Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

If You Want to Study in the United States: Graduate Study

EducationUSA
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If You Want to Study in the United States

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDY AND RESERACH

2

Editor: Coleen Gatehouse
Cover Design: Rolando Ribera

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If You Want to Study in the United States

Booklet 2

Graduate and Professional Study and Research

Acknowledgments

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Kathleen Alam
Ellen Badger
Martin Bennett
Louise Cook
Juleann Fallgatter
Julia Findlay
Judy Freudenberger
Coleen Gatehouse
Nancy Gong
Joanna Graham
Sharon Grodzielanek
Sandarshi Gunawardena
Linda Heaney
Lisa Henderling
Lia Hutton
Judith Irwin
Michelle Johnson
Rekha Kalle
Nancy Keteku
Ann Kuhlman
Gaston Lacombe
Carolyn Lantz
Maria Lesser
Evelyn Levinson
Amy Lezberg
Diana Lopez
Ted Mashima
Michael McCarry
Beryl Meiron
Martyn J. Miller
Terhi Molsa
Barbara Nichols
Roberta Paola
Dawn Piacentino
Rohayma Rateb
Laura R. Ruskaup
Sohair Saad
Jaylene Sarrasino
Bethany Shaw
Sharon Snyder
Karen Solinski
Peter Storandt
Rosalie Targonski
James Vaseleck
JoAnn deArmas Wallace
Harold Woodley

Preface

Graduate and Professional Study and Research is one of a series of four introductory booklets produced by the U.S. Department of State to provide objective and practical advice to prospective international students and scholars on studying in the United States. The booklets may be downloaded from the Internet at www.educationusa.state.gov, and print copies are available at EducationUSA advising centers worldwide. To find the center nearest you, contact a U.S. embassy or consulate, or consult the list available on the EducationUSA website.The four booklets cover the following areas:

Undergraduate Study

How to choose and apply to U.S. bachelor's and associate degree programs, plus information on technical and vocational educational opportunities in the United States.

Graduate and Professional Study and Research

How to research and apply to U.S. master's, doctoral degree, and postdoctoral programs, plus information on certification and licensing procedures for professionals who wish to further their education or practice in the United States.

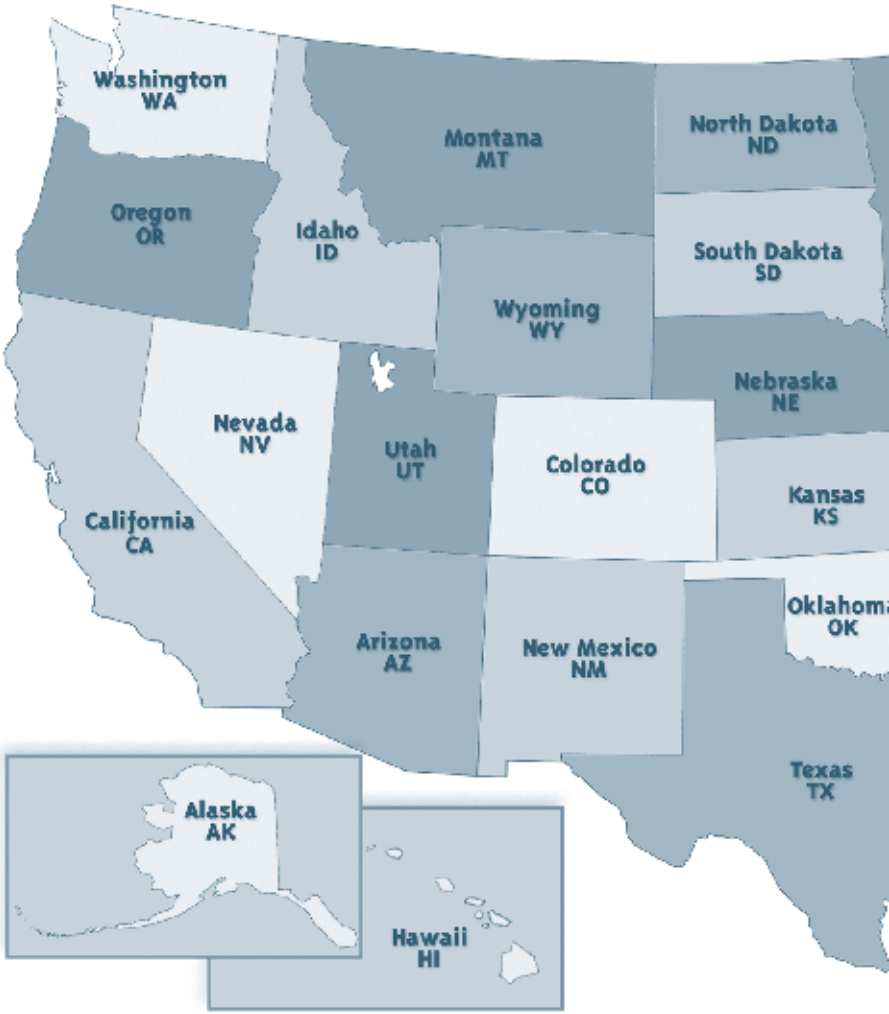
Short-Term Study, English Language Programs, Distance Education, and Accreditation

Information on opportunities to study in the United States for up to one year, plus an overview of studying toward a degree, diploma, or certificate from outside the United States through distance education programs. The booklet also includes detailed information on accreditation of U.S. higher education institutions.

Getting Ready to Go: Practical Information for Living and Studying in the United States

Help with planning your move to the United States after you have been accepted to a U.S. university or college. This booklet provides advice on applying for a visa, moving to the United States, and what to expect when you arrive on campus.

The United Sta



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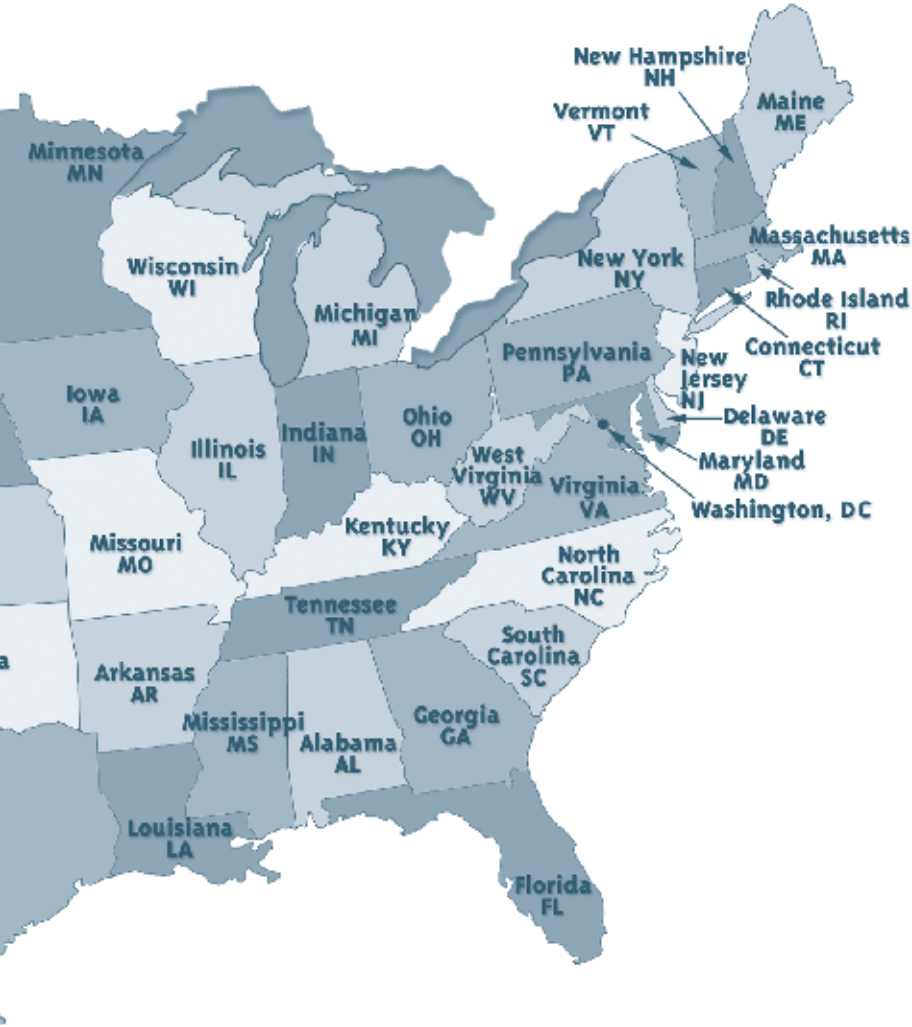

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Introduction

Thousands of colleges and universities offer graduate degrees, specialized professional education, and opportunities for scholars to pursue their academic and professional goals in the United States. This vast choice means there are programs available to meet everyone's needs, but how can you find the best program for you? This booklet aims to give you the knowledge you need to make the right choices and the confidence to prepare successful applications.

Why Study in the United States?

Here are just a few of the reasons why more than 600,000 international students from around the world are furthering their education in the United States:

Quality: U.S. colleges are known worldwide for the quality of their facilities, resources, and faculty. Accreditation systems ensure that institutions continue to maintain these standards.

Choice: The U.S. education system is unrivalled in the choice it offers in types of institutions, academic and social environments, entry requirements, degree programs, and subjects in which to specialize.

Diversity: You can find a mix of people from all different backgrounds and all corners of the globe on U.S. campuses; more than 600,000 international students come to study in the United States each year.

Value: As an investment in your future, a U.S. degree offers excellent value for the money. A wide range of tuition fees and living costs, plus some financial help from universities, make study in the United States affordable for thousands of students.

Flexibility: Students in the United States may choose from many courses within their university and have the option to move from one institution to another.

EducationUSA Advising Centers

> *"It is difficult to overestimate the help and support I got from the advising center. The center was my first and primary source of information about the American educational system. The books, magazines, and the Internet access at the center proved extremely useful, and the staff assisted me very much in achieving my goals."*
>
> — Business student from Russia

Choosing the best programs for you and preparing successful applications will require commitment and careful planning on your part, but in almost every country there are specialized advisers who understand your needs and can help you. Information and advice on study in the United States are available to you from a network of nearly 450 EducationUSA advising centers worldwide. Admissions test information, directories, and program guides are available at the centers. You can also meet trained educational advisers who want to help you and your family with the process of choosing and applying to U.S. universities. Some centers also run events like college fairs or seminars. Introductory information in the form of video or group presentations, website access, and independent resource libraries is available free of charge, but payment may be required at some centers for additional services.

All EducationUSA advising centers are supported by the U.S. Department of State, with the goal of providing objective information on the range of study opportunities available in the United States; however, the names of the centers and the organizations that run them vary from country to country. To locate the center nearest you, contact your closest U.S. embassy or consulate, or consult the list available on the EducationUSA website (http://www.educationusa.state.gov).

Good luck with your applications!

Useful Websites

EducationUSA
http://www.educationusa.state.gov

If You Want to Study in the United States On-line
http://www.educationusa.state.gov (Click on "If You Want to Study.")

Directory of EducationUSA Advising Centers
http://www.educationusa.state.gov (Click on "Find an Advising Center.")

Graduate Education in the United States

Education in the United States will almost certainly be different from the system offered in your country. This chapter gives an introduction to the graduate degrees available in the United States, the different types of institutions, and some key terms and ideas you will come across if you want to study at a U.S. university.

Graduate Degrees

The two graduate degrees offered in the United States are the master's degree and the doctoral degree; both involve a combination of research and coursework. Graduate education offers a greater depth of training than undergraduate education, with increased specialization and intensity of instruction. Study and learning are also more self-directed at the graduate level than at the undergraduate level.

Graduate courses assume that students are well prepared in the basic elements of their field of study. Depending on the subject, courses may be quite formal, consisting primarily of lecture presentations

by faculty members, or they may be relatively informal, placing emphasis on discussion and exchange of ideas among faculty and students. Seminars involve smaller groups of students than lecture courses and may require students to make presentations and participate in discussions. Class participation, research papers, and examinations are all important in graduate education.

Master's Degrees

The master's degree provides additional education or training in a specialized branch of knowledge, well beyond the level of a bachelor's degree. Master's degrees are offered in many different fields, and there are two main types of programs: academic and professional.

Academic Master's: The master of arts (M.A.) and master of science (M.S.) degrees are usually awarded in the traditional arts, sciences, and humanities disciplines. The M.S. is also awarded in technical fields such as engineering and agriculture. These programs usually require one or two academic years of full-time study beyond a bachelor's degree and may lead directly into doctoral programs.

Many master's programs offer a thesis and a non-thesis option. The degree is the same in both cases, but the academic requirements are slightly different. Students in non-thesis programs usually take more coursework in place of researching and writing a thesis, and they take a written comprehensive examination after all coursework is completed. Students in degree programs that include a thesis component generally take a comprehensive oral examination covering both coursework and the topic of their thesis.

Professional Master's: These degree programs are designed to lead the student from the first degree to a particular profession. Such master's degrees are often designated by specific descriptive titles, such as Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.), Master of Social Work (M.S.W.), Master of Education (M.Ed.), or Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.). Other subjects of professional master's programs include journalism, architecture, and urban planning. Professional master's degrees are oriented more toward direct application of knowledge than toward original research. They are more structured than academic degree programs and often require that every student take a similar or identical program of study that lasts from one to three years, depending on the institution and the field of study.

One main difference between master's programs is whether or not they are designed for students who intend to continue toward a doctoral degree. Those that do not lead into doctoral programs are known as terminal master's programs. Most professional master's degrees fall under this category. Some departments only admit potential doctoral candidates, although they may award a terminal master's degree to students who complete a certain level of coursework but do not go on to pursue a doctorate. Other departments require a master's degree as part of the requirements for admission to their doctoral programs.

Check with the programs you are considering to determine the structure and admissions policies for master's and doctoral candidates.

Doctoral Degrees

The doctoral degree is designed to train research scholars and, in many cases, future college and university faculty members. Receipt of a doctoral degree certifies that a student is a trained research scholar in a specific discipline.

The Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) is the most common doctoral degree awarded in academic disciplines. In professional fields, other doctoral degrees include the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) and the Doctor of Business Administration (D.B.A.).

To receive a doctoral degree, candidates must pass a comprehensive, or "qualifying," examination, usually after three to five years of study and completion of all coursework, and when the student and adviser agree that the student is ready. This exam is designed to test the student's ability to use knowledge gained through courses and independent study in a creative and original way. Students must demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of their chosen field of study.

After finishing their coursework and passing this exam, students must complete an original piece of significant research, write a dissertation describing that research, and successfully defend their work before a panel of faculty members who specialize in the discipline. This may take an additional two to three years. To earn a doctoral degree, therefore, may take anywhere from five to eight years beyond the bachelor's degree, depending on the field of study.

There are also many nontraditional doctoral programs in the

United States; these programs might have very different types of requirements from traditional programs. Before applying to any program, make sure you know what is required to enter it and obtain a degree. This information is usually available from university catalogs and websites or directly from individual departments.

Academic Calendar

The academic year in the United States generally lasts nine months, from late August or early September until the middle or end of May, and it may be divided into two, three, or four academic terms depending on the institution. Short breaks occur during both fall and spring terms, between terms, and on public holidays. An optional summer term is often available for students who wish to continue courses or accelerate their program.

It is best to start a program in the fall term (beginning in August/September). Many courses must be taken in sequence, and you may lose time in completing your degree if you start in another term. It is easier to become accustomed to studying in the United States and meet other students in the department if you start at the beginning of the academic year. Scholarship opportunities may also be more readily available to students starting in the fall rather than midyear. (See chapter 6, "Funding Graduate Study," for further information.)

Course Load and Grading Systems

"Course load" refers to the number of courses students take each term. The normal course load for a graduate student is three or four courses per term. Under the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), the U.S. Department of Homeland Security requires that international students take a course load that is considered full-time by their institution.

Passing grades are typically awarded on a scale of "A" through "D," and "F" indicates a failing grade for a course. An average grade of "B" is usually the minimum required for completion of a graduate degree program. Other grading systems may include: a grade-point scale from 0 to 3, 4, or 5; a pass/fail system; or other variations.

