



# International Student Handbook



# 2019 -20

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# Welcome!

Thank you for choosing Northeast Community College! As the International Student Advisor (ISA), my primary purpose is to help you stay “in status” on your F-1 visa.

My office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 to 5:00. Sara, my administrative assistant, is also here to help you, but she is only here in the mornings, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 to noon.

I have an “open door” policy, which means, if I am not with another student or guest, or if I am not working on a project, I enjoy when you drop by and visit about your day. However, if you have an issue that is more than just a few minutes (such as you need transportation somewhere or you have a question regarding your grades or class schedule), please make an appointment, preferably no less than a week in advance. If I am not in my office when you want to schedule an appointment, Sara can place your appointment on my calendar. You may email either of us, and we will do our best to get back to you at our earliest convenience. Also, please join the Northeast Community College International Students Facebook group and use it to ask questions and get current information.

My email is [pamela@northeast.edu](mailto:pamela@northeast.edu) . Sara’s email is [saraak@northeast.edu](mailto:saraak@northeast.edu).

We are looking forward to working with you and making your experience at Northeast the best it can be! Once again, we’re here to help, and if we don’t know how to help, we will find someone who can. This will be a time of great adjustment for you, and we all want you to feel as comfortable and be as happy as you can be at Northeast and in Norfolk, so please, feel free to contact any one of us with your questions or concerns.

Pam Saalfeld, International Advisor  
(402) 844-7466  
[pamela@northeast.edu](mailto:pamela@northeast.edu)

# 2019-20 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

(All dates are subject to change.)

## FALL SEMESTER 2019

August 14-16	International Student Orientation
August 18	Fall Orientation
August 19	Classes begin - Tuition and Fees Due
August 23	Last day to cancel or change a meal plan
September 2	Labor Day - College closed
September 27	Last day to withdraw from first eight-week classes
October 11	First eight-week classes end
October 14-15	Fall Break for faculty and students
October 16	Second eight-week classes begin
November 11	Registration for spring semester begins
November 15	Last day to withdraw from fall semester classes
November 26	Last day to withdraw from second eight-week classes
November 27-29	Thanksgiving Break for students and faculty
November 28-29	Thanksgiving Break - College closed
December 13	Semester ends

## SPRING SEMESTER 2020

January 12	Residence Halls open by appointment
January 13	Classes begin - Tuition and Fees Due
January 17	Last day to cancel or change a meal plan
February 21	Last day to withdraw from first eight-week classes
March 6	First eight-week classes end
March 9-13	Winter Break for Students
March 16	Second eight-week classes begin
March 23	Registration for summer sessions begins
April 9	Last day to withdraw from spring semester classes
April 10-13	Spring Break for students and faculty- College closed
April 14	Registration for fall semester begins
April 24	Last day to withdraw from second eight-week classes
May 13	Semester ends
May 16	Graduation

## First Steps

**Residence Life:** If you plan to reside on campus, the first thing you should do when you arrive in Norfolk is check into the Residence Halls. There, you will be introduced to Residence Life staff, given a tour of the residence halls, given your keys and shown to your room. You are then free to move your belongings into the room and make yourself comfortable.

**Orientation Check-In:** Upon arrival for your first day of international student orientation, you will check-in. We will ask you to provide a local address and local phone number. Please bring copies of your passport, visa, I-94, and proof of health insurance.

**New International Student Orientation:** During the orientation session, you will be given information about Northeast and its expectations of its students, an overview of various on-campus services will be presented, you will receive your College ID, and you will take a tour of campus services. On the final day of orientation, you will meet with an Academic Advisor★, who will help you register for classes and show you how to use “My Northeast” (Northeast’s student information system).

All international students are required to either make payment arrangements through the NBS Payment plan or prepay for the estimated number of credit hours they wish to enroll in.

*★If you are required to take English as a Second Language (ESLX) courses, you will meet with the ISA, who will enroll you in ESLX classes. Once you have progressed through the ESLX sequence, you will meet with your Academic Advisor each semester to schedule your classes.*

Once registered for classes, you can purchase your text books. We encourage you to use your new schedule to find your classrooms before the first day of classes.

## Information about...

**Northeast Community College:** Northeast Community College was established in 1973 as a comprehensive community college offering vocational/technical, liberal arts, college transfer, and continuing education. It is a two-year college located in Norfolk, Nebraska and serves the 162,500 residents of a 20-county area in Northeast Nebraska. Northeast boasts over 80 programs of study, many of which easily transfer to four-year institutions. Class sizes are small and students work closely with instructors. Northeast offers a variety of social and extracurricular activities for you to participate in at your leisure. You may stop by the Student Activities Office [Student Center 212A] or call 844-7159 for more information.

**Norfolk:** Norfolk is located in northeast Nebraska in the Elkhorn River Valley of Madison County. Norfolk is 112 miles northwest of Omaha and 121 miles north of Lincoln. Norfolk's population is 23,516 and is the 7th largest city in Nebraska. The history of Norfolk begins on July 17, 1866, when 44 German families from Wisconsin arrived at the junction of the Elkhorn and North Fork Valleys, where they were attracted by the rich land open for settlement. These pioneers were soon joined by others and formed the community that later became Norfolk. You may hear native Norfolk Nebraskans pronounce the city name as "Nor-fork", rather than "Nor-folk" as it is spelled. In 1881, the village of Norfolk was organized. The settlers proclaimed "North Fork" to be their permanent post office address, named after the river, but suggested "Norfork" as the name because it was the simplest compounding of "North Fork". Postal authorities, thinking the word had been misspelled, changed the spelling to "Norfolk".

**Nebraska:** "The State of Nebraska lies at the geographic heart of the United States in an area called the Great Plains. The state's culture has been shaped by its early population of several indigenous peoples, the arrival of pioneers, and immigrants from diverse cultures. Nebraska's history, especially its reliance on agriculture, has served to encourage a strong work ethic, respect for achievement, support for one's neighbor, and unquenchable optimism." ----Tony Hancock, University of Nebraska

## Staying “In Status”

It is important that you understand that it is **YOUR** responsibility to maintain your status and the ISA is here to help you. To maintain your status, you must:

- ◆ Take a full course load of 12 semester credit hours or more, unless PRIOR approval has been received from the ISA. (Important: Approval cannot be granted by an Academic Advisor.)
- ◆ Keep your passport and other immigration documents current.
- ◆ Report all changes of legal name, address, program of study or receipt of social security number to the ISA.
- ◆ Attend only the college or university that USCIS has authorized you to attend.
- ◆ Know the immigration regulations that relate to the F-1 visa. If you have any questions, ask the ISA.

