

International Student Guide

*How we can help you during your stay
at:*



Created May 2013

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What to know about WLU

West Liberty University is a small state university located in the rolling hills of West Virginia. It is located in the small rural town of West Liberty and is primarily a residential campus. There are many services available to our students here, such as a tutoring and guidance centers, a gym and swimming pool, on-campus restaurants, a bookstore, gaming and lounge centers, and of course, a well-stocked library. A campus map has been included in your welcome folder.



West Liberty University is a wonderful place for international students to study because it provides something that many universities don't, constant American interaction. Due to the rural nature of our campus, you will be forced to interact with Americans on a daily basis. And by doing so, you will build great partnerships and friendships that can last a lifetime.

Local Cities



Although West Liberty is a rural town, it is in close proximity to other medium and large cities. We are 15 minutes away from Wheeling, WV (once the former capital of West Virginia), two hours away from Columbus, OH, and only an hour away from Pittsburgh, PA. Both Wheeling and Pittsburgh have a rich history in the steel industry as well as with coal and natural gas. Both locations are unique and will show you how different life can be in the U.S. based just on city versus rural living. We, the staff in the International Student office do our best to show you what these cities, as well as other cities around the area, have to offer through the activities that we plan throughout your stay. Make sure to check the calendar of activities on

our website – www.westliberty.edu !

Studying in the U.S.

In U.S. universities, many teachers follow a learner-centered approach. This means that teachers encourage students to participate in class by asking questions, speaking up in discussions, and doing group activities. While each teacher may differ in their teaching style, student participation and effort is highly valued.

The relationship between professors and students also tend to be less formal than in other cultures. Sometimes, teachers request to be called by their first name instead of their appropriate title and last name. Although they may insist on being informal, they will most likely not be insulted if you continue to address them formally.

It is also important that you maintain eye contact with your professors. In U.S. culture, eye contact shows that you are paying attention to what they are saying. It is also a sign of respect. This does not mean that you have to constantly stare at them, but a soft gaze with a break in eye contact every once in a while will suffice. If you are not used to maintaining eye contact, it may take some practice, but we assure you that it will become easier and more natural as time progresses.

This last point can almost be considered the most important. U.S. professors and most U.S. people in general, place high importance on punctuality (being on time). If you are late, you give the impression that you do not care and do not value the other person's time. Therefore, if you are late for class, the teacher

will feel like you do not care about the class or his/her time. When this happens, you are either marked down as late or absent, which can hurt your grade if it happens repeatedly.

If at any point during the school year you feel like you need assistance with your school work or are having trouble coping with the different style of teaching, West Liberty University has tutors and staff available to help you. The office is called the "Learning and Student Development Center", located in the East Wing of Main Hall. For more information or to contact the councilors, visit www.westliberty.edu/center-for-student-success.

Culture Shock: "...disorientation and discomfort associated with initial arrival into a new culture"

You are probably already feeling some kind of culture shock already, and we want to assure you that what you are feeling is normal, and most of us experienced disorientation and discomfort associated with initial arrival into a new culture/country. To cope with these feelings, you must give yourself time to adjust, and to accept that certain things you will have to learn again, but after a few months you will grow comfortable in your new environment and you will make your new place: your second home. You will find guidance of how to successfully adjustment into the U.S. culture at the International Student Office, and the help you need to overcome some of the initial challenges of living in a new environment.

You should make it a priority to attend the Acculturation Class provided by the International Student Office every Friday at 3:00 p.m.

The Purpose of the International Student Office

Located on the second floor of the College Union, in room S14, we handle all matters regarding international enrollment, promoting international diversity, and attending to the particular needs that international students face. We call our self the International **Student** Office because we believe that each international student has particular needs and should be treated as an individual, not as part of a group. We deal with immigration issues, international applications and recruitment, promoting cultural diversity, assisting students with housing, class, personal issues, and the transportation and entertainment needs of our international students.



Mia Szabo, the Director of International Enrollment Services and International Advisor, typically handles issues dealing with international applications and enrollment, visas issues, immigration documents, school and academic registration, and employment programs and issues.

