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PRE-ARRIVAL CHECKLIST

Plan your trip and arrival at WU. Complete all steps prior to arrival.

1) Accept your offer & create your Self-Service account.

- You will login to the WU Self-Service portal with your WU credentials.

2) Request & receive your signed electronic I-20

- Directions on how to request your I-20 and required documents will be emailed to you.

3) Complete a DS-160 visa application form & obtain your visa

- Ensure your passport is valid for at least 6 months after your arrival date in the US.
- Complete the DS-160 visa application [here](#).
- Review instructions for F-1 visa process [here](#).
- Schedule and attend visa interview. Once approved, receive your passport and visa.

4) Pay the I-901 SEVIS fee

Pay the SEVIS fee [here](#). Take your SEVIS fee receipt to your visa interview.

5) Plan your housing

- **On-campus** housing info [here](#)
- Plan where you'll stay when you first arrive.

6) Schedule your flight to the US

- You can arrive **no more than 30 days prior** to your I-20 program start date.
- Plan your airport transportation.

7) Prepare proof of immunizations

- Complete **mandatory** forms & policies [here](#). Records must be in English. More info [here](#).

8) Pack and prepare for your trip to the US

- Review the list of important documents to have in your carry and packing info.

9) Fly to the US!

Complete port of entry inspections.

10) After you arrive

- Update your US address in Self-Service.
- Complete "New Student Arrival Orientation Check-in".
- Purchase books & materials.
- **Attend all mandatory sessions of orientation.**

Important WU Self-Service information

Do **not** share your WU login details with anyone. Your username and password is your private information.

ARRIVAL PREPARATION & PACKING INFORMATION

Prepare for a smooth trip to the US

Important carry-on items & documents

The items below should be brought with you in your carry-on (hand luggage). **Do NOT pack these items in your checked luggage.**

IMPORTANT ITEMS TO PACK IN YOUR CARRY-ON LUGGAGE

- Valid passport
- Valid F-1 visa
- I-20
- I-901 SEVIS fee receipt
- Admission letter
- Immunization record
- Residential address (where you'll stay when you arrive) for port of entry form
- Financial support documents
- Copies of documents & passports
- Money for initial expenses
- Phone & charger

Don't arrive in the US too early!

First-time students entering the US in F-1 status are allowed to arrive only within 30 days before the I-20 start date

Prepare for the weather!

West Virginia has four distinct seasons. Remember to pack clothing to stay comfortable during your first few months.

Summer:

- Avg. temp: 75°F (24°C) - 85°F (30°C)
- Very warm and humid. Some strong storms
- Wear: cool, loose clothing

Fall:

- Avg. temp: 60°F (16°C) - 70°F (21°C)
- Weather gets cooler, especially at night
- Wear: layers, sweaters & pants

Winter:

- Avg temp: 35°F (2°C) - 45°F (7°C)
- Weather is cold with some snow
- Wear: heavy coats, gloves, warm layers

Spring:

- Avg temp: 55°F (13°C) - 75°F (24°C)
- Weather starts getting warmer. Sun & rain
- Wear: jacket & light layers for varied temps

Additional packing information:

Bring a touch of home! Pack a couple of mementos to keep you feeling comfortable while navigating U.S. customs. Check the provided link for prohibited items! View the list [here](#).

Always hold a small amount of cash in your wallet for important emergency purposes. You never know when you might need it.



CELL SERVICE & BANK ACCOUNTS

Set up essential accounts & services

Cellphone service

There are a number of options to obtain service and a local phone number. Most students start out with a sim card option for the first few months. Once they learn how they use their service, they set up service with a contract (prepaid option).

- Many students also use WiFi to access communication apps such as WhatsApp, GroupMe, and We Chat when they arrive.

Cellphone service options

Number on arrival with CampusSims:

CampusSims allows you to have a US phone number and service immediately upon arrival. You pay ahead for a designated amount of credit. Order a SIM [here](#).

Contract/Prepaid plan:

Most service operates on contract plans. Contracts are usually 2 years in length for the cheapest option. With a contract, you pay a prepaid amount on a monthly basis.

Pay-as-you-go (PAYG):

PAYG is similar to CampusSims. You purchase credit as needed with a local carrier.

