



Widener University

**OFFICE OF
INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT SERVICES**

F-1 Student Pre-arrival Guide

**1 University Place
University Center, Upper
Level
Chester, PA 19013
Phone: 610-499-4498
Alt. Phone: 610-499-4472
E-mail: iss@widener.edu**



WELCOME

Welcome to Widener University!

On behalf of International Student Services (ISS), we are pleased to welcome you to Widener University and the greater Philadelphia area. This packet will provide critical pre-arrival information as well as immigration regulations, services at ISS, and an overview of Widener. Our contact information is below, and most of our forms are available online at <http://sites.widener.edu/iss/>. Welcome to Widener!

Location & Campus Safety

Main Campus

1 University Place, Chester, PA 19013

Delaware Law School

4601 Concord Pike, Wilmington, DE 19803

Commonwealth Law School

3800 Vartan Way, Harrisburg, PA 17110

Campus Safety is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, even holidays. They can be reached at:

Main Campus: 610-499-4200

Delaware: 302-477-2200

Harrisburg: 717-541-1911

Contact Information

International Student Services

1 University Place
University Center, Upper Level
Chester, PA 19013
Ph. +1-620-499-4498
E. iss@widener.edu

Dr. Kandy Turner, PDSO/RO

Director, International Student Services & Programs
Ph. +1-610-499-4498
E. kkturner@widener.edu

Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)

DHS/ICE
500 12th Street SW Stop 5600
Washington, DC 20536-5600
Telephone: 703-603-3400
Email: sevp@ice.dhs.gov
Technical Issues: SEVISHelpDesk@ice.dhs.gov

Study in the States:

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students>

All of our forms, handouts and applications can be found at:

<https://sites.widener.edu/iss/>

Tuition & Fees

University students may be granted a merit-based or transfer scholarship. If no scholarship is offered, they or their sponsor are responsible for the tuition and fees as indicated on the Office of the Bursar site: <http://sites.widener.edu/bursar/tuition-and-fees/>

An Estimated Cost of Attendance Guide can be found on the Accepted International Students site: <https://www.widener.edu/accepted-students/international>

This document is used to determine the amount of funds required for an I-20 to be issued. Students must demonstrate sufficient funds for one year of study with the indication that the funding will continue for the duration of their program.

I-20 and Visa Information

Before requesting your I-20, make sure to activate your Widener account and pay your deposit. Request an I-20 at: <https://www.widener.edu/accepted-students/international>

Students are required to upload their passport biographical page, financial documents, other immigration documents (if any), and information about their dependents (if any).

In order to receive an I-20, students must show enough money to cover tuition, fees, books, medical insurance and living expenses for one year. Students must show proof of funds for living expenses even if they intend to live off campus.

Once all documents are received, the I-20 will be issued and mailed using eshipglobal. Students should pay for shipping of the document via eshipglobal at the time that they request the document.

Students must apply for the F-1 visa outside of the United States.

- Verify that all the information on the I-20 is correct.
 - Sign page 1 of the I-20.
 - Pay the SEVIS Fee and print the I-901 fee receipt.
 - Schedule a visa appointment.
 - Complete the DS-160 Form.
 - Pay the visa application fee.
 - Bring a passport size photograph, passport, I-20, I-901 fee receipt, financial support documents, proof of ties to home country and other documents as required to the visa interview.
- (Note: Canadian citizens do not need a U.S. visa, but still must pay the SEVIS 1-901 fee.)

After you receive your visa be sure to continue with steps 5-10 on the checklist found at: <https://www.widener.edu/accepted-students/international>

UNIVERSITY INSURANCE

All F-1 students are required to purchase the Widener Student Health Insurance, which is automatically added to students' bills. The insurance covers medical expenses as well as medical evacuation and repatriation. For additional information on the insurance plan, please visit the Student Health Services site: <https://sites.widener.edu/studenthealth/student-health-insurance/>

PRE-ARRIVAL CHECKLIST

- ☐ Make travel plans to allow sufficient time to familiarize yourself with the university. Attendance at new International Student orientation is mandatory and the date can be found on your I-20, or on the ISS website. Keep this in mind when booking your flight. F-1 international students may arrive no more than 30 days prior to the program start date listed on the I-20.
- ☐ Pack a variety of clothing for all seasons, including a warm over coat and summer attire.
- ☐ Bring national costume for cultural events (if desired).
- ☐ Obtain your visa (Note: Canadian citizens do not need a US Visa, but must pay the SEVIS fee).
- ☐ Make financial arrangements to pay for tuition (if applicable) and other bills.
- ☐ Exchange currency to US Dollars. \$5, \$10, & \$20 bills preferred.
- ☐ Secure housing or complete the housing application if living on campus.
- ☐ Collect and organize immigration documents and *put in your carry-on (hand) luggage*:
 - ☐ Valid Passport with Visa
 - ☐ I-20
 - ☐ I-901 SEVIS Fee Receipt
 - ☐ Financial Support Document
- ☐ Determine transportation from airport to the university.
- ☐ Complete required health forms: <https://sites.widener.edu/studenthealth/required-health-forms/>
- ☐ Ensure you have all required immunizations or arrange to get them (see webpage listed above for required immunizations).
- ☐ Bring all prescription medicines and copies of prescriptions.
- ☐ Bring copies of medical chart.
- ☐ Determine cell phone needs:
 - ☐ Will you get a SIM card at home?
 - ☐ A new phone in the US?

