

# The Journey to LSU: A Brief Guide to Help International Students

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Congratulations! You have just been admitted to Louisiana State University (LSU)! We want to welcome you. This guide is designed to guide you through the next steps of the process and to help you get to Baton Rouge safely. Please keep in mind that we can only provide you with guidelines that may not be entirely accurate for each individual case. Conditions or procedures of your journey may change and each student who comes here has different experiences, so do not be surprised if something is not as we have told you or if officials ask you for additional or different information. And don't worry: You will make it through the process like all the other students who are working on their admission right at this moment.

Our first tip: **Always read the information in any papers you receive very carefully! Only what is written is valid! Do not trust what your friends in the United States or at home tell you! They may have wrong or outdated information! Their experiences may not be what you should expect! Study all information yourself!**

## 1. ADMISSION PAPERS

You received a letter in the mail in which Louisiana State University informed you that you have been admitted to study at this university. You also found a form in the envelope that has your name on it and was issued by the **International Services Office (ISO)** here at Louisiana State University.

There are two kinds of forms for our incoming students. One is for exchange students and visitors. It is called **DS-2019**. Those students, who do not come as exchange students, will receive a different form which is called **I-20**. These forms are very important. Please remember these abbreviations because many people will ask you for these forms. If you indicated that you are bringing your spouse and possibly children, their names will appear on the forms as well.

Please make sure that all the information on the papers is correct and is spelled exactly as it appears in your passport, especially the names. If you detect any mistake, please contact the **Coordinator of Documentation Services of the International Services Office (ISO)** here at LSU immediately. Only this office can correct such a mistake. The best way to do this is by e-mail: [isodoc@lsu.edu](mailto:isodoc@lsu.edu). You may also call the ISO. The phone number is 225-578-3191. The office is open Mondays through Fridays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Time. Please keep this telephone number with your papers so that you can contact us if you are facing an emergency during your journey.

## 2. OBTAINING YOUR VISA

Your admission to this university is the first step in the journey to the United States. To actually enter the US as a student you need a special student Visa which Consulates or Embassies of the United States in your country issue. The Visa is your permission to enter the

United States. It will be placed in your passport and has your photo on it. Please be advised that this process usually takes a long time. So you should start this process as soon as you receive your admission papers from LSU!

**a) Things to do before you make your appointment**

Before you can start the Visa application process, you will be required to pay some money. In 2004 the United States government set up an electronic Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (**SEVIS**) in which all international students and exchange visitors must be registered. You must pay a \$100 US Dollar fee, **before** you make an appointment at the Consulate or Embassy; this fee will be used to administer and maintain the **SEVIS** system. The **SEVIS** fee is different from Visa fees. Some exchange visitors (J-1) who are in federally sponsored government programs (Fulbright, Institute of International Education, LASPAU, etc.) do not need to pay the fee. You should receive information regarding the exemption from your sponsor.

**How to pay:** You have several options to pay this fee:

- 1) You can use a check or a money order which must be drawn by a US bank, or
- 2) You can pay via the internet with a credit card. In our experience, the credit card option works faster and you will receive the receipt you need to be able to set up an interview at the Consulate or Embassy more quickly.
- 3) Sometimes you can also pay at the Embassy or Consulate in your own currency, but this option is not available everywhere.

Please take into consideration how long you may need to wait for the **SEVIS** fee receipt before you make an appointment for the interview at the Consulate or Embassy. You will find Louisiana State University's School code on the I-20 or Exchange Visitor Program number on the DS-2019 form in box number 2.

Please visit the following web site for up-to-date information and instructions on how to complete the process of paying the SEVIS fee, as well as links to actually pay the fee:

<http://www.FMJfee.com>.

