pursuit of a contented and balanced life as they strive for academic, personal, and intellectual growth. For many students, this is a time of new challenges as they learn to balance scheduling, academics, work, and athletics with leisure activities, relationships, and quiet time. Taking the time to address these issues in a comfortable and confidential setting can make all the difference in academic, physical, and personal performance.

Culture

When you arrive in the U.S., you will certainly bring many things with you. What you may not be aware of, however, is that you also carry a great deal of baggage that you cannot see. This baggage is "cultural baggage," the values and beliefs that have determined what you do (and how you do it) throughout your life. It is

important to recognize that you will encounter people whose cultural values and beliefs are different, maybe very different from your own. You may find that Americans are more individualistic than people in your home country, or that they are louder or more reserved, or more formal. These differences will require that you adapt and adjust in order to understand your new environment. You may find these changes exciting or disturbing. You will probably find the changes exciting and disturbing, but you are well advised to be prepared for surprises. The experience of exploring a new culture is really an opportunity to learn more about yourself and your own culture, so try to enjoy your new perspective of the world. Stay involved with campus activities and take advantage of the support resources that are available to you.

Driver's license

You may find it useful to drive while in the U.S. There are two ways for you to drive legally in the state of Iowa:

- As an international student, you may drive with a current **International Driver's License** and/or your home country driver's license in your possession. You should be aware, however, that local authorities may be unfamiliar with these forms of identification.
- You may obtain an Iowa Driver's License, if you are at least 16 years old and can provide proper documentation of your identity. A driving test and an exam on your knowledge of Iowa regulations is usually required. The license fee is \$8-16. <https://iowadot.gov/mvd/driverslicense/new-iowa-residents>

A Driver's Manual is only available on-line from the Iowa Department of Transportation. It is advisable to read the manual, so that you understand the local traffic laws, even if you intend to use an "out-of-state" ID.

Drugs

Drugs, like marijuana ("pot") or cocaine, are illegal to use and sell, or even to have in your possession. This is federal law, ordered by the national government. You can be dismissed from Clarke University or forced to leave the country, if you violate these laws.

Alcohol is also a drug; its use is limited by law. Please keep in mind that you must be 21 years old to purchase and to drink alcohol according to U.S. law. This is the same in every state. You can be fined or arrested for drinking underage or providing alcohol to anyone under the age of 21. Remember: **NEVER DRINK AND DRIVE**. This, too, is illegal and very dangerous.

You will find that many college students drink alcohol (beer, wine, or liquor). You will also see that many students have problems related to alcohol. Drinking too

much or too often can interfere with your classes. Alcohol can also cause you to have conflicts with friends or roommates. There are students who choose to enjoy life without alcohol, and many activities are available as alternatives to drinking.

On campus, there is no alcohol allowed in Mary Benedict Hall or Mary Josita Hall. In Mary Frances Hall and the Apartment Building, alcohol is only allowed in rooms and apartments where everyone is 21 years old. *For more information, you can contact your RA, a Graduate Assistant for Residence Life or the Director of Residence Life.*

e-mail

Electronic mail ('e-mail') is provided for all Clarke University students. You can use email to communicate with friends, family, instructors, etc. within the guidelines of the university. *If you need assistance in using your email or signing-up, consult with the Information Technologies (IT) staff or with Student Life.*

English

Studying in English

You may find that, despite years of study, speaking or writing constantly in English is very challenging. There are many ways to develop your language skills, and many resources at Clarke to assist you. Consider these ideas...

- Use the Writing Lab when drafting papers or assignments for class.
- Find a conversation partner to help you practice your English.
- Make flashcards to practice the new words you learn. This will help you to retain your developing vocabulary.

For additional support contact the Margaret Mann Academic Resource Center or Student Life.

F-1

Most Clarke students who are from outside the United States are "*F-1*" students, meaning that their **visa status** is that of an individual who has entered the U.S. temporarily for the purpose of studying. In order to maintain your status and to legally remain in the U.S. while you attend Clarke University you must comply with the following regulations:

- You must maintain a valid passport.
- You are required to attend the school which you are authorized to attend.
- You should pursue a full-course of study, with the exceptions of winter/summer vacations and serious illness.

There are several documents which you should have in your possession, as an F-1 student. Your **I-20** is the form which is issued to you by Clarke University; it is a statement of your eligibility to study in the U.S. Your **visa** is the stamp in your passport which certifies your approval to enter the U.S. Your **I-94** which is issued when you enter the country. If you need a copy of your **I-94**, it is available on-line.