Credit, course load, grading systems, and requirements vary between institutions. Make sure you know the policies of an individual program and institution before you apply.

Colleges, Universities, and Institutes: The Distinction

Degree-granting institutions in the United States can be called by any of these terms, and colleges and institutes are in no way inferior to universities. As a general rule, colleges tend to be smaller and usually offer only undergraduate degrees, while universities also offer graduate degrees. The words "school," "college," and "university" will be used interchangeably throughout this booklet. An institute usually specializes in degree programs in a group of closely related subject areas, so you will likely come across degree programs offered at institutes of technology, institutes of fashion, and institutes of art and design, among others.

Within each college or university you will find schools, such as the school of arts and sciences or the school of business. Each school is responsible for the degree programs offered by the college or university in that area of study. Research centers offer graduate degrees or research and training opportunities, and they may or may not be affiliated with universities.

Public and Private Institutions

Both public and private universities offer graduate degree programs. The terms "public" and "private" refer to the way universities are financially supported. Public universities may also be called state universities, and some include the words "state university" in their title or include a regional element (for example, East Carolina University or Western Connecticut State University). State universities tend to be very large with enrollments of 20,000 or more students. Since public universities obtain a part of their support from the state in which they are located, the tuition they charge is often lower than that charged by private institutions. In addition, public institutions generally charge lower tuition to state residents (those who live and pay taxes in the state) than to students coming from outside the state. In most cases, international students are considered out-of-state residents and therefore do not benefit from reduced tuition at state institutions. A small number of institutions offer in-state tuition to international students through sister-city/country arrangements or because they have special agreements with institutions in other countries. Check with your EducationUSA adviser to see if your country, or an institution in your country, has such agreements with partners in the United States.

Tuition fees tend to be higher at private universities than at state universities, and all students pay the same tuition. Institutions with a religious affiliation and single-sex institutions are private. In general, private universities have enrollments of fewer than 20,000 students, and private colleges may have 2,000 or fewer students on their campuses.

Except for financial considerations, the public or private nature of a university should not be a factor in selecting a graduate program. High quality programs exist in both types of institutions.

Distance Education

Distance education is a popular way to study for anything from a short-term professional course to a graduate degree in the United States. Under the distance education model, students do not attend classes in a classroom on campus; instead, classes are delivered "from a distance" through the use of technologies such as the Internet, satellite television, video conferencing, and other means of electronic delivery.

For international students this means they can study for a U.S. degree without leaving their home country, though they may have to go to the United States for short periods of face-to-face contact and study on the campus. Studying for a degree using distance education requires students to be self-disciplined, committed, and able to work on their own. If you are considering distance education, you should thoroughly research the quality of the program, the accreditation of the institution in the United States, and its recognition in your home country to be sure that this option is appropriate for your future goals. Further information on distance education is provided in Booklet Three of this series, *Short-Term Study, English Language Programs, Distance Education, and Accreditation*.

Non-degree Study at a U.S. University

Do you want to study at a U.S. college or university, but not for a full degree? Perhaps you want to experience life on a U.S. campus, while improving your knowledge of certain subjects. This is certainly a useful addition to your educational experience, and U.S. colleges welcome such students. Write to colleges, explain your situation, and request information on applying for "special student" or "non-degree student" status. See Booklet Three of this series for more information on short-term study opportunities

in the United States, and refer to chapter 4 in this booklet for further details on requesting information from U.S. universities.

Review

- The two graduate degrees offered in the United States are the master's degree and the doctoral degree. Both include coursework and independent research. The length of time to complete a degree varies considerably between programs: from 12 to 24 months for a master's degree and from five to eight years beyond a bachelor's degree for a doctoral program.

- Master's degree programs can be either academic or professional, and they may or may not be designed to lead students to a doctoral degree. Check university catalogs and departmental descriptions carefully to determine the structure of the programs that interest you.

- It is also possible to study at the graduate level in the United States as a non-degree-seeking "special student."

- Institutions vary considerably in size and location. They may be private or public, designations that indicate only the sources of funding for the institution and not the quality or range of programs they offer.

Useful Websites

EducationUSA
http://www.educationusa.state.gov

America.gov – Education and Youth
http://www.america.gov/amlife/education.html

U.S. Network for Education Information
http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/edlite-index.html

Distance Education and Training Council
http://www.detc.org

Choosing the Best Graduate Programs for You

"Look at pictures, download videos, and try to become familiar with the school. Picture yourself on the campus. If you don't like the picture, then try another one!"

— Management student from Brazil

Selecting a graduate program from thousands of miles away presents some challenges — especially when there are so many to choose from in the United States. But if you plan ahead and do your research carefully, you will come up with a manageable list of programs that match your needs. This chapter discusses several factors to consider when choosing a graduate institution and offers guidelines on where to get further help and information. Finding the right academic and personal match requires careful planning, research, and networking. No special formula or answer applies to everyone. You should begin 12 to 18 months before you wish to start studying in the United States.

Defining your Education and Career Goals

Defining the goals for your education and career will help you select the most appropriate gradu-

ate programs and motivate you through the application process. It will assist you in writing application essays that ask you to explain your career goals and how they relate to your application for graduate study. Be sure to research the qualifications for careers that interest you and whether or not U.S. credentials are recognized in your home country.

To help define your education and career goals, ask yourself these questions:

- What career do I want to pursue? Is employment available in my country in this field? What advanced degree is required to enter this profession?

  Speak to people already working in the field and to representatives of professional associations. Educational advisers or career advisers in your country may have information about the skills and background required for various professions, as well as the demand in your country for professionals in different fields.

- How will study in the United States enhance my career? Will a graduate degree help me earn a higher salary?

  Consult educators, government officials, and working professionals in your country about the value of U.S. study for you at this stage in your career, including any increased earning potential. Take into account revalidation or certification requirements for employment in your particular field when you return home.

- What is the system of recognition for U.S. degrees in my country?

  In many countries, a U.S. degree is highly valued, and recognition of degrees is straightforward. In some countries, however, graduate degrees from the United States may not be officially recognized, or they may be recognized at a different level. Check with your nearest EducationUSA advising center or with the ministry of education or other appropriate authority before you begin your applications.

Finding the Right Program

Deciding on a program is one of the most important decisions you will make. Think carefully about what you wish to accomplish and find out about the types of programs that meet your needs. Identify institutions that offer your subject area and any specializations you wish to pursue

within that subject area. Finding the right academic "match" between you, the department, and its faculty can be the key to a successful graduate experience in the United States. Be sure to look at the individual programs, not just institutions, since no one school can excel in all disciplines; many excellent graduate programs are available at lesser-known schools.

Sources of Information to Help You Choose

EducationUSA Advising Centers

There are EducationUSA advising centers in almost every country in the world, and they are the ideal starting point for your research. EducationUSA centers usually have a library with directories, university catalogs, introductory guides, handouts, and reference books to assist you in applying to programs of study in the United States. Most centers offer Internet access and have computer-based search packages to help you choose the best programs for you. Many have also developed guides, videos, and websites specifically tailored to students applying from your country. They all have trained staff who can answer your questions in person, by telephone, or by e-mail.

Printed Directories

There are several general directories that list institutions by degree program and include helpful articles on graduate study (see the "Additional Resources" list at the end of this booklet). Professional associations also publish directories of university departments in the United States, including information on different specializations and faculty research interests. University catalogs provide the most specific information about institutions and their programs. You can find these directories and catalogs at EducationUSA advising centers and in some university libraries.

Contacts

Discuss your plans with faculty members at your undergraduate institution and with students who have studied in the United States. They are likely to have their own U.S. contacts and may have suggestions for universities to consider. Contact universities in the United States directly with questions about their programs or to communicate with international students currently enrolled in the programs you are considering.

College Websites and E-mail

Almost every U.S. university has a website with information about

degree programs, application procedures, academic departments, facilities on campus, and other topics. Many sites include a copy of the college catalog and e-mail addresses for current students (including international students) who can answer your questions. If you don't find this information on the website, ask the admissions office.

Web-based Search Tools

Some websites are independent of colleges and universities and allow you to search for programs by subject area, by geographic preference, or by a range of other criteria that you specify — visit the EducationUSA website and click on "Find a U.S. College or University" to get started. Remember that you will be receiving a degree from and spending most of your time with students and faculty from within your graduate program, so you should decide on the type of program you need first, then consider the criteria described below.

Before beginning an online search, think about the kind of experience you are looking for in the United States: Do you want to live in a big city, or do you prefer a more rural or suburban location? Do you want to attend an institution that has tens of thousands of students, or are you looking for a small or mid-size college or university? (Keep in mind that individual graduate programs can be quite small or very large, regardless of the size of their host institution.) Do you need access to facilities that could supplement your academic studies, such as museums, other universities, or places to conduct field research? By answering these questions and others you can refine your search criteria and generate a list of schools closely matched with your needs.

Social Media Tools

Students can access information about U.S. graduate programs through a variety of technological tools and formats. Online videos, social networking groups, podcasts, and blogs about life on U.S. campuses offer genuine stories and experiences directly from students. EducationUSA advising centers can assist you in finding these resources.

EducationUSATV, a channel on YouTube, broadcasts videos produced by EducationUSA advising centers to help students through the search process — from taking standardized tests, to completing applications and essays, to securing scholarships and financial aid, to applying for student visas, to

attending pre-departure orientations. Videos posted by universities give you the chance to see what these institutions think are their best qualities. Social networking groups allow you to interact with admissions representatives or to communicate with current students. Podcasts provide helpful advice on navigating the application process or allow prospective students to listen to classroom lectures. Blogs give a student perspective of what day-to-day life is like at different universities. We encourage you to explore all these tools as you search for the right school for you.

U.S. College/University Fairs and Visits

If you cannot visit the United States, university representatives may come to visit you. Your nearest EducationUSA advising center can tell you about upcoming fairs or other types of visits that give students an opportunity to speak with admissions officers face-to-face. Many of these take place in the spring or fall of the year before you intend to start your studies, so it is important to start your research early. Admissions officers who attend these fairs are eager to get to know you and to find out why you are interested in their programs. Find out which schools are attending the fair ahead of time so you can do some research on those institutions.

U.S. admissions representatives also give presentations at EducationUSA advising centers throughout the year when they visit other countries. These presentations explain the admissions process and what it would be like to be a student on specific campuses and in specific programs. A list of fairs around the world is available on the EducationUSA website.

Campus Visits

If you are able to take a vacation to the United States before you begin graduate studies, this could be a great opportunity to visit the programs you are considering. Many schools organize tours led by current students; check with the admissions office for further information. Visit the academic and housing facilities, the student union, and the library to get a good sense of the campus. Talk to current students in the programs you are considering.

Educational Consultants and Recruiting Agents

In many parts of the world, private agents or agencies work to recruit international students into U.S. universities. There are also pri-

vate educational consultants who charge a fee to assist students with the process of choosing programs and compiling applications. Often these educational consultants and private agents are graduates of U.S. institutions or people who are dedicated to promoting the benefits and advantages of the U.S. education system. Sometimes, however, they are not, so it is important to check the credentials and past performance of educational consultants or agents before using their services. Sometimes agents or consultants promise things — like being accepted at certain schools — that they cannot deliver. If you do decide to use the services of an agent, be actively involved in the process, and be sure to understand what that person or company is realistically able to deliver.

If you have found a recruiting agent or consultant who is helpful, well informed, and dependable, he or she may be very useful in helping you select and apply to graduate programs in the United States. Be careful, however, to look for verifiable signs of the agent's or consultant's past success with students from your country. Ask for a list of names and addresses of references, particularly current students. Write, e-mail, or telephone some of these students to get their opinion of their program and the services they received from the agent or consultant. Such precautions are especially important if the agent or consultant charges expensive fees for his or her services. Always check with an unbiased source (such as an EducationUSA advising center) to ensure the legitimacy and accreditation status of the programs you are considering.

Other Considerations

Accreditation and Recognition of Degrees

An important indicator of the quality of any U.S. university is its accreditation status. Unlike many other countries, the United States does not have a central government office that approves educational institutions. Instead, it relies on a system of voluntary accreditation carried out by non-governmental accrediting bodies to ensure that schools meet standards.

While almost all U.S. colleges hold widely recognized forms of accreditation, accreditation in the United States is a complex area; there are different types of accreditation and a large number of accrediting bodies. There is also no legal requirement that degree-offering institutions be accredited or hold a particular form of accreditation. Because of this com-

plexity, you should check carefully whether a degree from the institutions you are applying to will be recognized by your home country government and any relevant professional associations, ministries, or employers. You should also talk to graduates who have returned to your country to see if they have been successful in applying degrees earned from such institutions to their chosen professions.

EducationUSA advising centers can advise you regarding recognition of U.S. degrees in your country and tell you whether a U.S. degree-offering institution is appropriately accredited. More detailed information on the topic of accreditation can be found in Booklet Three of this series: *Short-Term Study, English Language Programs, Distance Education, and Accreditation*.

Internship or Overseas Study Programs: Many U.S. universities have incorporated internship (voluntary or paid work placements) or overseas study ("study abroad") programs into their curriculum that may be of interest to you, particularly if you are undertaking a professional master's degree program.

Size: Some institutions are small and offer degrees in one or two fields of study; some are very large and offer degrees in many fields. When choosing where to apply, you should consider the size of the institution, as well as the size of the department and degree program. A large institution may offer better academic facilities, while a small institution may offer more personal services. The same is true of the size of the degree program. A large program that has many students may not provide the individual attention you need; however, there may be more diversity within the faculty and student body, and more assistance may be available from other students. A small degree program may not expose you to as wide a range of views in your chosen field, but may provide more individual attention and access to professors.

Location: Think about the type of environment in which you would like to study. Would you prefer to live in a large city, or would you be more comfortable in a small town? City-based campuses offer a variety of eating, entertainment, cultural, and shopping facilities. Rural universities may be quieter, and students may be more involved with the people and institutions in town. Keep in mind accessibility to local facilities and services that could be useful to you in

your studies. For example, if you wish to enter an art program, does the school offer programs that involve students with nearby museums and art galleries? If you are accustomed to a warm climate, you might consider studying in a part of the United States known for mild weather. Or, if you prefer colder temperatures, you might consider an area with a cooler climate.

Student Services: U.S. universities offer students a variety of services such as international student offices, campus orientation programs, counseling services, legal aid services, housing offices, varied meal plans, health centers, tutoring facilities, English as a Second Language programs, writing laboratories, and career counseling. Compare facilities among universities to find the services that meet your specific needs.

Students with Disabilities: If you have special needs, make sure that the university you choose can accommodate you. Request information at least two years before you plan to leave for the United States and give brief details of your disability and the assistance you need.

Some colleges offer comprehensive programs for students with learning disabilities, while others make a limited number of special services available to such students. You and your family should look at the services offered and compare them to your needs. Find out which services are provided automatically and free of charge, and which services need to be pre-arranged and incur a charge. If possible, contact a current student who has a similar disability, and visit the campus if you can. With proper documentation, students with disabilities can request special facilities or extended time to take graduate admissions tests and course examinations during the academic year.

Rankings: Although many organizations and publications do rank universities, there is no official list of the top universities in the United States. The U.S. government does not rank universities. Many rankings are subjective and may be based on criteria that do not include academic standards or general reputation as primary factors. Be particularly wary of rankings that do not explain the criteria on which they are based. The more established rankings can provide a starting point for your search, but the "best" institution is the one that is right for you based on the factors suggested in this chapter.

Deciding Where to Apply

Once you have a list of institutions that offer your field of study and any relevant specializations, you will need to compare the objective data among these institutions. Do not rely solely on rankings or ratings of institutions to do this; there is more to choosing the right department than choosing the most well-known or selective university. Keep in mind that a department's reputation relies heavily on the reputation of its faculty. Sometimes it is more important to study under a particular person than it is to study at a university with a prestigious name. Remember that assistantships and fellowships are often based on the right "match" between student and faculty research interests. Good advance research can help you find the schools with departments and faculty that meet your academic and professional goals, and it may enhance your chances of obtaining financial assistance.