For more information see our checklist at: <https://www.widener.edu/accepted-students/international>

Arriving to Widener early?

Best Western Plus Philadelphia Airport South
1450 Providence Ave
Chester, PA 19013
(610) 872-8100

Mention you are a Widener student to receive the discounted student rate. Free shuttle service available.

ARRIVAL INFORMATION

- ❑ REMEMBER: *Attendance at new International Student orientation is required* so make travel plans to allow sufficient time to familiarize yourself with the University. Keep this in mind when booking your flight. F-1 international students may arrive no more than 30 days prior to the program start date listed on the I-20.
- ❑ Arriving at the Port of Entry
 - ❑ Keep your passport, I-20, I-901 fee receipt and financial support documents with you, NOT in your checked baggage.
 - ❑ Present the Customs Officer with your passport and I-20. If asked, present your financial documents or other requested documentation.
 - ❑ Ensure that the Officer returns all your documents and stamps your passport with the date and “F-1 D/S.”
- ❑ Transportation to Widener University (Main Campus): It is recommended that international students arrive at the Philadelphia Airport (PHL). Widener does provide airport pickups on specific dates and times to and from the Airport, which will be emailed to you before you arrive. If you are unable to make these shuttle times, the following options are available:
 - ❑ A taxi from the PHL airport is approximately \$30. Uber/Lyft rides are approximately \$20.
 - ❑ Shuttles to Delaware County (Widener University) include:
 - ❑ AAA Airport One Direct (215) 677-3544
 - ❑ Atlantic Sedan Services (610) 659-8513
 - ❑ American Limo, (484) 368-7041
 - ❑ Delaware Express (800) 648-5466
 - ❑ Lady Liberty (215) 724-8888
- ❑ Transportation to Widener University: Delaware Law School : It is recommended that international students arrive at the Philadelphia Airport (PHL). WU: Delaware Law School does not provide airport pickups. The following options are available:
 - ❑ A taxi or Uber from PHL airport ranges from \$58-\$80
 - ❑ Shuttles to Wilmington, DE include:
 - ❑ American Limo, (484) 368-7041
 - ❑ Atlantic Sedan Service, (610) 659-8513
 - ❑ Call-First Transit, (302) 427-3736
 - ❑ Delaware Express, (800) 648-5466
 - ❑ Tropiano, (800)-559-2040
- ❑ Other Regional Airports:

	Distance to Main Campus	Distance to School of Law
John F. Kennedy Int’l Airport (JFK)	198Km / 122 Miles	217Km / 135 Miles
Washington DC (Dulles) IAD	233Km / 145 Miles	217Km / 135 Miles
Newark Liberty (EWR)	157Km / 98 Miles	175Km / 109 Miles
Baltimore Washington (BWI)	148Km / 92 Miles	135Km / 84 Miles

MAINTAINING YOUR F-1 STATUS

- **Attend *all* days of International Student Orientation** and bring your immigration documents.
- **Maintain a full course of study each fall and spring semester for the duration of your program.**
 - Undergraduates: Minimum of 12 credits per semester
 - Graduates: Minimum of 9 credits per semester
- **Keep immigration documents current and in a safe place.**
 - Passport must remain *valid* throughout entire stay in US.
 - I-20 may not expire.
 - Report any changes in academic program, program dates, level of study, or changes in funding to ISS.
 - Report any loss or theft of immigration documents to ISS.
- **Report local address to International Student Services within 10 days.**

You are required by immigration regulations to maintain your local address with Widener University at all times. A change of address form can be found on the ISS website. Immigration regulations require a physical address rather than a P.O. Box.
- **Engage in authorized employment only.**
- **Request an extension of your I-20 if you need more time or report if you will complete your program early.**

I-20 completion dates are an estimate of when you will complete your program.
- **Obtain a travel signature on page 2 of Form I-20 from ISS before traveling outside of the US.**

Valid for 1 year (6 months on OPT).
- **Upon graduation or completion of your program, do one of the following within 60 days:**
 - Return to your home country
 - Transfer to another SEVP certified school
 - Change academic level at Widener
 - Change your status
 - Apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Driver's License/State ID:

F-1 students and their dependents are eligible for a driver's license.

The driver's license or state ID should be issued through the grace period on your I-20. It is very important to check your information and expiration date to make sure it is correct before leaving the Photo and Exam Center.

More information on Driver's Licenses can be found on the Driver's License Handout.

CHANGE OF STATUS

F-1 students and their dependents may apply for change of status (such as H1-B) while in the U.S. You can either file the application yourself or work with an immigration attorney. Once the application has been approved, bring your proof of change of status to ISS and your F-1 SEVIS record will be terminated.

60-DAY GRACE PERIOD

Upon completion of your program, you and your F-2 dependents are allowed a 60-day grace period to do one of the following:

- Depart the US within the 60-day "grace period" (i.e., the 60 days immediately following your date of graduation.).
- Apply, or have already applied, for OPT work permission. (You will have an additional 60-day "grace period" following the last date of your OPT).
- Transfer your SEVIS record to a new school.
- Enter a new academic program at Widener.
- Apply (or have already applied) for a change of status with US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

You are not authorized to work during the grace period, nor can you leave the United States and return during this time.

