

IF YOU WANT TO STUDY IN THE UNITED STATES: UNDERGRADUATE STUDY

FOURTEEN STEPS TO STUDY IN THE UNITED STATES

STEP 1: Consult an advising center

STEP 2: Define your educational and career objectives

STEP 3: Determine whether you meet admission requirements

STEP 4: Evaluate your ability to finance U.S. study

STEP 5: Arrange to take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) examination

STEP 6: Prepare for enrollment by selecting 10 to 15 appropriate institutions

STEP 7: Write to at least 10 institutions you have selected and ask for an application and information

STEP 8: When application forms arrive, prepare them carefully, including all the items requested

STEP 9: If you need financial aid, begin to look for sources

STEP 10: Wait for offers of admission; supply any additional items requested

STEP 11: Accept one offer of admission; write to the institutions you will not attend

STEP 12: Decide whether you will live in housing on-campus or off

STEP 13: Apply for a student visa

STEP 14: Attend a predeparture orientation session at your advising center

GLOSSARY

IS U.S. STUDY APPROPRIATE FOR YOU?

Hundreds of thousands of students from other countries annually come to the United States to study. Most have a rewarding academic and personal experience and return to their home country well prepared to begin or resume a career. For a few, the experience may be disappointing. The difference lies in planning, and knowing the facts well in advance.

Many foreign students considering an educational experience in the United States fail to get information and advice based on their individual needs and abilities, as well as the differences in American colleges and universities. As a result, they may enter an educational institution in the United States with expectations that cannot be fulfilled.

Study in the United States may or may not be appropriate for you. Before you begin, you should think about the following:

- You will need about one year to complete the application process.
- Study in the United States is expensive. You will need a minimum of \$12,000 per year, and many universities cost more than \$20,000 per year.
- For undergraduates, financial aid is very rare.

STEP 1: CONSULT AN ADVISING CENTER.

First, contact the American embassy, consulate or United States Information Service (USIS) office in your country to locate the nearest educational advising center. Such centers are often found in U.S. Information Service offices, in American libraries, in binational centers, in Fulbright Commission offices; or in some countries, at AMIDEAST or Institute of International Education (IIE) offices.

Qualified educational advisers in these offices provide information and many services free of charge. When you go, or if you inquire by mail, you should state the following:

- Your secondary school grades;
- Your field of study;
- Whether or not you need financial aid;
- When you want to begin study;
- Your English language proficiency; and
- Where in the U.S. you want to study.

Many advising centers also offer group programs about the application and selection procedures, as well as predeparture orientation programs. The educational advisers can assist you in answering questions about:

- Equivalence between the educational system in your country and the United States;
- Entry requirements for study in your field;
- Use of reference materials to find appropriate institutions;
- Sources of financial assistance available in your home country and in the United States;
- Testing requirements and applications;
- How to prepare your applications;

- How to plan your education;
- Adjusting to academic and cultural life in the United States; and
- Using your education after you return to your home country.

In addition to educational advisers, graduates of U.S. colleges and universities who have recently returned home are excellent resources for advice about the benefits and costs of study in the United States.

STEP 2: DEFINE YOUR EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER OBJECTIVES.

Because educational objectives are usually related to a specific career goal, you need to consider how study in the United States will fit into your long-range plans, and whether this study will be fully recognized at home.

Ask yourself some important questions:

What career do I want to pursue?

Is employment available in this field in my home country?

An educational adviser will have information about the skills and background needed for various careers, as well as knowledge of the need for professionals in various fields in your country.

How can study in the U.S. enhance my career?

Consult educators, government officials and working professionals in your country to determine the usefulness of U.S. study for you at this point in your career. Check to see if there are revalidation or certification procedures for employment and take these into account in your planning.

Can I receive the same training at less expense in my own country or in a nearby country?

In some countries, undergraduate degrees from other countries may not be recognized for employment. Financial aid is more limited at the undergraduate level. In such circumstances, you may want to consider study in the U.S. at the graduate level rather than the undergraduate level, or you may want to study at the two-year technical degree level.

Will my U.S. degree be accepted when I return?

Will it offer the right kind of qualification for the kind of work I want to do?

Check with your Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, or other appropriate authority before you go, to find out if recognition of study abroad will pose any problems.

STEP 3: DETERMINE WHETHER YOU MEET ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS.

The three basic requirements for admission to educational institutions in the U.S. are:

- A strong academic background;
- Adequate financial resources; and
- A command of the English language.

True to the tradition of freedom and diversity in the United States, each institution sets its own admissions standards. Almost all colleges and universities, however, require the following for academic admission:

- Twelve years of education with the appropriate high school diploma or secondary school certificate;
- Academic achievement level sufficiently high to enter a university in your own country; and
- Any academic entrance examinations required by the institution.

Academic Credentials Required for Entry into Undergraduate Study or Vocational Training

In the United States, students complete 12 years of primary and secondary education to begin higher (postsecondary) education. Most U.S. students complete secondary education at about age 18. After finishing secondary school, students may opt for postsecondary vocational or technical, or academic study at a two-year community college, or a four-year college or university. *Students with fewer than 12 years of preparation cannot expect to be admitted, unless they have an outstanding academic record and have already completed a year or two at a university abroad.* This is a rule, however. The level at which you are admitted to a given institution depends on the policy of that institution, as well as the equivalence between the educational system in the U.S. and that in your country. U.S. colleges, universities and technical institutions vary in the requirements they set for previous academic achievement. Some have very high and exacting standards, while others are more flexible.

Undergraduate Admissions Examinations

Many colleges and universities require all applicants to take one or more academic entrance examinations ([Table 1](#)), in addition to TOEFL (Test of English As A Foreign Language). Two-year colleges usually require only TOEFL.

These tests are standardized, multiple choice tests that require a high degree of English proficiency. Some also require mathematical skills or in-depth knowledge of content related to the field of study. To obtain information about these examinations, consult your advising center or write to the addresses in [Table 1](#).

To find out if you need to take one or more of these entrance examinations, consult reference books at the advising center. These reference books also give ranges of the score levels of successful applicants. There are no passing or failing grades on these examinations, but your score will have an effect on the overall competitiveness of your application.

These tests are only one of the factors in the evaluation of a foreign student's record. Admissions officers are aware that you may be taking the examinations in a language other than your native tongue, and they will take this into account.

All colleges and universities have different admissions requirements. To compare them consider the following:

- Acceptance Ratio. The number of students who apply and how many are actually accepted into the college or university.
- Grade average or achievement ratings of successful applicants.
- Is a standardized admissions test like SAT or ACT required? If so, what were the average scores of successful applicants?

Admission to internationally-known institutions is highly competitive. Students who apply to such institutions will need to have excellent academic records and high scores on academic entrance examinations and the TOEFL examination.

Entry to some fields of study is also highly competitive. To apply for study in the fields at left, which are also some of the most popular fields that U.S. students pursue, you will need outstanding grades and test scores.

THE MOST HIGHLY COMPETITIVE FIELDS
Engineering
Computer Science
Pre-law
Pre-medicine
Marine biology
Architecture

A Special Note about Medical and Law Study

Medical study at all levels is highly competitive. *Students in the United States are never admitted to medical school immediately after secondary school, as in many countries. First, students enter pre-medical studies and complete a bachelor's degree. Only then can a student apply to medical school.*

For law, veterinary and dental studies, students also must complete a bachelor's degree before admission to a first professional degree program.

Law students from other countries rarely study in the United States until they have already become licensed as attorneys in their own countries and then only at the postgraduate level.

STEP 4: EVALUATE YOUR ABILITY TO FINANCE U.S. STUDY.

In making a financial assessment of whether or not study in the United States will be possible for you, consider the following:

Foreign students currently in the U.S. agree that study in the United States is usually more expensive than they had expected. You must plan for the total cost of living and studying over a period of several years, which, for foreign students, is usually at least \$6,000 per year higher than the cost of tuition, fees, and room and board published in the college catalog. From 1990 to 1991, the total "published" cost for one academic year ranged from \$3,000 to \$13,000 at two-year institutions, from \$7,000 to 14,000 at public four-year institutions, and from \$9,000 to \$22,000 for private four-year institutions. The average total "published" cost is about \$11,000 per year, making the average "real" cost \$17,000 to \$18,000 per year. About 75 percent of all foreign students are funded by home-country sources, either from private funds or home-country scholarships. There is only limited financial or scholarship aid available from U.S. institutions for undergraduate students from other countries.

Estimating Expenses for One Academic Year

Current immigration regulations restrict working to support yourself as a student. Even if you can find work, no job that you could find pays wages that will cover all your expenses.

When you apply for a student visa, you will need to show evidence of support adequate to cover study and living expenses for at least one academic year. (An academic year usually lasts nine months.)

The cost of study varies widely among institutions, and the cost of living varies from one location to the next. To compare total costs, therefore, you will need to do some research. A basic reference is: *The College Board Handbook: Foreign Student Supplement*, published by the College Board. This book compares tuition and the cost of living based on estimates from each institution.

[Table II](#) details costs involved in U.S. study for one academic year of nine months. Costs are for an unaccompanied student. Sponsored students should check with their sponsoring agency about terms of their support. After arrival in the United States, they should maintain contact with designated agencies or, if sponsored by the home-country government, with the cultural section of their embassy in the United States.

Economic Factors

If you plan to receive funds from your home country, fluctuations of the exchange rate between currency in your country and the U.S. dollar may make a significant difference in the dollar value of your funds over the period of your stay in the United States.

In financial planning, you should adjust cost estimates to allow for inflation. In recent years, the rate of inflation in the United States has been under five-percent annually.

Hidden Costs

In addition to published costs, which include application fees, tuition, miscellaneous fees, books, health insurance, and room and board, you will need to add at least \$6,000 per academic year to cover "hidden" costs. These hidden costs, detailed in [Table II](#), include personal expenses, costs when residence halls are closed, required health insurance and medical expenses which may exceed coverage, and changes in the value of currency. If you travel or study during the summer, if you live off campus, if you bring other members of your family, or if you buy a car, you must add in these extra costs.

Income Sources

Consider all funds available, and how much can be drawn from each source. For example:

- Annual family income, the earnings per year of each member of the immediate family who will provide money toward your education;
- Family assets, current holdings in bank accounts, investments in stocks and bonds, business enterprises, debts owed to the family, and any other assets from which money could be drawn or obtained through sales or loans in an emergency;
- Your own earnings until departure, savings from earnings and gifts, investments or property; and
- Other sources, such as relatives in the United States, or a sponsor (individual, government agency, or private organization) in your country who has agreed to pay all or part of your educational expenses.

Using a Financial Worksheet

On a financial worksheet, estimate your expenses for each major item for one academic year at the institution(s) in which you are interested. Estimate other expenses according to where you will be living, what sort of housing is available and other factors that you can anticipate. Then list and add the amounts that will be available for your educational expenses from each of the sources described above, and convert the total to U.S. dollars. If the total is less than the costs anticipated for the first year, you will need financial aid to make up the difference, plus an extra amount for emergencies. For each additional year of study, repeat this process, adding an appropriate amount to cover inflationary increases.

To avoid disappointment, do not plan to make up the difference by working or finding a scholarship once you get to the United States.

Financial Assistance

Many students in other countries seem to believe that foreign students can easily get the money they need for study once they have been admitted to a college or university in the United States. *That is an incorrect assumption and can lead to hardship and disappointment.* Most institutions have committed all their scholarship and loan funds long before the academic year begins. Accordingly, the best time to arrange U.S.-based financial assistance is before you leave home for the United States. Applications for financial aid must be initiated as early as one-and-a-half years before departure. See [Step 9](#) for suggestions on searching for financial aid.

STEP 5: ARRANGE TO TAKE THE TOEFL (TEST OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE) EXAMINATION.

To complete academic study or technical training in the United States successfully, you will need to be able to read, write and communicate orally in English with a high degree of proficiency. English language proficiency is a requirement for gaining admission to U.S. institutions of higher education as well as for achieving your academic and personal goals while in the United States.

[Table III](#)

Assessment of English Language Proficiency

To determine your level of English language proficiency, arrange to take the TOEFL as early as possible --*at least a year before you plan to enroll*. Most institutions require a score of 500 to 550 on the TOEFL examination for academic admission. A few accept scores as low as 450; selective institutions may require 600 or above. Scores of 600 or above may also be required in fields such as journalism or literature, which demand a higher than average proficiency in English.

Most institutions also give an English proficiency examination after arrival on campus to all entering foreign students, including those with TOEFL scores higher than 550. These additional tests provide more information about your ability to use English. Even if you already have basic English proficiency, a college or university may require you to take courses to improve your mastery of American English, academic usage or research and study skills. If you studied English under the British system, you may find that U.S. vocabulary and usage are quite different.

Can I Apply Without Taking the TOEFL Examination?

Some institutions, particularly those that have English as a second language (ESL) programs on campus, will admit you to the ESL program with the understanding that you will gain full academic admission as soon as you attain the required TOEFL score or, in some cases, as soon as you successfully complete the required level in the ESL course. However, because this increases the overall time and expense of your education, it may be more cost-effective to meet the English requirement through study in your home country.

Options for Improving English Language Proficiency

Bilingual centers, cultural centers, universities or private companies in your country may offer English language programs. Self-study programs involving tapes and written materials are available; however, not all students benefit from this method of learning a language. In any case, results, even from a private tutor, are never immediate.

If you determine that English language study in the United States is possible and appropriate, consult *English Language and Orientation Programs*, published by the Institute of International Education (IIE), for information about many of the programs available.

Choosing An English Language Program in the United States

There is no financial aid for students in intensive English language programs. Although some programs are less expensive, it is usually best to budget at least \$ 1,000 to \$1,300 a month for total expenses during English language study. If you begin without *any* previous English language study, it may take up to 12 months to reach a level sufficient for academic admission or even longer if your native language is very different from English. English language institutes may be affiliated with a college, university or community college, or they may be independent. Consider choosing a program at a university, college or community college where you plan to enroll, or find an English language center nearby. If you do not have to move, you will have fewer adjustments to make when you begin academic study or training.

It is wise to take the TOEFL test early and to take your score into account when choosing a program for English as a second language. Some institutes require a minimum TOEFL score of 350 to 450 for admission--that is, they do not accept beginners.

Compare programs with respect to cost per hour of instruction, qualifications of instructors, living costs in the area, availability of housing and support services, orientation programs, beginning dates, size and location. Look for programs that permit you to study at more than one level at the same time, since your reading, speaking and writing abilities may be quite different.

Special Programs

For those with TOEFL scores of 500 to 550, many English language institutes offer support programs to introduce students to techniques of writing research papers, taking notes and participating in class discussions. Other programs are available in English for Special Purposes, such as business English, aviation English or English for computer science.

STEP 6: PREPARE FOR ENROLLMENT BY SELECTING 10 TO 15 APPROPRIATE INSTITUTIONS.

Many foreign students miss opportunities for acceptance at institutions of their choice or chances for financial aid simply because they do not allow enough time for the application process. The process of entering higher education in the United States requires at least a year or a year-and-a-half if you are applying to selective

institutions or requesting financial aid. Selection, application and testing may each require several months. Travel arrangements and visa application can also be time-consuming.

Students from other countries who have finished secondary school are eligible for study in the United States toward undergraduate degrees (Table IV). There are about 1,350 community and junior colleges, and 2,000 colleges and universities in the United States that offer some or all of these degrees.

TABLE IV

UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES OFFERED IN THE UNITED STATES			
Degree	Abbreviation	Institution	Time Required
Associate of Arts	A.A.	Community colleges or junior college	Two years
Associate of Sciences	A.S.	Community, technical or junior colleges	Two years
Bachelor of Arts	B.A.	Colleges, universities	Four years
Bachelor of Science	B.S.	Colleges, universities	Four to five years

Community, Technical and Junior Colleges

These schools offer academic programs that are comparable to the first two years of university work and can be applied toward a four-year college degree. In addition, community colleges are unique in also offering general education courses, technical education and vocational training courses which prepare students for immediate employment.

Since their goal is to offer education to everyone in the local community, community colleges usually admit most students who meet basic requirements, offering a wide variety of options at relatively low tuition cost. Most, though not all community colleges admit foreign students. Private junior colleges offer similar programs, but may emphasize academic preparation for four-year colleges over technical studies.

Community and junior colleges award associate degrees after successful completion of two-year programs of study. (Note: Four-year colleges and universities usually do not award associate degrees after two years of study.) They may also offer certificates of achievement upon completion of shorter technical programs.

During 1989 and 1990, nearly 50,000 foreign students attended community, technical and junior colleges in the United States. There are several reasons why many foreign students find these colleges an attractive option for the first two years of undergraduate work. The low cost, the faculty's emphasis on teaching (as opposed to research) and attention to individual learning needs are often cited as advantages.

Many two-year colleges offer a full range of services to foreign students, although others are just beginning to develop services. Some have facilities and programs for foreign students, including English as a second language programs; others do not. Since most students live nearby and drive to campus, community colleges usually do not have housing on campus. Not all community colleges are authorized to issue Form I-20 (the document necessary to apply for a student visa). In such cases, foreign students must be permanent residents (U.S. immigrants) to attend these schools.

If you are planning to study beyond the associate degree, using the first two years at a community college or junior college for transfer credit toward a bachelor's degree, you must be sure that your academic credits will transfer to the four-year college or university you are considering. Although most community colleges within a particular state will have articulation (transfer) agreements with the public colleges and universities within that state, non-public colleges and universities might not accept all community college credits for transfer. Before you begin courses at a two-year institution, ask the registrar's office at the four-year institution(s) you are interested in attending, if they will honor credit for the particular courses you plan to take at your community college. Many community colleges have agreements with nearby four-year colleges or with universities to insure that appropriate academic credits earned at the community college will be automatically accepted for transfer toward a bachelor's degree program. Credit for technical programs directed toward employment usually do not transfer to academic programs.

Four-Year Colleges and Universities

Although not identical, the terms "college" and "university" are often used interchangeably in the United States. There is no legal or official control over the institution's option to choose one or the other as part of its name. Over the years, many institutions change their names as they add new programs and levels of study. Usually, a college offers a four-year program of study leading toward the bachelor's degree. Colleges may be independent, offering only undergraduate programs, or they may be part of a university that offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees. Universities emphasize research and often include professional schools, undergraduate

colleges of arts and sciences, and graduate schools. In 1989 and 1990, nearly 138,000 foreign students attended four-year programs leading to the bachelor's degree.

There are over 2,000 traditional four-year colleges and universities in the United States, and each has a unique identity. Each college determines its own goals, emphases and admissions standards. Liberal arts colleges, for example, emphasize excellence in teaching basic subjects such as humanities, natural sciences, social sciences and languages.

Besides liberal arts colleges, there are many other types of colleges. Historically, some colleges have admitted only male, only female or only black students; however, most now are open to all academically qualified students who apply. Other colleges have a particular religious emphasis. Colleges and universities that stress career preparation may have special cooperative education programs or internships in which students work part-time as a requirement for the degree.

Both colleges and universities may be public or private. Institutions of high quality are found equally among public and private universities; the principal difference is one of funding. Public institutions are funded partially by the government of the state in which the institution is located (for example, Texas or Florida), and partially by student tuition payments and private donations. Since public institutions are supported by state government, they give preference in enrollment and tuition charges to students from that state. The total cost, however, is usually lower at most state institutions than at private institutions, even for those who are not residents of the state.