Friendship

One of the best ways to make friends with Americans is to understand their lifestyle; observing the way Americans live will help you to associate with them. Naturally, a big obstacle between international students and Americans is the cultural difference; however, assumptions like **stereotypes** do not make friendship between the two any easier.

The best choice to encourage friendship with Americans is to try to ignore stereotypes you may hold and get to know each person better. Also, you may need to help others to overcome the stereotypes they might have about international students. This must be done while respecting the other person's way of thinking and respecting their cultural values, as well.

A U.S. student may consider you a friend, but he or she may invite you to do something only a few times throughout the semester. This is not because he or she does not like you. It simply means that life in the United States is very busy and U.S. students feel confused when someone they do not know says hello to them in the street. This casual greeting is not intended to encourage a conversation or express a romantic interest. It is just another form of American friendliness.

"Hi, how are you?" is a common greeting in the United States, but very often the person who asks the question does not wait for a response. Some international students think this is very rude, but it is not intended to be. It is not customary for the person asking this question to wait for a deep answer. It is customary to reply, "Fine" or "Good." You may also want to ask how the other person is. She or he will most likely answer with the same brief response.

Graduating

By the time you complete your studies, you will successfully complete the **general education core** in addition to the courses for your major. The general education core includes classes in the "skills area" - which help to prepare you for effective communication and research in your chosen discipline. The general education core also includes the **liberal studies areas** (for example, AREA ONE is Religious Studies). These areas are intended to help you to develop an understanding of many different areas of knowledge (religion, philosophy, art, science, etc.). For some students, the totality of graduation requirements is called

Compass. Compass is new set of branded requirements that do not apply to current seniors (graduating in May, 2018). You will also complete the required courses for your chosen major. To graduate, you must complete at least 124 semester hours with a grade point average of 2.00 or better.

What's Commencement Anyway?

After completing your required studies, you will have the opportunity to participate in the graduation ceremony, or commencement. Your friends and family will be able to watch you receive your degree and share in your achievements. Graduation is seen as a time for reflection and for celebration. The commencement activities are the college's way of honoring the graduating senior students.

GPA

GPA refers to the average of your grades for a given semester or in total. Your **cumulative GPA** is the average of all your grades throughout your college years. Grades will range from 4.00 points ("A," superior performance) to 3.00 points ("B," above average performance) to 2.00 points ("C," average performance). For a more detailed explanation of letter grades and their grade point equivalents, please see the course catalog. After every semester, you will receive a grade report. You can calculate your GPA by multiplying your grade for each class by the number of hours of each class, then divide by your total number of hours.

Course	Credit Hours	Grade	Grade Point Equivalent	Subtotal
Western Civilization	3	x (A)	4.00	12.00
Principles of Biology	3	x (B)	3.00	9.00
English Composition	3	x (C)	2.00	6.00
Philosophy of Human Nature	3	x (A)	4.00	12.00
Total	12			39.00
GPA				3.25

Health Services

All students are eligible for assistance from the nurses in Health Services. Health Services can provide you with information, minor health care, and referrals when

necessary. They can also assist you with filing paperwork for your insurance coverage. It is advisable to complete a **health form** for Health Services' records; this will enable them to better help you in case of illness or emergency. International students are required to purchase the International student health insurance plan. *Health Services is located in the lower level of Mary Josita Hall.*

Holidays

One of the best ways to learn about American culture is to learn about the way Americans celebrate. While you are living in Dubuque, you may find it fun and interesting to participate in the activities associated with American holidays.

Identification

At times, you may find it necessary to show some proof of identity. Your **student identification card** issued by Clarke is your meal ticket, your library card, and your proof of identity on campus. It is advisable to carry some form of identification (often called "ID") at all times, especially when off-campus. ID's are required for using checks, purchasing cigarettes and alcohol, etc. A **passport** can be used, but an **ID card** may be safer and simpler to use. You can have an ID card made by the local Driver's License Department. You may find it necessary to obtain a **Social Security Number** for working in the United States or for identification purposes. *Contact your PDSO for assistance with this.*

Jobs

F-1 students may work part-time (less than 20 hours per week), on-campus only, while classes are in session. During vacations and breaks, you can work full-time (29 hours per week). All on-campus jobs are listed online at the Financial Aid website – click on International Students. For assistance in finding a position, contact Financial Aid. You may not work off-campus without special authorization. *Consult with your PDSO for more information.*