PROGRAM EXTENSION

The program completion date is listed on your I-20. If you have not completed your program by this date, you will need to request a program extension *before your current I-20 expires*. Program extensions may be granted because of the following reasons:

- Change of major
- Change of research topic
- Unexpected research program
- Thesis/Dissertation Extension
- Medical

To request an extension, complete the Program Extension Request Form with your academic advisor.

EARLY COMPLETION

If you will complete your program early, please inform ISS. Your I-20 date will be shorted to that semester's graduation date, and you will need to follow the procedures during the 60-Day Grace Period. *If you finish your program early, you cannot just "hang out" until your I-20 end date.*

TRANSFERS

F-1 students are eligible to transfer to other SEVP certified post-secondary institutions. To transfer a SEVIS record, complete the SEVIS Release Form and submit an acceptance letter to ISS. Your record will be transferred when your current term has been completed.

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MAINTAINING YOUR F-1 STATUS, CTD.

MAINTAINING YOUR F-1 STATUS, CTD.

FULL TIME STUDY / REDUCED COURSE LOAD

In general, permission to register for less than full-time should occur rarely during a student's academic career. Per immigration law, international students must be full-time each fall and spring semester. Full time status is 12 credits for undergraduate students and generally 9 credits for graduate students. (There are a few graduate programs that require 12 credits for full time status; the Academic Advisor will inform the student if this applies).

Please note:

- A student completing a thesis/monograph/dissertation who is registered for the thesis/dissertation course is considered a full time student and does not need to complete this form.
- Concurrent enrollment does not count towards full time for F-1 students.
- A limit of one online class can count towards full time for F-1 students per semester.

Reduced course load may be authorized for the following reasons *only*:

- Student requires less than full course load to complete degree program at the end of the term.
- Student is a doctoral student intending to take comprehensive exam this semester and requires a reduced course load to paper for the exam (may only be used once).
- Student has a medical/psychological reason to be registered less than full-time. The student must provide medical documentation from a licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist. (Approval can be for "0 credits." Can only be used twice; student must reapply for 2nd semester).
- Student has been placed in an improper course level for his/her current academic standing. (Can only be used once; student must register for at least 6 credits).
- Initial difficulty with English language, reading requirements, or American teaching methods (first year students only; must be registered for 6 credits).

To request an reduced course load, complete the Reduced Course Load Form with your academic advisor. *Students must maintain fulltime status until RCL is approved. Classes may only be dropped after the RCL is approved.*

Summer Start:

A student starting their studies during the summer terms must be registered full time over both terms. For example, 6 credits in summer 1 and then 6 credits in summer 2 for an undergraduate student.

REGAINING STATUS

F-1 students who fail to maintain status and have terminated SEVIS records have the following options to regain their F-1 status:

Travel & Re-Entry

A student with a terminated status may request an initial I-20 and return to their home country to apply for a new visa. The student will then re-enter with the new I-20 and visa.

Reinstatement:

A student may choose to apply for reinstatement in travel and re-entry is not an option for regaining status. Any student preferring to request reinstatement should make an appointment with ISS. *Note:* This process may take up to 12 months to process.

On-Campus Employment:

Current F-1 students are eligible for on-campus employment up to 15 hours per week while classes are in session and 25 hours per week during the summer. Students who take summer classes are limited to 15 hours per week.

To obtain authorization for on-campus employment, complete the On-Campus Work Contract. After ISS signs this form, take it to Lipka Hall.

Curricular Practical Training:

Curricular Practice Training (CPT) is a work benefit for F-1 students to gain practical experience related to their major. The work experience cannot be related to a minor or general education course. It is only available to F-1 students when it is an integral part of an established curriculum. This means that the work must fall into one of the following categories:

1. Required for all students in a program
2. Co-op, practicum, clinical, internship course
3. Above and beyond the requirements for a course in the student major, including independent student

To be eligible for CPT, you must:

- Be maintaining F-1 status.
- Have completed at least two full-time semester by the requested employment date (fall & spring).
- Be registered for a course approved by your academic advisor.

CPT is approved on a semester-by-semester basis. You cannot extend your CPT, but can be authorized for another semester of CPT. CPT cannot be used as a means to be less than full time. CPT must be an integral part of your curriculum, NOT a convenient way to work off campus.

Full/Part Time CPT:

- Full-time: 21 hours or more per week
- Part-time: 20 hours or less per week

Important: If you engage in 12 months or more of FULL TIME CPT, you will lose eligibility for Optional Practical Training. It is your responsibility to keep track of full time CPT employment.

To obtain authorization for CPT, complete the Curricular Practical Training form and submit the complete form signed by your academic advisor and a letter from your employer (on letterhead) stating the following to ISS:

- Your name
- Number of hours to be worked per week
- Full address of the location where you will be working
- The exact start and end dates (related to the semester/course dates)
- A general description of your duties

Optional Practical Training:

F-1 students are eligible to participate in Optional Practical Training (OPT) for a total of 12 months in work directly related to the students major area of study. Students must have completed at least 1 full academic year from a college or university in order to be eligible for OPT.

Pre-Completion OPT:

Pre-Completion OPT is OPT authorized by USCIS prior to a student's completion of a degree. Time spent working on pre-completion OPT will be subtracted from the 12 months of available OPT. Students may only work 20 hours or less per week when classes are in session. If students wish to engage in Pre-Completion OPT, an appointment should be made with ISS to discuss requirements and process.