State universities fall into two general categories:

Research Universities

Most states have at least one public university designed to provide the traditional variety of educational opportunities in academic fields. These universities, in addition to offering undergraduate education, stress research as well as teaching. As a general rule, they are less likely at the graduate level to place emphasis on applied study and research and more likely to place emphasis on theoretical, or "pure" research.

Land Grant and Sea Grant Universities

In 1862 Congress passed the Morrill Act that provided a grant of land to many of the states to establish "land grant" universities. These universities, in addition to providing a broad general education in many fields, emphasize the application of knowledge in such fields as agriculture and engineering.

The name of a land grant university often reflects this emphasis. Look for "Agricultural and Mechanical University" or "Technological University" to designate a university that stresses applied knowledge. Other states call this type of university a "state" university. More recently some state universities have been designated as "sea grant" universities, to emphasize the importance of marine applications.

Short-Term Study

In addition to degree programs, many two- and four-year colleges and universities offer opportunities for short-term study. Summer programs are often open to non-degree students, and some institutions offer the option of a single year of study (junior year) abroad.

Technical and Vocational Training

In the United States, community, technical and junior colleges (both public and private) provide training for employment in technical occupations. Two-year colleges offer a broad range of programs. For example, there are health programs (nursing, medical and dental assisting, X-ray technology, gerontological assisting); engineering technology programs (civil, electrical and architectural engineering, and aircraft maintenance); building trades programs (masonry, carpentry, home construction, wiring, plumbing); business occupations programs (secretarial, data processing, word processing, computer sciences, management, bookkeeping and accounting); agricultural programs (agricultural business, economics, sciences, technologies) and automotive technologies. Programs also exist for occupations in the tourist industry, law enforcement, fire sciences, security and energy management. Technical occupational programs are typically credit-bearing programs that extend a year or more. In most instances, students who successfully complete these programs receive certificates or associate degrees. The total credit earned for an associate degree intended for immediate employment may not completely transfer toward a four-year (bachelor's) college degree.

Community, junior and technical colleges also offer short-term technical refresher programs which may last as little as a few weeks or as long as several months. Proprietary institutions, which generally focus on a single professional area and may or may not offer degrees, provide an alternate resource for technical training.

SELECTION FACTORS

Selecting a working group of 10 to 15 institutions from the more than 3,000 available in the United States is a challenging task. Although so much variety can be bewildering, it has a positive side as well. With so many institutions to choose from, it is almost always possible to find one or more institutions that meet your academic

and financial needs and offer an environment in which you will be comfortable. Do not leave this important decision to a friend or relative, or choose only from the most famous institutions. There may be other institutions more appropriate to your goals and requirements.

Once you have located a suitable group of institutions that offer your field of study, compare them systematically. Look at the differences between them with respect to:

- Your chosen field of study,
- Quality,
- Ease of admission,
- Location,
- Size,
- Cost,
- Availability of financial aid,
- Housing,
- Approach to technology,
- Availability of English as a second language programs, and
- International Student Services Office.

The most important factors in selection are availability of your chosen field of study and high quality of instruction in that field. For undergraduates and for those seeking technical programs, there are many institutions offering high quality programs. One good strategy is to choose a region of the United States that you prefer and then locate institutions within that region that offer your field of study. Educational advisers can assist in interpreting the differences between institutions. In addition, advisers are aware of the error of applying only to famous, internationally-known institutions. They can suggest additional accredited colleges, universities, community colleges or technical schools that best fit your goals, finances and tastes. They are also aware of host-country regulations and educational equivalencies in various fields.

Use catalogs at your advising center (a complete and current set may be available on microfiche), brochures and other publications to investigate the entire range of possibilities. Using a worksheet makes it easy to eliminate institutions that are too expensive, that do not meet your individual needs, or that have admissions requirements that are too high or too low. Gather as much data as possible about specific programs and institutions through research at the advising center and through correspondence.

Another alternative is to use computerized college search programs found in some advising centers. These programs-for which a fee may be charged-can compare programs and institutions quickly, with respect to your needs and preferences.

Field of Study

Not all institutions offer your field of study. To find institutions that do offer the program you are considering, consult books that cross-reference institutions by field of study. Advising centers often have files of information for each field. Advisers and students in your country who have studied in the United States can contribute information from their personal knowledge and experience. Please note that fields of study and specializations may be found in different departments from the ones you may be used to in your country, and not always in the same department in each institution.

Quality

A question that students often ask is, "How do I find the best institutions?" Unfortunately, there are no simple answers.

The first step is to define your academic and career goals, as well as personal preferences about the campus environment. Then find institutions whose goals and offerings most closely match your needs.

A second step is to check whether or not institutions are accredited by organizations/associations recognized by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA). Each year the American Council on Education publishes for COPA a list of all accredited institutions in the United States, called *Accredited Institutions of Postsecondary Education*. While there may be institutions of high quality that have chosen not to participate in the COPA accrediting process, questions should be raised about the acceptance of degrees by, and transfer of credits to and from accredited institutions, and whether or not unaccredited institutions meet the minimum standards of a COPA-recognized institution. Caution should be exercised and considerably more information should be requested from such institutions before enrolling.

The United States does not have a Ministry of Education responsible for regulation of educational institutions. Instead, institutions agree to voluntary self-regulation in the process called accreditation. There are two types of accreditation: institutional and professional.

Institutional accreditation refers to the institution as a whole. For conferring institutional accreditation, COPA recognizes six regional accrediting agencies, as well as accrediting agencies for independent schools and religious colleges.

Professional accreditation exists only in fields or programs where professional or occupational competence in the field is a major concern, such as medicine, engineering, business and law. Professional accrediting associations usually require that the entire institution be accredited before they will accredit a particular program. The importance of professional accreditation varies from field to field. Often professional accreditation applies only to the first professional degree.

It is important to distinguish between accreditation and state authorization. State authorization or "state approval" may not involve regulation of quality at all, but simply indicate that an institution complies with financial and licensing regulations. Some states do not regulate educational institutions at all.

A third step in seeking quality is to avoid institutions that seem too anxious to enroll foreign students.

Unfortunately, there are some institutions in the United States that are more interested in the dollars of foreign students than in providing a good education. These institutions are not numerous, but there are enough that caution is necessary.

Published rankings (assessments) of colleges and universities are available, but their usefulness varies. There is no "official" ranking of colleges and universities in the United States. Rankings according to competitiveness of admission (that is, the ratio of the number of students who apply to the number admitted) are useful in giving an idea of the chances for admission. For other rankings, it is necessary to define your goals carefully, and to make sure that the criteria on which a ranking is based match your criteria for choosing institutions.

Some rankings are based on the opinions of one person who has visited or interviewed people about a number of colleges and universities. Others may be based on an opinion survey of professionals in the field. Still others are based on funds allotted by the federal government for research grants. For undergraduates, a high ranking indicating emphasis on research may mean a lack of emphasis on undergraduate teaching.

In the final analysis, finding the "best" institutions means finding the institutions that best meet your individual needs and interests.

Ease of Admission

Compare your academic record and test scores with published admissions standards of the institutions you are considering. If you are interested in very competitive institutions, apply to them, but also select a few less competitive institutions as second choices. This is standard procedure for U.S. students as well.

Location

The continental United States can be divided into several regions based on climate. In New England, the Middle Atlantic, the Midwest and eastern regions of the West, as well as Alaska to the north, winters can be cold, with extended periods in which the temperature stays below zero degrees centigrade. In these regions, summers are mild. In the South and Southwest regions, as well as Hawaii and Puerto Rico, summers may be hot, and winters mild. In the Northwest and Southwest year-round temperatures are more nearly uniform. Certain parts of the states of Washington and Oregon have a rainy season and a dry season.

Cost of living varies from region to region as well. In general (although exceptions are frequent), living costs are lowest in the South and Southwest regions and highest in large cities and in New England.

Urban, rural and suburban campuses offer different advantages and pose separate problems. Students from small countries or rural areas may appreciate the atmosphere of campuses far from large cities. Be sure to weigh advantages and disadvantages, and choose an area where you will feel most comfortable.

Size

As an undergraduate student, the size of an institution may be a significant factor in your choice. In general, the smaller the institution, the more personal attention you receive from faculty and administrators. Classes are often smaller, and the faculty devote more time to teaching. Large institutions offer more diversity and usually have prominent researchers on the faculty. Research facilities and equipment are usually superior. The number of students in a large university, often as many as 30,000 to 40,000, reduces the amount of individual contact possible between students and professors and therefore increases the need for self-reliance on the part of students.

Cost

Institutions vary widely not only with respect to tuition charges, but in cost of living as well. In comparing costs, remember to use the "total" cost rather than "published" figures based on adding tuition, room and board, books and fees. A general rule is to add at least \$6,000 (for a single student) to published totals.

Availability of Financial Aid

Read catalogs and reference books carefully to locate institutions where financial aid may be available-for undergraduates usually in the form of partial scholarships. Colleges that seek an international flavor may offer unadvertised scholarships to encourage foreign students. Others have athletic scholarships open to foreign as well as to U.S. students.

Availability of Housing

If inexpensive housing is available in campus residence halls, costs can be reduced. Undergraduate students are usually advised to spend at least the first semester in campus housing. If off-campus housing takes a long time to find or is far from campus, additional expenses can be great.

Approach to Technology

If you are studying an applied field, look for programs that most nearly match requirements of your home country. For example, if you plan to study agriculture and you come from a desert country, look for programs in dry-land farming, such as those in Arizona and Texas, rather than tropical agricultural courses.

Availability of English As A Second Language

If you need further English language preparation, select colleges, community colleges or universities that offer English as a second language or make sure such programs exist at nearby institutions.

International Student Services Office

One of the most important factors for foreign students is the presence of a comprehensive program of international student services. An institution that provides services for foreign students is also more likely to be sensitive to the academic needs of students from other countries.

STEP 7: WRITE TO AT LEAST 10 INSTITUTIONS YOU HAVE SELECTED AND ASK FOR AN APPLICATION AND INFORMATION.

After selecting a group of 10 to 15 institutions that seem most appropriate, write to at least 10 of them for information and application materials. Always use the same spelling of your name, from the first inquiry through the entire application process. This is especially important if your name is transliterated from some other language into English.

In requesting information and application materials, use a preliminary application form provided by the nearest advising center, or write a letter containing information similar to that in the application form. If there are mail or currency restrictions in your home country, consult the nearest advising center for procedures.

When to send inquiries. Receiving a response to your first letter may take four to six weeks (See [Table V, "Corresponding with American Educational institutions."](#)). For selective institutions or for financial assistance, mail your first inquiry at least a year-and-a-half before you plan to enroll. In other cases, send your first inquiry at least a year before you plan to enroll (by August for the fall term of the next year).

How to send inquiries. Send inquiries by airmail, and request an airmail reply. Carefully type or print all items. Do not send any documents with the original inquiry; wait until you file a formal application. Some universities have facsimile (fax) numbers; if this is the case, you may be able to save time by making your first inquiry by fax. In most cases, for the application, however, the university will want actual documents rather than a facsimile transmission.

If you have conducted thorough research, most or all of the institutions will respond by inviting you to submit a full formal application for admission. They will send all the necessary forms and instructions. Sometimes a preliminary application will be necessary.

If you are applying to English as a second language programs you may find applications included in brochures available in the advising center. In such cases a preliminary letter is unnecessary.

What to Include

You may lose valuable time by not including essential information in the first inquiry. A letter or preliminary application should have the following:

- *Where to send inquiries.* Address your inquiry to the Director of Undergraduate Admissions, using the address for the college or university given in the reference books.
- *Your name,* printed legibly or typed in exactly the same form and spelling each time, clearly indicating which of the names is the family name. In the United States, each person is identified primarily by a single family name or "last name" and it is customary to use only the father's family name as the son's or daughter's family name. It is best to use your name as it appears on your passport.

- *Date of birth*, printed or typed with month first, then day and year as it corresponds to the (Gregorian) calendar used in the United States. Example: May 6, 1972 is 5/6/72. If a different calendar is used in your country, "translate" into the U.S. system and be sure to always use the same birth date.
- *Mailing address*. (See [Table V](#).)
- *Citizenship* and country issuing passport.
- *Marital status* and number of dependents.
- *Past and present education*, in chronological order, including secondary schools, technical programs, colleges and universities attended, with *examination results, grades and rank in class*, if known.
- *Program of study*, stated as specifically as possible, with the month and year in which you hope to begin studying in the United States.
- *Total funds available* to meet your educational and living expenses during each year of study in the United States, and sources of these funds.
- *Scores of TOEFL and required admissions tests*, if available, or dates on which you are registered to take these examinations.
- *Number of years of English language study* and where you studied.

These items will enable admissions officers to judge whether application at a particular level is suitable and to indicate chances for admission.

Table V

STEP 8: WHEN APPLICATION FORMS ARRIVE, PREPARE THEM CAREFULLY, INCLUDING ALL THE ITEMS REQUESTED.

Although U.S. educational institutions vary in their procedures and requirements for admission of students from other countries, formal applications usually include most of the following:

- Institutional application form;
- Certified copies of original educational documents;
- Certified translations of these documents if not originally in English;
- Evidence of English language proficiency (usually TOEFL);
- Scores for any required academic entrance examinations;
- Financial information, with applications for financial aid if requested;
- Letters of recommendation from teachers; and
- Non-refundable application fee of \$ 10 to \$75.

As in the initial inquiry, be sure that you print and spell your name in exactly the same way in each part of the application. Use the same name order, and indicate the *family name*, either by underlining it or writing it in all capital letters, for example: Richard John SMITH. If different parts of the application arrive separately -- for example, test scores or recommendation letters -- they will be placed in separate files if the names are even slightly different. *Admissions files do not become active unless they are complete*, so unless all items arrive and are placed together, no action will be taken. To help admissions officers keep all documents together, attach a note to each document which bears a different name or different spelling, giving the same first, second and family name you used on your application form. Choose the name on the passport if possible.

Instructions for each application will differ. Follow them carefully, paying particular attention to closing dates or deadlines for receipt of completed applications. (See *The College Board Handbook: Foreign Student Supplement*.) Allow enough time for mail delivery. Often the closing date for students from other countries is earlier than for U.S. students. Usually applications for scholarships or fellowships must be submitted earlier than applications for admission.

Try to begin work on applications well before the deadline and submit completed applications two or three months before the closing date. This will allow the institutions time to evaluate the application before the peak of the selection period. If you are applying in a competitive field or to a selective institution, submit your application as early as possible. Many U.S. admissions counselors believe that early applications are apt to be considered more favorably than later ones.

If there are mail or currency restrictions in your home country, seek advice on effective application procedures from educational advising centers in your country.

Keep copies for your records of all documents and application forms submitted. Keep a record of when materials were mailed and where.

Throughout the application process, do the best that you can to comply with instructions, but if some procedure is impossible or some document is lost or cannot be obtained, state the situation in a letter with a cover letter

from the advising office or the U.S. cultural affairs officer. Sometimes accommodations will be made for difficult circumstances.

Application Forms and Instructions

The glossary at the back of this handbook defines the more common technical terms that may be included in application forms. Most institutions want to know the kind of career you plan, as well as plans for career preparation and educational background.

Educational Documents

Each institution will specify the types of official records it requires to document past education. Usually they will require your entire scholastic record for secondary school and/or university sources. U.S. admissions officers prefer that transcripts of previous educational work be sent directly from your former schools. The institution may also furnish special forms on which school authorities are asked to write your grades and your academic performance relative to other students in your institution. If such forms are not provided, you or the school will be expected to submit official documents that provide this kind of information. If the admissions officer requests explanation of the grading and class ranking system or descriptions of courses that you have taken, this information should be furnished by an official of your school or university if possible.

As requested, send certified copies of the originals of diplomas, degrees or professional titles, or copies of full records of your performance in the comprehensive examinations administered in your home country. Do not send original documents unless there is no alternative; usually they cannot be returned. Copies should be certified with an official seal from the school or university or certified by a public official authorized to certify documents. In some countries these officials are called notaries public. If English translations are necessary, you may use the services of a professional translator or translate the document yourself. Such translations must also be certified by a notary public or another acceptable agency. U.S. embassies and consulates no longer certify documents, copies or translations.

Credit for Previous Study at the Same Level (Transfer Credit)

If you have taken courses in the United States, or at an institution in your home country, and you feel that these courses might apply toward the degree you are seeking, include certified transcripts for these courses. In most cases, admissions offices cannot give, in advance of admission, an estimate of credit that will be accepted. This is because, in most cases, awarding credit toward a degree at a particular institution involves making sure that each course is roughly equivalent to a course at that institution. An estimate of transfer credit usually will not be made until a student has been enrolled for several months. No credit will be awarded for courses which have been applied to a previous degree, nor will academic credit be awarded for courses designed to fulfill requirements for a technical/vocational program.

Statement of Educational Purpose

Most applications include a space for an essay detailing your purpose in seeking an education in your chosen field, your strengths in that field and your plans for the future. Be sure to take this task seriously. It is one of the most important parts of your application. Think through your essay before you present it and make sure you organize your answer clearly, neatly and in a well-written manner. The essay may also be used as a sample of how well you write in English.

Evidence of English Language Proficiency

The Test of English As A Foreign Language (TOEFL) is almost always required of non-native speakers of English for full academic admission. This applies to all students from countries where English is not the first language, even those whose education may have been in English. Generally a score of 500 to 550 is the minimum accepted. The TOEFL score required by institutions varies according to the availability of English as a second language programs on their campuses. In addition to reading and listening sections for all test administrations, TOEFL now includes a written component on three test dates. This component is required by some institutions.

For general information about requesting that scores be sent officially to institutions, see instructions in the TOEFL bulletin. The test score will be mailed automatically within about a month after you take TOEFL, if you request it on the answer sheet at the examination. After the test, TOEFL also offers a Rush Reporting Service for a higher fee. Score results will be mailed within two working days after the TOEFL office in Princeton, New Jersey, receives the special request and fee.

Most institutions routinely test students for English language proficiency after they arrive, even though TOEFL is required for admission.

Academic Admissions Examinations

Look in the reference books at your advising center to see whether or not you need to have the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), one of the in Achievement Tests, or the American College Test (ACT) for admission your field (See [Table I.](#)). if they are required, these tests are only one of the factors in the evaluation of a foreign student's record.

Admissions officers are aware that you may be taking examinations in a language other than your native tongue and will take this into account when evaluating your application. Before taking the examinations, it is a good idea to practice with standardized tests using the multiple choice format, since this type of test may be unfamiliar. Your adviser can often suggest books that contain sample tests with the bulletin of information and application form. The programs may also offer additional study materials for a fee.

Bulletins of information about these tests are usually available free of charge from advising centers. it is a good idea to keep bulletins throughout the entire period you are applying to institutions (not just until you have taken the test), since they include information about score reporting and what to do if your scores do not arrive.

Academic admissions examinations are offered in many locations worldwide. Test administrations are frequent in some locations and less frequent in others, depending on the number of applicants. To find the location of the nearest test center, or to establish a special test center where none is available, see instructions in the bulletin, or write to the testing agency which administers the test. (See [Table I.](#))

Start inquiry at least a year before intended enrollment in order to be in time for those tests which are given infrequently. The closing, or deadline date, is often the date by which applications must be received, not the date by which they must be sent, Mail applications by airmail two to four weeks before the closing date.