Knowledge

In American tradition, "knowledge is power." The best way to accomplish your goals and to be successful is to understand the world around you. The best way to find out anything about Clarke University or international study is to ask questions. The administrators, staff and faculty are here to assist you in your educational process, and they are the experts. If you have a concern or a suggestion about anything at all, feel free to express yourself. It is not just appreciated, but expected. To prove it, Americans have a widely used expression: *The only dumb question is the question you don't ask!*

Loneliness (Dealing with Homesickness and Culture Shock)

With all of the experiences and surprises that life will present to you as you adjust to your new environment, it can be expected that you may find yourself feeling fatigued, or homesick, or even blue. You will certainly find yourself thinking of home, perhaps with sadness and even thinking of returning. These feelings are quite normal, and will pass as you further adapted to your surroundings. There are many ways feels better about your time in the U.S. while you are getting accustomed to your new surroundings.

Consider these suggestions:

- Put pictures of your family and friends in your room, to make your surrounding more familiar.
- Keep in contact with the people you love by email regularly, calling (as often as it practical) or using Skype.
- Keep busy with some new and different activities.
- Make new friends to support you and share your feelings.
- Talk to a counselor or a close friend about the way you feel.
- Take time for yourself to reflect on your situation.
- Try to relate your new life to your home. Look for a good side of being here.
- Join an organization/club or get a job. Taking on some responsibility can help you to occupy your time and your mind

The important thing is to maintain a positive attitude about your experience, to take care of yourself and to rest when needed, and to find people to rely upon for support. Your Resident Advisor (RA) is a perfect person to go to if you are having these feelings. Also, the counseling center is free, easy, and available.

Multicultural Center

THE MULTICULTURAL CENTER MISSION

In keeping with Clarke's commitment to encourage personal and intellectual growth, promote global awareness and social responsibility, and to deepen spiritual values, the Multicultural Center **affirms** the value of multicultural understanding, **aims** to promote/support diversity at Clarke University, and **celebrates** diversity within the campus community.

The Center provides services that are designed to give multicultural students the opportunity to participate in cultural endeavors often lacking in the community at large. The office also works to give all members of the Clarke community a forum exploring cultures different from their own. Everyone is welcome to attend Multicultural Center events and to make use of our resources.

Mail

All full-time Clarke students can send and receive mail through the Clarke University mail center. The Student Life Office assigns your campus mail station number (MS) and combination – just log into myInfo to locate this information. Postage stamps can be purchased at the Whitlow Campus Store. You can also send and receive packages through the mail center.

Your mailing address at Clarke will be:

First and Last Name,
1550 Clarke Drive, MS# _____
Dubuque, IA 52001

For more comprehensive service, you may need to go to the local branch of the USPS (United States Postal Service) often called the Post Office. The main office of the postal service is located downtown, 350 West 6th Street, Dubuque, IA 52001.

No!

The freedom of speech to which Americans have become accustomed has established a way of communicating that is sometimes seen as very direct. Directness while communicating with others is very acceptable and sometimes expected. **DON'T FEEL BAD ABOUT SAYING NO!** In some countries, open rejection or disagreement may be considered rude. This is not the case in the United States. Here it is quite normal to disagree openly.

Drugs, alcohol, and romantic relations are quite appropriate contexts to utilize your right to say no.

Organizations

Clarke students are encouraged to be involved in co-curricular activities, organizations and events that are social, cultural, intellectual, spiritual and recreational. There are a variety groups and organizations that provide leadership opportunities for students.¹ Participating in an organization can be a valuable learning experience. You can learn more about Americans, practice your English, make friends, and gain some useful practical skills - which will help you in the classroom and in your career.

For more information, check with the office of engagement and intercultural programs, CSA, or Student Life. You will also find helpful information in your handbook.

¹ adapted from <<http://www.clarke.edu/studentlife/handbook/department/organizations.htm>>.

Practical Training

There are two types of practical training, optional and curricular, available to international students with F-1 visas. **Optional Practical Training (OPT)** allows students to use their academic training in a professional environment, making students more employable when they return to their home countries.

F-1 students in legal immigration status, enrolled full-time in a degree program for at least one academic year (9 months) are eligible to apply for OPT. If approved, you can seek employment related to your studies and must be commensurate with your educational level. As an F-1 student, you are eligible for a maximum of 12 months of optional practical training after completion of your degree program (full-time only).