Note: Students should utilize for Curricular Practical Training rather than Pre-Completion OPT if possible.

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EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

Post-Completion OPT:

Post-Completion OPT is OPT authorized by USCIS after a student completes their program of study for work in their field of study.

Application Procedures:

- Students may apply up to 90 days prior to their program completion and the application must be received and receipted by the USCIS within 60 days of graduation.
- ISS must print a new I-20 recommending OPT that will accompany that student's application.

Students wishing to engage in post-completion OPT should review the OPT Handout. Once the student has completed the required documents, an appointment should be made with ISS to check the completeness of the application and print a new I-20. The OPT application must be mailed to USCIS within 30 days of the OPT Recommendation I-20.

STEM OPT Extension:

F-1 students who have completed a degree in a Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM) major are eligible for a 24 month OPT extension after post-completion OPT. Students are eligible for 2 STEM extensions during their lifetime. To apply for an extension, please complete the STEM OPT application and mail the required documents to USCIS.

CAP GAP Extension:

F-1 students who have been approved for an H-1B work visa will automatically be granted an extension if their OPT is valid through April 1. Any student who is eligible for this extension needs to request a new I-20.

Bringing Your Family

Your immediate family members (spouse and children under the age of 21) are eligible to enter and remain in the United States as F-2 dependents during your course of study. To request a I-20 for a family member who wishes to apply for a F-2 dependent visa, include their information in your Request for Immigration Document form or send the following information to iss@widener.edu:

- Copy of biographical page of passport
- Evidence of additional funding (See amount required on the Estimated Cost of Attendance guide).

Maintaining Status

F-2 dependent status hinges upon your F-1 student status. Therefore, as long as the F-1 student maintains status, the F-2 dependent will remain in status.

Employment

F-2 dependents may not accept employment or engage in business under any circumstances.

Study

F-2 dependents may enroll in *less than a full course of study* that leads to or counts towards a degree at an SEVP certified school

Dependent Health Insurance

Widener University does not offer insurance coverage for dependents. Insurance must be purchased through International Student Insurance: <https://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/schools/widener-university.php>

Social Security Information:

The Social Security Administration (SSA) will issue a social security number for employment purposes only. Students who become employed should apply for a Social Security number promptly.

More information on Social Security can be found in the Social Security handout.

Emergency Information

In the event of a medical emergency, call 9-1-1 for help. Please note, you should only call for an ambulance if there is an emergency. Ambulances are very expensive and you may be liable for some or all of the cost. If you live on campus, Campus Safety will take you to the local hospital.

Doctor Visits

When arriving to the United States, you should find a regular doctor who you can visit when necessary (this may also be called “Primary Care”). If you live on-campus and have the university health insurance, this doctor could be at the Student Health Center. You will need to schedule an appointment with the doctor and same-day or walk-in visits are discouraged or hard to get. Doctors are normally open from 9am-5pm but hours vary greatly, especially if you need to see a specialist.

In the event that you need to see a doctor on short notice, try calling your doctor or visit the local Urgent Care. Urgent Care is a part of the hospital with walk-in services or a separate clinic. Depending on the date and time, there may be a long wait (up to 3 hours or more) to see a doctor. If you are sick on the weekend and can’t wait to meet with your regular doctor on Monday, Urgent Care is your best option. Make sure to check your insurance to see if a co-pay is required for urgent care and what you may be responsible for financially.

Any time you visit the doctor, you should bring your insurance card and ID. Your insurance card will indicate if you need to pay a co-pay, or the amount you are immediately responsible for. Make sure to check with your doctor’s office to see if you must bring cash for the co-pay.

Preventative Care

Avoid paying costly doctors bills by taking care of yourself! Most insurance plans offer “free preventative” care at least once a year. This can be a visit for a yearly physical or women’s health visit. Also, make sure to get plenty of sleep, eat healthy meals, and dress appropriately. Be conscience of others’ health around you and wash your hands often.

Prescriptions

If possible, bring enough prescription medicine for your time in the United States. You should carry copies of your prescriptions when travelling to prove the prescription is yours. Depending on your insurance, you may be required to pay for some of all of your prescription costs. If your prescription is for a name brand medication, check with your doctor and pharmacy to see if you need the name brand or if you can use the generic version of the medicine. Generic versions are normally significantly cheaper. You should also note that most medicines in the US require a doctor’s prescription so you may want to look into bringing certain medicines with you, like antibiotics, for example.

Dental Insurance

Dental insurance is different for everyone. You should look at your past history with the dentist to determine if dental insurance is necessary. For example, if you have very healthy teeth and only go to the dentist once per year, it may not make financial sense to have dental insurance at this point in your life. If you have a past history with many dentist visits, you may want to purchase this insurance.

Eye Care

Eye Care costs can add up quickly. Try and bring supplies from home, especially if you wear contacts. If you need to get more contacts or glasses you must have an eye exam; once per year if you wear contacts. Shop around when looking for an eye doctor and look for “clubs” or specials that include free exams with purchase of glasses, etc. Remember: Costco and Walmart have eye centers! Many times health insurance comes with vision benefits. Determine if your insurance does and how to claim these benefits.

HEALTH CARE

TRAVEL

TRAVEL WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

When traveling outside the greater Philadelphia area, you should carry copies of your passport biographical and expiration pages, I-20, and I-94 record. If you plan to travel near the U.S.-Mexico or U.S.-Canada border, you may be required to show proof of legal immigration status, so be certain to bring your original documents even if you do not plan to cross the border.