About one month after the examination, score results are sent directly to the institutions requested on the test application form. The test fee usually includes the cost of sending score reports to three or four institutions. Additional score reports require payment of an additional charge. Receiving a personal record of the score can take up to six or eight weeks after the test date, depending on the speed of international mail delivery. Waiting to see a score before sending it to an institution can cause a significant delay.

Letters of Recommendation

If institutions request letters of recommendation, the college or university will specify the number of letters to be submitted. Those you ask to serve as references should be people who hold respected positions and who know you and your academic work well.

For recommendation letters to be effective, they should contain insights into your seriousness of purpose, academic promise, motivation, adaptability, personality and character. Recommendations which give an honest appraisal of your capabilities-weak points as well as strong points-are much more convincing to U.S. admissions officers (and therefore more valuable) than general letters of extreme praise or checklists for rating students.

Letters should be in English, or accompanied by a translation. If the college or university provides a form with the application, use it for the recommendation.

To guarantee candor and confidentiality, you must arrange for the writer to mail your recommendation directly to the university without your reading it. As a courtesy, give each person a stamped airmail envelope addressed to the institution. Write in the lower left hand corner of the envelope "Re: Application of (your name)."

Evidence of Financial Resources

Admissions officers will not issue the certificates needed to request a visa for study in the United States until they are satisfied that you have enough money, from whatever sources, to cover all expenses during the period of your stay in the United States. Most institutions require that you submit statements of detailed information on the amounts and sources of funds available to pay your educational and living expenses while in the United States.

Many institutions ask that you fill out a copy of the College Board Scholarship Service "Foreign Student's Certification of Finances" as part of the application. Others simply ask for a list of sources and amounts. Usually this information must be confirmed or witnessed by a responsible individual, such as an officer of the bank where the listed funds are on deposit. If a sponsor or parent is contributing, they may be asked to attest to the availability of funds. In some cases, notarization (see [Glossary](#)), may be required.

STEP 9: IF YOU NEED FINANCIAL AID, BEGIN TO LOOK FOR SOURCES.

Home-Country Sources

First, investigate the availability of loans, grants or scholarships from sources in your own country. Possibilities may include government ministries that provide support for study abroad in certain specific fields; non-governmental sources, such as private individuals, foundations and trust funds that give to charitable causes; business corporations, churches and religious groups; or schools and universities (especially those with U.S.

affiliations), In some Latin American countries, educational credit organizations help students who wish to study abroad in certain fields and at certain levels which have been determined to be important to national economic development. The educational advising center often has information about local sources of support. Because contacts are easier to make and the number of applicants may be lower relative to the number of awards, you may be able to obtain financial aid more easily from home-country sources than from international organizations or from U.S. sources. U.S. government aid is seldom available at the undergraduate level.

Private U.S. Sources and International Organizations

A few private U.S. agencies, foundations, business corporations and professional associations award financial aid in the interest of furthering international exchange. International organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) may also offer financial awards. Competition for these awards, which apply almost exclusively to graduate students, is very intense. For information, consult references available at educational advising centers, especially for partial awards in your field of study. Do not write to these organizations unless you have found a listing of a particular award for which you might be eligible; these organizations cannot answer general requests for financial aid.

U.S. Colleges and Universities

Most of the limited financial aid for undergraduates from U.S. sources comes from colleges and universities themselves. In some cases, students from abroad compete with American students for limited financial aid. Below are some questions that you can ask yourself in order to locate universities that might be able to give you at least partial financial support:

Are you an exceptionally good student?

If you have an excellent grade average and class ranking in your secondary work, if you have high scores on the SAT and a TOEFL score of at least 600, you may be able to qualify for admission to a school with very high admissions standards that will offer funding to students who meet their admissions requirements but are unable to pay the total cost of their education. If you think you can qualify for admission to one of these universities, read about applying for admission to highly competitive colleges in books at the advising center. You may require some special tactics to make your application stand out from all the other excellent students who apply.

Are you an exceptionally good athlete, or do you excel at another skill?

To take advantage of this strategy, you first need to know which universities or colleges have varsity teams in your sports, and you need to consult references to see which universities actually give athletic scholarships. This may also apply to other special skills you may have, such as dancing or art. Opinions differ about how you should demonstrate your skill; a visit from a scout is best, but not always possible. If you send a video, be sure it is professionally made and of high quality.

Do you know of a college or university that hopes to internationalize its campus but has low representation from your part of the world?

Usually colleges and universities that offer any financial aid to international students do so because they want superior students who will provide international breadth to the campus. Find such universities by consulting with students and professionals who have studied recently in the U.S. and by discussing this with your educational adviser. (These are usually small liberal arts colleges or colleges with religious affiliations.) Apply to the college or university that might be a good prospect and request financial aid with the application. Your academic record, however, must be excellent for this to be successful. No financial aid is available for English as a second language study; so you must have excellent English skills (TOEFL 550 to 600) to be considered.

What institutions have given at least partial aid to first year foreign students in the past?

You can answer this question by looking through reference books. If an institution says "No," however, don't apply for financial aid. That means that the institution really has none to offer.

Are you willing to study at a community college for the first two years in order to establish your aptitude and reduce your costs, or are you willing to study at a less expensive university or college?

Choosing an institution whose total costs are less than \$12,000 rather than one that costs \$24,000 represents an effective \$12,000 scholarship. In general, you can stretch available funds much farther if you plan to spend at least the first two years at a less expensive institution (but be sure your credit will transfer).

Can you reduce the number of courses you need to take by taking advanced placement examinations or transferring courses from home-country institutions?

If previous education enables you to get U.S. college credit for advanced placement examinations, you can reduce the time you need to spend in the United States.

Although U.S. universities represent only a possible source of last resort for financial aid, you should not hesitate to apply for aid. Application for aid will not prejudice your chances of admission to a chosen program of study.

On the other hand, since almost all scholarships cover only a part of the tuition, state the amount you do have available for study rather than asking for a full scholarship. It will greatly increase your chances of support. Do not understate the amount of funds needed in the expectation of later obtaining additional aid, however. Opportunities for financial aid (including employment) are severely limited once you are already in the United States.

Many colleges and universities have unadvertised possibilities for at least partial funding of students who qualify for academic admission but need financial support; go ahead and apply for financial aid unless the institution lists itself in reference books as not offering financial aid. Make your request for financial assistance on the basis of merit, stating your need as a secondary factor. Universities get many, many letters stating the adverse circumstances and good character of applicants; this may move the admissions officer personally, but only a superior application with documented financial need will actually be effective.

Employment

Sometimes the international Student Services Office can help foreign students find jobs on campus consisting of up to 20 hours per week. The position must not displace a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. After the first year, part-time employment off-campus may be possible. However, neither on- nor off-campus jobs will pay high wages.

Cooperative Education Programs

Some community, technical and junior colleges, four-year colleges and universities have cooperative education programs, in which students alternate periods of full-time study with periods of employment. When a period of employment is required for the degree, foreign students (except M-1 visa holders) can work legally to defray part of their expenses by participating in such a program. Cooperative programs that incorporate several short periods of employment alternating with periods of study usually do not admit foreign students; look for programs with one or two extended periods of employment. Whether or not cooperative work assignments actually pay a significant part of study cost varies from program to program.

For further information about sources of financial aid, consult sources listed at the end of this booklet, "Sources for Additional Information". Many of the references will be available in your advising center, and the educational adviser may know of additional home-country sources.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE APPLICATION TO U.S. INSTITUTIONS

- Observing deadlines, apply to at least five institutions.
- Of the five, no more than two should be highly selective.
- At least two should be institutions whose admissions standards fit closely with your background, test scores and academic achievements.
- The remaining institutions should include at least one that will almost certainly grant admission.
- If you have selected a highly competitive field such as engineering, or if you are requesting financial assistance, apply to a larger number of institutions.

STEP 10: WAIT FOR OFFERS OF ADMISSION; SUPPLY ANY ADDITIONAL ITEMS REQUESTED.

Several months will pass while institutions review applications. During this period, test scores, letters of recommendation and other documents arrive, and the admissions file is finally completed. Consult the advising center if you encounter difficulties such as inability to obtain particular documents.

Many institutions review all completed applications at the same time and issue acceptances between March and May. Some institutions have rolling admissions; that is, they continue to accept applications throughout the academic year. The advantage of this for a foreign student is that delays often caused by long distances are less serious; acceptance may still be possible as late as June or even July before the academic year begins in September.

STEP 11: ACCEPT ONE OFFER OF ADMISSION; WRITE TO THE INSTITUTIONS YOU WILL NOT ATTEND.

If you are accepted by an institution, you will receive a letter of admission and the form you need to apply for a visa, the "Certificate of Eligibility for Non-Immigrant F-1 Status," Form I-20 A-B. (See [Step 13](#).) The letter of admission will probably ask that you make a decision within a specified period. You may also be requested to confirm your intention to enroll by sending in a deposit of \$50 to \$100. If you accept, write a letter to the admissions officer, stating your intention to enroll. Fill out and return any additional forms by airmail. If

university-sponsored housing applications are included, process them as soon as possible, and return them by airmail with a check or money order for any deposit that may be required. (See [Step 12](#))

STEP 12: DECIDE WHETHER YOU WILL LIVE IN HOUSING ON-CAMPUS OR OFF

Alternatives for housing may include residential halls on campus, rented rooms, or furnished or unfurnished apartments on or off-campus. Occasionally students are able to arrange accommodations with a family. Except for on-campus housing, however, most of these options must be arranged after you arrive. (See the booklet, *Predeparture Orientation*.)

On-Campus Housing

Sometimes separate residence halls are provided for men and for women; in other cases, the residence halls are "co-ed" -- that is men and women live in the same housing unit but do not share rooms. Usually two students share a room; single rooms are scarce. Generally, rooms have a bed, a desk, a chair, a closet and sometimes draperies. Students must provide bed linens, draperies, decorations and accessories. Contracts for residence halls usually cover the entire academic year. Often you must pay non-refundable fees in full at the beginning of the year -- so you will need to have a large portion of your funds available immediately on arrival-if you have not already paid them with your admissions cost. "Room and board" contracts cover the cost of housing as well as a specified number of meals in the campus dining hall or cafeteria.

Off-Campus Housing

If you choose to live off-campus, you will probably have to wait until after you arrive to arrange housing. The international Student office may be able to help in locating housing, but it is wise to plan to take this responsibility yourself. Some cities have apartment locator services that charge a fee for locating apartments with your specifications.

Options include single rented rooms, with or without kitchens; rooms in "boarding houses" with meals provided at extra cost; shared houses for rent; and furnished or unfurnished rented apartments. "Furnished" in the United States means that basic furniture and sometimes floor coverings and draperies are provided. Bed linens, towels, kitchen equipment and dishes are not provided. Public transportation may be scarce. if you need a car to get to campus, costs will increase dramatically.

Living with a Family

The ease of arranging homestays with families in the U.S. varies from location to location. If this service is available, the cost is usually about the same as that of a rented private room with added meals. The International Student Services Office can sometimes offer information about homestays. The Experiment in international Living is one of a number of organizations that sponsor group programs and one-month homestays for students who would like to live with an American family before beginning their studies.

STEP 13: APPLY FOR A STUDENT VISA.

Consult the consular section at the nearest United States embassy or consulate as early as possible to determine the specific procedures and documents necessary to apply for a non-immigrant (F-1) student visa. These may differ from country to country. Below are the usual requirements:

- Passport, valid for at least six months after the date you plan to leave;
- Visa application form;
- A photograph, 5 cm by 5 cm, with your signature in English on the back;
- Certificate of Eligibility for Non-Immigrant F-1 Student Status (Form I-20 A-B);
- Affidavit of financial support form and evidence of support;
- Evidence of English language ability; and
- Any other documents of local importance.

The F-1 Student Visa

To apply for an F-1 student visa, present the above documents to a U.S. consular officer. The consular officer usually interviews applicants and will examine your documents and review your educational plans. Although the visa application process normally is not time-consuming, it is a good idea to apply early. Any questions that might arise about your qualification to receive a visa can be dealt with without delaying your departure.

Note: The Form I-20 is not a visa, nor does it guarantee a visa. Be sure that you have read the form before you go to the interview and have completed any statements required of you.

For entry into the United States, the institution endorsed on the visa and the institution you plan to attend must be the same.

STEP 14: ATTEND A PREDEPARTURE ORIENTATION SESSION AT YOUR ADVISING CENTER.

Your advising center may offer programs to give you information about what to expect regarding the academic system, the climate, the culture and other aspects of your life in the United States. Arrange to attend such a program, and obtain the booklet in this series, *Predeparture Orientation*, which gives further information.

GLOSSARY

Academic adviser: Members of the faculty who helps and advises the student on academic matters. He or she may also assist the student during the registration process.

Academic year: The period of formal academic instruction, usually September to June. Depending on the institution, it may be divided into terms of varying lengths--semesters, trimesters or quarters.

Accreditation: Approval of colleges, universities and secondary schools by nationally recognized professional associations. Institutional accreditation affects the transferability of credits from one institution to another before a degree program is completed.

Advanced placement or advanced standing: A waiver of some of the studies normally required for an undergraduate degree, granted to a student on the basis of prior study or experience (often as indicated by the student's performance on special examinations).

Baccalaureate degree: The degree of "bachelor" conferred upon graduates of most U.S. colleges and universities.

Bachelor's degree: Degree conferred by an institution of higher learning after the student has accumulated a certain number of undergraduate credits. Usually a bachelor's degree takes four years to earn, and it is a prerequisite for studies in a graduate program.

Campus: The land on which the buildings of a college or university are located.

Class rank: A number or ratio indicating a student's academic standing in his or her graduating class. A student who ranks first in a class of 100 students would report his or her class rank as 1/100. Class rank may also be expressed in percentiles (i.e., the top 25 percent, the lower 50 percent).

College: An institution of higher learning that offers undergraduate programs, usually of a four-year duration, which lead to the bachelor's degree in the arts or sciences (B.A. or B.S.). The term "college" is also used in a general sense to refer to a postsecondary institution.

College catalog: An official publication of a college or university giving information about academic programs, facilities (such as laboratories, dormitories, etc.), entrance requirements and student life.

Community, technical or junior college: An institution of higher learning that offers programs of up to two years' duration leading to an associate degree in the arts or sciences (A.A. or A.S.) or to a technical degree. Credits earned at a community or junior college are usually transferable to a four-year institution with programs leading to a bachelor's degree. Students on a two-year program prepare for semi-professional or technical employment. Community and junior colleges usually require a secondary school diploma or its equivalent for admission.

Course: Regularly scheduled class sessions of one to five (or more) hours per week during a term. A degree program is made up of a specified number of required and elective courses and varies from institution to institution. The courses offered by an institution are usually assigned a name and number ("Mathematics 101," for example) for identification purposes.

Credits: Units institutions use to record the completion of courses of instruction (with passing or higher grades) that are required for an academic degree. The catalog of a college or university defines the amounts and kinds of credits that are required for its degrees and states the value in terms of degree credit -- or "credit hours" or "credit points" -- of each course offered.

Cut: Unauthorized absence from a class.

Dean: Director or highest authority within a certain professional school or college of a university.

Degree: Diploma or title conferred by a college, university or professional school upon completion of a prescribed program of studies.

Department: Administrative subdivision of a school, college or university through which instruction in a certain field of study is given (such as English department, history department).

Dormitories: Housing facilities on the campus of a college or university reserved for students. A typical dormitory would include student rooms, bathrooms, common rooms and possibly a cafeteria.

Drop: See "Withdrawal."

Electives: Courses that students may "elect" (choose freely) to take for credit toward their intended degree as distinguished from courses that they are required to take.

Faculty: The members of the teaching staff, and occasionally the administrative staff, of an educational institution. The faculty is responsible for designing the plans of study offered by the institution.

Fees: An amount charged by schools, in addition to tuition, to cover costs of institutional services.

Financial aid: A general term that includes all types of money, loans and part-time jobs offered to a student.

Flunk: To fail an examination or course.

Foreign Student Adviser: The person associated with a school, college or university who is in charge of providing information and guidance to foreign students in such areas as U.S. government regulations, student visas, academic regulations, social customs, language, financial or housing problems, travel plans, insurance and certain legal matters.

Freshman: A first-year student at a high school, college or university.

Full-time student: One who is enrolled in an institution and taking a full load of courses; the number of courses and hours is specified by the institution.

Grade: The evaluation of a student's academic work.

Grade point average: A system of recording academic achievement based on an average calculated by multiplying the numerical grade received in each course by the number of credit hours studied.

Grading system: Schools, colleges and universities in the United States commonly use letter grades to indicate the quality of a student's academic performance: A (excellent), B (good), C (average), D (below average), and E or F (failing). Work rated C or above is usually required of an undergraduate student to continue his or her studies. Grades of P (pass), S (satisfactory), and N (no credit) are also used. In percentage scales, 100 percent is the highest mark, and 65-70 percent is usually the lowest passing mark.

Graduate: A student who has completed a course of study, either at the high school or college level. A graduate program at a university is a study course for students who hold a bachelor's degree.

High school: The last three or four years of the 12-year public education program in the United States.

Higher education: Postsecondary education at colleges, universities, junior or community colleges, professional schools, technical institutes and teacher-training schools.

Institute of technology: An institution of higher education which specializes in the sciences and technology, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Junior: A third-year student at a high school, college or university.

Lecture: Common method of instruction in college and university courses; a professor lectures in classes of 20 to several hundred students. Lectures may be supplemented with regular small group discussions led by teaching assistants.

Liberal arts: A term referring to academic studies of subjects in the humanities (language, literature, philosophy, the arts), the social sciences (economics, sociology, anthropology, history, political science) and the sciences (mathematics, physics, chemistry). Also called "liberal arts and sciences," or "arts and sciences."

Maintenance: Referring to the expenses of attending a college or university, including room (living quarters), board (meals), books, clothing, laundry, local transportation and miscellaneous expenses.

Major: The subject or area of studies in which students concentrate. Undergraduates usually choose a major after the first two years of general courses in the arts and sciences.

Minor: The subject or area of studies in which students concentrate their studies to a lesser extent than in their majors.

Non resident: Students who do not meet the residence requirements of the state or city that has a public college or university. Tuition fees and admissions policies may differ for residents and non-residents. Foreign students are usually classified as non-residents, and there is little possibility of changing to resident status at a later date for fee purposes. Most publicly supported institutions will not permit a foreign student to be classified as a resident student while on a student visa.

Notarization: The certification of a document, a statement or a signature, as authentic and true by a public official-known in the United States as a "notary public." Applicants in other countries should have their documents certified or notarized in accordance with instructions.

Placement test: An examination used to test a student's academic ability in a certain field so that he or she may be placed in the appropriate courses in that field. In some cases a student may be given academic credit based on the results of a placement test.

Plan of study: A detailed description of the course of study for which a candidate applies. The plan should incorporate the objective given in the student's "statement of purpose."

Prerequisites: Programs or courses that a student is required to complete before being permitted to enroll in a more advanced program or course.

President: The rector or highest administrative officer of an academic institution.

Quarter: Period of study of approximately 10 to 12 weeks' duration.

Quiz: Short written or oral test, less formal than an examination.