### Please be aware that:

- ◆ You are **not** allowed to work off campus in the United States without USCIS authorization. You may, if you have received permission from the ISA, work on campus for a maximum of twenty hours per week when school is in session. You may work up to 40 hours per week when school is not in session (i.e. between semesters, during the summer).
- ◆ You must notify the International Student Advisor of any plans to travel outside the U.S., so that your current I-20 form can be endorsed for travel.
- ◆ Because they can affect your status, Northeast Community College is required by law to report any of the following events:
  - Enrollment or failure to enroll each semester
  - Dropping below a full course of study without prior approval
  - Failure to otherwise maintain status
  - Change of program of study
  - Change of my or my dependent’s legal name or address
  - Completion of studies
  - Termination date and reason for termination
  - Program extensions
  - School transfers
  - Employment authorization
  - Criminal conviction

## Make an appointment to see the ISA if:

- ♦ You need to drop a class or become under-enrolled for any reason. You must be enrolled in at least 12 credit hours at all times. If you drop below full-time (12 credit hours), the ISA will report this to USCIS and you will be required to apply for re-instatement which is costly and could be denied (and you will have to return home).
- ♦ Anything changes, like your address, financial support, transfer plans, or program of study.
- ♦ You plan to travel abroad. Your I-20 must be endorsed by the ISA to indicate that the college is aware of your travel plans and has given you permission to re-enter the U.S. DO NOT travel outside of the U.S. if your visa has expired.
- ♦ Anytime you have questions about employment opportunities on- or off-campus. The ISA must give permission for F-1 students to become employed and the ISA can help you obtain a Social Security Number (SSN), which is required to work anywhere in the U.S. Off-campus employment is strictly forbidden, except in a few specific situations.
- ♦ You are beginning your final semester at Northeast. The ISA will help you with your transfer plans or answer any questions you may have before returning home.

## When you have Questions about....

Issue	Contact
Academic problems Curriculum requirements Trouble with your instructor Changing Majors Schedule Changes	Academic Advisor
Absence Details about specific course Late Assignments Can't understand a topic or lecture Course grade	Instructor teaching the course
Employment Language Problems	ISA
Housing (on- or off-campus) Problems with on-campus housing (lost keys, roommate issues, etc.) Parking Permit	Residence Life Department
Medical Problem	RA/SA, Residence Life Staff <u>or</u> ISA
Issue	Contact
Personal and Adjustment Problems	ISA <u>or</u> College Counselor
Changes in Name, Address or Telephone Number	ISA <u>and</u> Admissions Office



Your Tuition/Fee/Room & Board Bill Food Service/Meal plan	Business Office
Harassment or Discrimination	Vice President of Student Services
Health Related Emergency	911 or 9-911 on campus
Intramural Sports Fun Activities On- or Off-Campus	Student Activities Office
Library Services	Library/Resource Center
Lost & Found Items	Student Services
Adding & Dropping Classes Student Transcripts Verification of Enrollment	Registrar Office
Textbooks & Supplies	Bookstore
Writing a Paper	Writer's Clinic
Scholarships	Financial Aid Office

## Offices & Services on Campus

ISA	Maclay 142/140 • (402) 844-7466
Residence Life /Housing	Burkhardt Hall • (402) 844-7150
Student Services	College Welcome Center • (402) 844-7272
Admissions	College Welcome Center • (402) 844-7261
Registrar's Office	College Welcome Center • (402) 844-7265
College Counselor	College Welcome Center • (402) 844-7261
Business Office	College Welcome Center • (402) 844-7001
Financial Aid Office	College Welcome Center • (402) 844-7285
Book Store	Student Center 221 • (402) 844-7140
Student Activities Office	Student Center 212A • (402) 844-7259
Library	Library/Resource Center • (402) 844-7130
Peer Tutoring Office	College Welcome Center • (402) 844- 7125
Writer's Clinic	College Welcome Center • (402) 844-7127
Disability Services	College Welcome Center • (402) 844-7343
Campus Security	(402) 841-5163

## Health/Insurance

Unlike many other countries, the United States does not have a national health insurance plan. Northeast does not offer a health insurance plan for its students. You are responsible for arranging and paying for your medical care. Medical care can be expensive. International students are required to obtain comprehensive health insurance coverage for you and your family. If you and your family have not made arrangements for health insurance, please ask the ISA for information regarding companies that provide health insurance to international students. Staff in Admissions and Residence Life can provide you with information about health care providers in Norfolk.

Choose health insurance coverage with an insurance company licensed to do business in the United States. The health insurance coverage should include medical expenses associated with accident, sickness, hospitalization, major medical procedures, and repatriation of remains. **All international students are required to present proof of health insurance coverage prior to registering for classes.** International students must provide such verification for each year of attendance at Northeast Community College.

If you have a health concern, it is strongly recommended that you communicate the concern with one of the following as soon as possible:

- RA/SA Staff or Front Desk
- Coaching Staff
- International Student Advisor

## SAFETY

Northeast's campus is very safe and, overall, so is the community of Norfolk and the state of Nebraska. Still, it is important that you be aware of your surroundings and mindful of your need to keep yourself safe.

The College contracts with a private security firm to provide general campus security. Security officers work closely with local law enforcement agencies in coordinating campus security. They conduct foot and vehicular patrols of the campus 24 hours a day/7 days a week. If you would like an escort on campus with a security officer, call 402-841-5163

**In the United States, the EMERGENCY number is 911. You can call from any phone and do not need money to call.**

For tips on how to stay safe in the U.S., please see Appendix 3.