Jasmin Ilovar, the Coordinator of International Student Activities, typically handles programs and activities that take place once you have arrived on campus, such as travel arrangements, community service, cultural programs and presentations, housing issues, and campus tours.



If one of us is not available when you need us, typically the other is able to provide guidance or assistance. If not, you can contact us through our emails at mszabo@westliberty.edu for Mia, and jasmin.ilovar@westliberty.edu for Jasmin.

The Spice Room

As an international student, you are given access to a room that is specifically tailored to your needs. We call this room the "Spice Room", and it is also the headquarters of the International Club. In this room, you will be able to easily make friends and meet other international students as well as American students.



Besides facilitating interaction and networking, Spice Room is a good location to relax and nap between classes, read, play Xbox, watch TV on our flat screen “smart” TV, Skype with your family and friends, socialize with your international and American friends here on campus, do homework, and so much more. This room is here to provide you with entertainment, privacy, or meeting place without you having to leave campus. We just ask that you keep it clean, be respectful of others in and around it, and follow the general rules while in the room.

In our Spice Room, we also have a program called “**The Exchange Closet**”. In this closet, you can donate used clothing or items that are in clean, good condition, for other students to use during their stay here. While you are here, we encourage you to periodically check the closet if you want free, gently used clothes, TV’s, notebooks, books, etc. This Exchange Closet program not only saves you money and time, it encourages recycling and waste reduction. So have fun and check it out.



Students are also welcome to store their things in Spice Room over the summer breaks, as long as the items are properly labeled with student’s names.

Before School Starts

Now that you have arrived on campus and have completed your initial shopping trip at Walmart, you will be assigned a room, receive your room keys, and possibly (depending on your arrival time and date) obtain your student ID card. During the following days or weeks before school starts, we will assist you in registering for classes, give you a tour of the campus, help you set up cell phone plans and bank accounts, and provide you with fun activities to show you what our campus and region has to offer. We encourage you to participate in these initial trips as they are either essential for your stay or will provide you with a fun and new experience.

Bank Accounts

When opening a bank account, you will need your passport and your immigration documents (Forms I-94, I-20 or DS2019). Without these, you will be unable to open an account. There will be weekly trips to the bank for you to deposit and withdraw money, as well as discuss any issues that may or may not arise.

Cell Phones and Skype

We will provide you many opportunities to set up a cell phone account so that you can communicate with friends here at West Liberty University and family back home. The only two cell phone services that work at West Liberty are Verizon and AT&T. When we bring you to their stores, you will be able to take a look at the available plans and be able to make a decision that best suits your needs. We do recommend that you purchase a cell phone that that we can contact you while you are in the U.S. It is very important that we have a quick way to get ahold of you in case of an emergency.

We also encourage that you use Skype to contact your family back home, as it is often cheaper and more gratifying than using cell phones. As discussed earlier, we have Skype in the Spice Room and you can also use it on your personal computer or phone.

Initial Walmart Trip

During your initial trip to Walmart, we recommend that you purchase certain items to prepare you for your stay. We have compiled a list below that is comprised of items that many of our past international students have bought in the past when they have first arrived. They are as follows:

- Bedding (pillows, sheets, comforter/blanket, and an egg crate for the mattress). The bed size in a twin
- Alarm clock
- Towels
- Power strip (do NOT buy an extension cord)
- Router
- Network cord for the Internet
- Hangers
- Laundry detergent
- Toiletries (shampoo, conditioner, body wash, washcloth or body sponge, hand soap, toothpaste, tooth brush, etc.)
- Shower flip-flops
- Napkins
- Toilet paper
- Garbage bin
- Notebook, pencils, and folders
- Book bag/ backpack
- Laundry hamper/basket
- Bedside lamp
- A shower caddy/basket

Sending Letters and Packages

When sending letters, you can purchase envelopes and stamps at the campus bookstore located in the College Union. If you are sending packages, we recommend that you use the United States Postal Service by to www.usps.com. You can get mailing and shipping supplies online, print and pay for your shipping label, and have your package picked up on campus. Their website is very user friendly, but if you need assistance with their website, we will be more than happy to help.