If you need more information on this topic, please visit our own web site: LSU's International Services Office (**ISO**) (<http://www.oip.lsu.edu/iso/Sevis%20Fee.htm>) or the web site of the US Federal Government's Office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (**ICE**): at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901>. Additionally, you may contact the following e-mail address for more information and with questions concerning the process of paying the SEVIS fee: [fmjfee.SEVIS@dhs.gov](mailto:fmjfee.SEVIS@dhs.gov)

**b) How to make an appointment**

Please make yourself familiar with the application procedures in your country. All new Visa applicants are now required to make an appointment with the US Embassy or Consulate in advance, so you have to call the American Embassy or Consulate in your country. All Embassies and Consulates have telephone services in place which do not permit you to speak

directly with an employee of the Embassy or Consulate but will help you schedule an appointment. These telephone services also explain to you what fees you need to pay in advance of your visit and which papers you will need to bring. Please have all papers on hand when you call. Sometimes the communication is not easy, so you must be patient. If you do not understand something, *please ask* for a clarification. There are many abbreviations used and that can be confusing. Usually you will have to pay any application fees and Visa fees at a bank before you will go to the Embassy or Consulate for your appointment. The bank will give you a receipt that you will need to take along to your appointment. It will also be a good idea to consult the web site of the Consulate or Embassy where you are applying for your Visa. You can find a list of all US Embassies and Consulates at: <http://usembassy.state.gov>

### **c) What happens at the Consulate or Embassy?**

While all American Consulates and Embassies operate differently, here are some general guidelines. You will have to go to the Consulate or the Embassy, which usually opens for this kind of business in the morning. Long lines are quite frequent, so you need to have lots of time and be there early, even if you have an appointment at a specific time.

Here is a list of what you must bring. **It is important that all documents you submit are originals. Consulates or Embassies will not accept photocopies of any documents.**

- A valid passport
- Receipts for all required fees, including the SEVIS fee and Visa application fee
- Application forms. The forms are called DS-156, DS-157, and DS-158. Not everybody has to fill out all forms, so please read the instructions carefully! Applications are available without charge from all US Consular offices, or you can download such a form from the internet at [http://travel.state.gov/Visa/frvi/forms/forms\\_1342.html](http://travel.state.gov/Visa/frvi/forms/forms_1342.html)
- One photograph of each applicant. Please refer to the Dept. Of State web site for the specific requirements of these photos: <http://travel.state.gov/passport>
- Proof of Admission to Louisiana State University
- Evidence of sufficient knowledge of English. That is usually your TOEFL score, if your native language is not English
- Evidence of academic credentials qualifying you for admission
- For graduate student applications: GRE/GMAT results
- Certificate of eligibility (form SEVIS I-20 or form DS-2019)
- Evidence of sufficient financial support (bank statement, letter from your parents, documentation from your sponsor, etc.)
- Evidence of sufficient ties to your home country. This is important and needs to show that you intend to return home after your studies. Under US law, all applicants for nonimmigrant Visas are viewed as intending immigrants unless they can convince the Consular officer that they are not. You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. "Ties" to your home country are the things that bind you to your hometown, homeland, or current place of residence: job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, investments, etc. You may be asked about your specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other relationships, educational objectives, grades, long-range plans, and career prospects in your home country. Each person's situation is different, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate or letter, that can guarantee Visa issuance.

**The interview** will be the most important part of your visit. Remember that the person who interviews you does not have a lot of time, so the more organized you are, the better the process will go. The National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA) put together a list of tips for your interview. You should take the following points into consideration:

**--English:** Anticipate that the Visa interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview. Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The Consular official will want to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.

**--Academics:** Know the academic program to which you have been admitted and how it fits into your career plans. If you are not able to give the reasons why you will study in a particular program at LSU, you may not succeed in convincing the US Consular official that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to immigrate. You should be able to explain how studying in the United States relates to your future professional career when you return home.

**--Be short and to the point:** Because of the volume of applications received, all Consular officers are under considerable pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impressions they form during the first minute or two of the interview. Consequently, what you say first, and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers to the officer's questions short and to the point.

**--Supplemental information:** Be sure that you have all your papers in order and that all information is clearly visible and understandable. It should be clear at a glance to the Consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. Remember that you will have 2-3 minutes of interview time at best.

**--Not all countries are the same:** Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the United States as immigrants will have more difficulty getting Visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their study in the United States.

**--Financial documentation:** If you are receiving funding from Louisiana State University, your home university, your employer, or from the government, be prepared to present the appropriate letters or documents which verify this funding. If your financial support is coming from personal or family funds, bank statements alone are seldom considered credible enough evidence to demonstrate sufficient finances. Only when coupled with highly credible documentation which can substantiate the source (such as job contracts, letters from an employer, tax documents, pay stubs, or deposit slips) will a bank statement be accepted. Bank statements are most credible if they are a series of reliable computer-generated ordinary monthly bank account statements.

