



Hi All,

Again, Congratulations on your acceptance and the next step in your exciting new journey!

As you get ready to head up to the US, I wanted to send another note (also to parents this time) to share some key things to ensure a smooth transition and adjustment to university life.

Here are some things you'll need to know and do before your arrival:

1. Visa and Immigration: By now you should have applied for and (hopefully) received your student visa (**not required for students who have DUAL US citizenship**)
 - a. Ensure you have the necessary visa (usually F-1 for academic study) and that it is valid for the duration of your studies and all details on the document are correct.
 - b. Familiarize yourself with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection guidelines for entering the country. **Have the address of where you are staying on you when you land. They may ask for this at immigration.**
 - c. Keep all your immigration documents, such as your passport and I-20 form a safe place with you when you are traveling (do NOT put in checked luggage)
 - d. Take photos of all IDs and documents and save on a laptop or hard drive (not on the cloud) or send to a family member via email to download and save.

2. Travel: Book flights as soon as possible as "summer travel" is very expensive.
 - a. Check the airline baggage rules and ensure you understand how many bags you are able to carry, the weight and the costs. It is almost always less expensive to purchase most items in the US.
 - b. If you're coming home for Christmas, book your travel as soon as possible. It's often challenging to book the trip home as you don't yet know which day your final exams will end in December and when you will be able to leave campus. **However, you can book your return ticket in January.** Do that ASAP. You can find out when the January 2025 semester will begin and book that ticket back up sooner than later. Buy a one-way ticket now and buy the ticket home when you know when you can leave or the last day of exam period.
 - c. Also, there are many airlines that fly throughout the US, not originating in the Caribbean. It's often less expensive, though may be a bit more complicated, to book from your home to a hub in the US such as Miami or JFK and then switch airlines (booking a separate ticket) to your university. You can often save a lot of money (and time) rather than trying to find one airline that will take you all the way through.

3. Accommodations:
 - a. As soon as you are able, get your housing sorted (optiona move quickly) and you may already have gotten the name of your roommate(s)



- b. It's great to connect with roommates in advance and make a plan as to which (if any) shared items each of you will organize to purchase
 - c. Ensure you're **aware of the move in dates** as you cannot show up early and get access to the dormitory
 - d. Dorm rooms are often very small and it's smart to be resourceful and creative when it comes to how to organize your room and store your stuff. There are lots of videos online that have great information about this.
 - e. Dorms often come with just a bed, desk & chair, dresser and closet. You will be required to bring your own: linens, blanket, pillows, hangers, mirror and any other personal/decorative items you want. Check the size of your bed (it will be shared from the university) – most dorm beds are single XL so you buy the correct size sheets
 - f. Here is a sample "[Dorm Packing List](#)" It's very over the top, but may help you think of some things you'll need.
 - g. There are many reasonable stores in the US to purchase everything for your dorm. Target has a great option for a one time 20% off dorm discount, both in store and online. You can also use Amazon, Walmart and even stores such as Marshalls will carry a lot of dorm essentials.
 - h. You don't need to get everything all at once, though it may be easier if you have people there to help you. You can order anything online and it will be delivered to your dorm, often for free – use Amazon, Target, Walmart...almost all stores have online purchase and free delivery (over a certain amount)
4. Health and Insurance:
- a. Understand which vaccines are required by the school and schedule all vaccinations and medical examinations before traveling. **Documentation is often required to be sent prior to arriving at school.**
 - b. **US Health insurance for students is a requirement.** All universities have an on-campus health center and that is the first/primary place for all healthcare activities and your health insurance needs to cover this particular health center.
 - c. All universities offer their own health insurance. It is EXPENSIVE! They also may offer "pre-approved" alternative options" that are often less than the named university insurance. If your parents have an international plan, you can see if this will allow you to waive the university's health insurance. You will need to liaise with their health services office to explore this option.
 - d. Go online to the health services page of the university website to see if other health insurance options are available. Some universities offer other options and some don't. There is a deadline to purchase health insurance prior to arriving at school.
 - e. Again, health insurance is REQUIRED! If you do not purchase a pre-approved plan and send confirmation of such to the school, they will add their own health insurance to your student account and charge you the full price.
5. Orientation and Pre-Departure Webinars:
- a. Attend pre-departure webinars and/or orientations organized by the university to learn about campus life, academics, and other essential information.
 - b. Connect with current international students and university staff through social media groups or online forums.
 - c. For DUAL US citizens – though you reside outside the US, due to your dual citizenship, you are considered a US citizen according to the university so most times you will NOT be invited to any international student orientations. If you



can attend one, in addition to the freshman orientation, it would be helpful for you to acclimate to the university and life in the US. You can contact the international student services office to learn more about these options.