Recommendation, Letter of: A letter appraising an applicant's qualifications, written by a professor or employer who knows the applicant's character and work. Also called "personal recommendation," "personal endorsement," or "personal reference."

Registration: Selection of courses to be taken during a quarter, semester or trimester.

Scholarship: A study grant of financial aid, usually given at the undergraduate level, which may be supplied in the form of a cancellation of tuition and/or fees.

Semester: Period of study of approximately 15 to 16 weeks' duration, usually half of an academic year.

Seminar: A form of small group instruction, combining independent research and class discussions under the guidance of a professor. Seminars are usually open to undergraduate seniors and graduate students.

Senior: A fourth-year student at a high school, college or university.

Social Security number: A number issued by the U.S. government to job-holders for payroll deductions for old age, survivors and disability insurance. Anyone who works regularly must obtain one. Many institutions use the Social Security number as a student identification number.

Sophomore: A second-year student at a high school, college or university.

Special student: A student at a college or university who is not enrolled as a candidate for a degree.

Subjects: Courses in an academic discipline offered as part of a curriculum of an institution of higher learning.

Survey course: A course which covers briefly the principal topics of a broad field of knowledge.

Syllabus: An outline of topics to be covered in an academic course.

Teacher's college: institution of higher learning that confers degrees, especially in teacher education, or a college within a university which offers professional preparation for teachers.

Test: Examination. Any procedure measuring the academic progress of a student.

Transcript: A certified copy of a student's educational record containing titles of courses, the number of credits and the final grades in each course. An official transcript will also state the date a degree has been conferred.

Trimester: Period of study consisting of approximately three equal terms of 16 weeks during the academic year.

Tuition: The money an institution charges for instruction and training (does not include the cost of books or supplies).

Undergraduate studies: Two- or four-year programs in a college or university after high school graduation, leading to the associate or bachelor's degree.

University: An educational institution that usually maintains one or more four-year undergraduate colleges (or schools) with programs leading to a bachelor's degree; a graduate school of arts and science awarding master's degrees and doctorates (Ph.D's); and graduate professional schools.

Vocational schools: Institutions which prepare students for semi-professional or technical employment.

Withdrawal: The administrative procedure of dropping a course or leaving an institution.

Zip code: A series of numbers in mailing addresses that designate postal delivery districts in the United States.

IF YOU WANT TO STUDY IN THE UNITED STATES: GRADUATE STUDY

FOURTEEN STEPS TO STUDY IN THE UNITED STATES

STEP 1: Consult an advising center

STEP 2: Define your educational and career objectives

STEP 3: Determine whether you meet admission requirements

STEP 4: Arrange to take required graduate admissions examinations

STEP 5: Evaluate your ability to finance U.S. study

STEP 6: Arrange to take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) examination, and, if necessary, the TSE (Test of Spoken English) examination

STEP 7: Prepare for enrollment by selecting 10 to 15 appropriate institutions

STEP 8: Write to the Graduate Admissions Office of the institutions you have selected and ask for an application and information. When application forms arrive, prepare them carefully, including all the items requested

STEP 9: If you need financial aid, begin to look for sources

STEP 10: Wait for offers of admission; supply any additional items requested

STEP 11: Accept one offer of admission; write to the institutions you will not attend

STEP 12: Decide whether you will live in housing on-campus or off

STEP 13: Apply for a student visa

STEP 14: Attend a predeparture orientation session at your advising center

GLOSSARY:

IS U.S. STUDY APPROPRIATE FOR YOU?

Hundreds of thousands of students from other countries annually come to the United States to study. Most have a rewarding academic and personal experience and return to their home country, well prepared to begin or resume a career. For a few, the experience may be disappointing. The difference lies in planning, and knowing the facts well in advance.

Many foreign students considering an educational experience in the United States fail to get information and advice based on their individual needs and abilities, as well as the differences in American colleges and universities. As a result, they may enter an educational institution in the United States with expectations that cannot be fulfilled. To find if study in the United States will be the best alternative for you, you need information about study options available in your field in the United States and for employment after you return.

STEP 1: CONSULT AN ADVISING CENTER.

First, contact the American embassy, consulate or United States Information Service (USIA) office in your country to locate the nearest educational advising center. Such centers are often found in U.S. Information service offices, in American libraries, in binational centers, in Fulbright Commission offices; or in some countries, at AMIDEAST or Institute of International Education (IIE) offices.

Qualified educational advisers in these offices provide information and most services free of charge. When you go, or if you inquire by mail, you should state the following:

- Degree sought and degrees already earned;
- Your field of study and research goals;
- Whether or not you need financial aid;
- When you want to begin study;
- Your English language proficiency; and
- Where in the U.S. you want to study.

Many advising centers also offer group programs about the application and selection procedures, as well as predeparture orientation programs. The educational advisers can assist you in answering questions about:

- Equivalence between the educational system in your country and the United States;
- Entry requirements for study in your field;
- Use of reference materials to find appropriate institutions;
- Sources of financial assistance available in your home country and in the United States;
- Testing requirements and applications;
- How to prepare your applications;
- How to plan your education;
- Adjusting to academic and cultural life in the United States; and
- Using your education after you return to your home country.

In addition to educational advisers, graduates of U.S. colleges and universities who have recently returned home are excellent resources for advice about the benefits and costs of study in the United States.

STEP 2: DEFINE YOUR EDUCATIONAL AND STEP CAREER OBJECTIVES.

Because educational objectives are usually related to a specific career goal, you need to consider how study in the United States will fit into your long-range plans, and whether this study will be fully recognized at home.

Ask yourself some important questions:

What career do I want to pursue?

Is employment available in this field in my home country?

An educational adviser will have information about the skills and background needed for various careers, as well as knowledge of the need for professionals in various fields in your country.

How can study in the U.S. enhance my career?

Consult educators, government officials and working professionals in your country to determine the usefulness of U.S. study for you at this point in your career. Check to see if there are revalidation or certification procedures for employment and take these into account in your planning.

Can I receive the same training at less expense in my own country or in a nearby country?

In some countries, particularly those with educational systems markedly different from those in the United States, postgraduate degrees from the United States may not be recognized, or may be recognized at a different level. If this is the case, you may still consider U.S. study to gain information and experience.

Will my U.S. degree be accepted when I return?

Will it offer the right kind of qualification for the kind of work I want to do?

Check with your Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, or other appropriate authority before you go, to find out if recognition of study abroad will pose any problems.

STEP 3: DETERMINE WHETHER YOU MEET STEP ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS.

The three basic requirements for admission to educational institutions in the U.S. are:

- A strong academic background;
- Adequate financial resources; and
- A command of the English language.

To be eligible for a graduate level program, you should have completed at least four years of university education and earned a first academic or professional degree. This is usually the equivalent of 16 years of study. If your first academic degree only required three years, if you have completed only 14 or 15 years of study, or if your degree study involved only a single technical field, ask your educational adviser about policies of various universities in the United States. Although universities follow the same general guidelines, they may differ in the level at which they recognize a particular degree from your country.

Graduate school applicants should also have excellent grades, particularly in the chosen field of study. Most graduate departments require a "B" ("3.0") grade average for undergraduate work. Your educational adviser will be able to tell you the equivalent grade average in your own educational system. Proven research ability or relevant work experience definitely increase your chances of admission at the graduate level.

STEP 4: ARRANGE TO TAKE REQUIRED GRADUATE ADMISSIONS EXAMINATIONS.

Most graduate departments require at least one academic admissions examination, either a general aptitude test such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or a demonstration of proficiency in your Field (GRE subject test), or sometimes both. See [Table I](#) for a description of academic admissions examinations that may be required (these are in addition to an English proficiency examination, [Table III](#), required of non-native speakers of English). Professional schools such as law, medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine have special examinations tied to placement schemes; see the booklet *Scholars and Professionals* in this series.

These tests are standardized, multiple choice tests that require a high degree of English proficiency. Some also require mathematical skills or in-depth knowledge of content related to the field of study. To obtain information about these examinations, consult your advising center or write to the addresses in [Table I](#).

Usually the faculty of each department within each university determines the requirement for various entrance examinations, as well as the weight given to the result; in consequence, there is no general rule to follow with respect to examination requirements.

To find out if you need to take one or more of these entrance examinations, consult reference books at the advising center. These reference books also give ranges of the score levels of successful applicants. There are no passing or failing grades on these examinations, but your score will have an effect on the overall competitiveness of your application.

These tests are only one of the factors in the evaluation of a foreign student's record. Admissions officers are aware that you may be taking the examinations in a language other than your native tongue, and they will take this into account.

STEP 5: EVALUATE YOUR ABILITY TO FINANCE U.S. STUDY.

In making a financial assessment of whether or not study in the United States will be possible for you, consider the following:

Foreign students currently in the U.S. agree that study in the United States is usually more expensive than they had expected. You must plan for the total cost of living and studying over a period of one to two years for a master's degree and three to seven years for a doctoral degree. The total "published" cost for one academic year (1990-1991) ranges from \$8,500 to \$18,000 per academic year. The total cost will usually be at least year higher than the cost of tuition, fees, and room and board, published in \$6,000 per year higher than the cost of tuition, fees, and room and board, published in the university catalog. About 75 percent of all foreign students are funded by home-country sources, either from private funds or home-country scholarships. If graduate departments offer financial assistance, they often wait until after the first year of graduate study. If your field enjoys a high level of grant funding for research in U.S. universities, however, you may be able to qualify for a research assistantship in the first year. Current immigration regulations restrict the possibility of working outside the university to support yourself as a student. Even if you can find work, no job that you could find pays wages that will cover all your expenses.

Estimating Expenses for One Academic Year

When you apply for a student visa, you will need to show evidence of support adequate to cover study and living expenses for at least one academic year. (An academic year usually lasts nine months.)

The cost of study varies widely among institutions, and the cost of living varies from one location to the next. To compare total costs, therefore, you will need to do some research. A basic reference is: *The College Board Handbook: Foreign Student Supplement*, published by the College Board. This book compares tuition and the cost of living based on estimates from each institution.

Table II details costs involved in U.S. study for one academic year of nine months. Costs are for an unaccompanied student unless otherwise indicated. Sponsored students should check with their sponsoring agency about terms of their support. After arrival in the United States, they should maintain contact with designated agencies or, if sponsored by the homecountry government, with the cultural or education section of their embassy in the United States.

Economic Factors

If you plan to receive funds from your home country, fluctuations of the exchange rate between currency in your country and the U.S. dollar may make a significant difference in the dollar value of your funds over the period of your stay in the United States.

In financial planning, you should adjust cost estimates to allow for inflation. In recent years, the rate of inflation in the United States has been under five percent annually.

Hidden Costs

In addition to published costs, which include application fees, tuition, miscellaneous fees, books, health insurance, and room and board, you will need to add at least \$6,000 per academic year to cover "hidden" costs. These hidden costs, detailed in Table II, include personal expenses, costs when residence halls are closed, required health insurance and medical expenses which may exceed coverage, and changes in the value of currency. If you travel or study during the summer, if you live off campus, if you bring other members of your family, or if you buy a car, you must add in these extra costs.

Income Sources

Consider all funds available, and how much can be drawn from each source. For example:

- Annual family income, the earnings per year of each member of the immediate family who will provide money toward your education;
- Family assets, current holdings in bank accounts, investments in stocks and bonds, business enterprises, debts owed to the family, and any other assets from which money could be drawn or obtained through sales or loans in an emergency;
- Your own earnings until departure, savings from earnings and gifts, investments or property; and
- Other sources, such as relatives in the United States, or a sponsor (individual, government agency, or private organization) in your country who has agreed to pay all or part of your educational expenses.

Using a Financial Worksheet

On a financial worksheet, estimate your expenses for each major item for one academic year at the institution(s) in which you are interested. Estimate other expenses according to where you will be living, what sort of housing is available and other factors that you can anticipate. Then list and add the amounts that will be available for your educational expenses from each of the sources described above and convert the total to U.S. dollars. If the total is less than the costs anticipated for the first year, you will need financial aid to make up the difference, plus an extra amount for emergencies. For each additional year of study, repeat this process, adding an appropriate amount to cover inflationary increases.

To avoid disappointment, do not plan to make up the difference by working or finding a scholarship once you get to the United States.

Financial Assistance

Many students in other countries seem to believe that foreign students can easily get the money they need for study once they have been admitted to a college or university in the United States. *That is an incorrect assumption and can lead to hardship and disappointment.* Most institutions have committed all their scholarship and loan funds long before the academic year begins. Accordingly, the best time to arrange U.S.-based financial assistance is before you leave home for the United States. Applications for financial aid must be initiated as early as one-and-a-half years before departure. See Step 9 for suggestions on searching for financial aid.

STEP 6: ARRANGE TO TAKE THE TOEFL EXAMINATION, OR IF NECESSARY, THE TSE EXAMINATION.

To complete graduate academic study in the United States successfully, you will need to be able to read, write and communicate orally in English with a high degree of proficiency. English language proficiency is a requirement for gaining admission to U.S. institutions of higher education as well as for achieving your academic and personal goals while in the United States.

Assessment of English Language Proficiency

To determine your level of English language proficiency, arrange to take the TOEFL as early as possible -- *at least a year before you plan to enroll.* Most institutions require a score of 550 to 600 on the TOEFL examination for graduate academic admission. A few accept scores as low as 500.

Even if you already have basic English proficiency, a college or university may require you to take courses to improve your mastery of American English, academic usage or research and study skills. If you studied English under the British system, you may find that U.S. vocabulary and usage are quite different.

If you are applying for a teaching assistantship, the university may ask you to demonstrate your proficiency in spoken English, which the TOEFL examination does not test. The Test of Spoken English (TSE), often required for this purpose, is offered less frequently and at fewer centers than TOEFL; so allow several additional months for the application process if you are applying for a teaching assistantship.

STEP 7: PREPARE FOR ENROLLMENT BY SELECTING 10 TO 15 APPROPRIATE INSTITUTIONS.

Many foreign students miss opportunities for acceptance at institutions of their choice or chances for financial aid simply because they do not allow enough time for the application process. The process of entering higher education in the United States requires at least one to two years, if you are applying to selective institutions or requesting financial aid. Selection, application and testing may each require several months. Travel arrangements and visa application can also be time-consuming.

There are about 1,100 universities in the United States that offer graduate level programs; 430 of these offer doctoral degrees. Educational institutions are usually called universities in the U.S. if they offer graduate study, emphasizing research as well as teaching. Most also offer undergraduate studies. Some have professional schools, such as law or medical schools, as well.

Although graduate students usually take some formal coursework as part of their degree requirements, research is an important part of most graduate programs. Graduate students do independent research in consultation with a supervising professor (often called the "major professor" or thesis adviser) or a committee of professors who help to set up research plans and schedules. Research must be original and creative.

Master's Degree

Most universities award master of arts (M.A.) degrees in arts, sciences and humanities and master of sciences (M.S.) degrees in applied fields such as engineering. The master of business administration (M.B.A.) equips students with a credential for entry into the business world.

Increasingly, master's degrees are acquiring new names and initials as more and more professional fields design master's degrees as credentials for entry into the field. Such master's degrees, which include the name of the field or specialization as part of the title, usually lead to eligibility for professional certification rather than preparation for doctoral study or teaching.

Master's degrees may require one to two years of courses (30-60 credit hours) concentrated in the field of study, with other courses from closely-related fields. Usually a grade average of "B" must be maintained to receive the degree. Master's degrees may or may not require a thesis in addition to course work.

Doctoral Degree

Doctoral degrees include, for example, the doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) in the arts and sciences, and the doctor of education (Ed.D.). Doctoral programs almost always require original research leading to the defense of a doctoral dissertation. Students may enter some programs with the equivalent of a U.S. bachelor's degree and take courses for one to two years before beginning dissertation research. In this case, a student may or may not earn a master's degree upon completion of course work. Other doctoral programs begin after the master's degree with little if any course work required. Some programs require that students pass a comprehensive oral and/or written examination to attain candidacy for the degree.

Types of Universities

Universities may be public or private. Institutions of high quality are found equally among public and private universities; the principal difference is one of funding. Public institutions are funded partially by the government of the state in which the institution is located (for example, Texas or Florida), and partially by student tuition payments and private donations. Since public institutions are supported by state government, they give preference in enrollment and tuition charges to students from that state. The total cost, however, is usually lower at most state institutions than at private institutions, even for those who are not residents of the state.

State universities fall into two general categories:

- **Research Universities**

Most states have at least one public university designed to provide the traditional variety of educational opportunities in academic fields. These universities, in addition to offering undergraduate education, stress research as well as teaching. As a general rule, they are less likely at the graduate level to place emphasis on applied study and research and more likely to place emphasis on theoretical, or "pure" research.

- **Land Grant and Sea Grant Universities**

In 1862 Congress passed the Morrill Act that provided a grant of land to many of the states to establish a "land grant" university. These universities, in addition to providing a broad general education in many fields, emphasize the application of knowledge in such fields as agriculture and engineering.

The name of a land grant university often reflects this emphasis. Look for "Agricultural and Mechanical University" or "Technological University" to designate a university that stresses applied knowledge.

Other states call this type of university a "state" university. More recently some state universities have been designated as "sea grant" universities, to emphasize the importance of marine applications.

Short-Term Study

In addition to degree programs, many universities offer opportunities for short-term study. Students who might not be able to gain home-country recognition of a U.S. graduate degree, and employed professionals who cannot afford sustained absence, often benefit from short-term training and educational programs. Consult your advising center for information about these short-term options.

Other Institutions

Research centers, special institutes or professional schools may also offer graduate degrees. These institutions may offer research and/or instruction in only one field or group of fields. Often these institutions have a relationship to a university.

SELECTION FACTORS

To select institutions effectively, you must first think carefully about your intentions and plans. If you are planning to study toward a master's degree, decide whether you want to emphasize professional certification with an applied "terminal" or professional master's degree leading directly to employment in the field, or to prepare for teaching or for doctoral study and research with an academic master's degree. These distinctions matter, because many master's degrees cannot be used as the basis for doctoral study.

The master of business administration (M.B.A.) program, designed for immediate employment, cannot be applied toward a Ph.D. in business. Before you apply to any M.B.A. program, analyze the programs at the universities you are considering, to make sure that you choose a program that meets your goals and preferences. Ask yourself the following:

- Are you interested in a one- or a two-year program?
- Do you want to emphasize computer applications in management or follow a more traditional approach?
- Do you want a program that uses the case study method, and therefore requires a high proficiency in spoken English?

If you are interested in a research degree, particularly a Ph.D., investigate the definition of your field as it exists in the United States and choose your research emphasis. Rather than specifying your field broadly, for example, "civil engineering," define your research interests as clearly as possible, for example, "dry-land irrigation methods." Talk to local professionals in your chosen field, especially those who have studied in the United States, and ask about centers of excellence in your particular field of study. These do not correspond necessarily with various rankings of universities as a whole. If you can, attend a conference in your field or go to the library and scan journals published for your field. Look at the papers in your specialized field of research to see who is active in your field and to which university they belong. If your application reflects that you have tried to match your interests with those of the department, your chances for acceptance and for departmental funding increase dramatically.