**--Employment:** You must understand that your purpose for coming to the United States is to study, not for the chance of work before or after graduation. While many students may work part-time during their studies, such employment is incidental to their main purpose of completing their US education. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program. If your spouse is also applying for an accompanying F-2 Visa, be aware that F-2 dependents cannot, under any circumstances, be employed in the United States. If asked, be prepared to explain what your spouse intends to do with his or her time while in the United States. Volunteering and attending school part-time are permitted activities.

**--Dependants remaining in your home country:** If your spouse and children are remaining behind in your country, be prepared to explain how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be an especially tricky area if you are the main source of income for your family. If the Consular officer gains the impression that your family members will need you to send money from the United States in order to support them, your student Visa application will almost certainly be denied. If your family decides to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at the same post where you applied for your Visa.

**--Maintain a positive attitude:** Do not engage the Consular official in an argument. If you are denied a student Visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and obtain, in writing, an explanation of the reason you were denied.

**--The next step:** You may be asked to leave your papers at the Consulate or Embassy and will be able to pick them up later. In some countries the papers are sent to you by mail. The time to process your Visa application can last anywhere from a few hours to a few weeks, so the earlier you take care of this matter, the better it will be. You will receive a Visa with your photo in your passport, together with all other papers. Remember that you should have all these papers ready again to show them when you are at the airport and when you are getting to the United States.

**--Visa delay or Visa denial:** In most cases students will be able to obtain their Visas as quickly as possible. Due to the new security requirements, however, Consulates and Embassies are hard pressed to process the Visa applications, especially in July and August because there are so many students who want to come to the United States to study here. Despite everyone's best efforts, there are cases in which a Visa is denied. The most common reasons for a Visa denial are failure to prove sufficient ties to your home country and failure to provide sufficient evidence of financial support. The Visa officer must tell you why your Visa application was denied. If your Visa is denied, please send an e-mail to [isodoc@lsu.edu](mailto:isodoc@lsu.edu) immediately, provide the date and location of your Visa interview, as well as all the details regarding the reason that the interviewing person gave you for the denial. The ISO may be able to provide you with suggestions on how to proceed after the denial, so please contact us if that is the case.

Much more frequent than a denial is a Visa delay. The person interviewing you must also give you the reason for the delay. There are many reasons why your Visa may be delayed.

Sometimes your course of study may be security sensitive and may require more investigation. Individuals from specific countries have to undergo special security clearance procedures. Or your information is not yet available in the SEVIS computer system. If that is the case, please contact the ISO immediately at [isodoc@lsu.edu](mailto:isodoc@lsu.edu) and provide the date and the location of the Visa interview. We will contact the appropriate authorities and resubmit the SEVIS information directly to the location where you were interviewed.

**IMPORTANT!** If you encounter these difficulties, don't lose hope. Try to find out as much as you can from the person who interviewed you about what you can do to improve your chances for getting a Visa next time or expediting the process. And remember: *Patience is the key to success*. It is of no use to you to become angry or upset, or to start an argument. Keep in mind that you want to overcome this obstacle as quickly as possible and that you need the help of the person who interviewed you to do that.

**--Visa Types:** Exchange students will receive a **J-1** Visa; all other students are issued an **F-1** Visa by the Consulates or Embassies (please remember what type of Visa you have: either J-1 or F-1). Do not be alarmed if the dates on your Visa do not cover the entire time you want to study. They only indicate during what period of time you can **enter** the United States. The Visa does not say anything about the length of your stay in the United States!

If this is the very first time that you obtain a Visa and enroll at an American school, it is essential that the school listed on a new J-1 or F-1 Visa is the same school where you will actually enroll! If you do not enroll at LSU and your Visa was issued for LSU, we must notify immigration authorities immediately. That will result in serious problems for anyone who may have entered the United States with a Visa for LSU and does not go to LSU.

If you travel with your spouse and/or children they will receive an **F-2** or **J-2** Visa. Your spouse and your children are **dependants** of the person who has the F-1 or J-1 Visa. If your family will go to the United States with you, you will need to bring to the interview their passports, a marriage license, and birth certificates for the children in addition to the papers mentioned above. It is better to have more papers than you need than to find out that you forgot something. It is also better to have more money than you need than not having enough for the fees. If you and your family travel together, only you will have the envelope stapled in your passport. If they travel at different dates, they will need their own DS-2019 or I-20. If that is the case, please contact the **International Services Office here at LSU**.