You may find it useful to make a comparison chart listing the differences among universities with respect to:

- research programs and facilities, including libraries and computer facilities;
- size of department (students and faculty) and size of institution;
- qualifications of the faculty;
- accreditation of the institution and, if applicable, the department or program;
- course and thesis requirements;
- length of time required to complete the degree;
- academic admission requirements, including required test scores (see chapter 3 for further information), degrees, and undergraduate grade average required;
- cost of tuition, fees, books, etc.;
- availability of financial assistance (see chapter 6 for further information);
- location, housing options, campus setting, climate, and cost of living; and
- international student services and other services available on campus.

Narrow your choices to those that meet your personal and professional needs, that you can afford to attend, and for which you are qualified for admission. See chapter 4, "Preparing Successful Applications," for further guidelines.

Review

- Define your educational and career goals to help you select the most appropriate programs.
- EducationUSA advising centers can provide information and advice about degree programs and other aspects of study in the United States.
- Directories and websites are useful sources of information, but you should also speak to faculty at your institution and to students who have studied in the United States.
- Attending U.S. university fairs and visiting campuses is another useful way to help identify suitable programs.
- Rankings may be helpful, but they should be used with caution and in conjunction with other more objective data.
- Always check the accreditation status of degree programs to which you are considering applying and find out if the degrees will be recognized in your home country.
- Once you have identified a list of programs that offer your subject area and specialization(s), compare the programs in terms of financial costs and assistance available, admission and degree requirements, the composition of the faculty and student body, and campus services and facilities.

Useful Websites

Directory of EducationUSA Advising Centers
http://www.educationusa.state.gov
(Click on "Find an Advising Center.")

University of Texas at Austin Database of U.S. Universities
http://www.utexas.edu/world/univ/state/

The Princeton Review
http://www.princetonreview.com/

Council for Higher Education Accreditation
http://www.chea.org

U.S. Department of Education Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs
http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/

Mobility International USA (Information for Students with Disabilities)
http://www.miusa.org

Admission Requirements and Entrance Examinations

The main requirements for admission to a graduate program in the United States are:

- a strong academic background;
- demonstrated command of the English language; and, for many programs,
- scores on one or more standardized admissions test.

Academic Background

To be eligible to apply for a graduate level program, you should have completed, or be about to complete, a first academic or professional degree. In the United States this typically takes four years of university study to complete, giving U.S. students 16 years in total at school and university. If your first academic degree required only three years of study, if you have completed only 14 or 15 years of school and university study combined, or if your degree study involved courses in only a single technical field, check with an EducationUSA adviser about whether you will be eligible for admission to graduate degree pro-

grams in the United States. Note that although all U.S. universities follow the same general guidelines, they may differ in the level at which they recognize a particular degree from your country.

Graduate school applicants should have excellent grades, particularly in their chosen field of study. Most graduate departments require a minimum grade average equivalent to a U.S. "B" in undergraduate work. Staff at EducationUSA advising centers can tell you the equivalent to this grade average in your own educational system. Proven research ability or relevant work experience also increases your chances of admission at the graduate level.

Graduate Admissions Tests

Most graduate departments require scores on at least one academic admissions test: either a general test such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test, which measures verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and analytical writing skills, or an achievement test in your field such as a GRE Subject Test. Most business schools require the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), which includes an analytical writing assessment plus quantitative and verbal sections, but increasing numbers have also begun to accept GRE General Test scores. The Miller Analogies Test (MAT), which measures analytical thinking through problems stated as analogies, may be required in fields such as education and psychology. Professional schools such as schools of law, medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine have special examinations; see chapter 9, "Specialized Professional Study," for further information.

Check with the programs you are considering to find out if you need to take one or more of these tests. Individual institutions and graduate school guides often give the test score ranges of successful applicants to different programs. It is important to note that test scores are only one of the factors used in evaluating applications. Admissions officers are aware that you may be taking the examinations in a language other than your native tongue, and they will take this into account. There are no passing or failing scores on these examinations, but your score will have an effect on the overall competitiveness of your application.

Plan to take the appropriate examinations one year before you hope to start your graduate program. Remember that at busy

times of the year you may not be able to take the test immediately, so register early. For more information or to request registration and test preparation materials, visit the website for the test you need. You can also find information at your nearest EducationUSA advising center.

English Proficiency

To complete graduate study in the United States successfully, you will need to be able to read, write, and speak in English with a high degree of proficiency. English language proficiency will also help you achieve your academic and personal goals while in the United States.

To determine your level of English language proficiency, arrange to take one of the tests mentioned below as early as possible and at least a year before you plan to enroll. Each institution sets its own English language admission standard, so check with the programs you are considering about their individual requirements.

If you are applying for a teaching assistantship, the university may ask you to demonstrate your proficiency in spoken English. Both the TOEFL Internet-based test and the IELTS include speaking sections. If you live in a country that does not offer the Internet-based TOEFL or the IELTS, you can contact the Educational Testing Service (ETS) at toefl@ets.org to request the Test of Spoken English (TSE). Allow several additional months for the application process if you are applying for a teaching assistantship.

If you are a non-U.S. citizen and non-native speaker of English who has been educated in English for most of your school life, the English Language testing requirement may be waived. Be sure to ask the institutions to which you plan to apply about this well in advance of application deadlines. U.S. universities are unlikely to accept secondary school English language examination results as proof of your language ability.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

The TOEFL measures the ability of non-native English speakers to communicate in an academic setting.

The TOEFL Internet-based test (iBT) has four sections: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Candidates have up to four hours to complete the test, which is administered via computer from a secure Internet-based testing network through certified testing sites.

The paper-based TOEFL (TOEFL PBT) provides TOEFL testing in areas where TOEFL iBT is not available and to supplement the TOEFL iBT test center network. The paper-based TOEFL does not include a speaking section. If you choose to take the TOEFL, but live in a country that does not offer the TOEFL iBT, you can contact ETS at toefl@ets.org to request the Test of Spoken English (TSE) to evaluate your oral proficiency.

TOEFL registration is available online, by phone, and by mail, and pre-registration is required. At certain times of year, or in certain cities, centers may become full, so be sure to register early. For more information about registration, test dates, test preparation, and other issues, visit the TOEFL website at www.ets.org/toefl or contact your nearest EducationUSA advising center.

International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

IELTS is a paper-based test that assesses English language ability in reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

The reading and writing portions of IELTS are available in two versions: Academic and General Training. The listening and speaking modules are the same in both versions. Test takers interested in entering higher education programs or pursuing a license in the healthcare professions usually take the Academic version of the reading and writing modules. The General Training version is for test takers who need to use English daily for functional activities, secondary education, vocational training, work purposes, or immigration.

For registration information please visit the IELTS website at www.ielts.org. The website includes a downloadable "Information for Candidates" booklet, plus a list of IELTS centers, test dates, and the cost of the test in local currencies.

Review

- To apply for a U.S. graduate degree program, you must have completed or nearly completed a first academic or professional degree, and you must have earned good grades.
- If English is not your first language, you will need to complete the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Check with the institutions to which you plan to apply to find

out their English language proficiency requirements.

- If you are applying for a teaching assistantship, some graduate departments may require you to prove your English speaking ability. Both the TOEFL iBT and IELTS measure this. If you choose to take the TOEFL, but live in a country that does not offer the TOEFL iBT, you can contact ETS at toefl@ets.org to request the Test of Spoken English (TSE), which evaluates oral English proficiency.

- Many U.S. graduate degree programs require applicants to submit scores from a standardized admissions test, most commonly the GRE General Test for academic programs and the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) for business programs. Some academic programs also require applicants to take a GRE Subject Test.

- Register for admissions tests early and prepare for them at least one to two months in advance.

Useful Websites

GMAT
http://www.mba.com/mba/thegmat

GRE
http://www.ets.org/gre

IELTS
http://www.ielts.org

Miller Analogies Test
http://www.milleranalogies.com

TOEFL
http://www.ets.org/toefl

Preparing Successful Applications

"It is important that your dedication to your field resonate in your application. Be sure and explain any academic difficulties you might have experienced and what you did to correct them. Extracurricular activities give the admissions committee an idea as to the type of person that you are."

— Medical student from Ghana

You should now have a short list of degree programs that match your needs, interests, and abilities. You should also feel confident that you have the minimum entrance requirements for studying in the United States and that you can meet the costs of a U.S. graduate education. Now it's time to start putting together your applications. This chapter gives practical information and advice to help you prepare successful applications to the programs of your choice.

The Application Process

The entire application process, from obtaining initial information to applying for your stu-

dent visa, should begin 12 to 18 months before you wish to start studying in the United States. See chapter 5 for a summary of the time frame for applying to U.S. universities to make sure you understand what you need to do and when. It may be possible to complete the process in less than 12 months, but late applicants usually find they have a more limited choice of institutions, and even more limited chances of receiving financial assistance.

Requesting Application Materials

Most students limit their applications to between four and seven programs. Request information from as many schools as you like, then narrow down your list once you have read through the information you receive. Almost all graduate program websites allow prospective students to request information online or to e-mail admissions staff directly. If you have access to the Internet, this is the easiest way to send your inquiry, and programs are usually quick to respond.

U.S. universities often include their catalogs on their websites, and some have even stopped printing paper copies. Many programs also have online applications. If there is an online application, you should use it. This is the quickest method for submitting your application.

If you must communicate with a school via regular mail, use the address for the university given in the reference books available at your local EducationUSA advising center and be sure to include the name of the appropriate office or department on the envelope.

If you plan to apply to highly competitive institutions or to seek financial assistance, request information at least 18 months before you plan to enroll. In other cases, send your first inquiry 12 months before you plan to enroll. Give yourself sufficient time for possible delays in international mail, especially if you are posting applications or requesting information in November or December when the high volume of holiday mail in the United States can often double the length of time mail takes to reach its destination.

Registering for Admissions Tests

If you are planning to enroll at a university in September (fall semester), take required tests no later than January in the same year, and preferably earlier. Find out whether you need to take

the GRE General Test, a GRE Subject Test, the GMAT, or some other admissions test. (See chapter 3 for further information on these tests.)

If English is not your native language, register to take the TOEFL or the IELTS. (See chapter 3.) As with the academic admissions tests, make sure your test results reach universities before their deadline dates. If you believe that you qualify for an English-language proficiency waiver, contact universities directly and well in advance for further details. At least one to two months before the test dates, find out about test preparation materials and any other help you need. Your EducationUSA advising center can give you further information.

Completing and Returning Application Materials

Once you have received information from the universities, read everything thoroughly. Most schools require similar information but may ask for it in different ways. You will usually be asked to provide the following items.

Application Form

Your application form should be neat and clear to create a good impression. You should fit your information into the application form provided and only use additional pages where necessary. Keep your personal information consistent, and always spell your name the same way on all documents to help schools keep track of your application materials more easily. Do not worry about providing a Social Security Number — either leave the section blank or write "none," according to the instructions. Avoid abbreviations; it is better to write the full names and addresses of your schools, employers, examinations, and awards. Always provide information about your education or employment experience in either chronological or reverse chronological order. You will also be asked when you want to start your studies and the degree you hope to receive.

Application Fee

Almost all gradate programs charge a non-refundable application fee that covers the cost of processing your application. It must be paid in U.S. dollars by check drawn on a U.S. bank, by international money order, or by credit card. Check the school's application form, website, or catalog for the current cost as well as acceptable forms of payment.

Transcripts

Transcripts are a record of your past education and include a list of classes that you have taken in undergraduate programs, when you took them, and the grades you received for each class. You will be required to provide this record as you apply to graduate programs.

For international students, U.S. colleges sometimes provide special forms on which school authorities are asked to write your grades and describe your academic performance relative to other students. If such forms are not provided, your school will still be expected to submit official documents that provide this kind of information on letterhead paper with the school stamp. If the admissions officer requests an explanation of the grading and class ranking system or descriptions of classes taken or subjects you have studied, this information should be furnished by an official of your school, if possible. U.S. admissions officers prefer that transcripts of previous educational work be sent with your application in a separate envelope sealed by your school, or sent directly from the school.

U.S. colleges will either evaluate your grades and documents themselves or pay an outside company, called a credential evaluator, to do so. They sometimes require international applicants to pay for the evaluation of documents.

As requested, send certified copies of your original diplomas, degrees, or professional titles, and copies of full records of your performance in any comprehensive examinations administered in your home country. Do not send original documents unless there is no alternative; usually they cannot be returned. Copies should be certified with an official seal from the school or university, or certified by a public official authorized to certify such documents.

If English translations are necessary, you may use the services of a professional translator, or you may translate the document yourself. Such translations must also be certified by an acceptable agency. Some EducationUSA advising centers translate and certify documents to assist you with the application process; they may charge for such services. Do not attempt to convert your school results and courses into U.S. terms. Instead, try to provide as much background information as possible on the grading system used and the types of diplomas, certificates, or awards granted.

Test Score Reporting

When you apply to take the GRE, GMAT, MAT, TOEFL, IELTS, or other examinations, you should know to which universities you wish to apply. You will save time and money by requesting the scores at test time rather than at a later date. When you submit an application, include a photocopy of your test score reports if possible. The admissions office can then more easily match your application with the official scores when they arrive. In some instances, the office may begin processing your application with only the photocopy.

Personal Statement or Statement of Purpose

Almost all graduate programs ask applicants to submit a personal statement, or statement of purpose, as part of the application process. The personal statement gives universities a glimpse of you as an individual, an insight that is not possible in the grades and numbers that make up the rest of your application. Write a clear, concise, and persuasive statement that sincerely reflects your views and aspirations. The admissions committee that reviews applications wants to see if there is a good match between you and the department or school and whether the degree program can meet your needs.

The statement of purpose is an important part of the application and is an opportunity for you to distinguish yourself from other applicants. The personal statement is not meant to be an autobiography in chronological order; instead, use your imagination to come up with an interesting format and content that will maintain the reader's interest.

Consider the following four questions when writing your statement of purpose:

- Why do you wish to pursue a graduate degree, and why now? The university will often ask about your career goals and how they relate to your past experiences and your decision to apply for graduate study.

- What are your academic or research interests? The admissions committee will be looking for a good match between you and the department to ensure that they can satisfy your interests. They are also looking for a demonstration of intellectual maturity and understanding of your field.

- Why are you applying to this particular institution and de-

gree program? Tailor each statement of purpose to the specific program and institution, including, if possible, references to professors you wish to work with, courses you wish to take, and unique facilities available at the institution. Admissions officers want to see that you have done careful research about their program and that you are a serious candidate.

- What can you contribute to the department or program in terms of your background, abilities, or other special qualities and interests? Discuss any relevant past experiences and achievements, as well as any special qualities you feel you can bring to the program, such as your international perspective.

Some general tips:

- Make sure you answer the question asked. Once you have written an outline for a statement, go back and check that it answers the question, then do the same with each draft of your essay.

- Do not exceed the word limit if one is given. Keep the statement to two or three sides of paper (typed or word processed and double-spaced) if no limit is given.

- Make sure your statement is a true representation of you and your abilities — it is important that the essay be genuine and honest.

- Admissions officers read many essays. Since some programs are extremely competitive, try to have an interesting first sentence that grabs the reader's attention and makes the essay more memorable.

- Get someone you trust to proofread each statement of purpose for grammatical and spelling errors. Make sure statements are clear, interesting, and logically organized. The personal statement is an important demonstration of your written communication skills.

Recommendations

> *"Make sure you get recommendations from people who really know you and your work. Ask teachers who know you well to write about you, about how you approach your work, and how you participate in class and in extracurricular activities."*
>
> – Law student from Sri Lanka

You will usually be asked for at least two recommendations. The people who write your recom-

mendations must be able to write about your work and assess your potential to do well in graduate school. If you are applying for an academic degree program, ask professors who have taught you in the past to write your recommendations. If you are not a recent graduate, one recommendation can be from an employer. For professional programs, references from both employers and professors are acceptable.

Some universities send recommendation forms with the application; if so, ask your recommenders to use these forms and to follow the instructions printed on them. If there are no specific instructions, ask three or four professors, administrators, or employers who know you well to type letters on their own letterhead in English, and either place them in a sealed envelope for you to send with your application or send them directly to the university.