Field of Study

To find institutions that offer the program you are considering, consult books that cross-reference institutions by field of study. The library at the educational advising center may also contain special books for use in locating programs in your field. At your advising center, use catalogs, brochures and other publications to investigate the entire range of possibilities. (A complete and current set may be available on microfiche.) Educational advisers can assist in interpreting the differences between institutions and in locating references that list professors and their research interests by field. They are also aware of host-country regulations and educational equivalencies in various fields.

Once you have located a suitable group of institutions that offer your specialized field, compare them systematically. Look at the differences between them with respect to:

- Research emphases;
- Size of department;
- Qualifications of the faculty;
- Academic admission requirements, including required TOEFL and GRE or GMAT scores;
- Length of time required for degree;
- Cost of tuition, books, etc.;
- Availability of financial assistance for first-year foreign students;
- Location, housing options, campus setting, climate and cost of living;
- Course and thesis requirements; and
- International Student Services Office.

Compare the number of applicants with the number of students accepted. If possible, try to find out the level of outside funding (government, foundation and private grants) for research in your department for each of the universities you have selected; this factor affects the availability of research assistantships.

Using a comparison worksheet makes it easy to eliminate institutions that are too expensive, that do not meet your individual needs or that have admissions requirements that are too high or too low. Gather as much data as possible about specific programs and institutions through research at the advising center and through correspondence.

Quality

A question that students often ask is, "How do I find the best institutions?" Unfortunately, there are no simple answers.

The first step is to define your academic and career goals, as well as personal preferences about the campus environment. Then find institutions whose goals and offerings most closely match your needs.

A second step is to check whether or not institutions are recognized by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA). Each year the American Council on Education publishes for COPA a list of all accredited institutions in the United States, called *Accredited Institutions of Postsecondary Education*. While there may be institutions of high quality that have chosen not to participate in the COPA accrediting process, questions should be raised about the acceptance of degrees by, and transfer of credits to and from accredited institutions, and

whether or not unaccredited institutions meet the minimum standards of a COPA-recognized institution. Caution should be exercised and considerably more information should be requested from such institutions before enrolling.

The United States does not have a Ministry of Education responsible for regulation of educational institutions. Instead, institutions agree to voluntary self-regulation in the process called accreditation. There are two types of accreditation: institutional and professional.

Institutional accreditation refers to the institution as a whole. For conferring institutional accreditation, COPA recognizes six regional accrediting agencies, as well as accrediting agencies for independent schools and religious colleges.

Professional accreditation exists only in fields or programs where professional or occupational competence in the field is a major concern, such as medicine, engineering, business and law. Professional accrediting associations usually require that the entire institution be accredited before they will accredit a particular program. The importance of professional accreditation varies from field to field. Often professional accreditation applies only to the first professional degree.

It is important to distinguish between accreditation and state authorization. State authorization or "state approval" may not involve regulation of quality at all, but simply indicate that an institution complies with financial and licensing regulations. Some states do not regulate educational institutions at all.

A third step in seeking quality is to avoid institutions that seem too anxious to enroll foreign students.

Unfortunately, there are some institutions in the United States that are more interested in the dollars of foreign students than in providing a good education. These institutions are not numerous, but there are enough that caution is necessary.

Published rankings (assessments) of colleges and universities are available, but their usefulness varies. There is no "official" ranking of colleges and universities in the United States. Rankings according to competitiveness of admission (that is, the ratio of the number of students who apply to the number admitted) are useful in giving an idea of the chances for admission. For other rankings, it is necessary to define your goals carefully, and to make sure that the criteria on which a ranking is based match your criteria for choosing institutions.

Some rankings are based on the opinions of one person who has visited or interviewed people about a number of colleges and universities. Others may be based on an opinion survey of professionals in the field. Still others are based on funds allotted by the federal government for research grants.

In the final analysis, finding the "best" institutions means finding the institutions that best meet your individual needs and interests.

Location

The continental United States can be divided into several regions based on climate. In New England, the Middle Atlantic, the Midwest and eastern regions of the West, as well as Alaska to the north, winters can be cold, with extended periods in which the temperature stays below zero degrees centigrade. In these regions, summers are mild. In the South and Southwest regions, as well as Hawaii and Puerto Rico, summers may be hot, and winters mild. In the Northwest and Southwest, year-round temperatures are more nearly uniform. Certain parts of the states of Washington and Oregon have a rainy season and a dry season.

Cost of living varies from region to region as well. In general (although exceptions are frequent), living costs are lowest in the South and Southwest regions and highest in large cities and in New England.

Urban, rural and suburban campuses offer different advantages and pose separate problems. Students from small countries or rural areas may appreciate the atmosphere of campuses far from large cities. Be sure to weigh advantages and disadvantages, and choose an area where you will feel most comfortable.

Cost

Institutions vary widely not only with respect to tuition charges, but in cost of living as well. In comparing costs, remember to use the "total" cost rather than "published" figures based on adding tuition, room and board, books and fees. A general rule is to add at least \$6,000 (for a single student) to published totals.

Availability of Financial Aid

In graduate departments, availability of financial assistance varies widely from field to field and from university to university. Most financial assistance comes in the form of assistantships. In general, fields that attract federally funded research grants, such as physical sciences, applied health, biological sciences and engineering, support many graduate students through research assistantships. In most of the humanities and social sciences, in business, and in the fine arts, few if any research assistantships are available.

Departments that offer large undergraduate introductory courses often employ graduate foreign students as teaching fellows, but usually only after the first year and only if the teaching fellow can demonstrate outstanding proficiency in spoken English.

Availability of English As A Second Language

If you need further English language preparation, select colleges, community colleges or universities that offer English as a second language or make sure such programs exist at nearby institutions.

International Student Services Office

One of the most important factors for foreign students is the presence of a comprehensive program of international student services. An institution that provides services for foreign students is also more likely to be sensitive to the academic needs of students from other countries.

STEP 8: WRITE TO THE GRADUATE ADMISSIONS OFFICE OF THE INSTITUTIONS YOU HAVE SELECTED AND ASK FOR AN APPLICATION AND INFORMATION.

After selecting a group of 10 to 15 institutions that seem most appropriate, write to at least 10 of them for information and application materials. Always use the same spelling of your name, from the first inquiry through the entire application process. This is especially important if your name is transliterated from some other language into English.

In requesting information and application materials, use a preliminary application form provided by the nearest advising center, or write a letter containing information similar to that in the application form. If there are mail or currency restrictions in your home country, consult the nearest advising center for procedures.

When to send inquiries. Receiving a response to your first letter may take four to six weeks. (See Table IV, "Corresponding with American Educational institutions.") For selective institutions or for financial assistance, mail your first inquiry at least a year-and-a-half before you plan to enroll. In other cases, send your first inquiry at least a year before you plan to enroll (by August for the fall term of the next year).

How to send inquiries. Send inquiries by airmail, and request an airmail reply. Carefully type or print all items. Do not send any documents with the original inquiry; wait until you file a formal application. Some universities have facsimile (fax) numbers; if this is the case, you may be able to save time by making your first inquiry by fax. In most cases, For the application, however, the university will want actual documents rather than a facsimile transmission.

If you have conducted thorough research, most or all of the institutions will respond by inviting you to submit a full formal application for admission. They will send all the necessary forms and instructions. Sometimes a preliminary application will be necessary.

If you are applying to English as a second language programs you may find applications included in brochures available in the advising center. In such cases a preliminary letter is unnecessary.

What to Include

You may lose valuable time by not including essential information in the first inquiry. A letter or preliminary application should have the following:

- *Where to send inquiries.* Address your inquiry to the Director of Graduate Admissions, using the address for the university given in the reference books. Write a separate letter to the Department Chair or Departmental Graduate Admissions Committee Chair requesting information about study and research in the department.
- *Your name,* printed legibly or typed in exactly the same form and spelling each time, clearly indicating which of the names is the family name. In the United States, each person is identified primarily by a single family name or "last name" and it is customary to use only the father's family name as the son's or daughter's family name. It is best to use your name as it appears on your passport.
- *Date of birth,* printed or typed with month first, then day and year as it corresponds to the (Gregorian) calendar used in the United States. Example: May 6, 1967 is 5/6/67. If a different calendar is used in your country, "translate" into the U.S. system and be sure to always use the same birth date.
- *Mailing address.* (See Table IV.)
- *Citizenship* and country issuing passport.
- *Marital status* and number of dependents.
- *Past and present education,* in chronological order, including secondary schools, technical programs, colleges and universities attended, with *examination results, grades and rank in class,* if known.

- *Program of study*, stated as specifically as possible, with the month and year in which you hope to begin studying in the United States.
- *Total funds available* to meet your educational and living expenses during each year of study in the United States, and sources of these funds.
- *Scores of TOEFL and required admissions tests*, if available, or dates on which you are registered to take these examinations.
- *Number of years of English language study* and where you studied.

These items will enable admissions officers to judge whether application at a particular level is suitable and to indicate chances for admission.

Although U.S. educational institutions vary in their procedures and requirements for admission of students from other countries, formal applications usually include most of the following:

- Institutional application form;
- Certified copies of original educational documents;
- Certified translations of these documents if not originally in English;
- Evidence of English language proficiency (usually TOEFL);
- Scores for any required academic entrance examinations;
- Financial information, with applications for financial aid if requested;
- Letters of recommendation from teachers; and
- Non-refundable application fee of \$25 to \$100.

As in the initial inquiry, be sure that you print and spell your name in exactly the same way in each part of the application. Use the same name order, and indicate the *family name*, either by underlining it or writing it in all capital letters, for example: Richard John SMITH. If different parts of the application arrive separately -- for example, test scores or recommendation letters -- they will be placed in separate files if the names are even slightly different. *Admissions files do not become active unless they are complete*, so unless all items arrive and are placed together, no action will be taken. To help admissions officers keep all documents together, attach a note to each document which bears a different name or different spelling, giving the same first, second and family name you used on your application form. Use the name on the passport if possible.

Instructions for each application will differ. Follow them carefully, paying particular attention to closing dates or deadlines for receipt of completed applications. (See *The College Board Handbook: Foreign Student Supplement*.) Allow enough time for mail delivery. Often the closing date for students from other countries is earlier than for U.S. students. Usually applications for scholarships or fellowships must be submitted earlier than applications for admission.

Try to begin work on applications well before the deadline and submit completed applications two or three months before the closing date. This will allow the institutions time to evaluate the application before the peak of the selection period. If you are applying in a competitive field or to a selective institution, submit your application as early as possible.

If there are mail or currency restrictions in your home country, seek advice on effective application procedures from educational advising centers in your country.

Keep copies for your records of all documents and application forms submitted. Keep a record of when materials were mailed and where.

Throughout the application process, do the best that you can to comply with instructions, but if some procedure is impossible or some document is lost or cannot be obtained, state the situation in a letter with a cover letter from the advising office or the U.S. cultural affairs officer. Sometimes accommodations will be made for difficult circumstances.

Application Forms and Instructions

The glossary at the back of this handbook defines the more common technical terms that may be included in application forms. Most institutions want to know the kind of career you plan, as well as plans for career preparation and educational background.

Educational Documents

Each institution will specify the types of official records it requires to document past education. Usually they will require your entire scholastic record from secondary school and/or university sources. U.S. admissions officers prefer that transcripts of previous educational work be sent directly from your former schools. The institution may also furnish special forms on which school authorities are asked to write your grades and your academic performance relative to other students in your institution. If such forms are not provided, you or the school will be expected to submit official documents that provide this kind of information. If the admissions

officer requests explanation of the grading and class ranking system or descriptions of courses that you have taken, this information should be furnished by an official of your school or university if possible.

As requested, send certified copies of the originals of diplomas, degrees or professional titles, or copies of full records of your performance in the comprehensive examinations administered in your home country. Do not send original documents unless there is no alternative; usually they cannot be returned. Copies should be certified with an official seal from the school or university or certified by a public official authorized to certify documents. In some countries these officials are called notaries public. If English translations are necessary, you may use the services of a professional translator or translate the document yourself. Such translations must also be certified by a notary public or another acceptable agency. U.S. embassies and consulates no longer certify documents, copies or translations.

Letters of Recommendation

Some universities send recommendation forms with the application; if so, ask professors who know you and former employers to use these forms and to follow the instructions printed on them. If there are no specific instructions, ask three or four professors, administrators or employers who know you well to type letters on their own letterhead in English and send them directly to the university. To guarantee candor and confidentiality, you must arrange for the writer to mail your recommendation directly to the university without your reading it. As a courtesy, give them stamped airmail envelopes addressed to the institution. Write in the lower left hand corner of the envelope "Re: Application of (your name)."

Recommendations should include:

- A statement about their experience with your academic work or employment;
- An estimate of how your work compares with others in the same field with whom they have experience;
- An assessment of your particular strengths;
- Your rank in class, department or university if they know it; and
- An assessment of your research experience and ability, if known.

STEP 9: IF YOU NEED FINANCIAL AID, BEGIN TO LOOK FOR SOURCES.

Graduate students can apply for financial assistance through home-country assistance programs, U.S. government programs, private international programs or individual university departments.

Home-Country Sources

Ask at the educational advising center or consult local contacts about funding from home-country or regional sources. Government scholarship programs, regional assistance programs, local or third-country organizations or businesses, banks or religious institutions may offer aid to graduate students from your country.

U.S. Government Assistance

The Fulbright Program, founded to encourage mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries, offers awards for graduate and postgraduate scholars and researchers. Postgraduate lectureships are also available. There are currently 36 different types of awards, from travel grants to grants which cover maintenance and study costs; their availability varies from country to country. In general, more types of awards are available in countries which contribute to and jointly sponsor a Fulbright Commission or Foundation for Educational Exchange with the United States. Applicants must apply to and be approved by appropriate agencies in the home country. If there is a Fulbright commission in your country, inquire about the types of grants available; if not, inquire at a United States Information Service (USIS) office.

In some developing countries, support for short-term graduate study or master's level degree study may be available through programs sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Eligibility for these programs varies, but in general local institutions nominate employees for training or education that promotes a specified development goal.

Some scholarship programs operate regionally. For sub-Saharan Africa, the AFGRAD program, and in Latin America, the LASPAU program, may offer opportunities. Your educational advising center may be aware of other U.S. government-sponsored programs functioning in your home country.

Private U.S. Sources and International Organizations

Private U.S. agencies, foundations, business corporations and professional associations often award financial aid in the interest of furthering international exchange. International organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) are other possible sources of financial aid. Since these institutions are large and complex, writing to them directly with general requests for financial aid will have little effect. Use references available in the advising center to find specific awards or grants for which you are eligible, and

address the office indicated. Many awards and grants are directed toward particular groups (e.g., women, irrigation engineers, children of journalists); you must read carefully to see whether you fit into any of the categories. Greater foundation support is usually available for students in the social and natural sciences, and the humanities. Apply only for awards for which you match the specifications.

If an application requires that you write a research or project proposal, pay particular attention to this step. If possible, have the proposal checked by a professional in your field who has worked in the United States. For suggestions, see Table V, "Writing a Research Proposal."

U.S. Universities

Although availability of financial assistance from university departments varies directly with the field, many foreign graduate students finance U.S. education through assistantships. To locate likely sources of aid, first consult the Directory of Graduate Programs, published by the Council of Graduate Schools, and available in your advising center. Institutions offering your field are listed by state, with a numerical breakdown of the number of fellowships and assistantships awarded, by total and by number awarded to first-year students. Since this publication applies to U.S. students as well, these totals do not refer only to foreign students. Sources of aid that involve loans or work/study programs are not available to foreign students. Choose several institutions that offer assistantships to first-year students and consult other references for further information.

Fellowships

Departments award fellowships on the basis of academic merit, normally after the first year of study. Graduate fellowships may be modest, covering only tuition and fees, or full grants, providing the cost of tuition and fees, and monthly cash payments for maintenance. Fellowships do not usually cover the total cost of living and studying.

Assistantships

Assistantships are the most common form of financial aid at the graduate level. Assistantships are cash awards which require the performance of services related to the field of study, usually about 20 hours per week. Sometimes an assistantship carries with it a waiver or reduction of tuition. Awards may range from as little as \$500 to as much as \$17,000 (or effectively higher, if high tuition costs are waived) for an academic year, U.S. income tax must be paid on all forms of graduate financial assistance, including assistantships. There are several types of assistantships.

- *Teaching assistantships* may be available for the first year of graduate study in university departments with large numbers of undergraduates in introductory courses. Teaching assistants work about 20 hours per week. They may supervise undergraduate laboratory classes, lead discussion groups or teach small classes. increasingly, universities require that teaching assistants pass the Test of Spoken English (TSE) before receiving a teaching assistantship. Often universities require teaching fellows to complete seminars which prepare them to teach in the U.S. educational milieu. if you are interested in applying for a teaching fellowship, mention any previous teaching experience you may have.
- *Research assistantships* involve performance of research services, about 20 hours per week, related to the field of study. For engineering, for example--in addition to the *Directory of Graduate Programs* mentioned above--you can look up your research specialization in the annual March issue of *Engineering Education*. This publication lists by institution, amounts and subjects of current research grants at universities. Find institutions that have grants in your field, and apply to these universities for research assistantships. If you apply to institutions whose research funding matches your interests, professors who are the principal researchers for grants in your area will often single out your application for funding, especially if you have proven research experience.
- *Administrative assistantships* usually require 10 to 20 hours per week working in administrative offices of the university, such as the Foreign Student Advising Office. Apply for these assistantships through the Graduate Admissions Office rather than the department in your field of study.

Competition for all types of assistantships is intense, since only limited numbers are available at any one institution. Foreign applicants must compete with U.S. students. Doctoral students are more likely to receive support than master's candidates. Although financial need is taken into consideration, the most important factor in selection is academic achievement and promise in the field of study. Practically all awards for graduate study are made one year at a time. Renewal is not automatic and depends on your performance and the availability of funds.

Other types of aid include part-time employment on campus up to 20 hours per week and short-term emergency loans. For further information about sources of financial aid, consult sources listed at the end of this booklet.

Many of the references will be available in your advising center, and the educational adviser may know of additional home-country sources.

STEP 10: WAIT FOR OFFERS OF ADMISSION; SUPPLY ANY ADDITIONAL ITEMS REQUESTED.

Several months will pass while institutions review applications. During this period, test scores, letters of recommendation and other documents arrive, and the admissions file is finally completed. Consult the advising center if you encounter difficulties such as inability to obtain particular documents.

Many institutions review all completed applications at the same time and issue acceptances between March and May.

STEP 11: ACCEPT ONE OFFER OF ADMISSION; WRITE TO THE INSTITUTIONS YOU WILL NOT ATTEND.

If you are accepted by an institution, you will receive a letter of admission and the form you need to apply for a visa, the "Certificate of Eligibility for Non-immigrant F-1 Status," Form 1-20 A-B. (See [Step 13](#)) Or if you are sponsored by a qualifying institution or program, you need the "Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status," Form IAP-66. (See [Step 13](#))

The letter of admission will probably ask that you make a decision within a specified period. You may also be requested to confirm your intention to enroll by sending in a deposit of \$50 to \$ 100. If you accept, write a letter to the admissions officer, and to the graduate department, stating your intention to enroll. Fill out and return any additional forms by airmail. If university-sponsored housing applications are included, process them as soon as possible, and return them by airmail with a check or money order for any deposit that may be required. (See [Step 12](#))

If you are offered an assistantship, you must either accept it or refuse it by a common acceptance date (usually April 15) designated by the university. If you are waiting for another acceptance or another offer of financial assistance, wait until you are sure before accepting a less desirable offer you might then decide to refuse. When you have made a decision, also inform the institutions whose offers you have decided not to accept.