Also, when you are sending your mail or packages, or if you intend on receiving mail (like bank statements, Social Security card), or are asked for your address, you will need to follow the following reference. Failure to do so could result in delayed processing of your mail or packages. The more information that is on the envelope or package, the faster you may receive your mail. It is also important that you check your campus mailbox at least once a week because important information is sometimes distributed through the mailroom and you may not receive the information on time if you do not check your mail.

Here is the following format you will have to use:

Your Name
 (Your campus mail box number) College Union Office
 208 University Drive
 West, Liberty, WV 26074

*It is important that you do not put the word “box” on a package that is coming UPS, FedEx, or DHL. If the word “box” appears, the company will assume that you are trying to send the package to a P.O. Box number and they will reject the address telling you it is undeliverable.

To find your unique campus mail box number, log into your WINS account from www.westliberty.edu

Purchasing Your School Books

Once you are registered for classes, you will be able to locate a book list that describes which books you will need to purchase for your classes via your WINS account. All books that are required for your classes can be found at the campus book store located in the basement of the College Union. Depending on the book, you are given the option of renting a book or purchasing it. At the end of the school year, if you are renting a book, it must be returned. And if you have purchased a book, you can sell it back to the book store at a pre-determined value.

If you desire to purchase your books online versus the campus book store, we have comprised a list for you of different websites that you can purchase or rent books. Here is the following list:

- www.amazon.com
- www.betterworldbooks.com
- www.textbooks.com
- www.half.com
- www.cheaptextbooks.com
- www.cheapbooks.com
- www.chegg.com
- www.affordabook.com
- www.ebay.com

During School

Once school has begun, you will have met your roommate and hopefully have familiarized yourself with the campus. Like your school back home, there are many clubs you can join and lots of campus activities. We at the International Student Office also provide activities specifically for international students on the weekends, as many of the local students go home on the weekends. There are many fun ways to stay busy on campus and we will now discuss them further.

Clubs and Organizations

There are many clubs on campus that will allow you to make friends with American students and provide you with fun ways to get involved with our campus. We encourage that you join one of these clubs as this will help you create lasting friendships as well as improve your English speaking skills.

As of the 2012-2013 school year, here are the following student clubs and organizations:

Fraternities and Sororities

- Alpha Xi Delta
- Beta Rho Epsilon
- Beta Theta Gamma
- Chi Nu
- Chi Omega
- Delta Theta Kappa
- Delta Zeta Pi
- Kappa Delta Kappa
- Lambda Psi Sigma

Academic/Professional

- Alpha Si Omega
- American Dental Hygienists' Association
- American Institute of Graphic Arts
- Biology Club
- Chi Beta Phi (National Science Honorary)
- Criminal Justice Society
- Delta Sigma Pi
- History Club
- Medical Lab Science Club
- National Science Teachers Association
- Phi Alpha Theta
- Physical Education and Health Majors' Club
- Physician Assistant Experience Club
- Physician Assistant Student Society
- Psi Chi
- Psychology Club
- Social Work Club
- Student Accounting Society
- West Liberty Student Nursing Association

- West Virginia Student Education Association

Special Interest/Others

- Alchemy Club
- Chinese Club
- College Against Cancer
- D'Math Club
- Dance Team
- French Club
- Guitar Club
- Hilltop Swingers Swing Dance Society
- Historical Combative Studies Club
- Horror Club
- International Club
- Lacrosse Club
- Lego Club
- Liberty Fight Club
- P.R.I.D.E.
- Role-Playing Game Club
- Student Activities Board
- Student Government Association
- TCG (Trading Card Game) Club
- West Liberty Dance Ensemble
- West Liberty Paranormal Club

Religious

- Baptist College Ministry
- Catholic College Ministry
- Kappa Phi
- Protestant Campus Ministries

The International Club

The West Liberty International Club, also nicknamed Spices, is a West Liberty University student organization that promotes cultural awareness and diversity among the West Liberty community. In addition, the International Club supports the welfare of international students and facilitates interaction between American students and international students at West Liberty University. The club provides an atmosphere where students interested in other cultures can meet people from other countries, make lifetime friendships and share their cultural experiences with the university and the local community.