## Weather Issues

- ◆ The weather in Nebraska can change rapidly from one extreme to the next and throughout the year cycles through several different temperatures.
- ◆ Winter can arrive in Nebraska as early as October or November and last through March or April. Snow, ice, and sleet are common weather occurrences in the winter and require some extra precautions on your part. Warm coats and clothing, rubber-soled shoes and snow boots, mittens or gloves, hats, and scarves are necessary for any outdoor activity in Nebraska. Even something as limited as walking from class to class can be dangerous and uncomfortable without proper clothing. Driving on snow and ice requires special techniques. Learn them and proceed with caution.
- ◆ Spring may begin as early as March and continues through the first day of summer, which is June 21<sup>st</sup>. Spring brings with it the melting of snow, warming temperatures, and rain. Spring in Nebraska is characterized by planting season for agricultural operations and gardeners alike.
- ◆ Spring may bring with it thunderstorms and tornados due to volatile changes in the weather at this time of the year. A severe thunderstorm watch means that conditions are favorable for thunderstorms to produce wind gusts to 58 mph or stronger or hail to 3/4 inch or larger in the watch area. These watches are issued for 4 to 6 hours at a time and for a number of counties. Stay informed, watch the sky, and take cover if a severe thunderstorm approaches you.
- ◆ A severe thunderstorm warning means that a severe thunderstorm has been detected by radar, or by a trained spotter. Take cover if you are near the severe thunderstorm.
- ◆ According to the *Glossary of Meteorology* (AMS 2000), a tornado is *"a violently rotating column of air, pendant from a cumuliform cloud or underneath a cumuliform cloud, and often (but not always) visible as a funnel cloud."*
- ◆ If a tornado **"watch"** is issued for your area, it means that a tornado is "possible." If a tornado **"warning"** is issued, it means that a tornado has actually been spotted, or is strongly indicated on radar, and it is time to **go to a safe shelter immediately**.
- ◆ Local radio stations will broadcast storm information during warnings.
- ◆ Watches and warnings are issued for Nebraska counties. Norfolk is located in Madison County.
- ◆ Become familiar with the storm policy for your place of residence. During severe thunderstorms and tornados, people in Nebraska retreat to a basement, lower level, or reinforced structure such as a bathroom or interior area. Norfolk is equipped with an emergency siren that will sound when the area is under a "tornado warning".
- ◆ The summer months are characterized by mild to hot temperatures and fluctuating humidity. Take care to drink generous amounts of water during this time to stay well hydrated. If you are fair skinned, be sure to wear sunscreen or protective clothing if you will be out in the sun for an extended period of time.

## **Campus Alert- Emergency Text Notifications**

Sign up for text alerts so that you receive messages related to on-campus emergencies and severe weather. For more information, please visit <https://northeast.edu/Campus-Alert/>

## **Phone and E-mail Scams**

Be aware of phone calls and e-mails requesting money or personal information. Scammers may say there is a problem with an account and then tell you that you must provide bank or credit card information to fix it. When buying large items online, use trusted websites. Do not buy anything from an email you receive. If you have any questions or concerns or even just a bad feeling about an email or phone call, please ask for help!

## **Managing Money**

Managing your finances can be a challenging part of your academic study in the United States. Dealing with a new currency and cost of living can be difficult initially. Pay attention to the exchange rate between your country's currency and the U.S. dollar. Learn to think in dollars!

When handling American currency, it is important to look closely at the paper money, as much of it looks alike. Coins can present difficulties too. The five-cent piece is known as the nickel, ten-cent as the dime, and 25-cent as the quarter. The dime is smaller than the nickel, even though it is worth more.

It is advisable for you to open a checking or savings account at a local bank and deposit any large sums of money you have in a bank. A visit with a banker at a local bank can clarify for you the variety of checking and savings accounts available and determine which type best suits your needs. You will need your passport and your I-20 as well as a letter or document containing your mailing address.

## **Practicing your Religion**

The United States is a multicultural society founded on tolerance and mutual respect. People are encouraged to seek out opportunities to practice their religious beliefs. There are usually a variety of denominations and religious groups in every community. Although America has a higher rate of church attendance than most other western societies, many Americans are uncomfortable discussing religion. If you are in a religious situation or discussion in which you are uncomfortable, it is acceptable to excuse yourself or explain your perspective.

## **Alcohol**

U.S. laws concerning the sale and consumption of alcohol may seem very liberal or very constraining to you, depending on your nationality. In the United States it is illegal to purchase and consume alcoholic drinks, including beer and wine, until you reach the age of 21. Laws governing alcohol can vary from state-to-state. Northeast Community College is a “dry campus” and does not allow alcohol on campus even if you are 21.

## **Smoking**

In many parts of the United States, all public buildings are designated “smoke free,” meaning that you cannot smoke in any part of the building. Other buildings have designated spaces for smokers. If you are a guest in someone’s home, room, or apartment, always ask permission before you smoke. Northeast Community College is a tobacco free campus.

## **Completion of Studies**

When you have finished your program of study at Northeast, you may choose one of the following options:

1. Continue studies at Northeast or a different school for another degree or program. You must have an updated I-20 to reflect these changes.
2. Apply for employment through Optional Practical Training.
3. Return home (leave the U.S.) within 60 days of your Program End Date.

## Transportation

Norfolk is a small rural community with limited public transportation options. Students walk, ride their bikes or drive their cars to and from campus. Although Norfolk is a small community, it is rather spread out and you will find that most of the shopping places are located on the other side of the city. Most often fellow students on campus or your roommates will be willing to help you with local trips.

- **Bicycles**- There are two bicycles available for check out at the Residence Halls on campus.
- **Ponca Express** – Local travel and limited trips out of Norfolk  
877-769-3111 or [transportation@poncatribene.org](mailto:transportation@poncatribene.org)
- **Norfolk Public Transportation** – Local travel only –  
You must call and make a reservation (402) 379-4595; cost is \$2.50 one way.  
Monday – Friday 7:00 am to 5:30 pm  
Saturday-Sunday 7:15am to 4:45 pm (Closed 11:55 am -12:25 pm for lunch)
- **Checker Cab Company** – Local travel and limited trips out of Norfolk  
402-371-5800
- **Arrow Stage Lines and Eppeley Express** – Regional Bus Line and Eppeley Airport Shuttle. Transportation to Omaha during the week only, no weekends.  
402-371-3850
- **Uber**- Check the Uber App for availability- [www.uber.com](http://www.uber.com)

## Dining Options

### On Campus:

#### ● Starbucks

(College Welcome Center)

Hours:

Monday-Friday 7:45 am—5:00 pm

#### ● Hawks Landing

(Student Center)