Your recommenders may wish to include:

- a statement about the type and amount of experience they have with your academic work or employment;
- an estimate of how your work compares with others in the same field with whom they have experience;
- an assessment of your particular strengths;
- your rank in their class, department, or university, if they know it; and/or
- an assessment of your research experience and ability.

U.S. universities expect letters of recommendation to emphasize a student's positive qualities and to be longer and more detailed than might be customary in your home country. It is important to understand these cultural differences when choosing your recommenders. Poorly written, negative, or late recommendations will reflect on your judgment in picking referees. Recommendation forms may ask a list of questions or just one general question.

Since recommendations carry considerable weight in the admissions process, take the time to brief your recommenders about your plans, where you would like to study, and why.

A recommendation form may include a waiver where you can relinquish your right to see what is written about you. If this option is offered, most admissions

officers prefer you to waive your right so that recommenders may feel more comfortable when writing their evaluations. Admissions officers usually interpret waived recommendations as more honest. If your recommendations must be sent directly from your referees, it is common courtesy to give them stamped, addressed envelopes. Allow plenty of time for your referees to write their recommendations, and remind them to sign the sealed flap of each envelope before mailing it to an institution.

Financial Statement

Most universities include a form called a "Declaration and Certification of Finances" or "Affidavit of Financial Support" in their application packets. Your parents, or whoever is paying your college expenses, must sign this and have it certified by a bank or lawyer. Keep a copy of this form since you will also need it to apply for your student visa. Schools usually need to know that you have at least the first year's expenses covered, although many may also ask you to indicate your source of income for the entire period of study. If you know when you apply that you will need some form of assistance from the college, indicate how much you plan to request from the university.

Some academic departments or schools decide whether to admit students without taking into account their need for financial aid. Other schools and departments with limited or no financial aid available give higher priority to applicants who do not need financial support from the university.

Deadlines and Submission

Each graduate department within a university sets its own deadline date and is usually firm about not accepting applications after that time. For the fall semester, which begins in late August or early September, deadlines are usually between January and March, although they can be as early as November or as late as June or July. If an institution indicates that it operates "rolling admissions," late applicants may still have a fair chance of acceptance. In this case, a university admits and rejects candidates until the program is filled. It is nonetheless a good idea to submit your application as early as possible.

Some universities accept enrollment for any of their terms, although many institutions prefer to enroll graduate students for the fall term. For schools that operate on a semester calendar, midyear admission is some time in January. Universities that use the quarter

system may offer admission both in the winter term (January) and the spring term (March). The precise date differs for each institution. Deadlines for midyear admissions are usually six to nine months in advance of enrollment. If you are applying for admission in January, take admissions tests at least six months beforehand. It is your responsibility to ensure that all documents, application forms, references, and official test score reports reach the universities safely and on time. Often the closing date for students from other countries is earlier than for U.S. students. Applications for scholarships or fellowships must often be submitted earlier than applications for admission.

If possible, send all required documents — including certified academic credentials and letters of recommendation that have been placed in sealed envelopes — together in one envelope. (Some institutions require this.) Attach a note to any documents that bear a different name or different spelling from the standard one that you are using, and give the same first, second, and family name you used on your application form. Always use the name as printed in your passport if possible.

Send your application by registered mail or by courier, or submit the electronic application and mail all supporting documents. Keep copies of your application and documents so you can supply another set of information quickly if something gets lost. Three to four weeks after submitting the documents, contact the university to confirm that your application is complete. Allow at least six to eight weeks after completion of the application for a decision to be made. Some programs and institutions may take as long as three to four months to make admissions decisions, and many institutions review all completed applications at the same time and issue acceptances between March and May.

Throughout the application process, do your best to comply with instructions. If you cannot complete a procedure or obtain a particular document, explain your situation in a letter and send it to the school along with a letter from the relevant authorities that can support or authenticate your problem. Sometimes accommodations will be made for difficult circumstances.

The Admissions Process

No uniform procedure exists for graduate admissions in the United States. The graduate admissions office almost always shares

the responsibility for admissions with the academic departments, and most commonly there is a graduate admissions committee for each department made up of faculty members, graduate admissions office staff, and sometimes current students. The roles and the relative authority of the graduate admissions office and the academic departments, as well as the relationship between them, vary markedly from institution to institution. To make your admissions experience more positive, it is a good idea to network with both the graduate admissions office and your specific department of interest from the beginning of the process.

In addition to looking at whether your personal and professional goals and background match a department's academic and research objectives, admissions officers consider two other factors when evaluating applications. First, because graduate student research can be highly specialized, it is important to make sure that faculty and resources are available to support a potential applicant's proposed program of study. A department may suggest that you be admitted because your research interests match well with those of a particular faculty member, or may advise against admission because faculty members and resources for your research are lacking. Second, since faculty members review applications to decide who should receive research or teaching assistantships, departments often look for applicants who can teach or do research in particular areas.

Interviews

U.S. universities are rarely able to interview candidates outside the United States, although business schools or other professional programs occasionally send admissions officers on international recruitment trips to conduct interviews with applicants. International students are not at a disadvantage because they are unable to be interviewed, but if you are offered the chance to have an interview in your country, do not refuse the opportunity; it is a good way to learn more about the school and its programs.

Acceptance

If you plan to begin studies in September, you should hear from the universities you applied to by May of the same year. Institutions usually hold places for accepted applicants for a short period of time only and may ask you to send a deposit if you wish to accept their offer. If you receive more than one offer of accep-

tance, write to the universities you turn down so they can make offers to those students still on waiting lists. Return unused student visa Certificates of Eligibility to those schools as well.

Review

- No uniform procedure exists for graduate admissions in the United States. The admissions process may vary between universities and from department to department within a particular university.
- Start the application process 12 to 18 months before you wish to start your studies in the United States.
- Read program materials carefully to identify the institutions that best meet your needs and to which you have a good chance of admission.
- Register for required admissions tests early and take them well in advance of universities' deadlines for receiving scores.
- Allow plenty of time to prepare for tests, to write personal statements tailored to each university, to request official transcripts from your undergraduate institution(s), and to brief your recommenders fully.
- Make sure your applications are complete and include the correct application fee in U.S. dollars. Make copies before sending applications to the United States.
- Send applications to the universities by courier or registered airmail, or complete and submit the electronic application and mail supporting documents. Check with each institution to make sure your applications are complete.
- Send a letter of acceptance to the institution you wish to attend and letters of regret to those you turn down. Return any official documents to institutions that you will not attend.

Useful Websites

Council of Graduate Schools
http://www.cgsnet.org (Click on "Resources for Students")

GradSchools.com
http://www.gradschools.com

Peterson's
http://www.petersons.com

The Princeton Review
http://www.review.com

The Application Process: A Timetable and Checklist

The Application Process: A Timetable and Checklist

Below is the recommended timetable for applying to universities in the United States. It is sometimes possible to complete the process more quickly, but you may have a much more limited choice of schools. Planning ahead gives you sufficient time to make successful applications to the universities of your choice.

12 TO 18 MONTHS PRIOR to the academic year in which you hope to enroll:

- Ask yourself:
  - Why do I want to study in the United States?

- Which universities offer my subject and specialization?
- Will I need financial assistance?

- Begin narrowing down your choices of schools to approximately 10 to 20 institutions and make sure they meet your academic, financial, and personal needs.
- Find out application deadlines. This will affect when you take standardized admissions tests.
- Register to take GRE Subject Tests if required by the universities to which you are applying.

12 MONTHS PRIOR to enrollment (months indicated are estimates):

August

- Contact universities for application and financial aid forms and catalogs.
- Register to take the TOEFL or IELTS and the GRE General Test, the GMAT, or other required admissions tests.

September — December

- Request official transcripts from your undergraduate institution(s).
- Identify your recommenders and request letters of reference.
- Draft personal statements or statements of purpose and research proposals, if required.
- Submit completed application forms for both admission and financial aid.
- Double check that transcripts and references have been sent.
- Take required admissions tests.

January — March

- University application deadlines must be met; it is best to apply well in advance of these deadlines.

April — June

- Letters of acceptance or rejection arrive. Decide which university to attend, notify the admissions office of your decision, and complete and return required forms.
- Send letters of regret to those universities you turn down and return your student visa Certificates of Eligibility to those schools.
- Organize finances (arrange to transfer funds to a U.S. bank;

make sure you have funds for travel and expenses on arrival).

- Finalize arrangements for housing and medical insurance with your university.
- Notify any sponsoring organizations of your plans.

June — August

- Use information from your Form I-20 or DS-2019 to fill out the SEVIS Form I-901 and pay the required SEVIS fee.
- Upon receipt of your I-20 and SEVIS I-901 payment receipt, apply to your nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for a visa (see chapter 7 for more information).
- Make travel arrangements.
- Contact the International Student Office at your university to tell them when you will arrive and confirm the details of new student orientations.

Getting Ready to Go

Once you know that you are going to study in the United States, you will probably have questions about visas, accommodations, health insurance, banking, how to study, and other "pre-departure" information. See chapter 8 in this booklet for further information, and refer to Booklet Four in this series, *Getting Ready to Go: Practical Information for Living and Studying in the United States*. Most EducationUSA advising centers conduct pre-departure orientation presentations in the summer, and some offer sessions midyear as well. Contact the nearest center for their schedule and to reserve space for these popular events. Some centers may charge a fee for this service.

Funding Graduate Study

Education in the United States may seem expensive, but you have probably already realized that it offers excellent value for the money invested. This chapter looks in more detail at the costs of U.S. graduate study and ways in which you might cover your expenses, including financial aid from universities and other sources.

Planning Ahead

Most institutions have committed all their scholarship and loan funds long before the academic year begins, so it is important to start your search early if you hope to obtain financial aid. You will need to show proof to both the graduate school admissions office and your local U.S. embassy or consulate that you have sufficient funds to meet the total annual expenses as part of the student visa application process. If you plan to bring a spouse and/or children with you to the United States, you will also need to prove in advance that you have funds to support your family.

Deadlines for scholarship and grant programs can be as early as 18 months before departure. As part of the application pro-

cess, universities often require students to complete a financial statement that specifies how they intend to cover their expenses. Planning ahead will give you time to research independent scholarships and to identify university programs that have funding available. If possible, contact professors in your department of interest at U.S. universities, since professors play an important role in identifying grant and funding recipients in their departments.

Calculating Your Expenses

The main costs involved in studying in the United States are tuition, fees, and living costs. These vary widely, so if you explore several possibilities you can have some control over the cost of your education. All U.S. universities publish information on the costs of attending their institution and living in their area of the country. Consider the points outlined below in calculating your costs.

Tuition and Fees

Tuition is the cost of instruction, and fees are the costs associated with services such as the library, student activities, or the health center. International students are required to pay both tuition and fees. Some universities charge an additional fee for health insurance, which is usually mandatory for all students. Because tuition and fees vary from school to school and rise by an average of 5 percent each year, be sure to consult current college catalogs, websites, or other reference materials available at EducationUSA advising centers for the latest figures. Be sure to confirm current costs with the institution at the time you apply.

Living Costs

Living costs vary widely and depend on individual lifestyles. Living expenses are highest in large cities, in California, and in the Northeast. Costs can be much lower in the South, the Midwest, and other areas. University catalogs and websites are a good source of information on current living costs. Within the total living costs they quote, you will usually find an approximate breakdown of costs for items such as room, board, books, medical insurance, and personal expenses. Your EducationUSA advising center may also have information on the latest monthly living expenses by city or institution.

When calculating your basic living expenses, remember to include the following in addition to food and housing:

Books and Supplies: Colleges estimate the cost for books and supplies for the academic year. Students studying in the United States must buy their textbooks, and books can be quite expensive. Most institutions have on-campus bookstores. Many of these stores allow you to purchase used books at a lower cost, or to sell back your books at the end of a semester at partial value. If you are planning to study in a field that requires special supplies, such as engineering, art, or architecture, your expenses are likely to be higher than the average.

Transportation: The living costs quoted by most universities do not include trips between the United States and your home country. Be sure that your annual budget includes expenses for return travel between your home country and your college. If you plan to live off campus and commute, you should also include the cost of traveling to campus each day.

Other Personal Expenses: Personal expenses include the cost of basic goods, clothing, and services. Health insurance is required. If you have dependents (a spouse and/or children) or special medical needs, you will need substantial additional funds.

Financing Your Education

It is important to start your financial planning at least 12 months before you intend to study in the United States. Financing your graduate education consists of:

- assessing personal funds;
- identifying financial assistance for which you are eligible;
- compiling effective applications (see chapter 4); and
- reducing educational costs.

Assessing Personal Funds

Consider all the funds you have available, and how much you can draw from each source. For example:

- **annual family income:** the earnings per year of each member of the immediate family who will provide money toward your education;
- **family assets:** current holdings in bank accounts, investments in stocks and bonds, business enterprises, debts owed to the family, and any other assets from which money could be obtained through sales or loans in an emergency;

- **your own earnings until departure:** savings from earnings, gifts, investments, or property;

- **other sources:** relatives in the United States or a sponsor (individual, government agency, or private organization) in your country who has agreed to pay all or part of your educational expenses.

If you cannot pay the costs of your study through the personal funds you have available, you will need to apply for financial assistance.

Identifying Sources of Financial Assistance

You can apply for financial assistance from a variety of sources; however, it is important to apply only for those funds for which you are eligible. Competition for grants is keen; an incomplete, tardy, poorly written, or messy application could make the difference between receiving aid or not. Plan ahead, plan well, prepare carefully, and follow instructions. Give yourself plenty of time to put together a quality request for financial assistance and submit it well ahead of all deadlines. For further information about sources of financial aid, consult the resources listed at the end of this chapter. Your nearest EducationUSA advising center has a variety of resources to help you find financial aid.

- **Home-Country Sources:** Ask an EducationUSA adviser or consult local contacts about funding from government scholarship programs, regional assistance programs, local or third-country organizations or businesses, banks, or religious institutions that may offer aid to graduate students from your country.

- **U.S. Government Assistance:** The U.S. Department of State's Fulbright Program, founded to encourage mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries, offers awards for graduate study. There are many different types of awards, from travel grants to grants that pay maintenance and study costs; their availability varies from country to country. Applicants must apply to and be approved by appropriate agencies in their home country. If there is a Fulbright Commission in your country, inquire about the types of grants available; if not, any EducationUSA advising center can help you get further information, or you can inquire at the public affairs section of the U.S. embassy or consulate. In some developing countries, support for short-

term graduate study or master's level degree study may be available through other programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. Eligibility for these programs varies, but in general, local institutions nominate employees for training or education that promotes a specified development goal.

While the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) headquarters does not provide tuition grants or scholarships to individuals, some local missions offer limited funding for post-graduate training and education. Please contact the USAID office in your home country for information.

U.S. Department of Education and state-based financial aid are available only to U.S. citizens.

Ask your local EducationUSA adviser about other U.S. government-sponsored programs in your home country.

- **Private U.S. Sources and International Organizations:** Private U.S. agencies, foundations, business corporations, and professional associations often award financial aid in the interest of furthering international exchange. International organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank, and regional organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS) also provide scholarship support. Visit the organizations' websites for more information, or contact the local mission.

  Many private awards and grants are directed toward particular groups such as women, engineers, journalists, or students from a particular country; read carefully to see whether you fit into any of the categories. If an application requires that you write a research or project proposal, make it clear, concise, and thoughtful. If possible, have the proposal checked by a professional in your field who has worked in the United States. For more information, see "Writing a Research Proposal" on page 56.

- **U.S. Universities:** About one-third of international graduate students finance their studies through financial aid from U.S. universities. Availability of financial assistance varies by field of study, level of study, and type of institution. Research universities are likely to have the most funds available. To identify universities that offer financial assistance, consult university reference books or

computer search software at the nearest EducationUSA advising center. You can also find information on financial assistance in university catalogs and on websites. Some university reference books provide information on financial aid awarded to first-year graduate students, but these statistics include U.S. students as well as international students. All students, including international students, are required to pay U.S. income tax on certain forms of graduate financial assistance, so if you are awarded a grant be sure to check with the institution to see if you are subject to taxation. Keep in mind that some universities will give aid to students only after they have successfully completed their first semester or first year of study.