TRAVEL OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES

To enter the United States after a temporary trip abroad, you will need your:

- Passport (valid for 6 months or longer upon entry)
- Valid F-1 visa (Canadian citizens are exempt from the visa requirement)
- I-20 signed for travel within the last **12 months**

If you are traveling to a country that is not your country of citizenship, please consult that country's consulate to determine if you require an entry visa.

F-1 VISA RENEWAL

If your F-1 visa has expired and you wish to travel internationally, you must renew your expired visa at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy before you return to the United States. Processing times vary greatly among the different consulates, so please plan accordingly. To check current visa interview and processing times at a specific U.S. Consulate, consult the Department of State's website. Please note that the wait times listed do not include any delays that may occur as a result of background or security checks.

AUTOMATIC VISA REVALIDATION (AVR)

Travel with an expired visa using Automatic Visa Revalidation (AVR) is permitted when you travel to a contiguous territory (Canada, Mexico, and certain Caribbean Islands) for 30 days or less and do not apply for a U.S. visa during your travel. You will need to present the following documents in order to re-enter the United States using AVR:

- Passport
- Expired F-1 visa stamp
- I-20 signed for travel within the last 12 months

I-94 ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE RECORD

The I-94 Arrival/Departure Record is an electronic record issued by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) when you enter the United States. Your I-94 record confirms that you have been lawfully admitted to the United States in a specific visa status and for what duration. It is important to review your I-94 record to make sure that you are admitted in F-1 status for D/S (or "Duration of Status") after each entry.



Public Transit

Widener University is conveniently located between Washington, D.C. and New York City. For students interested in going to Philadelphia, Southeast Pennsylvania Transit Authority (SEPTA) is one option. Campus Safety and the Widener shuttle will take and pick up students to/from the Chester Regional Rail station during the day and Swarthmore Regional Rail Station in the evenings. Monthly passes and 10-ride tickets are available for purchase online or at the station. Tickets are also available for purchase on the train, but this is the most expensive option. If you buy a ticket on the train, present your receipt at the ticket window at Center City stations for a refund of the difference.

Please note that most stations outside of Center City have very limited hours so you should purchase your tickets and get refunds in the city. Refunds are only available on the day you purchase the ticket. More information, schedules, maps, and fares can be found at SEPTA.org.

Buses and trolley's are also options for getting around depending on where you live. These modes of transport require passes, cash, or tokens. Tokens can be purchased at the Widener Bookstore, stations, authorized vendors, and online.

30th Street Station

30th Street Station in Philadelphia is the transit hub where you will catch a train to New Jersey, New York, Washington, D.C. and elsewhere! Regional rail, Amtrak, and many discount bus services stop here.

Amtrak

Amtrak is the train system throughout the United States. Depending on your time limits and cost restraints, this can be a viable alternative to flying. Students can apply for a special discount card and bags normally travel for free. Learn more about Amtrak and the schedule at Amtrak.com.

Discount Bus Companies

The bus is definitely the cheapest way to travel throughout the United States. Megabus.com, PeterPan Bus and Greyhound (among others) pick up at or near 30th Street Station. Try to plan ahead when

purchasing bus tickets. Fares bought far enough in advance can be as low as \$1!

When travelling by bus, do not travel alone, especially when going long distances, or on overnight trips. Please contact ISS if you have questions about certain routes.

Taxi/Car Services

Taxi's are a convenient way to get around, but can get expensive. Most taxi companies have set fares from the airport to Center City or campus. When getting in a taxi, make sure to inquire if they accept cards or if you'll have to pay cash. Also, make sure the taxi is a real taxi (i.e.: has "taxi" sign on top and licenses inside the car.) You may also choose to follow the route on your cell phone.

Uber and Lyft are available in most American cities.

Car Rental/Zip Cars

Renting a car in the US can be a good deal over a weekend or with a group of friends. To rent a car, you should be at least 26 (for the cheapest rates) and have a valid US driver's license. You are always given an option to purchase different levels of insurance for the car upon rental and consider your options carefully. It's also important to note that the person who rents the car is the only licensed driver, unless specifically added to the rental agreement. The rental agreement serves as the car registration if a police officer pulls you over — the name of the driver must match the rental agreement. Failure to list all drivers on the rental agreement may result in fines.

Zip Car (and other similar companies) is a car rental service that functions more like a subscription. You can pay a certain amount per year or rental and check out/in a car when you need it. These rentals normally come with gas and insurance but have limited miles.

Hitch-Hiking

Hitch-hiking is when people stand near the road to try to get rides from passing cars. This practice is illegal in the United States and not safe. Do not attempt to hitch-hike.

GETTING AROUND

FOR YOUR INFORMATION...

CLIMATE: Pennsylvania is a temperate zone, with very cold winters, hot summers, and pleasant days in between. Within each season, the weather can change daily. **Fall (mid-September through November):** Days are often warm and sunny, nights cool; temperatures range from 60°F (15°C) in the daytime to 32°F (0°C) at night. **Winter (December through March):** Continuously cold weather with an occasional mild day; temperatures of about 32°F (0°C) to below 0°F (-20°C). Snow, sometimes deep, is possible anytime. **Spring (April through May):** Increasingly warm, sunny days, cool nights; temperatures sometimes reach 60° (15°C) to 80°F (27°C). Frequent, brief thundershowers. **Summer (June to mid-September):** Temperatures average from 70° (25°C) to 100°F (37°C) or higher, with medium to occasionally high humidity.