Throughout the year, the club has different cultural events to educate the community and bring students closer together. Some of the biggest events that the club does include:

- The International Food Festival
- The Culture Fair
- International Tea Time
- International Movie Nights
- Diversity Luncheon
- Country Presentations (on campus and at local schools)

The International Club also takes trips to share and learn about American Culture. It is a great place for both international and national students to interact and expand their knowledge. The club meets every Friday @ 4p.m. in the Alumni Room in the College Union.



International Food Festival 2013

Activities

We want you to be able to enjoy everything that our community has to offer. That is why the International Student Office plans events and activities to entertain you and to provide you with fun, new experiences. As soon as the first international students arrives on our campus for the new school year, we are hard at work making sure that you will have activities to attend and participate in. Once the school in is session, there are weekly trips to the local shopping centers, grocery stores, banks, and a weekend activity.

The following activities that the International Office has planned or attended in the past are:

- Kayaking
- Amusement and Water Parks
- Local Pools
- Trips to local big cities
- Concerts
- Movies
- Bowling
- Local festivals
- Art Workshops
- Hockey Games

In order to see what activities are planned, we make our activity calendar available online. Just go to www.westliberty.edu/is, click in “Current Students”, and click in “Programs and Activities”. There you will find a list of events (located below the slideshow). If you click on an event, it will show you details of the event and allow you to sign-up for it. Make sure to always check the calendar often as events and activities can be canceled or have the time and date changed. We also post upcoming activities and events on the International Club Facebook page.



Festival of Colors 2012



**Barnesville Pumpkin
Festival 2012**



Kayaking 2012

Transportation

At the International Student Office, we do our best to provide you with the most efficient and reliable transportation services that we can. We provide transportation to local shopping centers, events and activities, to airports, and to bus stations.

Local and Special Request

While we may not be able to cater to individual desires immediately, like if you need to get milk for your cereal in the morning, we will do our best to accommodate your needs within reason. There is a corner store up the street where you can buy certain foods and goods if you need something immediately, but as covered in the “Activities” section, we make sure that there are weekly trips to grocery stores and the bank. So as long as you plan ahead, you should be fine.

If you still need to travel and we are unable to provide you with transportation, we recommend that you either get a ride from a friend that has a car or call a taxi. There are three taxi services that we recommend. They are:

- Airport Limousine Service (Wheeling, WV), 304-232-0920
- Brook County Cab (Wellsburg, WV), 304-737-4300
- Yellow Cab Company (Pittsburgh, PA), 412-321-8100

Travel for Vacation

We want you to be able to experience all that the United States has to offer. Therefore, we encourage you to travel during your stay here at West Liberty. We do, although, require that you communicate with us and fill out the travel form so that we are not only knowledgeable of your safety and whereabouts, but also that you are following the regulations allowed by your visa or your study abroad program. You can fill out the travel form by going to www.westliberty.edu/is, clicking “Current Students”, and clicking on the “Travel and Transportation” tab.

Here are the rules that we need you to follow in order to ensure that we can help you with your transportation:

1. You must confirm dates and times of your travel **before** booking your tickets.
2. Your departure and arrival times must be between **9a.m.** and **9p.m.**
3. You must fill out the travel form **no later** than **one week** before your trip.
4. After confirming your trip with the International Student Office, you **must** email or give a copy of your ticket(s) to Jasmin Ilovar . We must receive a copy of the tickets for each student traveling.
5. Each student must fill out their own travel request
6. You **must** book round-trip tickets unless you do not plan on coming back to West Liberty University (like summer vacation, transferring, graduating). Any combination of air, bus, train, or car travel is accepted.
7. If you decide to change your transportation arrangements to something other than what is listed on this form, you will be responsible for your own transportation.
8. If you are traveling by Greyhound bus, you must depart from and/or arrive to the Wheeling, WV station unless otherwise approved by Jasmin Ilovar or Mia Szabo.

If you do not follow these rules, we cannot guarantee transportation. Also, if the times are not convenient for your schedule when planning your trips then you may use the local taxi services described above in the “Local and Special Request” section.