The main types of financial aid available from universities are:

Fellowships: Departments and institutions award fellowships on the basis of academic merit, normally after the first year of study. Graduate fellowships may be modest, covering only tuition and fees, or full grants, providing the cost of tuition, fees, and monthly stipends for maintenance. Fellowships rarely cover the total cost of living and studying.

Assistantships: Assistantships are the most common form of financial aid for graduate students. These are cash awards that require the performance of services related to the field of study, usually about 20 hours per week. Sometimes an assistantship carries with it a waiver (a remission or reduction) of tuition and fees. Awards may range from as little as $500 to as much as $30,000 (or higher, if high tuition costs are waived) for an academic year, so it is important to check what proportion of your costs the assistantship will cover. There are several types of assistantships:

Teaching assistantships may be available for the first year of graduate study in university departments with large numbers of undergraduates in introductory courses. Teaching assistants (TAs) supervise undergraduate laboratory classes, lead discussion groups, or teach small classes. Many universities require teaching assistants to prove they can speak English proficiently (either with TOEFL/IELTS results or via an interview) or to complete training programs that prepare them to teach in the United States. If you are interested in applying for a teaching assistant-

ship, be sure to mention in your application any previous teaching experience.

Research assistantships involve performance of research services related to your field of study. The advantage of a research assistantship is that it can be related to your thesis or long-term academic interests. Research assistants (RAs) are chosen for their demonstrated research and interpersonal skills, computer and writing ability, and experience working as part of a team. Find institutions that have grants in your field, and apply to these universities for research assistantships. If you apply to institutions whose research funding matches your interests, professors who are the principal researchers for grants in your area will often single out your application for funding, especially if you have proven research experience.

Administrative assistantships usually require 10 to 20 hours per week working in an administrative office of the university such as the International Student Office. You will need to contact each office individually at most institutions, although a few may have a central location for applications. Read the material from each institution to learn where to send applications.

To apply for university funding, find out which offices are responsible for the various programs and request application materials. The graduate school may control the funds, or the department or program may administer them, or a combination of both. Read all information pertaining to funding carefully, since the application process can be complex and time-consuming.

When you receive an offer, compare the total award package, including tuition and fees, the amount of any stipend, the length of award, and work responsibilities. If you receive more than one offer, weigh the benefits of each. Never decide which institution to attend based solely on the amount of an award, since financial assistance has nothing to do with the quality of the program. Selecting an institution is a complex and important decision; be sure to take all factors into consideration to make the best choice.

- **Employment:** Current immigration regulations permit international students in F-1

or J-1 student status to work up to 20 hours per week while school is in session and full-time during vacation periods. After your first year of study, you may apply to the Department of Homeland Security for permission to work off campus for up to 20 hours per week when school is in session or up to full time during vacation periods if you can demonstrate economic hardship. You should note, however, that there is no guarantee that this request will be granted. If you are married and are in the United States on an F-1 student visa (see chapter 7), your spouse does not have permission to work. If you are in the United States on a J-1 student visa, your spouse is allowed to request a temporary work permit. On-campus employment is limited and competitive, and the relatively low salaries do not cover the cost of tuition and living expenses. In addition, graduate students are often so involved with their academic work that they do not have the time required for a part-time job. Employment in the United States cannot be used to demonstrate how you will pay the costs of study when applying for a student visa.

- **Loans:** Several lenders make loans available to international students. Consult your EducationUSA advising center for information on loans for students from your country. Before taking a loan, make certain you know how you are going to repay it and how a loan will affect your plans for future study and for returning home.

Writing a Research Proposal

To receive funds for research or study in the United States, some organizations require that you submit a carefully designed plan for your proposed research. Your proposal will be competing with those of other excellent scholars. It is not enough to state your qualifications by simply citing your diploma, your position, or your experience.

When a department committee or review board looks at research proposals, it compares competing proposals using several criteria: Is the proposed institution appropriate? Does the institution have researchers who will be interested in the project and able to supervise the work? If equipment is necessary, is the right equipment available, or are funds available for buying it? Are library or research collection facilities adequate? Does the applicant clearly show the necessary background in education and experience to be able

to complete the research successfully? Has he or she demonstrated research aptitude? (Supporting documents or past papers are helpful.) Is the proposal carefully written and neatly presented?

The proposal should begin with a clear statement of goals of the intended research project. It should include a summary of background information regarding the need for the research, highlights of related research (with a bibliography), a step-by-step description of the research plan with expected results or major theses, and a conclusion.

The proposal should be typed.

Is the proposed research significant, timely, and original? Although creativity, originality, and substance are usually the most important criteria in choosing among proposals, disciplines differ.

If you are applying for a grant or program that supports development in your country, it may be helpful if the research you propose can be applied to your work after you return to your home country.

Review

- Start your financial planning at the same time you begin choosing programs of study (12 to 18 months before you wish to study in the United States).
- Tuition costs vary from one institution to another, and cost is not an indication of the quality of an institution. Living expenses vary depending on your lifestyle and location.
- Carefully calculate the costs involved in U.S. study and your possible sources of funds to cover these costs. If you and your family cannot meet the costs, you will need to apply for financial assistance.
- Possible sources of financial assistance include: home government scholarships, U.S. government assistance, private U.S. sources and international organizations, U.S. universities, and loans.
- Many international students finance their studies through financial assistance from universities; however, availability of such funding varies considerably by field of study, level of study, and type of institution. Some institutions have only limited funding available for international students.
- The main types of university financial assistance are fellow-

ships, teaching assistantships, research assistantships, and administrative assistantships. Make sure you fully understand the responsibilities involved and the level of funding offered before accepting an award.

Useful Websites

EducationUSA Website — Financial Assistance
http://www.educationusa.state.gov
(Click on "For International Students," then "Finance Your Studies.")

Institute for International Education — Funding for U.S. Study
http://www.fundingusstudy.org/

The Fulbright Program
U.S. Department of State
http://fulbright.state.gov/

Organization of American States
"Educational Portal of the Americas"
http://www.educoas.org (available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French)

World Bank Institute
http://wbi.worldbank.org (Click on "Approaches," then "Scholarships.")

The Foundation Center — Foundation Grants to Individuals
http://foundationcenter.org/find-funders/fundingsources/gtio.html

Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and Student Visas

"Give the U.S. embassy no excuse to question your academic standing, and show in as many ways as possible that you will return home."

– Computer science student from the United Kingdom

Congratulations — you have been accepted by the university of your choice! You are thinking about the courses you will take, the people you will meet, and the exciting experiences that lie ahead, but now you face two final tasks: completing the SEVIS registration process and applying for your student visa.

Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)

SEVIS is an Internet-based system that maintains data on foreign students and exchange visitors before and during their stay

in the United States. It is part of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) managed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The college you plan to attend will begin the SEVIS process for you by entering basic information about you, your program, how you plan to finance your studies, and when the program begins and ends. They will then send you an I-20 form, a DS-2019 form, or an I-20M-N form, depending on the type of visa you need. You must pay a SEVIS I-901 fee and complete this form before your visa interview (see below). For more detailed information about SEVIS, see Booklet Four of this series, *Getting Ready to Go: Practical Information for Living and Studying in the United States*.

Visa Types

The most common student visa is the F-1, though a small number of students travel to the United States on an M-1 visa if they are completing a program of hands-on technical or vocational training, or on a J-1 visa if they are on a sponsored exchange program.

Procedures for Your Country

Procedures and requirements for applying for a student visa vary from country to country. Your nearest EducationUSA advising center can provide valuable information on the application procedures for your country. (If possible, attend an EducationUSA pre-departure orientation program; it will almost certainly include information on applying for a visa). Your nearest U.S. embassy or consulate can provide application forms and specific details of the application process. Embassies and consulates often have telephone information lines and websites with this information.

Booklet Four in this series, *Getting Ready to Go: Practical Information for Living and Studying in the United States*, covers the visa application process in more detail. It is available on the EducationUSA website at http://www.educationusa.state.gov.

There are several things you can do to increase your chances of a favorable visa decision:

- Start the process at least two months in advance of your departure date.
- Assemble all the required documentation that can help make your case.
- Make sure you are well prepared for your interview.

Applying for a Student Visa: A Step-by-Step Guide

Before you can ask for a visa appointment you must pay the student I-901 fee. All students and exchange visitors must pay this fee, which varies based upon their status: most F and M students and exchange visitors pay 200 U.S. dollars. There are many ways to pay this fee, including an online option. To learn more, see https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/.

Once you have paid the fee, you can contact the U.S. embassy or consulate in your country for an appointment. To apply for an F-1 student visa, you must have a valid I-20 form; for the J-1 visa, you must have the DS-2019; and for the M-1 visa, an I-20M-N form. Your university will send you the appropriate form after you have been admitted and after it has reviewed the documents you provided to prove you can afford your program of study.

When your form arrives, check the following:

- Is your name spelled correctly and exactly as it appears on your passport? (Be sure to use the same spelling on your visa application as well.)
- Is the other information correct: date and country of birth, degree program, reporting date, completion date, and financial information?
- Is it signed by a college official?
- Has the reporting date ("student must report no later than…") passed? If so, the form has expired and may no longer be used. Contact the Designated School Official (DSO) or Responsible Officer (RO) at your school or program to request another.
- If your I-20, I-20M-N, or DS-2019 is valid, you are ready to apply for the visa.

Before you make your visa appointment, gather your documents: the I-20 or DS-2019, the I-901 receipt, your passport (which must be valid for at least six months), and your financial documentation.

The visa interview is often no longer than a few minutes, so you must be prepared to be brief yet convincing. Be confident, and do not hide the truth or lie; U.S. consular officers can easily identify people who are not being truthful about their visa applications. It is best to think of this as an opportunity to tell "your story."

In order to issue your visa, the consular officer must be satisfied on three counts:

- First, are you a bona fide student? The officer will look at your educational background and plans to assess how likely you are to enroll and remain in college until graduation. During your interview, be prepared to discuss the reasons you chose a particular college, your anticipated major, and your career plans. Bring school transcripts, national examination results, graduate admissions or English-language test scores (if these tests were required by your college), and anything else that demonstrates your academic commitment.

- Second, are you capable of financing your education? The U.S. government needs assurances that you will not drop out of school or take a job illegally. Your I-20, DS-2019, or I-20-M-N form will list how you have shown the university you will cover your expenses for at least the first year.

  If you are being sponsored by your family or by an individual, how can you show that your sponsor is able to finance your education? Your chances are improved if your parents are sponsoring your education. If anyone other than your parents is sponsoring you, you should explain your special relationship with this person, justifying a commitment of thousands of dollars to your education.

  Provide solid evidence of your sponsor's finances, especially sources and amounts of income. This assures the consular officer that adequate funds will be available throughout your program. If your sponsor's income is from several different sources (such as salary, contracts, consulting fees, a farm, rental property, investments), have the sponsor write a letter documenting each source of income.

- Third, are your ties to home so strong that you will not want to remain permanently in the United States? Consular officers are required by U.S. visa law to consider all applicants for student or exchange program visas as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not.

  Overall you must be able to show that your reasons for returning home are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. You must

demonstrate sufficient economic, family, and social ties to your place of residence to ensure that your stay in the United States will be temporary. Economic ties include your family's economic position, property you own or stand to inherit, and your own economic potential when you come home with a U.S. education. The consular officer will be impressed to see evidence of your career planning and your knowledge of the local employment scene. For family and social ties, the consular officer may ask how many close family members live in your home country, compared to those living in the United States. What community or school activities have you participated in that demonstrate a sincere connection to your town or country? What leadership, sports, and other roles distinguish you as a person who wants to come home and contribute your part?

- Note that if you intend to travel on a J-1 visa, you usually cannot apply for an H, L, or immigrant status visa until you have returned to and been physically present in your country of permanent residence for two years following your J-visa exchange program.

Visa Refusals

If your application is refused, the consular officer is required to give you a written explanation. However, this is often a standardized reply and is unlikely to go into the details of your specific case. You have the right to apply a second time, but if you do reapply, make sure to prepare carefully; the consular officer will need to see fresh evidence sufficient to overcome the reasons for the first denial.

If you have given careful thought to your educational goals and if you have realistic career plans, you will find the visa application an opportunity to prove you are ready to take the next big step in your education and your life: studying at a university in the United States.

Review

- Most students enter the United States on an F-1 visa, but some may travel on a J-1 or M-1 visa.
- Familiarize yourself with the application requirements for your country and prepare your application thoroughly and well in advance.
- Before applying, check that the I-20 form (DS-2019 for the J-1 visa or I-20M-N form

for the M-1 visa) you received from your university is valid and correct.

- Pay the I-901 fee and obtain the necessary receipt.
- Take all the necessary documents to your interview.
- Ensure that you can demonstrate to the consular officer that you are a bona fide student, that you can finance your education, and that you have strong ties to your home country.
- If your application is refused you can apply again, but you must provide fresh evidence to overcome the reason for the first refusal.

Useful Websites

General Information on Student Visas
http://travel.state.gov (Click on "Visas for Foreign Citizens.")

U.S. Department of State Website for Student and Exchange Visitors
http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1270.html

U.S. Department of Homeland Security — Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)
http://www.ice.gov/sevis

U.S. University Life

Once you have secured your place at a U.S. university, it is time to begin making plans for your new life as an international student in the United States. Although there are a few things you cannot do until you have obtained your visa, much planning can be done ahead of time to make your move to the United States run more smoothly.

This chapter highlights a few of the main areas to think about and what to expect when you arrive in the United States. For more detailed information contact the nearest EducationUSA advising center or consult Booklet Four of this series, *Getting Ready to Go: Practical Information for Living and Studying in the United States*.

Arrival in the United States

Once you have been admitted to a university and have notified them of your acceptance, you should receive further information about your new school and procedures for your arrival on campus. This should include details of the best way to reach the campus. Plan to arrive on a weekday, if possible, when the school's administra-

tive offices are open. Notify the institution if you are traveling with dependents, and be sure to ask about married student housing, day care facilities, activities for spouses, schooling for your children, and any other questions that may be important to you and your family.

Orientation

Many U.S. universities hold arrival orientations for new international students to familiarize them with the campus and its facilities and to help them adjust to life in the United States. The orientation lasts up to one week and may be optional, but you are strongly advised to attend. It will cover a variety of useful topics: how to use the library, health center, and other university facilities; academic regulations, expectations, and support services; how to register for classes; U.S. culture and social life, culture shock, and adjusting to life in the United States; local services; visa and legal regulations; and others. All of this information will help you integrate more easily into life as a student in the United States. You will also meet other international students on campus and the staff who handle matters relating to international students at the college — usually known as international student advisers.

International Student Advisers (ISAs)

U.S. universities that regularly admit international students have special staff assigned and trained to work with them. They are usually called international student advisers (ISAs) or foreign student advisers (FSAs). You can ask these staff members questions related to your status as an international student or seek their help if you have problems or concerns. They may also organize social and cultural events for international students throughout the year along with the International Student Office.

University Housing

When an applicant is accepted for admission, the university housing office should automatically send out information about what housing is available on campus for graduate students and how to apply for it. Most universities have accommodations for graduate students, including some for married students, though the latter is often limited. Schools may place you on a waiting list for on-campus family housing until space becomes available. Inquire well in advance and compare the costs of living on or off campus to make the best decisions for you and your family.

If you have not arranged housing in advance, or if you prefer living off campus in the local community, you will need to arrive at the university several weeks before the start of the term. The closer to the start of the term you begin looking for housing, the more limited your options will be.

Money and Banking

The United States has national, regional, state, and city-based banks. Some universities have their own credit unions or other banking services. Before opening an account find out which banks are near where you will be living and studying. It may be difficult to open an account from overseas, so bring enough money with you to live on until you can open a U.S. account and arrange for funds to be transferred from home.

Health Insurance

As an international student you should have health insurance coverage while in the United States. At most U.S. universities it is compulsory to take out health insurance, either through a university policy or by purchasing your own policy that meets the university's requirements. Health insurance policies vary; your international student adviser can explain them and help you decide on the best policy for you. Don't forget to make sure you are insured for the journey from your home country to your campus in the United States.