STEP 12: DECIDE WHETHER YOU WILL LIVE IN HOUSING ON-CAMPUS OR OFF.

Alternatives for housing may include residential halls on campus, rented rooms, or furnished or unfurnished apartments on- or off-campus. Occasionally students are able to arrange accommodations with a family. Except for on-campus housing, however, most of these options must be arranged after you arrive. (See the booklet, *Predeparture Orientation*.)

On-Campus Housing

Sometimes separate residence halls are provided for men and for women; in other cases, the residence halls are "co-ed" -- that is, men and women live in the same housing unit but do not share rooms. Usually two students share a room; single rooms are scarce. Generally, rooms have a bed, a desk, a chair, a closet and sometimes draperies. Students must provide bed linens, draperies, decorations and accessories. Contracts for residence halls usually cover the entire academic year. Often you must pay nonrefundable fees in full at the beginning of the year -- so you will need to have a large portion of your funds available immediately on arrival -- if you have not already paid them with your admissions cost. "Room and board" contracts cover the cost of housing as well as a specified number of meals in the campus dining hall or cafeteria.

Off-Campus Housing

If you choose to live off-campus, you will probably have to wait until after you arrive to arrange housing. The international Student Services Office may be able to help in locating housing, but it is wise to plan to take this responsibility yourself. Some cities have apartment locator services that charge a fee for locating apartments with your specifications.

Options include single rented rooms, with or without kitchens; rooms in "boarding houses" with meals provided at extra cost; shared houses for rent; and furnished or unfurnished rented apartments. "Furnished" in the United States means that basic furniture and sometimes floor coverings and draperies are provided. Bed linens, towels, kitchen equipment and dishes are not provided. Public transportation may be scarce. If you need a car to get to campus, costs will increase dramatically.

Living with a Family

The ease of arranging homestays with families in the U.S. varies from location to location. If this service is available, the cost is usually about the same as that of a rented private room with added meals. The International Student Services Office can sometimes offer information about homestays. The Experiment in International

Living is one of a number of organizations that sponsor group programs and one-month homestays for students who would like to live with an American family before beginning their studies.

STEP 13: APPLY FOR A STUDENT VISA.

Consult the consular section at the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate as early as possible to determine the specific procedures and documents necessary to apply for a non-immigrant (F-1) student visa. These may differ from country to country. Below are the usual requirements:

- Passport, valid for at least six months after the date you plan to leave;
- Visa application form;
- A photograph, 5 cm by 5 cm, with your signature in English on the back;
- Certificate of Eligibility for Non-immigrant F-1 Student Status (Form I-20 A-B);
- Affidavit of financial support form and evidence of support;
- Evidence of English language ability; and
- Any other documents of local importance.

The F-1 Student Visa

To apply for an F-1 student visa, present the above documents to a U.S. consular officer. The consular officer usually interviews applicants and will examine your documents and review your educational plans. Although the visa application process normally is not time-consuming, it is a good idea to apply early. Any questions that might arise about your qualification to receive a visa can be dealt with without delaying your departure.

Note: The Form I-20 is not a visa, nor does it guarantee a visa. Be sure that you have read the form before you go to the interview and have completed any statements required of you. The statements that you will be asked to sign include:

- That your purpose in coming to the United States is to remain temporarily to pursue a full course of study at the school specified on the Form I-20 and stamped on the visa;
- That you will not accept employment or engage in business in the United States without authorization of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS);
- That adequate finances are available for the entire period of your study; and
- That you notify the INS promptly of any change in address.

If the consular officer grants an F-1 student visa, he or she will stamp the visa into your passport, noting on it the name of the institution issuing the Form I-20. This indicates your intent to pursue a full course of study at that institution. If you decide to attend a different institution which has also issued a Form I-20, contact a U.S. consular officer before departure to see if the notation on the visa can be changed. For entry into the United States, the institution endorsed on the visa and the institution you plan to attend must be the same.

J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa

Certain students, scholars and professionals coming to the United States to participate in a program of study or research may be issued Form IAP-66, "Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status." Programs eligible to issue the IAP-66 include those approved by the U.S. Information Agency and sponsored by a private organization or government agency.

To apply for a J-1 visa, complete pages two (2) and six (6) of the IAP-66, and present it along with the documents listed above to a U.S. consular officer. Terms of the J-1 visa are very explicit. They define precisely the purpose and length of stay allowed. In applying for a J-1 visa, you must agree to the following:

- Your stay in the United States will only be for the duration of the program described in the Form IAP-66;
- You will engage only in the activities pertaining to the program described in the Form IAP-66;
- You will provide, or obtain from a sponsor, adequate finances for support during your authorized stay in the United States; and
- You will secure a release from sponsors and permission from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service before transferring to another exchange visitor program.

If your travel or study is financed directly by the U.S. government, or by your home-country government, your eligibility to change your immigration status while in the United States is limited by law. You must return to your home country or country of last residence for two years before becoming eligible to apply for an immigrant (permanent residence) visa. The two-year foreign residency requirement also applies to those whose field of study appears on the Exchange Visitor Skills List and to all foreign medical graduates coming to the United States for graduate medical education. U.S. consular officers will explain details to anyone who applies for the J-1 visa.

STEP 14: ATTEND A PREDEPARTURE ORIENTATION SESSION AT YOUR ADVISING CENTER.

Your advising center may offer programs to give you information about what to expect regarding the academic system, the climate, the culture and other aspects of your life in the United States. Arrange to attend such a program, and obtain the booklet in this series, *Predeparture Orientation*, which gives further information.

GLOSSARY

Academic adviser: Member of the faculty who helps and advises the student on academic matters. He or she may also assist the student during the registration process. **Academic year:** The period of formal academic instruction, usually extending from September to June. Depending on the institution, it may be divided into terms of varying lengths: semesters, trimesters or quarters.

Accreditation: Approval of colleges, universities and secondary schools by nationally recognized professional associations. Institutional accreditation affects the transferability of credits from one institution to another before a degree program is completed.

Assistantship: A study grant of financial aid to a graduate student that is offered in return for certain services in teaching or laboratory supervision, as a teaching assistant, or services in research, as a research assistant.

Baccalaureate degree: The degree of "bachelor" conferred upon graduates of most U.S. colleges and universities.

Bachelor's degree: Degree conferred by an institution of higher learning after the student has accumulated a certain number of undergraduate credits. Usually a bachelor's degree takes four years to earn, and it is a prerequisite for studies in a graduate program. **Campus:** The land on which the buildings of a college or university are located.

Class rank: A number or ratio indicating a student's academic standing in his or her graduating class. A student who ranks first in a class of 100 students would report his or her class rank as 1/100, while a student ranking last would report 100/100. Class rank may also be expressed in percentiles (i.e. the top 25 percent, the lower 50 percent).

College: An institution of higher learning that offers undergraduate programs, usually of a four-year duration, which lead to the bachelor's degree in the arts or sciences (B.A. or B.S.). The term "college" is also used in a general sense to refer to a post-secondary institution.

College catalog: An official publication of a college or university giving information about academic programs, facilities (such as laboratories, dormitories, etc.), entrance requirements and student life.

Course: Regularly scheduled class sessions of one to five (or more) hours per week during a term. A degree program is made up of a specified number of required and elective courses and varies from institution to institution. The courses offered by an institution are usually assigned a name and number (such as Mathematics 101) for identification purposes.

Credits: Units institutions use to record the completion of courses of instruction (with passing or higher grades) that are required for an academic degree. The catalog of a college or university defines the amounts and kinds of credits that are required for its degrees and states the value in terms of degree credit-or "credit hours" or "credit points" -- of each course offered.

Cut: Unauthorized absence from a class.

Dean: Director or highest authority within a certain professional school or college of a university.

Degree: Diploma or title conferred by a college, university or professional school upon completion of a prescribed program of studies.

Department: Administrative subdivision of a school, college or university through which instruction in a certain field of study is given (such as English department, history department).

Dissertation: Thesis written on an original topic of research, usually presented as one of the final requirements for the doctorate (Ph.D.).

Doctorate (Ph.D.): The highest academic degree conferred by a university on students who have completed at least three years of graduate study beyond the bachelor's and/ or master's degree and who have demonstrated their academic ability in oral and written examinations and through original research presented in the form of a dissertation.

Dormitories: Housing facilities on the campus of a college or university reserved for students. A typical dormitory would include student rooms, bathrooms, common rooms and possibly a cafeteria.

Drop: See "Withdrawal."

Electives: Courses that students may "elect" (choose freely) to take for credit toward their intended degree as distinguished from courses that they are required to take.

Faculty: The members of the teaching staff, and occasionally the administrative staff, of an educational institution. The faculty is responsible for designing the plans of study offered by the institution.

Fees: An amount charged by schools, in addition to tuition, to cover costs of institutional services.

Fellowship: A study grant of financial aid, usually awarded to a graduate student.

Financial aid: A general term that includes all types of money, loans and part-time jobs offered to a student.

Flunk: To fail an examination or a course.

Foreign Student Adviser: The person associated with a school, college or university who is in charge of providing information and guidance to foreign students in such areas as U.S. government regulations, student visas, academic regulations, social customs, language, financial or housing problems, travel plans, insurance and certain legal matters.

Freshman: A first-year student at a high school, college or university.

Full-time student: One who is enrolled in an institution taking a full load of courses; the number of courses and hours is specified by the institution.

Grade: The evaluation of a student's academic work.

Grade point average: A system of recording academic achievement based on an average, calculated by multiplying the numerical grade received in each course by the number of credit hours studied.

Grading system: Schools, colleges and universities in the United States commonly use letter grades to indicate the quality of a student's academic performance: A (excellent), B (good), C (average), D (below average), and F (failing). Work rated C or above is usually required of an undergraduate student to continue his/her studies; work rated B or higher is usually required of a graduate student to continue. Grades of P (pass), S (satisfactory), and N (no credit) are also used. In percentage scales, 100 percent is the highest mark, and 70 percent (or 65 percent) is usually the lowest passing mark.

Graduate: A student who has completed a course of study, either at the high school or college level. A graduate program at a university is a study course for students who hold bachelor's degrees.

High school: The last three or four years of the twelve-year public education program in the United States.

Higher education: Postsecondary education at colleges, universities, junior or community colleges, professional schools, technical institutes and teacher-training schools.

Institute of technology: An institution of higher education which specializes in the sciences and technology, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.).

Junior: A third-year student at a high school, college or university.

Lecture: Common method of instruction in college and university courses; a professor lectures in classes of 20 to several hundred students. Lectures may be supplemented with regular small group discussions led by teaching assistants.

Liberal arts (or "liberal arts and sciences," or "arts and sciences"): A term referring to academic studies of subjects in the humanities (language, literature, philosophy, the arts), the social sciences (economics, sociology, anthropology, history, political science) and the sciences (mathematics, physics, chemistry).

Maintenance: Referring to the expenses of attending a college or university, including room (living quarters), board (meals), books, clothing, laundry, local transportation and miscellaneous expenses.

Major: The subject or area of studies in which a student concentrates. Undergraduates usually choose a major after the first two years of general courses in the arts and sciences.

Major professor/thesis adviser: For research degrees, the professor who works closely with a student in planning and choosing a research plan, in conducting the research and in presenting the results. The major professor serves as the head of a committee of faculty members who review progress and results.

Master's degree: Degree conferred by an institution of higher learning after students complete academic requirements which usually include a minimum of one year's study beyond the bachelor's degree.

Nonresident: Students who do not meet the residence requirements of the state or city that has a public college or university. Tuition fees and admissions policies may differ for residents and nonresidents. Foreign students are usually classified as nonresidents, and there is little possibility of changing to resident status at a later date for fee purposes. Most publicly supported institutions will not permit a foreign student to be classified as a resident student while on a student visa.

Notarization: The certification of a document, a statement or a signature as authentic and true by a public official -- known in the United States as a "notary public." Applicants in other countries should have their documents certified or notarized in accordance with instructions.

Placement test: An examination used to test a student's academic ability in a certain field so that he or she may be placed in the appropriate courses in that field. In some cases a student may be given academic credit based on the results of a placement test.

Plan of study: A detailed description of the course of study for which a candidate applies. The plan should incorporate the objectives given in the student's "statement of purpose."

Postdoctorate: Studies designed for those who have completed their doctorate. Postgraduate: See "Graduate." Prerequisites: Programs or courses that a student is required to complete before being permitted to enroll in a more advanced program or course.

President: The rector or highest administrative officer of an academic institution.

Qualifying examination: In many graduate departments, an examination given to students who have completed required course work for a doctoral degree, but who have not yet begun the dissertation or thesis. A qualifying examination may be oral or written, or both, and must be passed in order for the student to continue.

Quarter: Period of study of approximately 10 to 12 weeks' duration.

Quiz: Short written or oral test, less formal than an examination.

Recommendation, Letter of (also called "personal recommendation," "personal endorsement," or "personal reference"): A letter appraising an applicant's qualifications, written by a professor or employer who knows the applicant's character and work.

Registration: Process through which students select courses to be taken during a quarter, semester or trimester.

Sabbatical: Leave time with pay granted to a teacher or professor after serving for six or seven years on the same faculty. its purpose is to give an extended period of time for concentrated study.

Scholarship: A study grant of financial aid, usually given at the undergraduate level, which may be supplied in the form of a cancellation of tuition and/or fees.

Semester: Period of study of approximately 15 to 16 weeks' duration, usually half of an academic year.

Seminar: A form of small group instruction, combining independent research and class discussions under the guidance of a professor.

Senior: A fourth-year student at a high school, college or university.

Social Security number: A number issued by the U.S. government to jobholders for payroll deductions for old age, survivors and disability insurance. Anyone who works regularly must obtain one. Many institutions use the Social Security number as a student identification number.

Sophomore: A second-year student at a high school, college or university.

Special student: A student at a college or university who is not enrolled as a candidate for a degree.

Subjects: Courses in an academic discipline offered as part of a curriculum of an institution of higher learning.

Survey course: A course which covers briefly the principal topics of a broad field of knowledge.

Syllabus: An outline of topics to be covered in an academic course.

Teachers' college: Institution of higher learning that confers degrees, especially in teacher education, or a college within a university which offers professional preparation for teachers,

Test: Examination. Any procedure measuring the academic progress of a student.

Thesis: A written work containing the results of research on a specific topic prepared by a candidate for a bachelor's or master's degree.

Transcript: A certified copy of a student's educational record containing titles of courses, the number of credits and the final grades in each course. An official transcript will also state the date a degree has been conferred.

Trimester: Period of study consisting of approximately three equal terms of 16 weeks during the academic year.

Tuition: The money an institution charges for instruction and training (does not include the cost of books).

Undergraduate studies: Two- or four-year programs in a college or university after high school graduation, leading to the associate or bachelor's degree.

University: An educational institution that usually maintains one or more four-year undergraduate colleges (or schools) with programs leading to a bachelor's degree; a graduate school of arts and sciences awarding master's degrees and doctorates (Ph.D.s). and graduate professional schools.

Withdrawal: The administrative procedure of dropping a course or leaving an institution.

Zip code: A series of number's in mailing addresses that designate postal delivery districts in the United States.

IF YOU WANT TO STUDY IN THE UNITED STATES: SCHOLARS AND PROFESSIONALS

SCHOLARS AND PROFESSIONALS

Increasingly, mid-career scholars and professionals travel to the United States to participate in postdoctoral research, to lecture, to consult or to gain short- or long-term professional training. Some come as part of established government or academic programs; others are invited by particular institutions or are self-sponsored. If you are considering mid-career opportunities in the United States, this booklet will address some of your concerns: how to find information about training, research or temporary positions; factors to consider when weighing options; and living conditions.

The first part of the booklet discusses the professional environment that a temporary academic or professional visitor will encounter, some varieties of short-term academic experiences that are available, and considerations for planning your stay. The second part gives special information for physicians, nurses, dentists, veterinarians and lawyers. A third section discusses personal considerations that will be important in your planning. A bibliography lists sources of further information, including references for a large number of professions. Another valuable source of information will be the educational advising centers in your country: United States Information Service (USIS) offices or libraries, U.S. educational exchange commissions (Fulbright Commissions) and binational centers. These centers provide information free of charge and may also offer predeparture orientation programs or other services.

THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Academic and research institutions in the United States differ in many respects from those in other countries. As a visiting scholar, researcher or lecturer, you may find that many aspects of faculty procedure, interaction with students, research arrangements and responsibilities differ from your expectations.

Higher Education in the United States

Higher or postsecondary education in the United States builds on 12 years of education at the primary and secondary level. After completion of high school at about age 18, students may enter a college or university to work toward a baccalaureate degree, or they may enter two-year community colleges or technical schools for other training. The bachelor's degree, which takes a minimum of four years to complete, can stand alone or can serve as the prerequisite for graduate work.

At the graduate level, students may enter into a one- to three-year master's program, or enter directly into predoctoral programs which lead after a minimum of three years to a doctoral degree. Some students complete a master's degree and then enter a doctoral program in the same or in a different field.

After earning a doctorate, many students pursue further research under a postdoctoral fellowship before seeking a permanent position with a university, research center or business.

Faculty

In working on a temporary basis with faculty or researchers at universities in the United States, you will need to be aware of constraints and pressures on academics, as well as the underlying structure of the faculty system. In almost every academic institution, faculties are organized into departments based on academic field, or occasionally into multidisciplinary centers for focus on a certain academic area. Each department operates independently, headed by a department chair, under broad university guidelines. Faculty members of a department usually choose their own department chair, either a senior member of the department, or occasionally someone from outside the university. In many cases, the position of department chair rotates from one department member to another, changing every three to four years. In other cases, the department chair remains as long as other faculty members agree. The department acts as a democratic body, by participation of all members, who determine requirements for degrees (within broad limits set by the university), admit graduate students, decide whether degree candidates qualify, choose teaching assistants, determine curriculum and hire new faculty. In some departments, real power lies with the department as a whole, more than with the chair as an individual. In others, the chair is more powerful.

Faculty titles denote academic rank. In ascending order, they are "lecturer" (or "instructor"), "assistant professor," "associate professor" and "professor." Except in the case of very distinguished senior professors, most faculty members address each other by first names and do not use these titles in conversation.

Lecturers and assistant professors have a full teaching load -- usually two classes that meet three times a week with a laboratory, or perhaps three classes without a laboratory. In addition, they may have one or more committee assignments (the curriculum committee, the honors committee, etc.), which take several hours per

week. Add to this grading time, as well as conference time and office hours for students, not to mention the many hours of research or writing necessary to build a reputation for scholarly research.

Under the system of promotion current in most university departments, an assistant professor has five to seven years to gain "tenure." At the end of this time, a committee of peers (other university faculty) votes whether or not to recommend tenure. One of the most important considerations is the faculty member's research and publication record. Tenure is a guarantee that he or she will remain employed by the university until retirement, unless, for example, the institution suffers extreme budget cuts leading to the elimination of the department or the person commits a serious moral offense.

The purpose of the tenure system is to preserve academic freedom, to prevent an institution from firing a professor for making unpopular or radical statements or advocating unorthodox ideas. Today, with tight university budgets, the effects of the tenure system have put strong pressure on assistant professors to succeed early.