Sandwiches, burgers, grilled items

Hours:

Mon. Tue. Wed. 7:00 am—10:00 pm

Thursday 7:00 am-8:00 pm

Friday 7:00 am-3:00 pm

#### ● Hawks Point

(Path Hall) College Cafeteria

Hours:

Breakfast: Monday-Friday 6:30 am-10:00 am

Brunch: Saturday-Sunday 11:00 am-1:00 pm

Lunch: Monday-Friday 10:30 am-1:30 pm

Dinner: Monday-Thursday 5:00 pm-7:30 pm

Friday 5:00 pm-6:30 pm

Saturday-Sunday 5:00 pm-6:00 pm

### Delivery:

#### ● Jimmy John's— Gourmet Sandwiches

[www.jimmyjohns.com](http://www.jimmyjohns.com) —402-379-4400

#### ● Pizza Hut— Pizza, salads, pasta and wings

[www.pizzahut.com](http://www.pizzahut.com) —402-379-1880

#### ● Domino's Pizza - Pizza, pasta, sandwiches, chicken

[www.dominos.com](http://www.dominos.com) - 402-371-0707

#### ● Godfather's Pizza—Pizza, sandwiches

[www.godfathers.com](http://www.godfathers.com) - 402-371-2000

## NEARBY ENTERTAINMENT AND RESTAURANTS

**Norfolk YMCA - (swimming, weight room, basketball courts, etc.)** <http://norfolkymca.org>

301 W Benjamin Ave. Norfolk, NE 68701

Monday-Thursday: 5 am - 10 pm; Friday: 5 am - 9 pm

Saturday: 7 am - 9 pm; Sunday: 11 am - 7 pm

Day use price: Adults (ages 18 & up) - \$10

.8 miles/1.3 km (20 min. walk)

**King's Lanes /Norfolk 7 Theatre- (Bowling Alley & Movie Theatre)**

1000 Riverside Blvd, Norfolk, NE 68701

<http://kingslanesnorfolk.com/>

<http://www.cectheatres.com/theatre/?tid=41>

1.5 miles/2.5 km (35 min. walk)

**McDonald's** - 1205 Riverside Blvd, Norfolk, NE 68701

4:00 am- 11:00 pm

1.2 miles/2 km (30 min. walk)

**Burger King** - 507 W Benjamin Ave. Norfolk, NE 68701

6:00 am – 11:00 pm

1 mile/1.7 km (24 min. walk)

**Tu Casa (Mexican Restaurant)** - 1220 Riverside Blvd #100, Norfolk, NE 68701

11 am – 9 pm

1.2 miles/2 km (28 min walk)

**Sakura Sushi & Steakhouse (Japanese Restaurant)** - 1226 Riverside Blvd, Norfolk, NE 68701

11 am- 2:30 pm; 4 pm -9:30 pm

1.2 miles/2 km (28 min. walk)

**Subway Restaurant (sandwiches)** - 1008 Riverside Blvd, Norfolk, NE 68701

9 am – 10:30 pm

1.5 miles/2.4 km (32 min. walk)

**Panda Garden (Chinese Restaurant)** - 720 W Benjamin Ave, Norfolk, NE 68701

11 am – 9 pm (CLOSED TUESDAYS)

1 mile/1.7 km (25 min walk)



## THINGS TO DO AROUND NORFOLK

### Norfolk Art Center

[www.norfolkartscenter.org](http://www.norfolkartscenter.org) (402) 371-7199

305 N 5th St Norfolk, NE 68701

#### ***First Friday- First Friday of each month***

7:00-10:00 p.m. | FREE TO ALL!- Come to the first Friday of the month and share your artistic talent- visual arts, musical, comedic or poetic performances encouraged.

### Klubhaus Modern Gaming

\$\$ Membership fee for access to library of games.

<https://www.klubhausgaming.com/>

320 W Norfolk Ave, Norfolk, NE 68701

402-316-4236

### The Cowboy Trail

[https://www.ci.norfolk.ne.us/parks/cowboy\\_trail.htm](https://www.ci.norfolk.ne.us/parks/cowboy_trail.htm)

The Cowboy Trail runs 321 miles across northern Nebraska, following the old Chicago & Northwestern railroad route. The eastern side of the trail starts in Norfolk's Ta-Ha-Zouka Park. Parts of the trail are paved, making it a great place to walk, jog and bike.

### North Fork Outfitting

<https://www.nforkoutfitting.com/home-1>

(402) 316-0157

\$\$ Rent kayaks and paddle boats at Skyview Lake. Rent kayaks and tubes to float through town on the North Fork of the Elkhorn River.

### Nor-Sports Family Fun Center

1037 Omaha Ave, Norfolk, NE 68701

Outdoor facility- closed for winter months

Family Fun Center that offers Batting Cages, Mini Golf, Bumper Boats, and Water Wars.

## Appendix 1

### Adjustment to the United States

As you begin living and studying in the United States, you will experience a period of adjustment. The information provided below is intended to assist you in understanding and managing the adjustment process. Please contact your International Student Advisor for more information.

The definition of **culture shock** is: (n) a condition of confusion or anxiety affecting a person suddenly exposed to an alien culture or milieu.

Everyone deals with culture shock in different ways and it is important to keep in mind it is an important part of the adjustment process. Adjustment to any new situation or culture is not accomplished in just a few days but is an ongoing process.

### The Cultural Adjustment Cycle

**Pre-Departure Anticipation** – While planning and packing, you may feel exhilarated and nervous; you might lose interest in current activities. You may have some trouble sleeping.

**Post-Arrival Exhilaration** – You may have a heightened sense of enthusiasm; changes in routine are exciting. Some insomnia and stomach queasiness is normal. Most people begin their new assignment with great expectations. Anything new is intriguing and exciting. You might be especially impressed with the similarities between your country and theirs.

**Early Sojourn Frustration** – You might feel impatient or disenchanted with life in your host country or you might feel restless and irritable. Sleep patterns may be disrupted. You may suffer from indigestion and lack of appetite. You might rely on familiar activities and foreign friends and start to question your own values and those of your host country. Some minor health problems are normal. Gradually, your focus shifts from the similarities to the differences between the two countries.

**Mid-Sojourn Discouragement** – You may be quite homesick, discouraged, or disoriented and feel hostility towards local people and customs. Colds and headaches are common.