Extracurricular Activities

A variety of organizations and activities await you on most campuses. These may include student-run publications, special-interest groups, or even sports clubs. Getting involved is a great way to meet new friends and find colleagues with similar academic and research interests.

Review

- Once you have accepted the offer of a place at a U.S. university, make sure you are properly prepared for your move to the United States.
- Contact the university to confirm details of the orientation for international students, making sure you will arrive in time to attend. Inquire about health insurance requirements.
- Make arrangements for accommodation, and plan to arrive in plenty of time if you need to find family or off-campus housing.
- Ensure you will have enough funds available to last until you

can set up a bank account in the United States and transfer funds from home.

- Check out the social, sports, and other facilities available on campus and identify activities in which you would like to get involved.

Useful Websites

Getting Ready to Go: Practical Information for Living and Studying in the United States (Booklet Four of the *If You Want to Study in the United States* series)
On-line
http://www.educationusa.state.gov
(Click on "If You Want to Study.")

America.gov — American Life
http://www.america.gov/amlife/education.html

Specialized Professional Study

The path for study and entry into many professions in the United States differs substantially from the process in most other parts of the world. This chapter gives an overview of study requirements for dentistry, medicine, nursing, veterinary medicine, and law. More details about these professions, as well as other fields with special requirements, are available at your nearest EducationUSA advising center.

Dentistry

In the United States, dental education usually begins after four years of undergraduate study. Universities do not have undergraduate programs in dentistry; students planning to study dentistry can major in any subject, but are required to have taken a minimum number of prerequisite undergraduate courses in the biological sciences, chemistry, phys-

ics, and mathematics, as well as in the humanities and the behavioral and social sciences.

First Professional Degree

The first professional degree in dentistry, titled either the doctor of dental surgery (D.D.S.) or the doctor of dental medicine (D.M.D.) degree, requires four years of study — two years emphasizing the basic medical sciences, and two years providing a clinical orientation. To practice, graduates must also meet licensure requirements of the state in which they plan to see patients, including satisfactory scores on the National Board Dental Examination and a state clinical examination.

Admission to a U.S. dental school is highly competitive, with about three times as many applicants as positions available. Although anyone is eligible to apply, foreign nationals rarely gain admission to a U.S. school of dentistry without having completed at least two years of postsecondary study at a U.S. institution. In one recent year, out of 4,268 first-year dental students, 342 were foreign nationals. Chances of obtaining admission to private dental schools are somewhat higher than those of admission to state-supported dental schools, because public institutions generally give admissions preference to the state residents whose taxes support their programs. The American Dental Education Association (www.adea.org) publishes an annual official guide to dental schools that includes useful information and statistics on admission requirements. Your EducationUSA advising center may have this resource and other reference material to help you get information on particular schools and evaluate your qualifications.

Application requirements for dental school include a strong undergraduate academic record, proficiency in English, and a score on the Dental Admission Test (DAT) judged satisfactory by the individual dental school. The DAT examines proficiency in mathematics, biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, reading, and perceptual motor abilities. It is regularly offered in the United States. Occasionally, it can be scheduled in other countries — a U.S. admissions officer or predental adviser must request such administration at least three months before a scheduled test date. For further information, contact the Dental Admission Testing Program, Department of Testing Services, American Dental Association, 211 East Chicago Avenue, Suite 1846, Chicago,

IL 60611-2678, USA; Telephone: 312-440-2689, extension 2689; E-mail: education@ada.org.

Admission with Advanced Standing

International dental graduates who wish to become licensed to practice in the United States or Canada must obtain a D.D.S. or D.M.D. degree from an accredited dental school in either country. Currently some 40 such dental schools offer an opportunity to obtain a degree on an accelerated basis, usually after studying for two or three years in the professional curriculum instead of the usual four. Admission to these advanced standing programs is based on academic merit as demonstrated in the dental course taken in the applicant's home country. Applicants for advanced standing are also usually required to take part one of the National Board Dental Examination.

A directory of dental schools that offer admission with advanced standing to international dental graduates is available on the American Dental Association website (www.ada.org). Some dental schools require individuals to apply for advanced standing admission using an institutional application process, but many utilize the Centralized Application for Admission with Advanced Standing for International Dentists (CAAPID) offered by the American Dental Education Association. CAAPID applicants submit a single set of credentials, which are then disseminated to the dental schools they choose.

Postgraduate Training

After receiving the D.D.S. or equivalent, dentists may apply for postgraduate training at hospitals or dental schools. Some programs lead to a master's degree, and doctoral study may also be available. These degree programs typically prepare graduates for teaching or research careers.

A university or a hospital may sponsor non-degree residency programs with a clinical focus. General practice residencies are highly competitive, and typically only about 4 percent of the students enrolled are foreign nationals. Specialty residencies tend to admit a considerably larger proportion of internationally educated dentists. These residencies offer training in dental public health, endodontics, oral and maxillofacial pathology, oral and maxillofacial surgery, orthodontics and dentofacial orthopedics, pediatric dentistry, periodontics, or prosthodontics.

No one process exists to qualify internationally trained dentists seeking to study in the United States. One common requirement is that applicants must pass one or both parts of the National Board Dental Examination. Some specialty areas, such as oral surgery and periodontics, require that dentists complete at least the last two years of professional study at a U.S. university and earn a first professional degree at a dental school accredited by the American Dental Association. (About half of U.S. dental schools offer admission at an advanced level for internationally educated dentists wishing to complete a U.S. first professional degree.) State licensure and national board certification may also be required in some cases.

Short-term Educational Opportunities

Dental schools and hospitals frequently offer postgraduate continuing education courses lasting from a few days to a few weeks. These courses provide updates on specific topics and are open to international dentists. A few schools will arrange special programs for visiting internationally-educated dentists.

Medicine

Medical education in the United States is lengthy and begins only after completion of a four-year bachelor's degree. Admission to medical study is very competitive. Less than half of U.S. citizen applicants are accepted to medical school, and typically less than 2 percent of international applicants are accepted. The majority of these international applicants have completed their bachelor's degrees in the United States. Some state-supported schools will consider only U.S. citizens and permanent residents for admission.

First Professional Degree

Medical school usually lasts four years, and students graduate with a Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) degree. The program of study combines classroom experience with observation and clinical work. Admission requirements include an undergraduate degree, preferably from a U.S.-accredited institution. Degrees in almost any discipline are acceptable as long as the student has completed the required minimum number of prerequisite courses in the biological sciences, chemistry, mathematics, behavioral and social sciences, and humanities. Additional requirements include: an excellent undergraduate academic record; fluency in English; extracurricular activities such as work experience and volunteer

experience; and a satisfactory score on the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT).

Students interested in pursuing an M.D. degree should carefully consider the entrance requirements, length of time involved (four years of undergraduate study plus another four years of medical school), and recognition of a U.S. medical degree and licensing qualifications in their home country to determine if medical study is appropriate for them. The Association of American Medical Colleges publishes an annual guide to medical schools, *Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR)*, which includes useful information and statistics on admission requirements. Most EducationUSA advising centers have this resource and other reference materials with information on U.S. medical schools.

Graduate Medical Education

Graduate medical education includes residency and, for some types of medical careers, additional fellowship training in a subspecialty area.

Residency Programs

U.S. graduate training for physicians involves completing a prescribed period of clinical training in a chosen medical specialty, usually called a residency. A residency is a professional training program under the supervision of senior physician educators. Most residency programs last from three to seven years. The length of residency training varies and depends on the specialty chosen: family practice, internal medicine, and pediatrics, for example, require 3 years of training; general surgery requires 5 years. The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) accredits such programs. While entry to residencies is quite competitive, international physicians have more opportunities to pursue U.S. study at this level than at the first professional level. Students may complete residencies at teaching hospitals, academic medical centers, health care systems, and other institutions.

Fellowships

Doctors who wish to become highly specialized in a particular field may complete one to three years of additional training in a subspecialty.

Obtaining ECFMG Certification

To obtain residency positions or other training involving patient

contact, graduates of medical schools outside the United States must pass a certification program administered by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG). This certification program is designed to assure both the U.S. public and directors of residency programs that applicants from foreign medical schools have qualifications comparable to U.S. medical school graduates. All graduates of medical schools outside the United States and Canada must meet ECFMG certification requirements.

For ECFMG certification, applicants must submit the following credentials:

- Documents showing graduation from a medical school listed at the time of graduation in the online *International Medical Education Directory (IMED).* (http://www.faimer.org/resources/imed.html)

- Final medical school transcript. (Submit your final medical school transcript in the original language. Documents that are not in English must also be accompanied by an official English translation.)

The ECFMG Medical School Web Portal (EMSWP) enables international medical schools to verify the status of their students and graduates who have applied to ECFMG for the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE).

Once approved by ECFMG, applicants must pass the following exams:

- Step 1 Medical Sciences Exam — an eight-hour, computer-based, multiple-choice exam covering knowledge in the basic medical sciences (anatomy, behavioral sciences, biochemistry, microbiology, pathology, pharmacology, physiology and interdisciplinary topics)

- Step 2 Clinical Knowledge Exam (CK) — a nine-hour, computer-based,multiple-choice test that covers clinical sciences including diagnosis, the understanding of disease mechanisms, and care management principles

- Step 3 Clinical Skills Exam (CS) — an exam to ensure that graduates of foreign medical schools demonstrate the ability to gather and interpret clinical patient data and communicate effectively at a level comparable to students graduating from U.S. institutions. The day-long exam must be taken

at clinical skills evaluation centers in the United States and consists of twelve fifteen-minute examinations of standardized patients with ten minutes to compose a written record of the encounter. Students are graded on their medical history and physical examination data-gathering skills, communication and interpersonal abilities, and English language proficiency.

For more information visit the ECFMG website at http://www.ecfmg.org or the USMLE website at http://www.usmle.org.

In addition to ECFMG certification, some residency programs require foreign medical graduates to pass a third medical licensing examination, the USMLE Step 3, prior to taking part in a residency program. This additional step assesses whether graduates can apply the biomedical and clinical science needed to practice unsupervised medicine.

ECFMG hosts a web-based information service called the On-line Applicant Status and Information System (OASIS) at https://oasis2.ecfmg.org so that applicants may check their status, make a payment, update their contact information, and access their exam results online.

Locating a Residency

ECFMG certification does not guarantee placement in a residency program, but the percentage of international medical graduates with ECFMG certification who have been placed in residency programs has increased in recent years. Locating a residency involves applying to individual programs (usually through the Electronic Residency Application System), interviewing with those programs that demonstrate an initial interest in admitting you, then ranking the programs with which you would prefer to work through the National Resident Matching Program.

Electronic Residency Application System (ERAS): ERAS is a web-based system through which students can apply to residency programs. ERAS allows students and medical school deans to transmit residency applications, letters of recommendation, medical student performance evaluations, and other supporting documents directly to residency program directors via the Internet. An increasing number of medical specialties are requiring use of ERAS to streamline the residency application process. For more information, visit the ERAS website at http://www.aamc.org/students/eras/.

Interviews: During the interview process, residency admissions officers further evaluate applicants based on previous clinical training, recommendation letters, personal statements, patient care experience, medical knowledge, practice-based learning and improvement, interpersonal and communication skills, professionalism, and systems-based practice. These programs are highly selective, so be open to all the potential residencies that would be a good fit for your academic background and professional goals.

National Resident Matching Program (NRMP): After the interview process, applicants and programs rank each other through a program known as the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP). Participants submit a list of residency programs to the NRMP, in order of preference. At the same time, graduate medical education programs submit ranked lists of their preferred residency candidates along with available positions. A computer then matches residents to programs based on the needs of both applicants and programs. For those applicants who remain unmatched after this process, the NRMP posts a list of unfilled positions the day after the initial matches are announced. Unmatched applicants then have two days to contact unfilled programs and possibly secure a position; this period is often referred to as the "Post-Match Scramble." For more information visit the NRMP website at http://www.nrmp.org.

More information on residency programs is available online in the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) database at http://www.acgme.org/adspublic and the American Medical Association's (AMA) Fellowship and Residency Electronic Interactive Database (FREIDA) at http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/education-careers/graduate-medical-education/freida-online.shtml. The AMA also issues print and CD-ROM versions of its *Directory of Graduate Medical Education* every year. Many EducationUSA advising centers have a copy of this resource.

Licensing Requirements

To practice medicine in the United States physicians must have a license to practice from the state or jurisdiction in which they plan to work. Requirements vary by state, but physicians must pass a series of exams and have completed a minimum number of years of

graduate medical education to obtain a license. Most doctors also choose to become board certified. To become certified doctors are tested on their mastery of a specialty area and must prove they can provide quality patient care in that specialty. Some 24 specialty medical boards certify U.S. doctors in more than 100 general medical specialties and subspecialties.

Alternatives Not Requiring ECFMG Certification

Academic Graduate Programs: Foreign medical graduates can apply directly to graduate academic programs in medically related fields that do not involve patient care. Such programs do not require ECFMG certification. Application procedures are similar to those for graduate programs in non-medical fields. A few examples of medically related fields of study include immunology, molecular biology, genetics, neuroscience, and physiology. Foreign medical graduates may also apply for research grants in the health sciences. Hospitals, universities, and independent research centers are possible sites for research.

Short-term Opportunities: Medical centers, hospitals, and medical associations frequently offer conferences or short-term courses, lasting from a few days, to a few weeks, to several months. Such opportunities are open to foreign medical graduates without ECFMG certification as long as they do not involve direct patient contact. Some medical centers, particularly larger research and teaching institutions, may also be able to arrange individual training for international physicians on request. Such exchanges cannot involve direct patient contact, but they can provide valuable opportunities for consultation, observation, and comparison of facilities. Some medical centers have specific offices to arrange such visits. You can also arrange visits by contacting your U.S. colleagues directly.

Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER) Institute: The FAIMER Institute is a two-year program for international health professions educators who demonstrate the potential to improve health professions education at their home institutions. The program teaches education methods and leadership skills and introduces participants to colleagues from around the world. For more information visit the FAIMER website at http://www.faimer.org/education/institute/index.html.

Nursing

Basic study for the nursing profession in the United States takes place at the undergraduate level. A "registered nurse" (R.N.) can hold a diploma, an associate degree, or a bachelor's degree in nursing and must fulfill state licensure requirements to practice. While the criteria and regulations for licensure vary from state to state, all states use the same licensing examination, known as the NCLEX-RN, regardless of the type of entry-level program attended. Nurses must pass the NCLEX-RN to receive a license. Most states also require nurses educated outside the United States to complete either the CGFNS International, Inc. (CGFNS) Certification Program or Credentials Evaluation Service before taking the NCLEX-RN. Those intending to practice in New York State must complete the CGFNS Credential Verification Service (http://www.cgfns.org/sections/programs/cvs/).

Graduate Nursing Education

A variety of options for advanced, specialized nursing education exist in the United States; these include university master's and doctoral programs as well as non-degree certificates and continuing education programs offered by universities, hospitals, associations, and other sources. Specializations include nursing administration, nursing education, nurse midwifery, psychiatric/mental health nursing, gerontological nursing, public health nursing, and many others. Some graduate nursing programs require state licensure depending on the level of patient contact and the laws of the state where the program is offered, and may require the CGFNS Credentials Evaluation Service (CES) as a pre-admission assessment. Another option in many states is a special limited license for educational purposes. Check licensing requirements carefully with individual programs to see if you qualify for this option.

Emerging trends in graduate nursing education include Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) certification and Doctorate in Nursing Practice (DNP) programs. CNL certification prepares nurses to oversee the care coordination of a distinct group of patients and provide direct patient care in complex situations. The DNP is designed for nurses seeking a terminal degree in nursing practice and offers an alternative to research-focused doctoral programs.