CLOTHING: Because of the range in seasonal temperatures, you will need clothing suitable for both the hot, humid summers and the cold, snowy winters, as well as some transitional clothing for the spring and fall seasons. You will need some sort of rain protection and extra layers of clothing, a heavy overcoat, hat, gloves, and warm boots are essential for the winter.

MONEY: Before arrival you should exchange money into US dollars to have cash available upon arrival. Traveler's checks may be helpful, but not all stores and restaurants accept them. Make an attempt to bring cash for denominations of less than \$100.00. When opening a bank account, note that it may take extra time to process international checks or wires and prepare accordingly.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: Make financial arrangements to receive money for living expenses if not covered by your department and/or sponsor. Living expenses include: room and board, medical insurance, and other miscellaneous expenses.

HOUSING: Widener is not able to reserve off-campus housing on your behalf. It is recommended that you bring an extra copy of your evidence of financial support to Widener University as it may be required for certain housing options. *Note:* Before

signing a lease, it is extremely important to read and understand what you are signing. A lease cannot usually be broken without significant financial compensation.

COST OF LIVING: Cost of living varies greatly depending on where you choose to live and your preferences. On campus costs can be found in the Bursar's Tuition Guide. Generally, if you live near campus you will need (at minimum) \$12,000/year. If you choose to live closer to Philadelphia, rent can range from \$900-\$2,000/month depending on size and location preferences. Compared to New York and Washington, D.C., the greater Philadelphia area is much cheaper for daily living expenses.

CAR INSURANCE: Pennsylvania law requires proof of insurance to register and operate (drive) a vehicle. At minimum, your insurance must cover:

- \$15,000 for injury or death of one person in an accident
- \$30,000 for injury or death of more than one person in an accident
- \$5,000 for damage to property of another person

Pennsylvania car insurance also gives you two options for "tort." Tort means your option to sue for "pain and suffering" if you are involved in an accident. Full tort means you may sue for medical bills plus pain and suffering. Limited tort means you cannot sue above medical expenses. Insurance premiums for full tort are higher.

RENTER'S INSURANCE: Renter's insurance may be required by your landlord if you live off-campus. It is used in the case of a break-in, injury in your home, etc. The cost of renter's insurance is not high and should seriously be considered.

LIFE AT WIDENER

Widener University's Main Campus is located in the city of Chester, Pennsylvania. This campus serves all daytime undergraduate students, as well as graduate students, adult learners and business professionals. Widener's Main Campus is situated just 29 km from Philadelphia, 170 km from New York City, 130 km from Baltimore, and 200 km from Washington DC. This proximity to major east-coast destinations makes weekend excursions quick and easy!

On campus we've got some first-rate collections and resources that you'll only find at the Wolfram Memorial Library that houses an extensive collection of print, periodical, audiovisual and multimedia materials and on-line services.

Widener Fast Facts:

- ***Total Enrollment is around 6,000 students***
- ***Students represent 48 states and 37 countries***
- ***27% are students of color***
- ***13:1 Student/Faculty Ratio***
- ***80+ Student Clubs and Organizations***

Dining options are on campus include Pride café, the "all-you-can eat" cafeteria, as well as several restaurants and a convenience store. We also have a University Book Store, post office, and several ATMs on campus.

Widener's Art Gallery is home to the university's collection of 18th, 19th, and 20th century American and European paintings as well as African and Oceanic pottery.

The PMC Museum, in partnership with the Widener

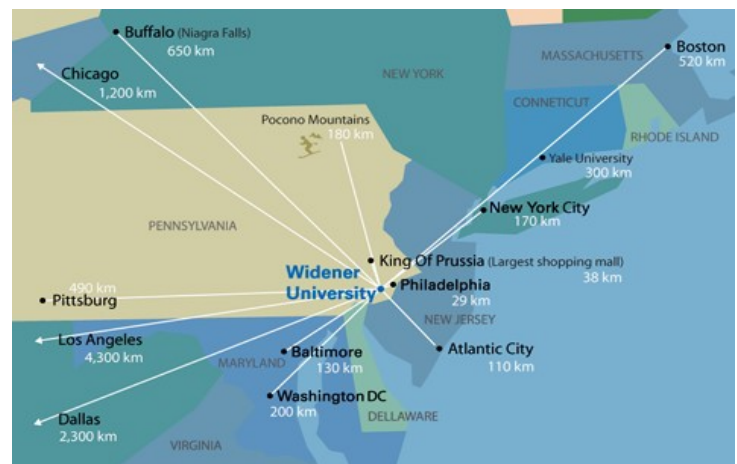
University Archives, brings to life the history of the Pennsylvania Military College and honors the military and civilian achievements of its distinguished alumni.

The Widener University Observatory has 12- and 16-inch computerized reflecting telescopes available for use by students and for public star-gazing programs.

Widener has plenty of support services to help you with your studies including a Math Center, Writing Center, Academic Coaching and Tutoring, Disabilities Support, and Counseling Services.

Widener's modern recreational facilities features the finest equipment with something for everyone -- treadmills, rowers, spin bikes, ellipticals, strength training stations for upper and lower body, free weights, two functional training areas, and a 24-foot rock wall.