What difference does this system make to visiting scholars and researchers? If you are given a year's appointment as a visiting assistant professor or lecturer, you will be expected to make similar commitments of time and to fulfill similar teaching loads. Similarly, if your faculty collaborator is working toward tenure, you may find that he or she has little extra time available for collaboration. In centers or institutions devoted entirely to research, however, visiting scholars often have fewer distractions from research.

Faculty in the United States tend to identify first with colleagues in their academic field and second with their institution, except in smaller colleges at which teaching is the primary activity. This is perhaps a consequence of the emphasis on research and publication record as a measure of success.

Faculty salaries are often lower than salaries at comparable levels of business or industry, ranging from an average of approximately \$30,000 for a lecturer to about \$65,000 for a professor. Faculty salaries in fields like engineering are higher than the average.

Many faculty members serve as consultants to business, industry and government, both as a source of outside income and as a stimulus for professional development. Senior faculty members sometimes hold joint appointments with part-time teaching responsibilities and part-time administrative responsibilities. Often administrative duties reduce the time and energy available for effective research.

Students

In the university setting, faculty interactions with students are informal. Often graduate students and faculty become close friends and work together almost on an equal basis. Since U.S. educational philosophy stresses analysis and critical thinking in addition to mastery of information, class formats stimulate exchange of ideas. Students, both graduate and undergraduate, do not hesitate to challenge professors in class; in fact, most professors encourage it as a sign of intellectual independence. Encouragement of questioning, however, does not mean that professors lack respect from students. Despite informality, students and faculty maintain a certain personal distance, with students deferring to faculty members. Faculty members usually construct their own examinations, and students expect that examinations will be given frequently. In most cases, faculty grade examinations and papers for their courses, unless the course has a very high enrollment.

Research Institutions

Some universities are devoted to research; others are not. Research and scholarly activity take place in many kinds of institutions besides universities. Often visiting scholars, researchers and faculty come to private or public research centers or hospitals.

Most research institutions are organized by field, with both an administrative and a scientific/technical head for each department (in some cases, the same person). Researchers may work together as part of a team, or they may work alone; all have some administrative relationship to the department. Grants-management staff monitor expenses on the grant, and the principal investigator is usually responsible for an annual grant report.

Quite often a foreign researcher establishes an arrangement with a particular research center that focuses on his or her area of research and then obtains a grant from public or private sources to work as the principal investigator for the grant.

FINDING AND ARRANGING ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES

There are many avenues by which scholars, researchers and faculty can come as temporary academic visitors to the United States. Those described below are among the most common.

The Fulbright Visiting Scholars and Scholar in Residence Programs

Under the auspices of the Fulbright Program, foreign senior scholars can come to the United States to do a year of research or to lecture at U.S. academic institutions. Senator J. William Fulbright introduced legislation in the

U.S. Congress in 1946 establishing the Fulbright Program to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and of other countries.

The United States Information Agency (USIA) funds and administers the Fulbright Program overseas; in some countries, the host country shares in the funding. Different aspects of the Fulbright Program are operative in each country; not all countries participate. Check with the U.S. embassy or consulate to determine Fulbright opportunities.

Scholars may obtain information about the program, which is an open competition, and an application through the local Fulbright Commission or U.S. Educational Foundation, or if there is no Fulbright Commission, through the United States Information Service (USIS) office located in the U.S. embassy or consulate. After preliminary screening by the Fulbright Commissions/U.S. Educational Foundations or by the USIS posts, recommended applications are forwarded to the United States Information Agency in Washington, D.C. and to the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board for final selection by its members which are appointed by the president of the United States.

The Council for the International Exchange of Scholars (CIES) assists with the implementation of the program by arranging university affiliations for senior Fulbright scholars at U.S. academic institutions. Once scholars are in the United States, CIES assists in program administration and support. CIES has prepared a comprehensive publication explaining privileges and obligations under the Fulbright Program. Fulbright grantees receive this booklet at the time they receive their grant documents.

The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program

The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program, also administered by USIA, provides opportunities in the United States for academic study and professional development at selected institutions to mid-career professionals from developing countries around the world. The Humphrey Program awards fellowships on a competitive basis in the fields of agriculture, public health, planning and resource management, and public administration. USIS posts, Fulbright Commissions and binational centers nominate candidates. The Institute of International Education (IIE) reviews nominations with the assistance of independent selection committees and makes recommendations to the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, which approves final selections and awards fellowships. In contrast to many fellowship opportunities, the Humphrey Program does not have as its goal the attainment of a degree. Rather, in cooperation with Humphrey Program coordinators on college and university campuses, fellows devise individually tailored plans for a year-long program of academic work balanced with professional development and internship activities.

University Affiliations Program

USIA's University Affiliations Program makes three-year grants to partnerships formed by higher education institutions in the United States and abroad to conduct exchanges for faculty members in the humanities, social sciences, communications and education.

United States Agency for International Development

In participating countries, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) missions arrange short- and long-term training, both in-country and in the United States, in technical and applied areas requested by the host country. Usually the host-country government selects trainees. Participants spend several months to several years either on U.S. campuses or in training institutes. Alternatively, they attend short study tours or courses concentrating on applications in their field. Typical fields are agriculture, business, health, banking and engineering. Although academic programs usually require English-language proficiency, courses or tours are sometimes conducted with the aid of an interpreter.

University Invitational Positions

University departments often have invitational positions, usually a year in length, for visiting scholars, researchers or lecturers. To be invited as a visiting scholar or visiting lecturer a candidate must be a recognized authority in the field. If you have an outstanding reputation as a researcher or have personal or professional contacts with U.S. faculty, you may be able to arrange a special invitational position. The U.S. university normally provides a salary and in addition, may provide research facilities. In some countries, there are agencies which claim to be able to find invitational positions for scholars, but these are rarely effective.

Short-term Training Programs and Seminars

Continuing education has become increasingly important in American education in recent years. Universities, hospitals and professional associations offer seminars and short courses for mid-career professionals in all fields: however, these are usually a week or less in length and therefore impractical for someone from overseas. The

vast majority of commercially available seminars for mid-career professionals are also one to three days in length.

Semi-independent training institutes affiliated with universities or government entities, however, are beginning to offer short-term training in business, agriculture and other topics of interest to overseas professionals, with courses of three months to a year in length.

Other Arrangements

Scholars and researchers anticipating a sabbatical or wishing to conduct research in the United States often learn of opportunities through speaking or corresponding with colleagues in the same field or by attending professional meetings. Professors may also learn of colleagues with similar research interests through former students who are in the United States, from U.S. university faculty or administrators visiting in their country, or from papers in scholarly journals. Sometimes scholars and researchers negotiate directly with a department or research center. In business, scientific and technological fields, the probability of arranging a research sabbatical in the United States is higher than for humanities, social sciences and the performing arts.

OBTAINING FUNDING

Take every step possible to secure adequate funding for research. Arrangements for funding visiting researchers and scholars vary greatly. Often the scholar's home institution pays regular salary while the scholar is on sabbatical. Occasionally, scholars come to the United States on their own funds.

Scholars considering a sojourn to the United States should know that the budget situation in most universities and research centers is currently tight. U.S. government funding for research has been curtailed. Careful and realistic financial planning will be crucial for the success of your program.

Some foundations and organizations provide grants to support scholarly research in the arts, sciences, humanities and health-related fields. Although competition is intense, foreign nationals as well as U.S. citizens are often eligible to apply. Consult sources listed in the bibliography at the end of this booklet, as well as additional resources available at the nearest educational advising center in your country. Usually the grant is for a specific amount and supports research at a particular facility or center.

Many grant applications specify that you present not only a research plan, but also an agreement with a research institution before they will fund a grant. It is your responsibility to find an institution that will agree to provide research facilities, employ you and monitor grant expenditures if you are awarded a grant. A committee of peers reviews grant proposals.

If you do receive a grant, determine whether the grant is to you as an individual or to the institution who then agrees to employ you with the funds from the grant. If you leave before the grant is completed and the grant is to the institution, it will remain with the institution.

Perhaps the ideal situation is to find an academic department in the United States with a research grant allowing employment of additional researchers. Usually such arrangements arise through personal correspondence between the people involved. There is no central source for information of this type.

OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Negotiating Terms of Your Academic Stay

In negotiating a position as a visiting scholar or researcher, you can avoid many painful misunderstandings by obtaining clear agreement, in writing, about a number of important issues regarding your stay. If you are corresponding with a researcher (and not an administrator), try to ascertain diplomatically whether the key administrator who will be responsible for your arrangements is aware of your needs and interests, and is willing to assist in meeting them. In universities, this key person is usually the department chair.

In your preliminary correspondence, find out how much time the principal faculty-contact person, as well as others in the department, will actually be able to devote to collaboration or consultation with you. Also, find out how directly involved your faculty contact will be in the specific research project in which you are interested. This is important, since a scholar often expects that the faculty host will see him or her for 10 to 20 hours per month, whereas the host may not be prepared to spend more than three or four hours a month.

Discuss what form the collaboration might take. Request a copy of your host's curriculum vitae and become familiar with the scope and background of his or her work, as well as educational background, travel and languages. Make sure that you share proficiency in at least one language with the person with whom you will be working. Finally, arrive at a mutual understanding about the length of time you will be visiting or working. Departments may extend courtesies to visiting scholars, such as an office with a desk and telephone, a university identification card that allows access to the university library and recreational facilities, authorization to apply for a parking permit and perhaps secretarial help. *These privileges are by no means guaranteed.* You should

make sure before you come that your expectations match those of the department in detail, not just in broad outlines.

Universities and research centers in the United States are not as highly subsidized as they are in many other countries. Funds for research must be carefully budgeted within the department or research program. If you need access to a personal computer or time on a mainframe computer, or if you need specific laboratory equipment or facilities, negotiate with the department (or, for a research center, with key administrators) about how these will be provided and funded.

There are a number of research areas where, for reasons of national security, there are government restrictions to information access. If the research center with which you are negotiating has been awarded sensitive U.S. government contracts, the institution may require a security clearance. If you are not a U.S. citizen, this requirement might pose problems.

Sometimes visiting scholars wish to attend classes. Some universities extend this option as a courtesy without charge; some do not. The demand on faculty time and the tight budgets of many institutions make this issue a sensitive one. If you think that you might be interested in courses, whether for credit or not, correspond with the university before beginning your stay, so that everyone has a clear understanding, in writing, of the policy.

Corresponding With the Office of International Services

On some university campuses, particularly the large research universities, an Office of International Services (variously called Office of International Educational Services, International Program Office, Office of International Students and Scholars, etc.) offers a valuable liaison between visiting scholars, researchers or faculty and the campus community. On other campuses such an office may exist, but its focus may be directed primarily to students. Even in the latter case, however, this office may be a helpful source of general and visa information. Among other things, it can provide information about many aspects of living and working in the United States and the particular institution you have chosen.

Because these offices were originally established primarily in response to the needs of international students, the office that assists scholars, researchers and visiting faculty may even be called the International Student Services Office. This is not meant to be derogatory or demeaning to scholars and international faculty members; it is simply a historical remnant. Most campuses, in fact, have been changing the name of these offices to reflect current realities in international exchange.

As soon as you begin to negotiate with a department or granting body, it would be helpful to send a copy of your correspondence to the Office of International Services. This office can advise the department, in light of the information that you send them about your situation, regarding the most appropriate visa to request, both for you and your family. In a research center or training hospital, a training liaison officer performs this function.

Visa Information

As you finalize your arrangements with an institution or organization, you should be sure that you have received clear information and have given clear information to the university or organization about the following:

- The terms of your appointment, how long the appointment is for, the type of appointment and what field the appointment is in;
- Visas you have previously held for the United States and their dates;
- Your qualification for the position;
- How soon you plan to depart your country and how long you will stay in the United States;
- Your professional standing;
- Whether or not your family will accompany you, and if so, whether your spouse would like to work;
- Funding arrangements and any tax implications; and
- Your plans after completion of the appointment.

After the university or research center sends you the appropriate documentation to apply for a visa, you will need to present to the American consul, proof of sufficient funding for the duration of your stay, for yourself as well as for any family members who will accompany you. In any case, do not plan to come on a business (B-1) or tourist (B-2) visa and change your immigration status after arrival. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service may not authorize such changes.

Professional Meetings, Conferences and Training Events

While you are in the United States, correspond with professional associations to determine dates and locations of professional meetings, seminars, conferences and short-term training programs in your field. These can be costly; attending a week-long conference can cost over \$1,000, but the benefits usually justify the expense. If

you have a grant or fellowship, ask if there is a provision for attending conferences or for other professional development activities.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

This text covers medicine, nursing, dentistry, veterinary medicine and law in some detail.

Medicine

First Professional Degree

In the United States, admission to medical school is very competitive. It is rare for students from other countries to be admitted to a first professional-degree program in medicine. To be eligible to apply for medical school, students usually complete the equivalent of a bachelor's degree (four years beyond the 12 years required to finish secondary school).

The cost of educating a medical student is much more than the cost of tuition. Because many medical schools are funded largely by taxes raised in the state where they are located (e.g., Wisconsin or Pennsylvania), they naturally give preference to state residents. There are no spaces reserved for foreign students in U.S. medical schools. Although anyone is eligible to apply, foreign students rarely gain admission to a U.S. medical school without pre-medical study in the United States and even then, very rarely.

U.S. students, too, feel the effects of the high level of competition for a limited number of spaces; less than half of U.S. applicants are accepted. Because of the extremely high level of competition, only 150 of the 15,867 students who entered medical school in a recent year were foreign nationals. Of these, all but a few had graduated from a college or university in the United States.

Medical school usually lasts four years, combining classroom experience with observation and patient care in the areas of internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, psychiatry, surgery and often family practice. Classroom study includes basic medical science, basic clinical science (both therapy and technology), preventive medicine and social sciences pertinent to the practice of medicine: ethics, behavioral science and human values.

To be eligible to practice medicine, a physician who attended medical school in the United States must:

- Attain the doctor of medicine (M.D.) degree from a medical school accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, consisting of representatives of the American Medical Association, the Association of American Medical Colleges and representatives of the public;
- Complete a period of residency or graduate medical education; and
- Pass state licensure examinations.

Obtaining ECFMG Certification

In the United States, graduate training for physicians may take several forms. Those who wish to practice a specialized field of medicine usually complete a prescribed period of clinical training in the chosen specialty or residency. The training received, or additional graduate study, also may lead to teaching in a medical school or toward medical research.

To obtain residency positions, clinical fellowships or other training involving patient contact, foreign medical graduates must meet certification standards. The Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) conducts a program of certification of foreign medical graduates to assure the people of the United States and the directors of residency programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) that applicants meet minimal standards of eligibility. Graduates of foreign medical schools, including U.S. citizens who have graduated from medical schools not accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, must meet requirements for ECFMG certification. In order to qualify for application to residency training involving patient contact, a medical school graduate must:

- Submit documents (and translations if necessary) showing graduation from a medical school listed at the time of graduation, in the then-current *World Directory of Medical Schools*;
- Submit documents showing completion of all educational requirements to practice medicine in the country where medical education was completed. (nationals of the country must provide a license to practice in that country);
- Pass the ECFMG English test;
- Pass both the clinical and basic medical science sections of the U.S. Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1 and Step 2, or the former Foreign Medical Graduate Examination in the Medical Sciences (FMGEMS) or Visa Qualifying Examination (VOE), (no longer given) or the Federation Licensing Examination (FLEX) as given prior to June 1985. (Note: The FLEX as currently administered by individual state medical boards differs from the examination as given before June 1985 and is not acceptable for ECFMG certification.); and
- Present a clear ECFMG financial record for payment of testing fees.

USMLE Step 1 and Step 2 and the ECFMG English test are given twice a year at a number of locations overseas. ECFMG annually publishes the *Information Booklet and Application for ECFMG Certification through USMLE Step 1 and Step 2 and the ECFMG English Test*. For a copy of this booklet, which contains further information about these examinations, about credentials and documents accepted from each country, and about ECFMG certification, contact:

Education Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates

3624 Market St.

Philadelphia, PA 19104-2685 USA

Telephone: (215) 386-5900 / Telex: 710-670-1020

The number of applicants for ECFMG certification far surpasses the number who attain it. In addition to ECFMG certification, some states require that prospective foreign residents or clinical fellows pass the licensing examination, currently the Federation Licensing Examination (FLEX). The FLEX test covers basic medical science and clinical practice. State medical boards administer the FLEX examination, usually in the state capital city in June and December of each year. FLEX will be replaced by the USMLE program which consists of Step 1, Step 2 and Step 3. For further information, contact:

Federation of State Medical Boards of the U.S.

6000 Western Pl., Suite 707

Fort Worth, TX 76107 USA

Telephone: (817) 735-8445

Locating A Residency or Clinical Fellowship

The supply of qualified physicians in the U.S. has exceeded demand in recent years. At present, the number of available residency positions or clinical fellowships is less than the number of qualified applicants. In some cases, U.S. physicians trained in accredited U.S. medical schools have been unable to find residency positions. In some years, only small percentages of foreign medical graduates who attained ECFMG certification were placed in residency positions.

Residents receive a salary from the participating hospital. Clinical fellows see patients under the supervision of licensed physicians just as residents do, however, they may or may not receive a salary but rather have funding from other sources, perhaps from an institution in their home country or from their own resources. The term "fellowship" does not imply funding from the hospital for clinical fellows.

Foreign medical graduates applying for residencies or clinical fellowships must have ECFMG certification before beginning their program, but they may initiate correspondence with a hospital before they receive certification. If they participate in the National Resident Matching Program, they must pass the ECFMG examination sequence by January 1 of the year in which they plan to enter and must submit proof of certification by the start of the residency. Physicians may apply directly to accredited residency programs or clinical fellowships in a specialty listed in the *Directory of Residency Programs* (published annually), or they may elect to enter the computerized National Resident Matching Program (the avenue chosen by most applicants). This program allows each applicant to submit a list of preferred residencies, and the requests are matched with available programs. For information, see the bulletin of the ECFMG, or write:

National Resident Matching Program

Executive Secretary

2450 N St., N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20037-1141 USA

Telephone: (202) 828-0566

For an order form for the *Directory of Residency Programs*, write to:

American Medical Association

Order Department OF416792

P.O. Box 109050 Chicago, IL 60610 USA

Telephone: (800) 621-8335

In corresponding with hospitals, be sure that you have clear information about salary, length of employment or appointment, elements of the residency program, hours of duty and responsibilities, and whether or not the hospital will provide health and professional liability insurance.

ECFMG-certified foreign physicians who are matched with residency positions usually are eligible to receive sponsorship from the ECFMG as Exchange Visitors. The period for which their Exchange Visitor (J-1) status may be valid varies with the medical specialty chosen and must be renewed annually. Each specialty board determines the appropriate length of time for postgraduate clinical training in that specialty. After completion of the stipulated training period, Exchange Visitor status expires and the Exchange Visitor physician must leave the United States. The Exchange Visitor physician is not eligible to petition to apply to return to the United States in immigrant status, "H" temporary worker or trainee status, or as an intracompany transferee until he or she has resided in the home country or country of last permanent residence for two years.