CGFNS Programs

VisaScreen Program: Healthcare professionals, including nurses, seeking temporary or permanent occupational visas or Trade NAFTA (TN) status, must first obtain a VisaScreen Certificate as part of the visa process. The CGFNS VisaScreen Program is also required for temporary nonimmigrant (H-1B) or permanent occupational visa applicants. The VisaScreen Program, administered by the International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHP), a division of CGFNS International, is comprised of four elements:

- Educational Analysis: to ensure that your secondary and professional education is comparable to the education of a U.S. graduate seeking licensure;
- Licensure Validation: to ensure that all of your professional licenses are valid and unencumbered;
- English Language Proficiency Examinations: to confirm your competency in oral and written English on tests approved by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services; and the
- Test of Nursing Knowledge: Registered nurses must take either the CGFNS Qualifying Exam or the NCLEX-RN examination.

The VisaScreen Certificate is valid for 5 years from date of issue and must be renewed if you have not adjusted status. For information on the VisaScreen, visit the CGFNS website at http://www.cgfns.org/sections/programs/vs/.

Certification Program: The CGFNS Certification Program requires a credentials review, a test of nursing knowledge (CGFNS Qualifying Exam™), and an English language proficiency test. To take the CGFNS Qualifying Exam, you must demonstrate to CGFNS that you:

- are currently registered as a first-level general nurse in the country where you were educated;
- have completed an upper secondary school education, separate from nursing education;
- have graduated from a government-approved general nursing program lasting at least two years;
- have received theory and clinical practice instruction in adult

health nursing, nursing of children, maternal/infant nursing, and psychiatric/mental health nursing; and

- have initial and current licensure in your country of education. This licensure must be valid and unencumbered.

The CGFNS Qualifying Exam tests nursing knowledge and is given approximately three times a year at sites around the world. Candidates for certification must also demonstrate English language proficiency (unless exempted from English language testing) as measured by the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). For more information on the CGFNS Certification Program, contact your nearest EducationUSA advising center or visit the CGFNS website at http://www.cgfns.org/sections/programs/cp/.

Credentials Evaluation Service

The CGFNS International Credentials Evaluation Service (CES) analyzes the credentials of multiple types and levels of health care professionals, including nurses, who were educated outside of the United States and wish to pursue licensure or academic admission in the United States. The CES report on education and licensure is advisory in nature and does not make specific placement recommendations. For information on the Credentials Evaluation Service, visit the CGFNS website at http://www.cgfns.org/sections/programs/ces/.

Veterinary Medicine

U.S. veterinary schools offer a four-year program, and graduates receive a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M. or V.M.D.). Veterinary school is generally entered after completion of a bachelor's degree program, but requirements vary between individual schools. Only 28 schools of veterinary medicine exist in the United States. Many of these are state-assisted, with tax money from state residents supporting the school. Therefore, applicants from that state, or states with contractual arrangements, are generally given priority. Approximately one third of all applicants to U.S. veterinary schools are accepted to one of the schools that they apply to.

Most (25 out of 28) U.S. veterinary colleges participate in the Veterinary Medical College Application Service (VMCAS),

which allows applicants to submit a common application for multiple schools. The primary consideration for admission is the quality of the applicant's undergraduate record. The majority of veterinary schools require students to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), but a few also accept the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). For more information on VMCAS, visit http://www.aavmc.org or contact VMCAS at 1101 Vermont Avenue NW, Suite 301, Washington, DC 20005 (tel: 877-862-2740; e-mail: vmcas@aavmc.org).

Postgraduate Training

Some foreign-trained veterinarians with the equivalent of the D.V.M. complete master's or doctoral degrees at U.S. veterinary schools. Others choose to undergo residency training leading toward board certification in a specialty such as veterinary internal medicine or veterinary pathology. Such residency training, often affiliated with veterinary schools, takes three years and requires a combination of academic and practical training and experience. Short-term training and exchanges with U.S. veterinary schools and related organizations may also be arranged.

License to Practice Veterinary Medicine

While the requirements to obtain a license to practice veterinary medicine vary from state to state, all states require that applying veterinarians pass the North American Veterinary Licensing Exam (NAVLE). Veterinarians graduating from veterinary colleges accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) are immediately eligible to sit for the NAVLE. All 28 U.S. colleges of veterinary medicine, in addition to 13 international colleges, are AVMA-accredited. Internationally trained veterinarians who received their degrees from non-AVMA-accredited institutions must also complete the Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates (ECFVG) certification program or the Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education (PAVE) prior to sitting for the NAVLE. All state licensing boards accept the ECFVG, and 24 state licensing boards accept the PAVE. For more information, visit the American Veterinary Medical Association website at http://www.avma.org or contact the association at 1931 North Meacham Road, Suite 100, Schaumburg, IL 60173 (tel: 847-925-8070).

Law

The legal system in the United States, on the federal level and in almost all states, is based on the British system of common law. One state, Louisiana, has a system modeled on the French legal code.

First Professional Degree

The U.S. first professional degree, the juris doctor (J.D.), provides an education strongly focused on preparation for U.S. practice, with limited opportunity for comparative or specialty study. For this reason, and because preparation in U.S. law will not easily transfer toward practice in other countries, the J.D. is often inappropriate for foreign nationals who do not wish to obtain a license to practice law in the United States. Although law schools offer individual courses that emphasize particular subject areas such as environmental law or taxation, there are no J.D. programs concentrating on any single specialty.

J.D. degree programs involve three years of study, and are entered following four years of undergraduate study in any major. Competition for admission is intense for both U.S. and international students. Requirements generally include fluency in English, an excellent undergraduate academic record, and a satisfactory score on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). (See http://www.lsac.org for LSAT registration information.) To practice in the United States, graduates must also pass the bar examination and meet other requirements of the state where they wish to work.

Graduate Legal Education

One graduate option is the master of laws (L.L.M.), a degree offered in a variety of specialties or as a self-designed program, with appropriateness for the international practitioner varying from program to program. The master of comparative law (M.C.L.), also known as the master of comparative jurisprudence (M.C.J.), is also an appropriate degree program for international lawyers. Recognizing that legal systems in many countries differ from common law as practiced in the United States, these programs acquaint lawyers from other countries with U.S. legal institutions and relevant specialties of U.S. law. Programs in international law or international business law may also be of interest.

Almost all master's programs in law last one year and admit stu-

dents only for the fall semester. Programs can be planned according to the interests of the student. Entrance requirements include a first degree in law, a strong academic background, letters of reference, a statement of purpose and/or writing samples, and a high level of English proficiency as demonstrated by the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) for students whose law degree was not in the English language. Most graduate law programs do not require standardized admissions tests.

Doctoral programs in law also exist. They admit only a small number of promising applicants, usually from among those who have completed a master's program at a U.S. law school and who plan to enter a career as a law school faculty member. Financial assistance may be more readily available to law students intending to continue towards a doctoral degree than to those seeking only a one-year master's program.

Short-term Legal Education

Many U.S. law schools offer programs, particularly in the summer, either designed for or appropriate for international lawyers. These usually last between one week and two months. Professional associations and private training organizations offer similar programs.

Your nearest EducationUSA advising center may be able to provide information on other options, such as tours to visit U.S. legal institutions.

Review

- Entry to U.S. first professional degree programs in dentistry is highly competitive. Graduate options include academic degrees, residencies (particularly in specialty areas), or short-term training and exchanges.
- Entry to the U.S. first professional degree in medicine is extremely difficult, and a bachelor's degree from an accredited U.S. university is usually a minimum requirement.
- For any graduate medical study involving patient contact, physicians educated outside the United States must be certified by ECFMG. Other options not requiring certification include a medically relevant academic degree or training and exchanges not involving patient contact.
- A variety of educational options exist in the United States for internationally educated nurses.

In some cases, and always in the case of nurses seeking to qualify for U.S. practice, certification by CGFNS is required.

- Entry to the U.S. first professional degree in veterinary medicine is even more competitive and difficult than it is for medicine. Graduate options include academic degrees, residencies, or short-term training and exchanges. U.S. licensure for veterinarians educated outside the United States requires certification by ECFVG.

- LL.M. and other graduate law degrees are usually the most appropriate choice for individuals who want to earn a U.S. law degree but who plan to practice law outside the United States. A wide range of short-term and graduate-level law degree options is available.

Useful Websites

Dentistry
American Dental Association
http://www.ada.org

American Dental Education Association
http://www.adea.org

Medicine
Association of American Medical Colleges
http://www.aamc.org

Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates
http://www.ecfmg.org

Electronic Residency Application System (ERAS)
http://www.aamc.org/students/eras

Federation of State Medical Boards
http://www.fsmb.org

Fellowship and Residency Electronic Interactive Database (FREIDA)
http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/education-careers/graduate-medical-education/freida-online.shtml

Medical College Admission Test
http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/

National Board of Medical Examiners
http://www.nbme.org/

United States Medical Licensing Examination
http://www.usmle.org

Nursing
Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools
http://www.cgfns.org

National League for Nursing
http://www.nln.org

Veterinary Medicine
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
http://www.aavmc.org

American Veterinary Medical Association
http://www.avma.org

National Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners
http://www.nbvme.org/

Law
American Bar Association
http://www.abanet.org

The Association of American Law Schools
http://www.aals.org

Law School Admission Council
http://www.lsac.org

National Conference of Bar Examiners
http://www.ncbex.org

Opportunities for Scholars

In addition to individuals who are beginning graduate or professional study, many mid-career scholars travel to the United States to participate in postdoctoral research, to lecture, to consult, or to gain additional training. This chapter describes the academic environment for such visitors and provides information on other professional exchange options.

Academic Environment in the United States

Academic and research institutions in the United States differ in many respects from those in other countries. If you will be working with faculty or researchers at universities in the United States, you need to be aware of the constraints and pressures on academics as well

as the underlying structure of the faculty system. Please note that while in many countries the word "faculty" refers to a department or division within a college or university, in the United States the term refers to the people who teach courses.

Faculty

In almost every academic institution, faculty members are organized into departments based on academic fields. Each department operates independently and is headed by a department chair. Faculty members of a department usually choose their own chair from among senior members of the department. In many cases, the position of department chair rotates from one senior faculty member to another, changing every three to four years. In other cases, the department chair remains the same, subject to the approval of other faculty members.

The department operates as a more or less democratic body, with all faculty members participating in important decisions. The department acts within broad limits set by the university to determine requirements for degrees, admit graduate students, decide whether candidates qualify for degrees, choose teaching assistants, determine the curriculum, and hire new faculty for that department. In some departments, primary power lies with the department as a whole. In others, the chair is more powerful than the other members.

Faculty titles denote academic rank. In ascending order, they are "lecturer" (or "instructor"), "assistant professor," "associate professor," and "professor." Except in the case of very distinguished senior professors, most faculty members who know one another address each other by first names and do not use these titles in conversation. In addition to teaching classes, faculty may have one or more committee assignments (the curriculum committee, the honors committee, and so forth), which may take several hours per week. They also spend time grading papers and exams, attending meetings and conferences, meeting individually with students, and conducting research. Junior-level faculty must make special efforts to publish original writing in order to build their reputation for scholarly research and build a case for tenure.

Tenure is a guarantee that a faculty member will remain employed by the university until retirement except in the case of very unusual circumstances such as the elimination of an entire department or extreme misconduct on the part

of the tenure holder. The purpose of the tenure system is to preserve academic freedom, to prevent an institution from firing a professor for making unpopular or radical statements, or for advocating unorthodox ideas. Lecturers, instructors, and visiting faculty are not considered for tenure. An assistant professor generally has between five and seven years to gain tenure. At the end of this time a committee of peers (other university faculty) votes on whether or not to recommend tenure. One of the most important considerations is the faculty member's research and publication record.

What difference does this system make to visiting scholars and researchers? You will generally be expected to make time commitments and to handle teaching loads similar to those of the permanent faculty. Also, if your colleagues are working toward tenure, they may have little time to spare for collaboration with visitors.

Faculty salaries are often lower than salaries at comparable levels of business or industry. In the 2008-2009 academic year, they ranged from an average of approximately $71,000 for an assistant professor to about $124,000 for a full professor. Instructors and other temporary and adjunct faculty generally earned an average of around $51,000, based on the number of classes taught. Faculty salaries in fields such as engineering and medicine were considerably higher than the average.

Many faculty members serve as consultants to business, industry, and government, both as a source of outside income and as a stimulus for professional development. Senior faculty members sometimes hold joint appointments whereby they have part-time teaching responsibilities and part-time administrative responsibilities.

Students

In the university setting, faculty interactions with students tend to be informal. Often graduate students and faculty become close friends and work together on an almost equal basis.

Since U.S. educational philosophy stresses analysis and critical thinking as well as mastery of information, class formats are designed to stimulate the exchange of ideas. Students, whether graduate or undergraduate, do not hesitate to challenge professors in class; in fact, most professors encourage such challenges as a sign of intellectual independence. They do, however, expect respect from their students; students and faculty maintain a certain personal

distance, with students deferring to faculty members.

Faculty members usually construct their own examinations. In most cases, faculty grade examinations and papers for their courses themselves, unless the course has a very high enrollment. In that case, they may rely on teaching assistants to do at least some of the grading.

Research Institutions

Universities differ greatly from one another in the level of their dedication to research. Research and scholarly activity also take place in many kinds of institutions besides universities. Visiting scholars, researchers, and faculty often come to the United States to work in private or public research centers or in hospitals. Visiting scholars may find they have fewer distractions from their projects in institutions dedicated entirely to research as compared with academic institutions.

Quite often, an international researcher establishes an arrangement with a research center that focuses on his or her area of research and then obtains a grant from public or private sources (see "Obtaining Funding" on page 91) to work as the principal investigator for the grant.

Finding and Arranging Academic Opportunities

Many avenues exist for scholars, researchers, and faculty to come to the United States as temporary academic visitors. Those described below are some of the most common.

Fulbright Visiting Scholars Program: Under the auspices of the Fulbright Program, international scholars come to the United States to research or to lecture at U.S. academic institutions for periods ranging from a semester to an academic year. U.S. scholars also travel outside the United States on this program. The U.S. Department of State funds and administers the Fulbright Program; however, many other countries also share in the funding. Approximately 120 countries around the world participate in the Fulbright Program, and the program operates differently in each country. Check with the U.S. embassy or consulate in your country to determine Fulbright opportunities. The Fulbright Program is an open competition for which scholars apply through the local Fulbright Commission, the public affairs section of the U.S. embassy, or another designated office. After preliminary local selection, recommended applications are forwarded to the U.S.

Department of State and the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board in the United States for final approval.

The Council for the International Exchange of Scholars (CIES) in Washington, D.C., assists with the implementation of the program by arranging university affiliations for senior Fulbright scholars at U.S. academic institutions. Once scholars are in the United States, CIES assists in program administration and support.

Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program: The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program, also administered by the U.S. Department of State, provides opportunities for a year of study in the United States for accomplished midlevel professionals from countries around the world in states of development or transition. The Humphrey Program awards fellowships competitively in the fields of: Agricultural and Rural Development; Communications/Journalism; Substance Abuse Education, Treatment and Prevention; Economic Development/Finance and Banking; Educational Administration, Planning and Policy; HIV/AIDS Policy and Prevention; Human Resource Management; Law and Human Rights; Natural Resources, Environmental Policy, and Climate Change; Public Health Policy and Management; Public Policy Analysis and Public Administration; Teaching of English as a Foreign Language; Technology Policy and Management; Trafficking in Persons, Policy and Prevention; and Urban and Regional Planning.

Fulbright Commissions, U.S. embassies, and binational centers accept applications and nominate candidates. The Institute of International Education (IIE) reviews nominations with the assistance of independent selection committees and makes recommendations to the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, which approves final selections and awards fellowships.

In contrast to many fellowship opportunities, the Humphrey Program does not lead to a degree. Rather, in cooperation with Humphrey Program coordinators on college and university campuses, fellows devise individually tailored plans for their one-year program, combining academic work with professional development and internship activities.

University Invitational Positions: University departments often have invitational positions, usually to be held for one year, for visiting

scholars, researchers, or lecturers. If you have an outstanding reputation as a researcher or have your own professional contacts with U.S. faculty, you may be able to arrange a special invitational position. Under these arrangements, the U.S. university normally provides a salary and sometimes provides research facilities. In some countries, there are agencies that claim to be able to find invitational positions for scholars, but these are rarely effective.