Widener University also has two Schools of Law, one located in the northern suburbs of Wilmington, Delaware and the other located near Pennsylvania's capital, Harrisburg. Near the Delaware-Pennsylvania state line, the Delaware campus is about 13 miles south of the Main Campus in Chester (about a 20 minute drive from the Main Campus). The Commonwealth Law campus is about a 2 hour drive from the main campus.



LIFE IN PHILADELPHIA

GREATER PHILADELPHIA: Only twenty minutes from Widener University, Philadelphia is the nation's sixth largest city, and home to world-class art, culture, sports, entertainment, and history. With accessible regional public transport, you can easily commute from our main campus in Chester to Center City, Philadelphia's thriving commercial and business district. Need to unwind? Spend the day exploring historic Old City, take in a Phillies baseball game, or hang out on South Street with friends. In Philadelphia, the possibilities are endless.

Widener students love all the opportunities to learn, play, work, and engage in Philadelphia. Here are some ideas to check out:

- Visit the Philadelphia Zoo, the oldest one in the nation.
- Sample history, art and international cuisine in one of Philadelphia's quirky neighborhood.
- Go an award-winning architectural walking tour.
- Take in an exhibit at the world-famous Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Franklin Institute, or one of the city's many art, history and science museums.
- Explore sea life and wildlife at the state-of-the-art Adventure Aquarium in nearby Camden, New Jersey.

- Play mini-golf or have a picnic in Fairmount Park, the largest urban park system in the country.
- Explore the stylish boutiques of Rittenhouse Square.

GETTING AROUND: Widener University sits comfortably within Southeast Pennsylvania's bustling transportation network, one of the nation's largest in terms of ridership and area. Easily accessible by two SEPTA rail lines and several bus routes, Chester is located just off interstates 95 and 476, two of the region's major arterial roads.

The region's extensive transportation network connects travelers to virtually any destination they may have. Interested in world-class beaches? Cross the Delaware River and be on Atlantic City's storied boardwalk in just over an hour. Prefer skis to surfboards? Award-winning Pocono Mountain resorts are a two-hour drive away.

If fast-paced urban environments are more your speed, you can easily take advantage of all that Philadelphia and Wilmington have to offer. Via SEPTA's Wilmington-Newark Line, you can be standing in the center of Philadelphia's iconic City Hall — the largest municipal building in the United States — in about 30 minutes.

Don't let this prevent you from setting your sights further afield, though! Interested in visiting Baltimore? Get on the train in the morning and you



can be at the Inner Harbor in time for a satisfying seafood lunch. If you'd rather spend the weekend in New York City, several express bus services can shuttle you to Manhattan from Center City Philadelphia in two hours.

SHOPPING: In Philly, you won't have a hard time finding the things you need — or want. From the funky boutiques on South Street to the glittering stores of the King of Prussia Mall, there are options to satisfy even the most discriminating fashionista.

For those on a budget — and these days, who isn't? — check out the Philadelphia Premium Outlets, located about an hour away near Pottstown. Stores there include Forever 21, Banana Republic, BCBG Max Azria, and J. Crew. Closer to campus is Franklin Mills Mall, found in Philadelphia's great Northeast and featuring several discount giants like Burlington Coat Factory, Old Navy, and many more!

For quick trips, head over to the Granite Run Mall in Media or drive along Baltimore Pike in Springfield, where you'll find stores like DSW and Target.

If you like to eat, the foodie in you won't be disappointed in Philly. The 9th Street Italian Market is a must-see destination for Italian fare, and the Reading Terminal Market has been tantalizing taste buds for more than 100 years.

ARTS & CULTURE: Philly is a town steeped in the arts. Hundreds of arts organizations across the region make Philadelphia one of America's hippest places to be. It has the most public art of any city in the U.S., from Robert Indiana's celebrated LOVE sculpture on the Ben Franklin Parkway to the iconic murals found on buildings across the city.

Looking for stand-up and improv? No problem. Art house cinema? We have several. Like theater? You can do big or small, whatever you prefer. Are story slams more your speed? We have those, too.

Have a hankering for painting and sculpture? The

Philadelphia Museum of Art, one of the largest art museums in the nation, is home to a number of amazing collections. Or make a visit to the nearby Barnes Foundation, which has held one of the finest collections of Impressionist and modern paintings in the world.

If you're looking for more curious objects, check out the medical oddities at the Mütter Museum, which houses the tallest skeleton on display in North America.

When it comes to music, Philly just can't be beat. Within walking distance of City Hall, we've got both a symphony orchestra and the Curtis Institute, the most selective music school in the United States. For fans of more contemporary music, Philadelphia has thriving local scenes in hip-hop, electro and indie rock. Venues like Union Transfer, Johnny Brenda's, the Trocadero, Electric Factory, and The Mann Center consistently bring sought-after acts to the region, which means you don't have to go far at all to see the bands you want.

But perhaps the best part of the local arts scene is that it's so accessible. Of the almost 17 million visits to Philly's cultural organizations last year, more than half were free. And for those events charging admission, the median price was only 15 dollars.

PHILADELPHIA, PA

AMERICANS 101

The United States of America is a very large and diverse country with a vast array of cultural differences from coast to coast. If you travel from Philly to California, Texas, or Georgia you will see huge differences in how people talk, interact, and function. Philly may have a slower but friendlier appearance than New York, but California is even “slower”, and someone from California may annoy a New Yorker. It is also not unusual for someone to be extremely proud to be from their home state and still continue to have strong ties where they grew up, even if they haven’t lived there in years.