Usually you are asked to leave these papers and your passport at the Consulate or Embassy and will be able to pick them up later. In some countries the papers are sent to you by mail; in other countries you have to pick them up in person. It usually takes a few weeks to process your Visa application, but it sometimes may take months, so the earlier you take care of this matter, the better it will be. You will receive a Visa with your photo in your passport. An envelope will be stapled in there as well which contains the papers for the immigration officer who will revise your passport when you arrive at the United States. Remember: Exchange students will receive a **J-1** Visa; all other students are issued an **F-1** Visa by the Consulates or Embassies.

### 3. HEALTH CARE

The United States has a private health care system. This means that health care is a business and you are expected to pay for a doctor's visit or a stay in the hospital immediately. **The health care organizations of your own country usually do not pay for illnesses that you may have abroad.** This is why Louisiana State University requires all foreign students to acquire health insurance while they are enrolled. In your country there may be insurance companies with whom you can buy health insurance while you are in the United States. Please be advised that health care is very expensive, so the more coverage for illnesses you have, the better it will be, although we hope that you will not have to use it. LSU requires you to buy insurance that will cover at least \$50,000 per year for J-1 students, at least \$25,000 per year for F-1 students. The insurance policy also must pay for the expenses to repatriate a body. This means that the insurance has to pay for the transport of a dead person to his or her home country. In case of a serious illness, the insurance must also pay for your transport home if it becomes necessary. Sometimes your sponsor will cover your insurance needs. Please refer to the ISO web site for complete details on insurance requirements at this university.

If you cannot find a company that will provide health insurance for the United States, you will have to buy health insurance here. In fact, most international students have to do this. LSU offers a health insurance plan (for more information on the cost and conditions of the health insurance plan at LSU please see the following web page:  
<http://www.oip.lsu.edu/iso/insurance%20info.htm>.

**Please note:** You will be required to show that you have insurance or you must pay for this insurance when you arrive here. If you have any questions regarding health insurance, please contact the **International Services Office**. The university is required by immigration authorities to make sure that you comply with these regulations. **There are no exceptions to this requirement!**

Regardless of whether you have your own insurance or buy an insurance plan in the United States, it will be a good idea to bring a credit card to take care of emergency expenses. American doctors and hospitals do not deal with foreign insurance companies directly and hold you responsible for paying the bills which the insurance company in your country often reimburses directly to you. American insurance companies do not cover the entire cost of a doctor's visit or medications. You will be responsible for making a co-payment directly at the doctor's office or at the pharmacy.

### 4. YOUR IMMUNIZATION RECORD AND MEDICINES YOU MAY BE TAKING

LSU also sent you a little sheet of paper in which you have to show that you are vaccinated against certain diseases. This is called your immunization record. Please make sure that you fill it out and have all the required immunizations. Please talk to your doctor at home about what you need to do. If you are taking any prescription drugs, bring a good supply that will last you for a while. Even the names of medicines which you can buy without a doctor's prescription here are different from the names in your country, so you should bring anything you take on a regular basis to help you over the first weeks. If you wear glasses, don't forget a second pair for emergencies.

## 5. PREPARING FOR YOUR JOURNEY TO BATON ROUGE

**Buying your ticket:** Now that you have your Visa, you can get ready and make your airline reservations. There are no direct flights from your country to Baton Rouge, so you will need to come to a large airport in the United States (your **Port of Entry**) and then take another plane from there to Baton Rouge. **Please ask your travel agent to make sure that you have plenty of time between the arrival of your plane from overseas in the United States and the connecting flight to Baton Rouge. Many intercontinental flights arrive with considerable delays, and immigration and security procedures take a long time for people arriving from other countries. You should have at least 3-4 hours of time between flights.**

**Please notify the International Cultural Center at LSU ( ICC) of your flight schedule. You can contact the ICC by**

**TELEPHONE:** 225-342-3084 or 225-572-2199

**FAX:** 225-342-0864

**E-MAIL:** [icc@lsu.edu](mailto:icc@lsu.edu).

You should have this contact information with you at all times!