**Late Sojourn Assimilation** – You begin to reconcile who you are within the local culture, and to recognize changes in yourself, including changes in your values. You begin to relax in a new situation and to laugh at minor mistakes and misunderstandings. You experience a renewed interest in the host culture and have a more constructive attitude. You feel adapted to, and in equilibrium with, the host country. This more relaxed state of being occurs after you have made some friends, learned to manage your surroundings, understand your studies, and begin to perform well on exams. Your health is “normal.”

**The Home Stage** - You find yourself in this stage when you are able to retain allegiance to your home culture, but also "feel at home" in the United States. You have successfully adjusted to the norms and standards of the College and you are beginning to understand what is important to Americans. Although you may still be homesick occasionally, you are well adjusted. You have developed the ability to live successfully in two cultures.

**Coping Mechanisms** - How can you adjust to the new culture and experiences of the United States and Norfolk, Nebraska?

If you find that you are experiencing difficulties, take note of the following suggestions:

**Maintain your perspective.** Try to remember that other people like you have come to the United States and Northeast Community College from other countries and have survived the experience.

**Learn about "culture-shock".** Understand that your feelings are part of a response to learning about this new culture. Consider this a positive sign.

**Evaluate your expectations.** If you find yourself feeling confused or disappointed, ask yourself, "What did I expect? Why? Was my expectation reasonable?"

**Keep an open mind.** People in the U.S. are acting according to their own set of values, not yours. Do not evaluate their behavior using the standards you would use in your own country.

**Learn from your experience.** Moving to the United States can be the most fascinating and educational experience of your life. You can explore an entirely new way of living and compare it to your own. There is no better way to become aware of your own values and attitudes and to broaden your point of view than by closely observing your new surroundings.

**Keep in touch.** Communicate with family and friends from home by phoning, texting, sending emails and using Face-time or Skype. Remember that those at home may not know that "culture-shock" is a normal experience. Let them know that it is a temporary phase of adjusting to a new culture.

**Be a helper and role model.** Help someone from your home culture who has recently arrived. You will be surprised at how much you have learned and can share with this new arrival. It may help you feel like the "expert" at a time when it seems everything is new.

**Seek out others.** Find others from your culture and spend time together talking about home, eating, and sharing experiences. Interacting with someone who "knows what you are going through" can be helpful in the adjustment process.

**Visit the Counseling Staff at Northeast.** Individual counseling consists of meeting one-on-one with a counselor for 45 to 50 minutes during office hours, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday – Friday. To schedule a first appointment, called an initial consultation, call our office at (402) 844-7277.

**Keep a sense of humor.** All too often, we take ourselves much too seriously. Everyone makes mistakes in new situations. It is important to remember that making mistakes is all part of the learning process. Keep smiling and try to look for the funny side of things. Your first week may very well provide you with a semester's worth of humorous moments.

## Communicating Across Cultures

There are a number of skills and guidelines that can be used to communicate successfully across cultures. The following are some suggestions to assist you:

- ◆ Don't assume that what you said was understood as you intended. Ask questions to determine if your meaning was interpreted correctly.
- ◆ Don't assume that what you understood was what the speaker intended. If you are uncertain, ask.
- ◆ Acronyms, abbreviations, and slang may make it difficult to understand the intent of the conversation. Ask for clarification when necessary.
- ◆ Look for facial expressions, gestures, and other indications that what you have said has been understood.
- ◆ Write things down, gesture, or draw pictures to assist you in your communication.
- ◆ Politely ask someone to verify that they understood by repeating it back to you.
- ◆ "Slower not louder" is a good rule to follow.
- ◆ Keep your sense of humor.

## Appendix 2

### American Culture: Realities and Rumors

**Pace of Life and Time Consciousness** -- One of the first things you will notice when you arrive is that Americans always seem to be rushing. Time is valuable and the achievement of goals depends on productive use of time. As a result, it is extremely important not to be late for appointments and meetings. In order to function effectively in an American community and build a good reputation, you must be punctual for all appointments. Make every effort to arrive at prearranged meeting places at the time agreed upon by everyone in the group.

**Materialism** -- Success in American society is often measured in monetary terms. Material goods are seen as rewards of hard work. A rich person is viewed as being successful, so some Americans display expensive items in an attempt to appear successful. As a result, Americans are sometimes seen as caring more for possessions than people.

**Competition and Free Enterprise** -- Americans generally believe that competition brings out the best in people and free enterprise produces the most progress and success. The fast pace of life in the United States and the emphasis placed on 'winning' and being successful can make this a very exhausting environment for those who are from nations where life is more relaxed.

**Personal control over the environment** -- Typically, Americans believe that people can and should control nature, their own environment, and destiny. Future is not left to fate. Americans are pro-active in their personal lives and work hard to meet their goals.

**Action and Work Orientation** -- Americans believe that work is morally right and that it is immoral to waste time. Change is seen as a positive event indicating progress, improvement and growth. This results in more emphasis on “doing” rather than “being”. Also produces a pragmatic, no-nonsense attitude toward life.

**Consumerism** -- One of the things that may impress people from other countries is the abundance of consumer goods. Credit is very easy to obtain and students receive what may seem to be specially sent offers to apply for all kinds of credit cards. Be very careful if you decide to take up any of these offers. Read all the fine print very carefully before you make any decisions. The same goes for buying goods on sale or as part of a special offer. The great advantage of living in a consumer society is that the consumer has many rights. In any reputable store, the customer's comments are heard. If you feel that you have been treated badly or been sold unsatisfactory merchandise, do not hesitate to discuss it with the store manager. Take extra care in discount stores and flea markets, as well as buying items online,

since the chance of getting a good bargain must be balanced with the fact that returning unsatisfactory goods is virtually impossible. Someone may deliberately try to sell you goods of poor quality.

**Individualism** -- In the U.S., a person is generally seen as a separate individual rather than as a representative of a particular family, community, or group. Individuals are encouraged to be independent and self-reliant. Americans take pride in their own accomplishments, not in family name. Respect is given for achievements. This entails not only acting without first consulting others, but also being ready to voice an opinion on a wide variety of subjects. Even with older people and superiors, American students will be just as outspoken as when they are with their peers.