Americans are generally very proud of being American and like to display the American Flag. Conversely, most Americans are also extremely proud of their heritage. If you ask an American where they are from or where their parents came from, you may get an answer like “I’m a 1/4 German, 1/4 Polish, 1/4 English, 1/8 Cherokee and 1/8 French!”

Below are some cultural insights that can help you understand Americans better:

1. **Americans value being on time.** “Time is money” can be a mantra in most of the United States. Do your best to be at least 5 minutes early or on time. If you will be late, let the person you are meeting know and apologize.
2. **Americans like privacy and personal space.**
 - It is rare for Americans to show up unannounced anywhere. It’s a sign of respect and courtesy to make sure someone is available before dropping in at their home/room/apartment/office.
 - Americans need about an arm’s length of personal space. Any closer and they may interpret your actions as intimidating or challenging and back up.
 - Americans rarely hug or kiss someone when they first meet them. Discuss with your new friends what’s appropriate when greeting each other. It will likely be different with each friend.
3. **Americans are direct and honest.** If you ask an American a question, you will probably get an honest answer, and they won’t ask you for your input if they don’t want it.
 - *It’s important to many Americans to be upfront with problems and not put them off.* Americans believe that problems can be solved and will work tirelessly to fix them, if they know about them.
 - Americans rarely save face. It’s viewed negatively when someone passes blame from a problem to someone else or makes excuses.
 - Americans are not good at “hints”, body language, or metaphors. They will say what they believe and believe what they say.
4. **Americans can seem friendly and unfriendly at the same time.** It is common for an American to ask you how you are doing with no intention of really finding out how you are.
 - Americans can also seem “flaky,” i.e.: don’t follow through with social plans. If you make plans with an American, be ready for the possibility that the plans will change or be cancelled.
 - It’s not uncommon for Americans to smile at someone while crossing the road, joke with another person in line, or talk to someone at an event without knowing this person, getting to know them, or even intending to get to know them.
 - Americans love “small talk,” i.e.: conversations without real substance such as the weather, traffic, or uncontroversial topics in which everyone can find common ground.
5. **Americans value independence, equality, and freedom**
 - The US has a very individualistic culture. People are taught at a young age to do things on their own and a high value is placed on the “self-made” person, who rose from nothing to riches.
 - Equality is VERY important to Americans—even if in practice, it doesn’t always happen. There are many rules in the US (like waiting for a traffic light to turn green and waiting in line) that are very

important. Americans also tend to become upset when others break the rules. Don't ever cut in front of someone in a line, or you may get yelled at.

- Freedom is one of the building blocks of American culture. Americans believe that everyone has the right to say or think what they want, even if they don't agree with it.

6. Americans value personal hygiene and cleanliness.

- This is a very regional preference. In many areas, is perfectly acceptable to go to class in your pajamas, where as in other regions people may dress up to go to Walmart.
- Americans normally take grooming and hygiene seriously, and it's not uncommon for them to shower 2 or 3 times a day, especially in the summer months. They may avoid you or make comments if you do not pay attention to or have a lapse in your hygiene.

7. Americans value etiquette.

- Be polite when asking for something. Americans don't take well to demands. When sending an email or asking for a favor, show you are appreciative and don't just demand for something to be done—even if you are waiting for something urgently.

8. Americans value education and curiosity.

- If you aren't sure about something, ask. Most Americans have grown up asking questions and being asked questions. Americans won't make fun of you or be angry for trying. Americans love to talk, especially about themselves, and share their opinions. Just make sure to ask multiple people, or you will end up with only one perspective.

9. Americans value control.

- Americans believe they control their own life and destiny, and it's very important for them to feel like they are in control. Americans don't like it when they don't know what's happening or when things don't go according to plan. Most of the time, Americans believe that if you work hard, you will achieve your goals. They often can't understand when people work hard but don't advance in society.

10. Americans LOVE their sports teams.

- When I say love, I really mean love. Many fans are so devoted they will fight for and religiously support their team. Football, baseball, and basketball are the biggest three sports in the US and often fans will wear clothes that support their favorite teams. Sometimes there are strong rivalries between different groups, so be aware of teams playing nearby and who wins or loses.

A few other notes about life and customs in the US:

- American's really appreciate convenience and will look for most convenient options. Online ordering is very popular, and, depending on your location, you can order everything from hand soap to groceries to sushi! You will also find many large ("Big Box") stores that carry everything: groceries, cleaning supplies, a pharmacy, an optometrist, alcohol beverages and even weapons (yes, you read this correctly!).
- Learn to be self-aware, even if others aren't. Be mindful of others around you. Is someone trying to study? Is it quiet hours in the residence halls? Are you taking up the whole sidewalk? We could all benefit from being more mindful.
- Chew with your mouth closed and don't slurp. In the US, both of these habits are considered rude, and you should also avoid burping or making other bodily noises.
- The drinking age for alcohol in the United States is 21, and you cannot drive after drinking.
- Tobacco products and gambling is legal at age 18. Tobacco is not allowed on the Widener Campus.

Most importantly, be brave! Introduce yourself to American students, try new things, and never be afraid to ask questions. ISS is available to help with questions and problems, but we can only help if you tell us.