Some Alternatives That Do Not Require ECFMG Certification

- *Postgraduate Academic Education*

Foreign medical graduates may apply directly to graduate academic programs in medically related fields which do not involve patient care. Because there is only incidental patient contact, academic or research programs do not require ECFMG certification. Application procedures are similar to those for graduate or postgraduate programs in non-medical fields. Some programs require admissions examinations such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Consult individual program announcements for requirements, and apply directly to the individual graduate program. Fields of academic study and research include radiology, immunology, molecular biology, genetics, neurosciences, pathology and physiology, to name a few. Foreign medical graduates also may apply for research grants in the health sciences. Hospitals, universities and independent research centers are possible sites for research.

Physicians who come to the United States on this basis will not be able to change to ECFMG Exchange Visitor (J-1) status (with the opportunity for clinical experience and patient contact) without undergoing the ECFMG certification process. Do not plan to arrive on a "B" (tourist or business) visa with the thought of entering either an academic or a clinical program; the Immigration and Naturalization Service will not grant the necessary change of immigration status. You must have prior admission to an academic program and documentation as a student prior to entry into the United States.

- *Short-term Opportunities for Continuing Education*

Medical centers and hospitals offer short-term courses, lasting from several days to several months. Although these are often too short to be attractive to physicians abroad, they are open to foreign medical graduates without ECFMG certification as long as they do not involve direct patient contact. *The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* lists available short-term courses twice a year, in January and July. Check for listings in U.S. educational advising centers and libraries overseas or contact:

American Medical Association

525 North State St.

Chicago, IL 60610 USA

Telephone: (312) 464-5000

ECFMG Foreign Faculty Fellowship Program in the Basic Medical Sciences

This program, designed to strengthen basic science teaching in foreign medical schools, brings selected faculty

members from foreign medical schools to teach and study for periods of nine months to one year in a U.S. medical school. Completed applications are submitted by the U.S. host institution on behalf of a candidate, or, if a U.S. institution has not been selected, ECFMG will evaluate the partial application and attempt to arrange a suitable match with a U.S. medical school. All applications must include the endorsement of the candidate's home-country medical school. The fellowships are **not** intended to support research or a formal curriculum leading to a degree.

- *ECFMG International Medical Scholars Program*

This program provides educational opportunities in the United States or foreign scholars who will contribute to academic medicine or the development of health services in their home countries. The program provides support for training in medicine, public health or health care administration for periods of three months to one year. Applicants must be proficient in English, have a graduate or professional degree related to their chosen field and demonstrate professional achievements. The fellowships are **not** intended to support research or a formal curriculum leading to a degree. For further information about either of ECFMG's fellowship programs, contact:

ECFMG Washington Office

2000 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Suite 3600

Washington, D.C. 20006 USA

Telephone: (202) 293-9320

- *Immigrant Physicians*

Since the United States now has more qualified physicians than demand warrants, foreign medical doctors are no longer given automatic labor certification leading toward immigrant visas. A physician who wishes to immigrate to the United States is not given priority treatment, but must qualify for an immigrant visa either through an individual labor certification showing that no qualified U.S. physician is available for the position being offered the alien applicant, or through family relationship to a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. A foreign medical doctor who obtains an individual labor certification may qualify for an immigrant visa under third preference (members of the professions). One who qualifies for an immigrant visa because of family relationships may do so as an immediate relative (spouse or unmarried minor child of a U.S. citizen or parent of a U.S. citizen who is over 21-years-old), or as a first, second, fourth or fifth preference alien (son or daughter of a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, spouse of a permanent resident, or brother or sister of a U.S. citizen). In any case, a graduate of a foreign medical school must obtain ECFMG certification in order to practice medicine in the United States.

An Exchange Visitor (J-1) physician, as mentioned, must leave the United States at the end of the training period and is not eligible to petition to return to the United States in immigrant status, temporary "H" worker or trainee status, or as an intracompany transferee until he or she has resided in the home country for two years.

Nursing

In the United States, professional "registered" nurses (RN) must be licensed in the state of employment. Each state has its own Board of Nursing which issues RN licenses on the basis of individual, state-mandated regulations. However, every state uses the same licensing examination known as the NCLEX-RN which must be passed before a license can be given. Most states require nurses educated outside of the U.S. to have a Certificate from the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) as a prerequisite to taking the NCLEX-RN.

The CGFNS is further important when applying for either a temporary non-immigration visa (H-1A) or a permanent visa. When applying for the H-1A visa, you will be asked to prove that you will be employed in a U.S. healthcare facility that is qualified to hire nurses with H-1A visas and that you already have either a full and unrestricted RN license in the state where you will be employed or a CGFNS Certificate. When applying for a permanent immigrant occupation preference visa, you will need a U.S. Labor Certificate from the Department of Labor. You need a CGFNS Certificate to be issued a labor certificate.

To obtain a CGFNS, first submit documents to the CGFNS credentials review. You will be registered for the CGFNS Exam if you:

- Are currently registered as a first-level general nurse in the country where you were educated;
- Have completed an upper secondary school education, separate from nursing education;
- Have graduated from a government-approved general nursing program of at least two years; and

- Have received theory and clinical practice in medical, surgical, obstetric, pediatric and psychiatric nursing.

The two-part CGFNS Exam tests nursing knowledge and English-language proficiency. It is a "predictor" test in that it is designed so that a passing result on the CGFNS Exam means you have a very good chance of passing NCLEX-RN. The CGFNS Qualifying Examination is given three times a year at sites around the world. For information on the CGFNS Certification Program, including application forms, write:

Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools

3600 Market St., Suite 400

Philadelphia, PA 19104-2651 USA

Telephone: (215) 349-8767

Veterinary Medicine

There are no spaces in veterinary schools reserved for students from other countries. In fact, it is very difficult for foreign students to gain admission to U.S. veterinary schools, simply as a result of the intense competition for a limited number of places.

There are only 27 schools of veterinary medicine in the United States, all associated with universities. Of these, 25 are largely state-financed; that is, tax money raised by the individual state (e.g., Minnesota) supports the school. Hence, it is not surprising that applicants from the home state are given first preference and that there are few opportunities for students from other countries. The American Veterinary Medical Association reports that in 1991 and 1992, of the 2,225 students admitted to veterinary schools, 16 were foreign nationals.

In the United States, many students who enter veterinary school have completed at least four years of education past the secondary level and attained a bachelor's level in universities, although a few universities have pre-veterinary majors similar to pre-medical studies, and vocational colleges have programs to train veterinary assistants.

Veterinarians begin practice in the United States after four years of study in veterinary schools and attainment of the first professional degree, doctor of veterinary medicine, D.V.M. or V.M.D. Before beginning practice, veterinarians must be licensed by the state in which they plan to work.

Admission to U.S. Veterinary Schools

There is no central admissions service for veterinary schools as there is for law schools and medical schools. Students apply directly to veterinary schools; chances are somewhat better at private than at state-supported schools. The primary consideration for admission is the quality of the undergraduate record. Of the 27 schools, more than half require the Veterinary Aptitude Test for admission; four require the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT); a few require parts of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Another alternative to veterinary school is to enter a graduate academic program in animal studies. Competition is less intense, since these programs do not lead to professional certification.

Postgraduate Training

For foreign-trained veterinarians with the equivalent of the D.V.M., there are two alternatives for postgraduate training in the United States. Veterinary schools offer postgraduate academic programs leading to the master's degree in veterinary science or to the Ph.D., in conjunction with associated universities. These programs do not lead toward clinical practice, but rather toward teaching in veterinary schools, employment by pharmaceutical companies or research. The proportion of foreign graduate students in these programs (on the average, about 10 to 20 percent of total enrollment) is higher than in programs leading to the D.V.M.

Another postgraduate option is residency training leading toward board certification in a specialty, such as veterinary ophthalmology or veterinary pathology. Residency training, also associated with veterinary schools, takes three years; it involves a combination of academic and clinical experience. Most U.S. veterinarians do not elect to enter a specialty; rather, they go into general practice. Foreign veterinarians are occasionally accepted into residency training. Apply to the individual veterinary school which offers the specialty of interest.

Immigrant Veterinarians

To practice in most states in the United States, immigrant veterinarians must gain certification from the American Veterinary Medical Association's (AVMA) Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates (ECFVG). In all states, veterinarians must pass state licensure before they are eligible to practice. For additional information, contact:

American Veterinary Medical Association

1931 North Meacham Rd., Suite 100

Schaumburg, IL 60173 USA

Telephone: (708) 925-8070, Extension 211

Dentistry

First Professional Degree

In the United States, dental study usually begins after four years of undergraduate work (a minimum of two years of undergraduate pre-dental study is mandatory). Most students attain a bachelor's degree or master's degree before entering dental school. Universities do not have undergraduate studies in dentistry; students planning to study dentistry take a combination of liberal arts and sciences, with any major being acceptable for admission.

Dental school curricula leading to the first professional degree, doctor of dental surgery (D.D.S.) or doctor of dental medicine (D.M.D.) require four years of study—two years with an emphasis on basic medical sciences as it applies to dentistry, and two years emphasizing a clinical orientation. Upon attaining the D.D.S. or D.M.D., dentists must pass both the National Licensing Examination and the State Board Examination in the state of intended professional practice.

Admission to First Professional Degree Programs

Those who apply to dental schools should remember that the level of competition is very high, for U.S. citizens as well as for foreign nationals. There are no spaces reserved for foreign students in U.S. dental schools. Chances of obtaining admission to a private dental school are somewhat higher than those of admission to a state-supported dental school. The cost of educating a dental student far exceeds tuition payments, because many dental schools naturally give preference to state residents. For this reason, students who are state residents are admitted to state dental schools before U.S. students who live in other states and foreign nationals.

Although anyone is eligible to apply, foreign students rarely gain admission to a school of dentistry in the United States without having completed at least two years of pre-dental study in a U.S. university. Other requirements for admission are:

- An excellent undergraduate academic record;
- Proficiency in the English language; and
- A score on the Dental Admissions Test (DAT) judged satisfactory by the individual dental school.

The Dental Admissions Test, given in the Spring and Fall, is an examination which measures proficiency in mathematics, biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, reading and perceptual motor abilities. Although its scheduled locations are all within the United States, applicants who inquire several months in advance can sometimes arrange an overseas administration. For further information, contact:

American Dental Association

Council on Dental Education

211 East Chicago Ave.

Chicago, IL 60611 USA

Telephone: (312) 440-2500

Postgraduate Dental Training

After receiving the equivalent of the D.D.S., dentists may apply for postgraduate training at hospitals or dental schools. Some programs lead to a master's degree in advanced dentistry. Others offer specialty training. Upon completion of specialty training programs, licensed dentists may apply for board certification in that specialty. These programs admit foreign dental graduates, particularly in fields such as dental public health, more frequently than do first professional degree programs.

There is no certifying examination administered worldwide for postgraduate dental students comparable to the FMGEMS for medicine. Some specialty programs, such as oral surgery and periodontics, require that foreign dentists complete at least the last two years of prudent studies in a U.S. university, as well as complete the D.D.S. at a dental school in the United States that is accredited by the American Dental Association. Some may also require state licensure and national board certification. Dental schools are more likely to consider unlicensed foreign applicants for postgraduate training than are hospitals.

Short-term Educational Opportunities

Dental schools and hospitals offer postgraduate continuing education courses lasting from a few days to a few weeks. These courses provide updates on the latest information about specific topics and are open to foreign dentists. Current listings of continuing education courses appear in the June and December issues of *The Journal of the American Dental Association* ordered from the address given above for the American Dental Association.

Law

The legal system in the United States on the federal level and in most states derives from the British system of common law; however, one state, Louisiana, has a legal system modeled on the French legal code.

Postgraduate Legal Education

The most appropriate U.S. degree programs for foreign national lawyers are the master of comparative law (M.C.L.) and the master of comparative jurisprudence (M.C.J.). Recognizing that legal systems in many other countries differ from common law as practiced in the United States, these programs acquaint lawyers from other countries with U.S. legal institutions and relevant specialties of U.S. law. Another possibility is the master of laws (LL.M.). Consult the prospectus of individual law schools for programs. These programs, one year in duration, are flexible and can be planned according to the interests of the student. During the period of study, foreign lawyers receive opportunities to observe courts and governmental agencies in the United States. Law schools arrange for foreign lawyers entering graduate study to attend an orientation on American law given by:

The International Law Institute

1615 New Hampshire Ave., N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20009 USA

Telephone: (202) 483-3036

Similar programs are given by several U.S. universities on a short-term basis, often in the summer. Foreign lawyers may also find graduate programs in international law or international business law of interest.

Short-term Legal Education

Lawyers in many countries may participate in short-term programs, usually about 30 days in length, which provide visits to U.S. legal institutions. For information about these programs, contact the United States Information Service (USIS) or the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The First Professional Degree

Law schools in the United States prepare students for the juris doctor (J.D.) degree (considered equivalent to a doctoral degree). Since the curriculum provides general basic legal education directed toward the practice of law in the United States, foreign nationals will find other degrees more appropriate. Although law schools offer individual courses which emphasize particular subject areas such as environmental law, taxation or business law, there are no specific J.D. programs for any single specialty except at the postgraduate level. Law school requires three years of full-time study.

Admission to Law School

Although some law schools will admit students with only three years of undergraduate study, almost all applicants to law school complete a bachelor's degree before entering. Other requirements for application include:

- An excellent undergraduate academic record; and
- Taking the Law School Admission Test (LSAT).

Foreign students whose native language is not English also must submit a satisfactory score on the TOEFL examination given several times a year at many sites in the United States and overseas. For further information about the LSAT, contact:

Law School Admissions Services

Box 2000 Newton, PA 18940 USA

Telephone: (215) 968-1100

Most students apply through the Law School Admission Service. Competition for spaces in law school is intense for U.S. citizens as well as foreign nationals. For information about being a law student, contact:

American Bar Association

Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admission to the Bar

550 West North St. Indianapolis, IN 46202 USA

Telephone: (317) 264-8340

Admission to Legal Practice

To practice law in the United States, an applicant must pass the bar examination for the state where he or she intends to practice. While there is no national bar examination, part of the state bar examination usually consists of a national, standard multiple-choice examination. The other half of the bar examination is state-specific. Each state has different requirements for admitting candidates to the bar. Immigrants are eligible to take state-bar examinations.

PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOLARS AND PROFESSIONALS COMING TO THE UNITED STATES

Consult the Office of International Services, the training liaison officer, or other administrative officer to ask for further information about aspects of living and working in the United States. Before you go, you may find valuable advice in the references listed in the bibliography below or from other sources in the nearest U.S. educational advising office, USIS library or U.S. educational exchange commission.

Cost of Living

Ask for an estimate of the total cost of living in the community and at the institution where you will be working. Usually, the Office of International Services or the training liaison officer will have cost ranges. Find out if the estimate was prepared for students or for mid-career professionals; if for students, you will find that estimates are low. Actual living costs will depend heavily on housing and transportation options available, and on whether you are bringing your family. Be sure to include in your estimate costs of health insurance, rent, travel, purchase of publications, clothing required because of climate differences, and automobile purchase and maintenance, if you will need a car. It is common for foreign scholars and professionals to find that all costs exceed what they had anticipated.

Housing

In some instances, you may be eligible for special housing provided by the institution. The Office of International Services may be aware of possibilities and options, and sometimes will be in a position to help you find housing. Establish by correspondence before you leave whether you will be finding housing on your own, or whether the department, the research center, the Office of International Services or some individual

will be willing to help you. It is unrealistic to expect that someone will help unless you have established this in advance.

Bringing Your Family

Whether or not you bring your family will depend on the cost of living, the educational level of your dependents, opportunities for your spouse and the level of support you can expect. You may want to consider coming by yourself at first and then bringing your family after you are settled.

Schooling for Children

School-age children will be eligible to attend public or private schools as your dependents. The Office of International Services or training liaison officer can advise you about documents, medical requirements and immunizations for the local school district. Bring academic records for each of your children, translated if necessary, to aid in placement. Instruction is in English (except in a few areas with large populations of other ethnic groups). Large cities or diplomatic centers such as New York and Washington, D.C. may have special schools that teach in the language of your home country or according to particular religious preferences.

Opportunities for Spouses

There are a variety of opportunities for cultural, educational and professional enrichment for a spouse accompanying a foreign scholar, researcher or professional. Individuals with appointments at a U.S. college or university may find active support programs for spouses and dependents, including English-language classes, student and support groups, and outings. Depending on the community and the organization at which you will be placed, similar opportunities may be available in noncampus settings.

If your spouse has an advanced degree, or has distinguished merit and ability in some field, or a high degree of professional or artistic skill, he or she may be able to qualify for one of several temporary-worker visas. If your spouse is qualified and interested in pursuing academic training in the United States, he or she may be able to enroll at a college or university as an F-1 non-immigrant student. In most cases, however, your spouse will not be permitted to work. Permission to engage in employment is granted by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and involves an application process which may take several months to process.

If you are admitted to the United States as a J-1 Exchange Visitor, your spouse is eligible for work permission as a J-2 visitor. For specific information about this employment eligibility, ask for information from your Exchange Visitor program sponsor.

Banking

Inquire locally, as well as from sources in the community to which you will be travelling, about the best method for transferring funds from your country, and about establishing a bank account in the United States. The Office of International Services may have suggestions about who should transfer funds, how they should be transferred, how long it will take (sometimes up to six weeks) and when you should begin.

Taxes

All visiting scholars and professionals are subject to federal and state income tax on U.S.-source income, as well as on most grants and scholarships. In certain cases, particularly if your stay in the United States exceeds a certain number of years, you may be subject to income tax on your worldwide income. The extent of that tax liability for that income, however, varies significantly depending on numerous factors, including your tax status as either a resident or nonresident taxpayer. Please note that tax status is different than immigration status; you may find that you are treated as a nonresident for immigration purposes and a resident for tax purposes. The nonimmigrant status you have in the United States will have an impact on what tax treatment you receive, but it is not the only consideration in determining that treatment. Inquire about your tax treatment before you leave your home country so that you can make adjustments as necessary. Be sure to find out if there is a tax treaty between your country and the United States, and what provisions might affect your tax status. Bring the necessary records and keep copies of any documents involved in tax records. Depending on your immigration status, you may also be subject to U.S. Social Security taxes.

Health Insurance

In the United States, medical treatment, especially hospital care, is extremely expensive, and the government does not provide free or subsidized medical care. You must make adequate provision for possible emergencies and health care by buying health insurance for you and your dependents, as do most Americans. If you have a policy already that offers international coverage, inquire whether it will be valid for medical costs incurred in the United States. Also check whether your coverage is adequate for U.S. costs. If not, ask the Office of International Services or your sponsor about any available low-cost group policies. If you are ineligible for some reason (for example, sometimes scholars exceed the age limit imposed on policies that are primarily designed for foreign students), you will still need to purchase health insurance.

Before buying a policy, read it carefully to see what is and is not covered. Usually, routine office visits, dental care and eye care are not covered. Most policies state that pre-existing conditions are not covered until a certain time has elapsed after the purchase of the policy. If pregnancy is a possibility, read the policy carefully to see what proportion of prenatal, delivery and postnatal costs is actually covered.

Religion

The United States encourages religious freedom for all faiths. In most U.S. cities, even small ones, you will be able to locate others who share your faith. The Office of International Services will have information about local religious activities.