- d. Dual citizen students can always join international student clubs once you are there to connect to other international students.
6. Finances and Banking:
- a. Open a bank account in the U.S. once you arrive on campus to manage your finances conveniently. As a student, it's easy to open a bank account (very different than in the Caribbean) and you/your parents can transfer funds from back home.
 - b. Some students come to the US with a credit card (parent's account) from home. It is always helpful to have a credit card for "emergencies". Many stores and businesses in the US don't take cash.
 - c. Often there will be sales representatives from banks on campus offering the student credit cards (even though you don't have a job) This has both pros/cons and should be discussed with your parents before you jump in and complete the application
 - i. **Pros:** Can be helpful since **many places do not take cash** in US and can help manage spending as you can see all your charges in one place as you can see your account online in real time;
 - ii. If you're planning to stay in the US after graduation, it's important to build credit in the US
 - iii. **Con:** Can be very easy to overspend as it "feels easy" to just charge, charge, charge and accounts need to be paid every month. If you are not responsible, this can get out of control quickly with very high interest rates
7. Academic Preparation and Support:
- a. Gather hard copies of all required academic documents, including transcripts and certificates, and bring them with you. Often you can get exempt from some foundational courses based on successful completion of CAPE exams/AP exams.
 - b. Research your academic program, review course requirements, and consider reaching out to academic advisors for guidance.
 - c. Connect with every professor during office hours. You never know what knowledge, information and connections they can impart. You also never know if you will need them to write a recommendation for you for a job or grad school. They won't do it if they don't know you. This is what office hours exists for.
 - d. All schools have free peer tutoring services. You should easily be able to find this This would be one on one support by an upper level student who is familiar with your class and should be able to guide you through any issues you are having with ANY class. Many schools also offer writing centers where you can go to get support with any type of paper or presentation. All for free (or your tuition payment)
8. Employment
- a. Many students choose to work during school to earn some money. Some students must work to stay in school. There are many work options available.
 - b. International students are eligible to work up to 20 hours per week in an ON-CAMPUS job (through the university). This is called "work-study". Dual-US citizens can work on or off campus.
 - c. Some students aren't comfortable working the first semester as they want the time to settle in and acclimate to the new environment. Others want to or need to work right away
 - d. On-campus (work/study jobs) can include opportunities such as campus tour guide, fitness center employee, research assistance, administration/receptionist
 - e. If you are looking to work right away, connect with the career center or find out where the on-campus job opportunities are posted online and apply early.
 - f. Many students work, so the "good jobs" may be taken quickly. So, if you want/need to work, apply quickly. You will need a resume.



9. Cultural Adjustment:

- a. Embrace cultural differences and be open to new experiences. American culture and the culture at your school may differ from what you're used to, but it provides an opportunity for growth and understanding.
- b. Seek out cultural clubs and international student associations on campus to meet like-minded individuals.
- c. Be a "joiner" - join clubs, associations and teams to meet new people and learn new things.
- d. Remember, the **legal drinking age in the US is 21.**

10. Health and Safety:

- a. Familiarize yourself with emergency procedures on campus and the surrounding area. These should be shared in freshman orientation and in your dorm orientation. (eg. hurricane plan)
- b. In your dorm you have a Resident Advisor (RA), an older student who lives on your floor and is available to help you in any way needed. The RA can be very helpful and supportive in many situations. If your RA is not helpful, find one in your dorm who is. S/he can be an important guide, mentor, advocate and mediator

11. Mental Health and Accommodations

- a) The percentage of students entering university with mental health issues (anxiety, ADHD, Depression...) is increasing substantially year to year as is the percentage of students accessing accommodations to support their educational journey. If you fall into this category, there is nothing to be ashamed of.
- b) At the majority of US universities, between 10-25% of students utilize the office of disability services for support.
- c) All students with "officially" diagnosed disabilities are eligible to receive accommodations at universities in the US. Each university has its own process to access these services (and if you need this service, hopefully you have already begun the process) but most begin at the Office of Student Services or Disability Services (universities have different names for this group)
- d) Based on your psychological tests and diagnosis you may be eligible for things such as extra time on exams, distraction-free exam location, note taker/note support and many other support tools as well as additional tutoring and support and lessons on executive functioning, time management and liaising with professors.
- e) **You must be pro-active with this office to take advantage of the services** they have to offer. They will not chase you down.

Remember that adjusting to a new country and university may take time, **so be patient with yourself.** There is a vast network of support available, including the university's international student services, counseling centers, Resident Advisors (RAs) and academic advisors.

If you have any questions, you can always reach out to us here at M*Power. We are always happy to do our best to support you. Have an amazing journey! You've earned it!