Applying for OPT can be a lengthy process and you can wait up to 3 months for approval. We recommend that you begin your job search as you make your application to INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service). You must have your INS approval before beginning a job. For, post-completion OPT, INS must receive your application during the period from 90 days before you complete your degree to 60 days after you complete your degree.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) allows international students to work off-campus through a practicum or internship for academic credit. CPT requires notification to the INS, with the assistance of a designated school official. *For more information about OPT or CPT, please contact your PDSO.*

frequently asked Questions and where to turn for answers

What ifI'm having academic problems? ...I don't know what classes I should take next semester? ...I'm having difficulty with my English? ...I think I might want to change majors?	Contact your Academic Advisor
What if... ...I need details about a specific course? ...I don't understand a lecture?	Contact the instructor teaching the course
What if... ...I'm looking for something to do this weekend?	Contact Engagement and Intercultural Programs.

...I have an idea about a program?

What if...

Contact Financial Aid or Student Life

...I want to get a job?

...I want to work off-campus?

What if...

Contact your RA or Director of Residence Life.

...I lost my room keys?

...The light bulb in my room burned out?

What if...

Contact Health Services

...I have a stomach ache or a cold?

...I need a flu shot?

What if...

Contact Student Life, Engagement and Intercultural Programs or Counseling Services.

...I am confused about something my American friend said or did?

...I am angry or depressed about being in the U.S.?

Residence Life Staff

Your RA (Resident Assistant), graduate assistants for Residence Life, and Director of Residence Life are living on campus to assist you. Clarke University is a residential campus, with many people from many different backgrounds living together. The residence life staff make sure that everyone who lives on campus feels comfortable and safe. They are your resources not just for on-campus living, but also for making your time at Clarke fun and educational. After all, you do spend 80% of your time outside of the classroom.

Real World

Americans often refer to sudden realizations as “reality checks” or “wake-up calls.” Those phrases are used to illustrate what we can discover when a new situation or perception leads us to understand something which we did not see clearly previously. Moving far from home or away from family for the first time can be that new situation. Starting college or living in a new country can be the opportunity for that new perception. We all have expectations or preconceptions of “what things will be like when...” Reality, however, is often very different from what we had in mind. The big question then becomes, “How will I face the real world?”

Most students are accustomed to living at home with their parents by their side, as they go through daily decisions. Coming to college requires learning to solve

problems and accomplishing tasks without the help of your family. Whether you need to do laundry or find a job to pay for books, you are without the support system you have relied upon for most of your life. College is an important step toward becoming a responsible and contributing adult in this world. You are now called upon to make good judgments daily, and to motivate yourself without as much help. The opportunity for growth is before you, the benefits are infinite. The choice is yours!

Often international students expect that they will have other students from their home country to rely upon in their new environment. This may or may not be true. Just as you would not necessarily like everyone you meet at home, you may not be friends with everyone here who shares your culture. It's best to be open and receptive to the people around you, regardless of where they may be from. There is much to gain from friendship of all kinds.

Americans are often expected to be very open and accepting of other cultures. The image of the U.S. as a "melting pot" of cultures, where everyone is equally respected, is very well-known. But, you may find that Americans can be unexpectedly reserved or even resistant to differences of nationality or culture. This is natural; most people have some fear of the unknown. You should find, however, that patience and receptiveness on your part will most often be met with patience and receptiveness from others. You may have a lot to learn about American culture, but Americans have a lot that they can learn from you, too!

SEVIS

SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) is an internet-based system requiring schools and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to exchange data on the status of international students and their dependents in the U.S. Effective February 15, 2003, Clarke University must electronically transmit immigration, academic, and dependent data to the INS throughout an F-1 student's academic career in the United States. U.S. embassies and consulates will also have access to SEVIS.

What information is required to be reported in SEVIS?

All of the information from your I-20, along with certain information from your passport/visa and I-94, are tracked in SEVIS. In addition, universities must report the following:

- Whether the student has enrolled at the school, or failed to enroll each semester.
- A change of the student or dependent's legal name or address – both in the U.S. and in your home country.