Another result of this trait is that people carry out their daily activities with very little reference to others, as long as they believe that their actions will not result in anyone being harmed. This can sometimes result in Americans being seen as self-centered and isolated.

**Communication and Privacy** -- Americans communicate in a direct, open, and honest manner. Questions such as "Where do you work?" and "What are you studying?" are common and quite acceptable in America. Americans may be seen by some as blunt and even rude. In reality, these are questions that allow Americans to get to know each other.

Direct questions about money, age, and sex are normally considered unacceptable, as are trying to ascertain a person's views on politics or religion. Many Americans will volunteer much information about themselves with no prompting from you, but too many questions will be viewed as being "nosey."

**Friendship** -- As is probably true in your own culture, it takes time for close friendships to develop between Americans. Nevertheless, most Americans are very "friendly" and appear to be very open when you meet them. There are however, degrees for friendship.

Americans normally have a wide circle of acquaintances. They will refer to these people as "friends" even if the relationship is a quite new or casual one. In the United States people often say, "Hello, how are you?" and then not wait for an answer. This is a polite phrase, not really a question. You can respond by saying, "Fine, thanks." Americans may appear to form friendships very quickly and easily.

**Equality** -- All individuals you meet should be and will expect to be treated with consideration and courtesy. North Americans expect that all people accept other individuals regardless of gender, race, occupation, handicap, political affiliation, or religion. Women play an active role

in the United States and are considered equal to men in status and therefore deserve the same respect. In addition, people have equal opportunities and are important as individuals, for who they are, not from which family or religion they come.

**Use of Names and Titles** -- In informal introductions, first names are used and people shake hands. Out of respect for another person or a person of different social status, the title of "Mr." for a man and "Ms." for a woman is used. Most North American men and women will shake hands with people to whom they are introduced in both formal and informal situations. Often, the title of one's position is used when addressing a person, such as a president, dean, or professor.

**Dating** -- Relationships between men and women in the U.S. are very informal compared to other cultures, and there is a great deal of interaction between the sexes. This informality should not be misunderstood. Simply accepting an invitation to go out does not indicate an interest in further meetings, nor that sexual involvement is implied. Honesty and sensitivity are the best guides to help you through any romantic situations that may present themselves.

**Future Orientation/Optimism** -- Americans typically believe that regardless of past or present, the future will be better and happier. This results in less value on past and constant looking ahead to tomorrow.

**Will I Lose My Own Culture?** -- Sometimes students worry about "losing their culture" if they become too well adapted to the host culture. It is virtually impossible to lose the culture to which you were raised. In fact, learning about the new culture often increases your appreciation for, and understanding of, your culture. Don't resist the opportunity to become able to function competently in two cultural environments. Just as culture shock derives from the accumulation of cultural clashes, so an accumulation of small successes can lead to more effective interactions within the new culture. As you increase your ability to manage and understand the new social system, practices that recently seemed so strange will become less puzzling. Eventually you will adapt sufficiently to do your best in your studies and social life and to relax and fully enjoy the experience.

*Adapted from "Implicit Cultural Assumptions of Americans", Developing Intercultural Awareness, Kohls, Rober. SIETAR, Washington, D.C. 1981, & The Wayne State College F-1 Student Handbook.*

## Myths and Realities of Living and Studying in the U.S.A.

From your reading, from American films and TV and from talking with Americans in your country, you have probably formed some idea of life in the United States. Some of what you have seen and heard is true and some is not. The following “myths” and their related explanations are designed to assist you learning about American culture.

**MYTH:** Life is easy in the United States.

**REALITY:** While it is true that the material standard of living in the United States is high, this has not resulted in a leisurely pace of life. Visitors to the United States are often surprised at how hard most Americans work, at their long work hours and short vacations, and at the fast pace of American life in general. Even leisure time is often devoted to activities such as sports, exercise, or other hobbies that involve intense activity and effort. Many Americans are uncomfortable with true leisure and feel guilty about doing nothing or spending long periods of time relaxing or talking with friends.

**MYTH:** America is “the land of the free” so I can do whatever I want there.

**REALITY:** Individual freedom is an important American value, but newcomers may find themselves overwhelmed by the legal and bureaucratic restrictions on their activities and confused by the complexities of social interaction.

Throughout their 300-year history, Americans have been trying to balance the freedom of the individual with the well-being of society, sometimes with odd results. International students are often shocked by the number of rules governing their behavior as foreigners, as students, as motorists, as bicyclists – any of the roles they may assume during their stay in the United States.

The rules of social behavior in the United States can be equally confusing. There is a strong dose of Puritanism mixed in with generally laissez-faire American attitude, which makes it difficult to predict how people will behave or react to others, which means that values may differ widely from one social group to another and from one individual to another. Sometimes it may seem that no rules apply and that “anything goes”, but a newcomer should be wary of making assumptions about what is acceptable.

**MYTH:** Americans are racist/Americans are tolerant.

**REALITY:** The contradictory stereotypes exist side by side, and both have elements of truth. In general you need not fear that you will encounter overt racism in the United States, particularly within the university or college community.



In regions where there are many immigrants you may find yourself blending in and suffering more from indifference than intolerance. In other, more isolated and homogeneous areas, you may be an object of curiosity, noticed and welcomed, but perhaps not always understood. Because of American's relative geographical isolation, many Americans are quite ignorant about the rest of the world and have a sense of national superiority. This can be irritating but you will find that hostility towards foreigners is rare.

Racial and ethnic prejudice is unfortunately a reality in the United States and occasionally a foreign student experiences hostility of this nature. It would be wise to be aware of the tensions that may exist in the communities you visit in the United States, but do not fear that this will be a common or frequent problem. Pay attention to the news, listen to the advice of friends, and perhaps take a class on race relations in the United States. This is a complex issue that reflects many of the paradoxes of American history.

**MYTH:** The United States has a classless society.

**REALITY:** Although the United States does not have a history or tradition of rigidly defined social classes, distinctions among economic classes in the United States results in a sort of classification. Although the majority of Americans can be considered to belong to the middle class, there is a small, wealthy upper class and a growing underclass. Still the American ideal of equal educational opportunity, and the belief that hard work and ability should be rewarded make for a society in which upward mobility is still common.