Local carriers

Compare plan options across carriers to determine the best plan for you. Local carriers with locations near WU:

- Verizon
- AT&T
- T-Mobile
- Metro PCS

Setting up a bank account

It's very important to setup a bank account in the US. When you open a bank account you will need to provide proof of identity. Call ahead to confirm what documents you need to provide. This usually includes:

- Passport
- I-20
- Proof of address
- Initial deposit

Bank locations

Local banks include:

- Chase Bank
- WesBanco
- Community Bank

GROCERY STORES & FOOD DELIVERY

Where to purchase food & discover new favorites

Grocery stores near WU

Many of these stores are very close to campus housing and accessible with car.

- Kroger
- Walmart
- Riesbecks
- Aldi

International groceries near WU

This is only a small selection of the international grocers located in Pittsburgh about 1 hour from campus. Check out the options.

- Nataliya European Food
- Jmart International Market
- Panda Supermarket
- Magnet International Market

Online food ordering and delivery:

Want to order your groceries online or have a meal delivered? Use one of the websites/apps below. **When using food delivery services, always make sure you tip the driver.**

- Instacart
- Uber Eats
- Door Dash
- GrubHub
- Seamless

Local farmers markets

Want farm fresh produce from local vendors? Visit one of the area's farmers markets. Some markets have limited hours or open certain months. Check websites for hours.

- Wheeling Farmers Market
- Warwood Farmers Market
- Ohio Valley Farmers Market
- Bellaire Farmers Market
- St. Mikes Farmers Market

Online Ordering & Pickup

Many shops offer online ordering & curbside pickup options if you want to limit your in-person shopping.

If you choose to shop in-person, follow all health & safety guidelines.



LOCAL STORES & ACCESSING EVERYDAY NEEDS

Where to purchase food & everyday items

Everyday goods and furniture

There are a numerous large retail stores where you can purchase household necessities, furniture and supplies. For larger and longer distance trips, a car is recommended.

Everyday goods and some furniture:

- Target, Walmart, Big Lots, Dollar Tree

Furniture and décor:

- IKEA, HomeGoods, Bed Bath & Beyond, Target, TJ Maxx

Hardware:

- Ace Hardware, Home Depot, Lowes

Electronics:

- BestBuy

Pharmacies

Visit a pharmacy for health, medicine and wellness products. Pharmacies near UMBC campus include:

- CVS Pharmacy
- Walgreens Pharmacy

Affordable winter clothing

Need extra winter clothing? You can often find warm winter coats and jackets at affordable prices at many stores. Some options:

- Outlet malls: Tanger
- Discount stores: TJMaxx, Marshalls, Kohls
- Thrift stores: Goodwill

Saving on purchases

Make sure you check for specials, including student discounts, when making purchases, online or in-person.

- Grocery stores usually update their store specials on a weekly basis
- You can also look at online coupon websites or the Sunday newspaper for coupons to save extra

Online Ordering & Pickup

Many shops offer online ordering & curbside pickup options if you want to limit your in-person shopping. If you choose to shop in-person, follow all health & safety guidelines.

Grocery & Food Delivery Services

Many online grocery & food services offer discounts on first orders & contactless delivery.



AREA TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

How to get around Wheeling & the surrounding area

Buses & trains - long distance

Want to travel further outside Wheeling?
Look into these bus, train, and plane options.

Bus:

- There are a number of affordable long-haul bus companies. Some options are: Greyhound, FlixBus

Train:

- Amtrak – US-wide train network. Pittsburgh is the nearest to WU.

Plane:

- PIT is the nearest airport to WU campus
- Other airports: CMH (Columbus, OH)

Explore new opportunities, places, & food during the 1st semester. The journey is going to be a wholesome experience. People are here to help. You may be overwhelmed by the new environment but, it's all part of the experience. Make the best of it & enjoy the journey.

Ride-share

Popular ride-share options available:

- Uber
- Lyft
- IC Cab

Don't forget to tip your driver in the app!

Driving in the US

If you plan to drive in the US you are **required** to obtain a **valid** US driver's license. For instructions on obtaining a West Virginia driver's license visit [this page](#).

Ride Services & Tipping

If you use a ride service (taxi, shuttle, Uber or Lyft) - **Don't forget to tip your driver.**

- For app based service, tip can be added in the app after your ride.
- If you are paying by card, you can add a designated amount to your total.
- A 20% minimum tip is recommended.