Working in the U.S.

International students in valid F-1 status desiring to work while studying at West Liberty University can apply for jobs on campus without seeking DSO authorization. Students in valid F-1 status cannot be **employed off-campus** without meeting eligibility requirements and obtaining prior written authorization. Off-campus employment is any type of internship, practicum, and other types of off-campus experiences, whether or not you are receiving college credit for it. Working off-campus without the appropriate authorization is considered illegal employment according to federal immigration law and it could result in deportation. SEVIS regulations require that all unauthorized employment be reported.

Working on-Campus

According to your F-1 visa responsibilities, work is restricted to 20 hours per week during the academic year and 40 hours per week during vacations and holiday breaks. It does not matter how many jobs you hold on campus, as long as you abide by these hour restrictions in the total amount of work you do. In order to obtain employment, international students must first get a social security card or ITIN number.

Working off-Campus

International students can work off-campus under the CPT Program (Curricular Practical Training) or OPT (Optional Practical Training). These programs are explained on our website and we can explain them to you if you are visiting the International Student Office.

Please note that the USCIS defines “employment” as any type of service for which a benefit, including academic credit, is received. Therefore, even if you will not be getting paid for your internship, you should obtain CPT authorization.

Social Security Card

International students who want a social security number must first have employment. In order to apply for a social security number at the local Social Security Administration office, you will need a letter of employment from your employing department and a letter from the International Student Office verifying your attendance to WLU.



If you do not qualify for a social security number, you can apply for an individual taxpayer identification number (ITIN) using a Form W-7. This form can be down loaded from the IRS website, www.irs.gov

The International Student Office at WLU will be assisting students with the SSN application process and will be facilitating trips to the local Social Security Administration Office in Wheeling, during the first months of the fall and spring semesters or when needed.

NOTE: As soon as you receive your card in the mail (usually 10 days from the day of application), please bring it to the International Student Office to update your records (notify your employer and your bank etc.)

Internships and Community Service

Some international exchange programs require students to do internships and/or community service. There are many opportunities in the Ohio Valley to do this, like with the local YMCA, Salvation Army, and school sponsored community service trips. If you have any questions regarding internships or community service, please contact the Coordinator of International Student Activities, Jasmin Ilovar, at jasmin.ilovar@westliberty.edu.

Immigration or Administrative Concerns

Maintaining F-1 Student Status

What does it mean to be in F-1 student status?

You entered the U.S. with an F-1 visa means *that your primary purpose for being in the United States is to study.*

To maintain your F-1 status, you must comply with ALL of the following requirements:

- **Keep your passport valid at all times.**
While you are in the U.S., you must always have a valid passport. In addition, you may be required to have six months' validity remaining on your passport for re-entry to the U.S.

- **Attend the school you are authorized to attend.** This means that you must report to the school whose I-20 you used to enter the U.S. or to which your last school transfer was authorized.
- **Remain a full-time student and make normal progress toward your degree. Undergraduate students must** register for 12 credit hours each semester (except during summer vacations) and Graduate students must register for 9 credit hours each semester.
- **Have a valid and accurate I-20.** Check section 5 of your I-20. The date of expected completion of studies must not have passed. If the expiration date is approaching and you have not finished your program, you must apply for an “Extension of Stay” before the expiration date.
To re-enter the U.S., you must get a travel signature on page 3 of your I-20 every year.
Exception: Students on OPT must get a new signature on page 3 of their I-20 every six months.
Note: Only Designated School Officials (DSO’s) are eligible to sign your I-20.
- **Not work without proper employment authorization**
- Notify the International Student Office of a change of address within 10 days of your move. If you are on OPT, you must report your change of address.

Failure to comply with these requirements is a violation of your F-1 status, which may result in serious consequences, including your termination in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitors Information System), inability to reenter the U.S., and arrest, detention and deportation from the U.S. Please direct all questions regarding your F-1 student status to Mia Szabo at mszabo@westliberty.edu.

International Student Office Location

2nd Floor of College Union
Room S14

International Office Mailing Address

208 University Drive
C.U. Box 200
West Liberty, WV 26074

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