

Westfield State University - International Student Services

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Mission and Purpose

Westfield State University is proud to be a global campus, enriched by the presence of students and scholars from over 100 countries. The International Student Services (ISS) office is dedicated to supporting the academic and personal success of our international community. Our mission is to provide comprehensive advising, support services, and programming that helps international students navigate university life, maintain their legal status in the United States, and thrive in their new environment. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and inclusive campus for all.

Services Offered

ISS provides a wide range of services to support international students throughout their time at Westfield State University. Our offerings are designed to address the unique needs of our international population, from immigration advising to cultural integration.

Visa and Immigration Support

Navigating the complexities of U.S. immigration regulations is a primary concern for many international students. Our trained advisors provide expert guidance on maintaining legal status.

- **Form I-20 and DS-2019 Issuance:** We issue the necessary documents for F-1 and J-1 students to apply for their visas and enter the U.S.
- **Status Maintenance Advising:** We offer advising on how to maintain your F-1 or J-1 status, including course load requirements, travel, and transfers.

- **Travel Signatures:** We provide the required travel signatures on your I-20 or DS-2019 for re-entry into the U.S.

Work Authorization

Understanding and obtaining work authorization is crucial for students who wish to gain practical experience in their field of study.

- **On-Campus Employment:** We provide guidance on the regulations governing on-campus employment for F-1 and J-1 students.
- **Curricular Practical Training (CPT):** We assist F-1 students in applying for CPT, which allows for off-campus work experience that is an integral part of their academic program.
- **Optional Practical Training (OPT):** We guide F-1 students through the application process for OPT, which provides an opportunity for 12 months of work experience related to their major field of study after graduation. STEM OPT extensions are also covered.
- **Academic Training (AT):** We support J-1 students in obtaining Academic Training authorization for employment related to their field of study.

Cultural Adjustment Programs

We recognize that adjusting to a new culture can be challenging. Our programs are designed to help students acclimate to life in the U.S. and at Westfield State.

- **International Student Orientation:** A mandatory orientation program for all new international students that covers topics such as immigration regulations, academic expectations, and campus resources.
- **Peer Mentor Program:** New international students are paired with current domestic and international students who can provide support and guidance.
- **Workshops and Events:** We host a variety of workshops and social events throughout the year to promote cultural exchange and build community.

English Language Support

For students who wish to improve their English language skills, we offer and partner with other departments to provide language support.

- **English Conversation Groups:** Informal conversation groups that provide a relaxed setting to practice English and meet other students.
- **Writing Center Partnership:** We work closely with the University Writing Center, which offers one-on-one tutoring for all students to improve their writing skills.
- **Referrals to ESL Programs:** For students who require more intensive English language instruction, we can provide referrals to on-campus and community-based English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

Eligibility and Access

All currently enrolled international students at Westfield State University on F-1 and J-1 visas are eligible for our services. This includes undergraduate, graduate, and exchange students. Some services may also be available to other visa holders, such as dependents (F-2 and J-2).

How to Access Services

Our office is your central resource for all matters related to your international student experience.

- **Location:** Student Services Building, Suite 200
- **Hours:** Monday - Friday, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
- **Phone:** (555) 123-4567
- **Email:** iss@westfieldstate.edu
- **Website:** www.westfieldstate.edu/iss

Appointment Scheduling

While we do offer walk-in advising for quick questions, we strongly encourage students to schedule an appointment for more in-depth advising needs. This ensures that you will have dedicated time with an advisor.

- **To schedule an appointment:** Please visit our website at www.westfieldstate.edu/iss/appointments and select a time that works for you.

You will receive a confirmation email with the details of your appointment.

Confidentiality

International Student Services is committed to maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of our students. All conversations and records are kept confidential, except in cases where disclosure is required by law or university policy, or in situations that involve a threat of harm to self or others. We adhere to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Related Resources and Referrals

We work closely with other campus departments to provide a comprehensive support network for our students.

- **Admissions Office:** For questions about applying to Westfield State University.
- **Registrar's Office:** For academic records, transcripts, and graduation.
- **Student Health Services:** For medical care and health insurance.
- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):** For mental health and wellness support.
- **Career Services:** For career counseling, resume building, and job search assistance.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: How do I get a travel signature on my I-20/DS-2019?

A: You can bring your document to our office during walk-in hours or submit a request online through our website. Please allow 3-5 business days for processing.

Q: Can I work while I am a student?

A: Yes, but there are specific regulations you must follow. On-campus employment is generally permitted for up to 20 hours per week during the academic year. Off-campus

employment requires special authorization, such as CPT or OPT. Please schedule an appointment with an advisor to discuss your options.

Q: I am feeling homesick and having trouble adjusting to the new culture. What should I do?

A: These feelings are very normal. We encourage you to get involved in our cultural adjustment programs, join a student organization, and connect with other students. You can also schedule an appointment with a counselor at CAPS for additional support.

Revision History

Date	Version	Author	Summary of Changes
October 15, 2023	1.0	ISS Office	Initial document creation.