- Any student who graduates, and whether it is prior to the end date listed on the I-20.
- Academic or disciplinary actions taken due to criminal conviction.
- Whether the student drops below a full course of study, which requires prior authorization from the DSO (Immigration regulations refer to international student advisers as "designated school officials"-DSO's).
- Termination date and reason for termination.
- Other data generated by standard procedures such as program extensions, school transfers, changes in level of study, employment authorizations, and reinstatement.
- Any student who fails to maintain status or complete his or her program.

How will Clarke help students comply with the immigration laws?

Kate Zanger, Vice President for Student Life is your Primary Designated School Official (PDSO). She is available to help you maintain status and keep your information in SEVIS current and accurate. She can also advise you on SEVIS and compliance with INS regulations.

Sex

The American media (television, radio, Internet) could easily give the impression that all Americans have casual attitudes about dating and sexuality. Actually, Americans have a wide range of attitudes and values about relationships. This can make relationships very difficult to understand. The key to understanding what's right and what's wrong in romantic relationships in the U.S. is simple. **R-E-S-P-E-C-T!** Americans generally follow their personal values and feelings, which are a reflection of their own religious and social influences. American men and women are accustomed to respecting each other's choices and behaviors, and you should expect the same level of respect for your decisions. Many Americans choose to abstain from sexual involvement until they are married, and –according to law and custom- that is their right, and it is yours as well. U.S. law is very strict about sexual harassment (including jokes and rude comments) and sexual assault (forcing any sexual contact). Consent for sexual activity is required by law in the United States. Please review the Clarke University Sexual Misconduct Policy.

Transportation

Many students worry that, without a car, they will find it difficult to travel from place to place in Dubuque. It is easy to reach the conclusion that buying a car will make things easier, but buying a car requires a lot of effort and money. In

addition to the purchase of the car, you must maintain insurance and registration which can be very expensive. There are other options for getting off-campus.

There is also a public bus system, The Jule, which can take you to most locations within Dubuque for free with your student ID card; this is a great way to go anywhere in town. Often students are reluctant to take a taxicab, for fear that it will cost too much; but, a ride to the mall or to the downtown area can be less than \$10.00. In addition, Student Life sponsors trips off-campus periodically to local activities and even out-of-town. If you are having difficulty with transportation, please contact the Student Life Office.

Travel

You may want to explore parts of the United States, other than the state of Iowa. It is important to always travel with identification and your issued documents. It is recommended to travel with your passport.

If your travel adventures will take you out of the United States, you must take all of your government-issued documents (passport, visa, current and past I-20 documents, printed I-94, I-901 fee receipt, and your finance documentation). Additionally, you must receive the signature of your DSO on your current I-20 before leaving campus for your travels.

UNITED STATES

You will find that folks in the United States refer to themselves as American, suggesting that countries and nationalities outside of the U.S. in North America and South America are not American. This is so engrained in the cultural and vernacular, that this very document refers to United States as American.

Visa

Your visa is a stamp in your passport which certifies your approval to enter the U.S. as a student. Most international students at Clarke University are classified as “F-1” visa students. *For more information, see “F is for F-1.”*

Winter

Dubuque winters are very cold! Temperatures are usually 10°F to 30°F (°-12C to -1°C) beginning in November, but can drop to -10°F (-23°C) or less. It snows often in Iowa. For those who come from places where the temperature does not change as often or as drastically, Iowa weather requires a good deal of adaptation. The good news: There are all sorts of winter activities to enjoy – like skiing, ice skating, sledding and snowball fights. The bad news: Winter is a time that many people may have health problems (like colds and flu). The best way to stay healthy is to eat right, exercise, and dress appropriately. You definitely need a good, warm coat. And, dressing in layers is an effective way to stay warm.

whY are you here?

There are as many reasons that guide international students to study in the U.S. as there are students. Some students come to the U.S. because they want to experience life away from home; others because they want to learn from other cultures. No matter the reason you have chosen, the result they'll obtain from that decision is what matters most. The result is, of course, dependent on your keeping in mind the goals and dreams you have set for yourself in a very near future.

Constantly remembering why you are here, in college, in the U.S. is very important. By keeping in mind the reasons that led you to decide to study here and by recalling the sacrifices you and your family made to get you here, you will motivate yourself to be the best you can be in whatever you do. Often students forget about their motivation in college and struggle academically or personally. On the other hand, students that remain aware of their motives are the ones that succeed.

Zanger

Kate Zanger, Vice President for Student Life is your SEVIS representative and Primary Designated School Official (DSO, PDSO) on campus. Come to her with any questions or concerns regarding your stay in the United States.