**Packing your suitcases:** There are lots of things to think about and include on your packing list. You will have to think very carefully about the things you want to bring along. But before you start, be aware that you may have to lift or carry your suitcases some distances without any help. Airlines increasingly strictly enforce the weight limits for luggage or charge very high fees if your luggage weighs more than permitted. You also need to be aware that the electrical current in the USA may be different from your country's. This means that many electrical devices may not work without a transformer. The United States also has very strict regulations regarding the importation of food, plants, seeds, animals and agricultural products. It is better to be safe rather than sorry. If you are not sure if you can bring something along, leave it at home. Pack all items that could be misused as weapons, such as kitchen knives or scissors in the big suitcases you will check into baggage, rather than keep them in the small carry on luggage; otherwise they may be confiscated.

Baton Rouge is hot and humid most of the year. Temperatures go up to over 90 degrees Fahrenheit (33 degrees Celsius) in summer. It does get rather cool in the winter and may even freeze on occasion. It is a good idea to have a jacket or sweater handy even during the summer because often you will find that offices, the library, and restaurants at the university are kept very cold by air conditioning. It rains **a lot** in Baton Rouge, so bringing an umbrella and some waterproof shoes is a very good idea.

There are very few banks that exchange foreign money in Baton Rouge, so it probably is best to buy traveler's checks in your home country in dollars. Remember that you will have

many things to pay for during the first few weeks, such as deposits for your apartment, utilities (electricity and gas), and telephone. You will need some furniture and you will have to eat. You may also have to pay for your insurance. Books and school supplies which you will be required to buy are expensive. Be advised that even if you have a sponsor, it will take time until you receive your first check. If you were offered an assistantship, you will receive your first check from LSU at the end of September. **You will need some money in cash on your journey (\$100-\$200), but it is not a good idea to bring all your money in cash.** Traveler's checks are safer because you can replace them if they are lost or stolen. If you want to send money before you come, you must make it payable to LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY, and you must write your complete name and student identification number (it starts with a 999-) on it. You send these checks to: Ms. Natalie Rigby, Director, International Services Office. She will deposit the money for you until you can open your own bank account here. Please be advised that LSU will use the money you send in this way to pay for your tuition first. Only if the tuition is paid in full will you be able to receive the rest of the money for yourself!

Until you have a permanent address in Baton Rouge, you can receive your mail at the International Services Office. Please have the mail addressed in the following format:

**[YOUR NAME]  
c/o International Services Office  
108 Hatcher Hall  
Louisiana State University  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-5233  
USA**

You will have access to computers at the International Cultural Center (ICC) and around campus to check and send e-mail.

## **6. ON YOUR WAY**

With your suitcases packed, the journey can begin. Plan to schedule a few days of rest before you leave so that you can collect your thoughts, say good-bye to friends, and family and get ready for the transition. First, a word of caution: **Do not trust anyone while you are traveling! Always watch your belongings, even on the plane!** In some cases passports and money have been stolen while students or faculty were on the plane. Make sure that you arrive at the airport at least three hours before the plane is scheduled to leave. You will have a long journey ahead of you and do not want to start it in a hurry. A little extra time will lessen the stress. Remember that the United States does not allow you to bring in any fresh food, especially meat or sausages, so please leave them at home. Have your passport and all papers always on your person and handy. You will also need a pen on the airplane. The airline representatives will ask you for your papers when you check in. It is a good idea to have all papers related to LSU and your journey (the letter of admission, passport with the DS-2019 or I-20 etc.) in one folder where you can pull them out at any time.

**It is a good idea to store one set of photocopies of all papers (including your Visa and passport) in your hand luggage and one in your suitcase, and leave one set at home, just in case something might get lost.**

While you are on the plane en route to the United States, the flight attendants will distribute forms for you to fill out. You should receive two forms: One form issued by the immigration authorities, and a customs declaration. Make sure that you receive the **white** immigration form. It is called **I-94**.

To fill it out you will need your passport, the airline and flight number, the first airport you arrive at in the United States (**Port of Entry**), the place and date where your Visa was issued. If you make a mistake, ask for a new form. Once again, many people will ask you for your **I-94**, so please remember what it is. If you are traveling with your family, each family member must fill out his or her own **I-94**. As usual, read the forms carefully before you start writing in them. You will also have to give your address in the United States. You can use the address of the International Services Office or the International Cultural Center here at LSU if you do not know where you are going to stay.