**MYTH:** Americans are rude and loud.

**REALITY:** This is the image of the "ugly American" who, when abroad, demands in loud English to be understood. Although you may find examples of this stereotype on your campus, they will probably be few. It is true that Americans are often less inhibited socially than people from some other cultures. It is equally true that directness, or saying what one thinks, is acceptable behavior. Americans value honesty and frankness. They are generally not embarrassed or angered by being told they are wrong, as long as the criticism is stated in a friendly and respectful way. They would generally prefer an honest argument or refusal to polite but insincere agreement.

The definition of "rudeness" varies widely from one culture to another. Do not jump to hasty conclusions about the intention behind someone's words or behavior that may seem very rude to you. Someone who tells you that you have done something wrong, including your professor, is probably trying to help you, not embarrass or hurt you.

**MYTH:** All Americans are rich and drive fast cars.

**REALITY:** In the United States, as in any country, there is a wide spectrum of economic status. You may be surprised to find American students at your university who come from very modest means and who struggle daily with money issues. Many American students go deeply into debt to obtain a university degree.

Some of the students you meet will, in fact, be rich, but you may find it hard at first to tell the rich from the poor. Even “poor” American students own a lot of things. Material goods are easy to acquire in a consumer-orientated, credit-driven society, but they do not necessarily indicate great wealth. A car may be a practical necessity for a student who works long hours after classes or who lives with his or her family in another town.

**MYTH:** American students are less prepared academically than students from my country and I will not have to work very hard in class.

**REALITY:** Some American students are less prepared academically than others. While it may be tempting to think that you will not have much competition in the classroom, rest assured that there are many, many academically prepared and highly competitive American students. In general, American students have a lot of experience in test taking and at expressing their opinions in class. You may come from an academic system that does not emphasize those skills.

**MYTH:** American professors are casual, sometimes even asking students to address them by their first names.

**REALITY:** It is true that your American professors may ask you to address them by their first names, but this does not mean they do not expect your respect. The ways in which courtesy and respect are shown to an American professor may differ from how they are expressed in your country. Respect in a U.S. classroom includes a willingness to participate in class debate and to ask questions when you do not understand something that has been said. Spend time watching how your American classmates interact with the professors. You will catch on quickly to the unique mix of formality and structure.

**MYTH:** American students use illegal drugs.

**REALITY:** Some do, most do not.

*Adapted from “American Culture: Myths & Realities” Educational Programs USA.*

## Appendix 3

### Staying Healthy & Safe While in the U.S.A.

- \*\* Lock your doors and windows when you leave and while you are sleeping.
- \*\* Do not open the doors to strangers.
- \*\* Ask for I.D. if you do not know the person at your door, even if he/she is in uniform.
- \*\* Buy renter's insurance to protect your possessions from fire and theft.
- \*\* DO NOT give personal information (Phone number, address, SSN, etc.) to strangers
- \*\* Do not let others use your money, credit cards, car or expensive equipment.
- \*\* Do not walk alone, especially at night (this includes men and women).
- \*\* On- or off-campus, go places with your friends.
- \*\* Look around you and be aware while you are out.
- \*\* Keep your money in your wallet or purse and do not show it off in public.
- \*\* Never drink alcohol and drive a car.
- \*\* If your friend is drunk, take his/her keys away. If you can't get the keys, do not ride with that person. Find another way home.
- \*\* Do not allow any strangers to get too close.
- \*\* Don't give information about your credit cards to a stranger.
- \*\* Your body belongs to you! If you do not want someone to touch you, tell him/her "NO!" and get away from them. If someone touches you and you do not want him/her to, this is considered sexual harassment. Women, in particular, need to be made aware that it is ok to fight back. If someone tries to take you away somewhere, fighting back may save your life!
- \*\* If you have a car:
  - Lock your car doors every time you leave your car and NEVER leave the keys in the ignition.
  - Hide purses, cell phones, electronic devices, and packages under the seat or in the trunk.
  - Look in your backseat and around your car before you get in.
  - Be aware of anyone standing near your car.
  - If you think you are being followed, DO NOT go home. Drive to a well-lit, public place, and call the police.
  - If a car behind you flashes its lights, or you hear a siren, a police officer may be signaling you to pull over.
    - If the car is clearly and obviously a police car:
      - ★ Pull over to the side of the road,
      - ★ Turn off your engine and wait for the officer with both hands on the steering wheel,
      - ★ Most importantly, do not get out of your car and don't reach for anything while you are waiting for the officer to approach.
- ★ It is frightening to be stopped by the police officer, so if you are extremely nervous, turn on your four way flashers and you are allowed to drive to a public place before stopping.

## Appendix 4

### Tips for Student Success

**Meet** with your instructors during office hours several times a semester and get to know them personally. Don't wait until you have some sort of problem to approach your instructor. They are the best resource any institution can offer.

**Build** a personal network of individuals for questions and advise. This network should include your Academic Advisor or another faculty member in your area of study friends, colleagues, lab partners, your ISA and other Northeast staff or faculty with whom you feel comfortable. This will give you several people with whom you can discuss problems or questions you may have and will be good references for future employers or scholarship committees.

**Get** involved. Use your network to find opportunities to be more involved with non-academic activities. Although you are clearly here to receive a college education, the college experience is made up of so much more than just your coursework. Students who are involved adjust more quickly, do better academically, increase their likelihood of acceptance at their next institution of higher education and report much higher levels of satisfaction with their college career. Be involved...but budget your time carefully.

**Use** your Student Handbook & Planner. Not only is this booklet useful for keeping track of your personal and academic commitments, but it contains the semester calendar, dates and deadlines for registration and withdrawals, holidays, the student code of conduct and much more.

**Read** and keep your course syllabus for each course. This will help you keep up with the topics and deadlines for your coursework.

**Ask** if you have a problem or question. Don't be afraid to approach faculty or staff if you need assistance. This college is committed to serving its students, but if we do not know that you are experiencing difficulty, we cannot help.

**Plan** your time and manage it well. Set time limits for tasks, give yourself free time, and be honest with yourself about your own strengths and limitations. Make a schedule of things to do.

**Don't** procrastinate. Don't try to cram a semester's worth of work in one night. You will miss out on an awesome feeling of getting things done early.

**Make** friends in each class that help you excel, not limit your potential. Make friends with a successful upperclassman and utilize him/her as your mentor.