The customs form is much easier to fill out. If you are traveling with your family you will only need one form for the entire family. Just remember to have a look at the reverse side and do not forget to sign it. Once you have filled the forms out, just put them in your passport.

## **7. GOING THROUGH IMMIGRATION**

The first airport in the United States at which you arrive from your country is called your **Port of Entry**. At this airport you will have to go through Immigration and Customs before you can go on to Baton Rouge. Don't worry about getting lost. Just follow the crowd and you will always get to where you need to go. And do not worry about your luggage. It will wait for you after you have passed through immigration. Make sure that you did not leave your passport or any of the papers in the airplane and that you have all other papers you needed for the Visa application ready as well. Since you already filled everything out and signed the forms, you will just have to stay in line and wait for your turn.

Due to new security regulations the immigration procedures at the port of entry are now taking much longer. Many international students must go through another interviewing process at the port of entry. All students have to have their picture and fingerprints taken. Please bring a lot of patience and do not forget to give yourself lots of time (at least 3-4 hours) between your arriving and connecting flights. Immigration and Customs officials may ask you a few questions while they will process your papers and they may want to see some additional documentation, for example the financial records you gave to the Embassy to show that you have enough money, or your letter of admission. If something is not clear to them, they may ask you to proceed with the interview in one of their offices. There is no reason to be alarmed if you are asked to come along for some additional questions. All legitimate students will make it through the process without difficulties, but it is very important to have all the papers at hand. Answer all questions politely, but briefly. Do not tell the officer anything she or he did not ask for. This may lead to misunderstandings.

**Special Registration:** Certain individuals from Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain,

Bangladesh, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and other determined areas are subject to special registration. If you belong to that category, the procedure is more complicated. Following your initial inspection, you will be fingerprinted, photographed, and questioned under oath. You may also have to report back to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) 30 days after entering the United States, and annually after that. The closest USCIS office to Baton Rouge is in New Orleans. The International Cultural Center will assist you with finding and going to the USCIS center if you need it. Just e-mail (icc@lsu.edu) or call them (225-342 3084) well ahead of time so that they can plan accordingly.

**Caution!!** Under the new regulations anyone who demonstrates by his or her behavior, demeanor, or answers that she or he should be monitored, can become subject to special registration. Once again: Be patient! If you are asked to do certain things, try to comply as well as you can with everything you are asked to do. If there are problems with your papers, that can usually be worked out when you arrive at LSU. Immigration officials rarely decide to deny a prospective legitimate student admission to the United States. Should the immigration officials decide to deny you admission, however, you should be extremely cautious about arguing with them. They can decide to issue an expedited removal which now entails a five-year ban on admission to the United States! There is no appeals process if such a procedure is deemed necessary by Immigration Officials. If you are denied admission, try to contact the ISO at LSU immediately, but also let the immigration officers know that you are willing to consider withdrawing your application for entering the United States rather than being subject to expedited removal.

**Final Steps:** When the Immigration officer is done, she or he will staple the small portion of your form **I-94** into your passport and put a **copy of your DS-2019** or a **copy of your I-20** in the passport as well. You will receive a rubber stamp in your passport that has the date of your arrival on it. The official will write on the **I-94** form how long you will be allowed to stay in the United States, so this is a very important document. Generally you will find that the official writes “**D/S**” (**Duration of Study**). This means that you are allowed to stay in the United States as long as you study at LSU. If there are problems with your papers, you will usually be allowed to stay 30 days and get a form I-515. You must come and see the staff of the ISO as soon as possible after your arrival to take care of the problem!

Now you can go on and pick up your suitcases. Since you have to go through customs at the port of entry, you must pick them up after going through Immigration. You can put them on one of the little carts that you will find free of charge at any port of entry and walk towards the exit. In front of the exit you will find a customs official who will take your customs declaration form. Usually that is all there is to it. Of course it is only that easy if you have nothing to declare. If you want to bring something unusual (maybe your cat or your dog), please check with the Embassy or Consulate beforehand about customs regulations. Once you are through the exit door you will immediately find counters where you can leave your suitcases for further transport to Baton Rouge. You are now officially in the United States!