**Try** your hardest and never give up on any task. Determination is the best motivation. There is no such thing as an impossible or hard task. You make it impossible or hard.

**Study** in an environment that allows you to focus. Find your peak time and your learning style. Join study groups if that helps you.

**Take** good notes and consider keeping them after the semester. You never know when you might need them again.

**Sit** in the front row in the center so the instructor can see you. This will help you pay attention and avoid distractions. You will also hear and see better.

**Don't** believe other people's opinions about teachers, formulate your own.

**Over** -study for the first test. After that you will know what the instructor's tests are like.

**Take** care of yourself – eat properly, exercise, get plenty of sleep. You will be surprised how much these things will help in retention of material and staying attentive and motivated.

**Admit** you need help. If you do not understand the course material, make use of campus resources like ESL classes, Writer's Clinic, Transitional English, Tutoring Services, and Prescriptive Math.

**Plan** ahead of your classes and make sure that you graduate on time. Visit your advisor each semester to plan your schedule. Remember, courses often have prerequisites that require you to take classes in a particular sequence. Your Advisor will know which courses are necessary.

**Use** your books. Read them. Underline and highlight words and sentences. Make notes in the margins.

**Make** study a routine part of your day.

**Meet** with your instructors before tests and ask them what you can expect and how to prepare. Because they know what is on the test, they can point you in the right direction.

**Participate** in class by expressing your opinion and asking questions. You will get out of class what you put into it.

**Go** to each class with an open mind and find something interesting in the subject every day, even if you think it's a boring class.

**Reward** yourself according to your accomplishments.

**Know** your priorities. Don't deviate from your main goal, which is getting a good education.

**After** exams, don't only argue for more points. Ask your instructor what you missed and try to understand why you missed it so you won't make the same mistake again.

**Don't** miss classes. There is no realistic way to pass a class you do not attend. Additionally, you should not expect an instructor to go out of his/her way to help you if you have not attended.

## Appendix 5

### Income Taxation for International Students

Everyone in the United States, regardless of his or her immigration status, is responsible each year for submitting an income-tax statement to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Americans call the process “filing a tax return.” Foreign students, whether they work or earn income in the United States or not, **must** file an appropriate return each year.

Sources of U.S. income may include on-campus employment, scholarships, fellowships, practical or academic training, and any compensation received for labor.

**Taxation of income in the U.S. is very complex and each person's situation is unique. Consequently, we are unable to provide tax advice to individuals. If you have further questions, seek the advice of a professional tax consultant.**

It is your responsibility to know and follow U.S. tax laws on the taxation of income. **April 15<sup>th</sup>** is the day most Americans must pay their taxes. Don't miss the deadline; you will be penalized if you are late.

Every person who files a nonresident income tax return, including dependents and those who earned no money, must provide either a Social Security Number or a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN).

If you are employed, taxes will probably be “withheld” from your wages and paid directly by your employer to the tax authorities. You may be entitled to a refund of some or all of this amount but you have to claim it.

Form 1040NR-EZ (along with Form 8843) can be used by most international students and visiting scholars who are nonresident taxpayers and who earned income from a source in the U.S. last year. It is short and easy to complete. Other nonresident taxpayers who earned income in the U.S. last year must use Form 1040NR (along with Form 8843).

**Every individual who is classified as a nonresident alien is required to file Form 8843, even if no income was earned in the U.S. last year.**

For free federal income taxation assistance please contact the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for Form 1040NR-EZ and the instructions for Form 1040NR-EZ, Form 1040NR and the instructions for Form 1040NR, the free Publication 519 (U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens), the free Publication 901 (U.S. Tax Treaties) and free expert advice. The IRS office can be called toll-free

at 1-800-829-1040. Questions also may be answered on the IRS web site (<http://www.irs.ustreas.gov>). IRS forms and publications may be requested free by phone at 1-800-829-3676 or may be downloaded from the IRS web site.

Individuals required to file federal income tax returns (either Form 1040NR-EZ or 1040 NR) are also required to file State of Nebraska income tax returns. Nebraska state income tax laws generally follow the federal laws but there are exceptions. Individuals should review the instructions in the Nebraska Income Tax Booklet. Forms and booklets are available at the State Office Building, 301 Centennial Mall South, and in the lobbies of many local banks.

F visa holders who earned any income from a source in the U.S., including scholarships and fellowships, also must file a state income tax return in each state in which they lived last year, except in states that do not have state income taxes.

#### Items Needed

##### ***For Individuals who Earned Income from a Source in the U.S.***

- A. Two copies of Form 1040NR-EZ or Form 1040NR, one for a working copy and one to submit to the IRS. (The instructions for these forms may be helpful.)
- B. Forms W-2 sent in January by employers to all persons employed during the previous year. (The employers have reported the income to the IRS.) One copy of each Form W-2 must be submitted to the IRS with Form 1040NR-EZ or Form 1040NR and another copy must be submitted with the Nebraska State income tax return.
- C. Letters of award and receipts or canceled checks documenting scholarships and fellowships, qualified educational expenses, contributions to charity and other allowable deductions.
- D. Documentation of other income such as refunds of last year's state taxes, sales of property, certain types of interest or dividends.
- E. Form 1099 reporting interest from a bank, savings and loan or credit union (if filing Form 1040NR).
- F. Form 8843

##### ***For Individuals who Did Not Earn Income from a Source in the U.S.***

Form 8843 (with or without a Social Security Number or a TIN)

The U.S. has concluded tax treaty agreements affecting nonresident taxpayers in about 50 countries. They take precedence over other federal tax regulations. Details are available in IRS Publications 519 and 901.

You will need copies of all federal tax returns you have filed to obtain a Certificate of Tax Compliance ("sailing permit") before you leave the U.S. The IRS also selects a certain number of tax returns to review in detail. Having your own copy will prepare you for this discussion. You also should keep a copy of the Nebraska Individual Income Tax Return. The Philadelphia IRS office will send you a stamped copy of the Form 8843 you submitted.

There are a variety of other taxes which are not related to income: for example, state and city sales taxes, personal property tax (on automobiles, boats, etc.) and real estate taxes.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Since each person's situation is unique, an individual might consider obtaining expert advice before completing and filing income tax returns. As indicated earlier, the IRS will provide expert advice for free, either in person or by telephone. A professional tax consultant will probably charge a fee for such advice.