## 8. COMING TO BATON ROUGE

The only thing left for you to do now is to find the plane that will take you to Baton Rouge, then sit back and enjoy the rest of your flight. The airport in Baton Rouge is not very big, so it is almost impossible to get lost. After your arrival you will have to go downstairs to the luggage claim. If you arrive by bus from another city, ICC representatives will wait for you in the lounge of the bus station if you told us that you are coming. If you schedule a flight into New Orleans or to any other city, you will have to take a bus from there to Baton Rouge. The last bus from New Orleans leaves the airport at about 8:00 p.m. If you arrive at New Orleans later, we advise you to stay in a hotel and take the bus from the airport the next day. We will pick you up from the Baton Rouge bus station.

If you notified the **International Cultural Center** in advance you should have received a confirmation reply. ICC volunteers (most of them are international students like yourself) will wait for you, or come to pick you up either from the Baton Rouge Airport or from the Baton Rouge bus station. Look out for a sign or lanyard (neckband for keys and identification) that has ICC written on it. Please contact the ICC as soon as possible if your arrival is delayed and you must come on another plane or bus. There will be people waiting for you, and you would not want them to wait for nothing! If you cannot find anybody, or you have not notified us in advance, please call us. You will need 50 Cents to dial **342-3084** between 8 am and 4:30 pm or **572-2199** at all other times from one of the public phones. If you call from another town in the United States, you need to call **225-342-3084** or **225-572-2199**. We will make sure that you will be picked up whenever you arrive, 24 hours every day.

The ICC van is clearly marked with the LSU logo and “International Cultural Center” written on the doors. **Do not leave the bus station or the airport!** There are many friendly people in Baton Rouge, but on occasion someone will try to cheat you. **Do not trust any strangers and do not take offers for a ride or a place to stay!** If you are not sure, ask for LSU identification or call the International Cultural Center. The transport from the airport or the bus station in Baton Rouge to LSU is free of charge for new international students. **Please remember to notify the ICC if your flight changes or if you missed a flight!**

You can also take a taxi from the airport. That is safe but expensive. You must tell the taxi driver to take you to the **International Cultural Center at LSU at 3365 Dalrymple Drive.**

The ICC and LSU have arranged to provide affordable temporary housing (\$5-10 per night) if you were not able to arrange for anything else. **This service is provided on a “first-come, first-served” basis and it is only good for students, not for family members or for friends.** Although you cannot make reservations, we always help to find a place to stay, so don’t worry. Alternatives are the Lod Cook Alumni Hotel at LSU (this is our university hotel), which is quite expensive, the Faculty Club on campus or other hotels which can be less expensive but are not on campus.

If you plan to bring your family to the United States, we recommend that you come first and give yourself several weeks to make housing arrangements and to take care of your own affairs. Please remember: If you arrive with family members or friends you will have to take

them to one of the hotels because the emergency housing of LSU and at the ICC is not set up for families. In such a case your family and you may have to pay for a taxi to come to the university every day.

Please contact the **International Cultural Center** if you have any further questions, or consult our web site: <http://www.lsu.edu/icc>

## 9. IMPORTANT TERMS

You should now be familiar with all of the following terms:

- **Letter of Admission**
- **DS-2019 or I-20**
- **J-1, F-1** (for **dependents** of students: **J-2, F-2**)
- **Health Insurance Requirement**
- **Immunization Record**
- **Customs Declaration**
- **Port of Entry**
- **LSU**
- **OIP**
- **ISO**
- **ICC**

If you do not know what something means, please read the guide again. You have missed some important information!

## 10. USEFUL LINKS

Undergraduate Admissions: <http://www.lsu.edu/paurec/international.shtml>

Graduate Admissions: <http://appl003.lsu.edu/grad/gradschool.nsf/index>

Office of International Programs: <http://www.oip.lsu.edu/>

Department of Residential Life-Housing: <http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/reslifeweb.nsf/index>

Student Organizations of LSU: <http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/csli.nsf/index>

**HAVE A SAFE JOURNEY! WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO YOU BECOMING A STUDENT AT LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY!**

Some of the Information included in this guide was provided by NAFSA

Courtesy of HL, December 2005

(reviewed & links updated: *msb*, Jan2008)