Other Arrangements: Scholars and researchers anticipating a sabbatical or wishing to conduct research in the United States often learn of opportunities by corresponding with colleagues in the same field or by attending professional meetings. Professors may also learn of colleagues with similar research interests from former students who are in the United States, from U.S. university faculty or administrators who are visiting the country, through e-mail discussion lists in their academic area, or from papers in scholarly journals. Sometimes scholars and researchers negotiate directly with a department or research center. Arranging a research sabbatical in the United States is easier in business, scientific, and technological fields than in the humanities, social sciences, and the arts.

Obtaining Funding

Arrangements for funding visiting researchers and scholars vary greatly. Often the scholar's home institution pays a regular salary while the scholar is on sabbatical. Occasionally, scholars come to the United States using their own funds.

Some foundations and organizations provide grants to support scholarly research in the arts, sciences, humanities, and health-related fields. Although competition is intense, foreign nationals as well as U.S. citizens are often eligible to apply. Grant proposals are generally reviewed by a committee of people active in the field, who are selected by the donor organization. Usually the grant is for a specific amount and supports research at a particular facility or center.

Many grant applications specify that you present not only a research plan, but also an agreement with a research institution before they will fund a grant. It is your responsibility to find an institution that will agree to provide research facilities, employ you, and monitor grant expenditures if you are awarded a grant.

If you do receive a grant, determine whether the grant is

awarded to you as an individual, or to the institution, which then agrees to employ you with the funds from the grant. If you leave before the grant is completed and the grant is to the institution, it will remain with the institution.

Perhaps an ideal scenario is to find an academic department in the United States with a research grant allowing employment of additional researchers. Usually such arrangements arise through personal correspondence between the people involved. There is no central source for this type of information.

Other Considerations

Negotiating Terms for Your Academic Stay

In negotiating a position as a visiting scholar or researcher, you can avoid misunderstandings by obtaining a clear agreement, in writing, about the issues that will affect your stay. For example, if you are corresponding with another researcher (and not a university administrator), make sure that the key administrator in charge of your stay is aware of your needs and prepared to help meet them. In universities, this key administrator is usually the department chair.

In your preliminary correspondence, find out how much time your main faculty contact, as well as others in the department, will be able to devote to collaboration or consultation with you. Find out how directly involved your faculty contact will be in the specific research project in which you are interested. Discuss what form the collaboration will take. Request a copy of the curriculum vitae of the people with whom you will be working so you can learn about their work's scope and background, as well as their individual educational backgrounds, travel experience, and language abilities. Make sure you share proficiency in at least one language with them. Finally, arrive at a mutual understanding about the length of time that you will be visiting or working.

U.S. university departments may extend courtesies such as an office, access to facilities such as the university library and gymnasium, and perhaps the services of university support staff to visiting scholars. These privileges are by no means guaranteed, so make sure that your expectations match those of the department.

Universities and research centers in the United States are not as

highly subsidized as they are in many other countries. Funds for research must be carefully budgeted within the department or research program. If you need access to a personal computer and particular software, specific laboratory equipment, or specialized university facilities, negotiate in advance with the department or the key administrators about how these resources will be provided and funded.

For reasons of national security, in a number of research areas there are government restrictions on access to information. If the research center with which you are negotiating has been awarded sensitive U.S. government contracts, the institution may require that its researchers hold security clearances.

Sometimes visiting scholars wish to attend classes. Some universities extend this option as a courtesy without charge, and some require visiting scholars to pay for their studies. Demands on faculty time and the tight budgets of many institutions can make this a sensitive issue. If you think you might be interested in taking courses, whether for credit or not, ask the university before you arrive so that everyone has a clear understanding, in writing, of the policy.

Corresponding With the Office of International Services

On some university campuses, particularly those of large research universities, an Office of International Services (which may use a slightly different name) offers a valuable liaison between visiting scholars, researchers, or faculty and the campus community. On other campuses, such an office may exist primarily as a resource for students, but even so, it may be a useful source of information. This office can provide information about many aspects of living and working in the United States and at the particular institution that you have chosen. (In a research center or training hospital, a training liaison officer often performs some of the functions of an Office of International Services.)

Professional Meetings, Conferences, and Seminars

While making your plans for U.S. study, correspond with professional associations in your areas of interest to determine the dates and locations of meetings, seminars, conferences, and other short-term professional development programs in your field. Such events can be costly, but the benefits of keeping current in your field and of having opportunities to make contacts with your peers

usually justify the expense. If you have a grant or fellowship, ask if there is a provision for attending conferences or for other professional development activities.

Review

- The U.S. academic environment and structure differ from those of other countries. Junior faculty members are likely to be extremely busy with the demands of pursuing tenure. Interaction with students tends to be relatively informal.

- Many paths exist for arranging an academic visit, including participation in various government exchange programs, a university invitational position, or an individual arrangement with U.S. colleagues.

- Funding may be obtained from your home institution, an exchange program, a U.S. government program, organizational grants, or other means. Be sure to review the terms of grants carefully.

- Obtain clear agreements in writing from the U.S. institution you are visiting regarding the terms of your stay.

- Seek out contacts such as the Office of International Services that can provide information to help you prepare for your stay.

- Explore additional professional development activities that may enhance your stay.

Useful Websites

Council for International Exchange of Scholars
http://www.cies.org

Fulbright Program
http://www.fulbright.state.gov

Hubert Humphrey Fellowship Program
http://www.humphreyfellowship.org/

Glossary of Terms

Academic Adviser: Member of the faculty who helps and advises students on academic matters. He or she may also assist students during the registration process.

Academic Year: The period of formal academic instruction, usually between September to May. Depending on the institution, it may be divided into terms of varying lengths: semesters, trimesters, or quarters.

Accreditation: System of recognition and quality assurance for institutions and programs of higher education in the United States.

Add/Drop: A process at the beginning of a term whereby students can delete and add classes with an instructor's permission.

Assistantship: A study grant of financial assistance to a graduate student that is offered in return for certain services in teaching or laboratory supervision, as a teaching assistant, or for services in research as a research assistant.

Audit: To take a class without receiving a grade or credit toward a degree.

Authentication: Process of determining whether something is, in fact, what it is declared to be. Incoming students are often required to provide a document of authentication for academic transcripts or previous degrees when applying to a program of study in the United States.

Bachelor's Degree: Degree conferred by an institution of higher learning after the student has accumulated a certain number of undergraduate credits. Usually a bachelor's degree takes four years to earn, and it is a prerequisite for studies in a graduate program.

Campus: The land on which the buildings of a college or university are located.

CGFNS: Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools.

Class rank: A number or ratio indicating a student's academic standing in his or her graduating class. A student who ranks first in a class of 100 students would report his or her class rank as 1/100, while a student ranking last would report 100/100. Class rank may also be expressed in percentiles (for example, the top 25 percent, the lower 50 percent).

College Catalog: An official publication of a college or university giving information about academic programs, facilities (such as laboratories, dormitories, etc.), entrance requirements, and student life.

Core Requirements: Compulsory courses required for completion of the degree.

Course: Regularly scheduled class sessions of one to five (or more) hours per week during a term.

Credits: Units that institutions use to record the completion of courses of instruction (with passing or higher grades) that are required for an academic degree. University catalogs define the number and the kinds of credits required for its degrees and state the value in terms of degree credit — "credit hours" or "credit units" — of each course offered.

DAT: Dental Admission Test required of applicants to dental schools.

Degree: Diploma or title conferred by a college, university, or professional school upon completion of a prescribed program of studies.

Department: Administrative subdivision of a school, college, or university through which instruction in a certain field of study is given (such as English department, history department).

Dissertation: Thesis written on an original topic of research, usually presented as one of the final requirements for the doctorate (Ph.D.).

Doctorate (Ph.D.): The highest academic degree conferred by a university on students who have completed at least three years of graduate study beyond the bachelor's and/or master's degree and who have demonstrated their academic ability in oral and written examinations and through original research presented in the form of a dissertation.

Dormitories: Housing facilities on the campus of a college or university reserved for students. A typical dormitory would include student rooms, bathrooms, common rooms, and possibly a cafeteria.

ECFMG: Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates.

ECFVG: Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates.

Electives: Courses that students may "elect," or choose, to take for credit toward their intended degree, as distinguished from courses that they are required to take.

ERAS: Electronic Residency Application System for obtaining a residency position in the field of medicine in the United States.

Faculty: The members of the teaching staff, and occasionally the administrative staff, of an educational institution. The faculty is responsible for designing the plans of study offered by the institution.

Fellowship: A study grant of financial assistance, usually awarded to a graduate student. Generally, no service is required of the student in return.

Final Exam: A cumulative exam, taken at the end of a term, encompassing all material covered in a particular course. Often referred to as a "final."

Financial Aid/Financial Assistance: A general term that includes all types of money, loans, and part-time jobs offered to a student.

Full-time Student: One who is enrolled in an institution taking a full load of courses; the number of courses and hours is specified by the institution.

GMAT: Graduate Management Admission Test, usually required for applicants to business or management programs.

Grade Point Average: A system of recording academic achievement based on the numerical grade received in each course and the number of credit hours studied.

GRE: Graduate Record Examination; primarily multiple-choice test of verbal and quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and analytical writing used for admission into graduate programs.

High School: The U.S. term for secondary school.

Higher Education: Postsecondary education at colleges, universities, professional schools, technical institutes, etc. Education beyond high school.

International English Language Testing System (IELTS): An English language proficiency examination of applicants whose native language is not English.

International Student Adviser (ISA): The person associated with a school, college, or university who is in charge of providing information and guidance to international students on U.S. government regulations, student visas, academic regulations, social customs, language, financial or housing problems, travel plans, insurance, and legal matters.

Language Requirement: A requirement of some graduate programs that students must show basic reading and writing proficiency in one other language besides their own to receive their degree.

Lecture: Common method of instruction in college and university courses; a professor lectures in classes of 20 to several hundred students. Lectures may be supplemented with regular small group discussions led by teaching assistants.

Liberal Arts: A term referring to academic studies of subjects in the humanities, the social sciences, and the physical

sciences, with the goal of developing students' verbal, written, and reasoning skills.

LSAT: Law School Admission Test required of applicants to professional law programs and some postgraduate law programs in American law schools.

Major: The subject or area of studies in which a student concentrates. Undergraduates usually choose a major after the first two years of general courses in the arts and sciences.

Major Professor/Thesis Adviser: For research degrees, the professor who works closely with a student in planning and choosing a research plan, in conducting the research, and in presenting the results. The major professor serves as the head of a committee of faculty members who review progress and results.

Master's Degree: Degree conferred by an institution of higher learning after students complete academic requirements that usually include a minimum of one year's study beyond the bachelor's degree.

MCAT: Medical College Admission Test required of applicants to U.S. medical schools.

Midterm Exam: An exam administered after half the academic term has passed that covers all course material studied up to that point. Often referred to as a "midterm."

Miller Analogies Test: Test of analytical thinking sometimes required for admission to graduate programs in fields such as education and psychology.

NAVLE: North American Veterinary Licensing Exam

NCLEX-RN: A licensing examination for registered nurses. It is required by each state and must be passed before a nurse can practice in that state.

Non-Resident: A student who do not meet the residence requirements of the state. Tuition fees and admission policies may differ for residents and non-residents. International students are usually classified as non-residents, and there is little possibility of changing to resident status at a later date for tuition purposes. Also referred to as an "out of state" student.

Notarization: The certification of a document, a statement, or a signature as authentic and true by a public official — known in the United States as a notary public. Applicants in other countries should have their documents certified or notarized in accordance with instructions.

NRMP: National Resident Matching Program.

Out-of-state Student: See "Non-Resident" above.

Placement Test: An examination used to test a student's academic ability in a certain field so that he or she may be placed in the appropriate courses in that field. In some cases a student may be given academic credit based on the results of a placement test.

Plan of Study: A detailed description of the course of study for which a candidate applies. The plan should incorporate the objectives given in the student's "statement of purpose."

Postdoctorate: Studies designed for those who have completed their doctorate.

Postgraduate: Usually refers to studies for individuals who have completed a graduate degree. May also be used to refer to graduate education.

Prerequisite: Program or course that a student is required to complete before being permitted to enroll in a more advanced program or course.

Professional Degree: Usually obtained after completing a bachelor's degree; degree designed to lead into a specific profession such as medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, or law.

Qualifying Examination: In many graduate departments, an examination given to students who have completed required coursework for a doctoral degree, but who have not yet begun the dissertation or thesis. A qualifying examination may be oral or written, or both, and must be passed for the student to continue.

Registration: Process through which students select courses to be taken during a quarter, semester, or trimester.

Residency: Clinical training in a chosen specialty.

Sabbatical: Leave with pay granted to give a faculty member an extended period of time for concentrated study.

Scholarship: A study grant of financial assistance, usually given at the undergraduate level, which may be supplied in the form of a cancellation or remission of tuition and/or fees.

Semester: Period of study of approximately 15 to 16 weeks' duration, usually half of an academic year.

Seminar: A form of small group instruction, combining independent research and class discussions under the guidance of a professor.

Social Security Number: A number issued by the U.S. government to jobholders for payroll deductions for old age, retirement, survivors' benefits, and disability insurance. Anyone who works regularly must obtain one. Many institutions use the Social Security Number as a student identification number.

Special Student: A student at a college or university who is not enrolled as a candidate for a degree. Also may be referred to as a non-degree, non-matriculating, or visiting student.

Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS): An Internet-based system that maintains data on foreign students and exchange visitors before and during their stay in the United States. It is part of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) managed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Subject: Course in an academic discipline offered as part of a curriculum of an institution of higher learning.

Syllabus: An outline of topics to be covered in an academic course.

Tenure: A guarantee that a faculty member will remain employed by a college or university until retirement except in the case of very unusual circumstances. Tenure is granted to senior faculty members who have demonstrated a worthy research and publication record. Its purpose is to preserve academic freedom.

Thesis: A written work containing the results of research on a specific topic prepared by a candidate for a bachelor's or master's degree.

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language; an English language proficiency examination of applicants whose native language is not English.

Transcript: A certified copy of a student's educational record containing titles of courses, the number of credits, and the final grades in each course. An official transcript also states the date a degree has been conferred.

Trimester: Period of study comprising one third of the academic year.

Tuition: The money an institution charges for instruction and training (does not include the cost of books).

Undergraduate Studies: Two- or four-year programs in a college or university after high school graduation, leading to the associate or bachelor's degree.

USMLE: U.S. Medical Licensing Examination.

VMCAS: Veterinary Medical College Application Service; a comprehensive service collecting data for veterinary medical schools.

Withdrawal: The administrative procedure of dropping a course or leaving an institution.

Zip Code: A series of numbers in mailing addresses that designates postal delivery districts in the United States.

Additional Resources

Contact your nearest EducationUSA advising center to find out more about these and other resources.

Choosing and Applying to Graduate Programs

88 Great MBA Application Tips and Strategies to Get You into a Top Business School, Brandon Royal. 2003. Prentice Hall, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Best 296 Business Schools, 2009 Edition. 2008. Princeton Review Publishers, LLC, New York, NY.

The College Board International Student Handbook. Published annually. The College Board, New York, NY.

Get into Grad School: A Strategic Approach for Master's and Doctoral Candidates. 2008. Kaplan, Inc., New York, NY.

Going to College: Expanding Opportunities for People with Disabilities, Elizabeth Evans Getzel and Paul Wehman. 2005. Brookes Publishing, Baltimore, MD.

How to Get into the Top MBA Programs, 4th Edition, Richard Montauk. 2007. Prentice Hall Press, The Penguin Group, New York, NY.

Peterson's Colleges with Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Disorders, Charles T. Mangrum and Stephen S. Strichart. 1997. Peterson's, Princeton, NJ.

Peterson's Guide to Graduate and Professional Study. Published annually. Peterson's, Princeton, NJ. (6-volume set with information on a wide variety of programs)

Peterson's MBA Programs 2009. 2008, Peterson's, Princeton, NJ.

Your MBA Game Plan: Proven Strategies for Getting into the Top Business Schools, Omari Bouknight and Scott Shrum. 2007. The Career Press, Franklin Lakes, NJ.

Financial Assistance

The College Board Scholarship Handbook. Published annually. The College Board, New York, NY.

Funding for United States Study 2010: A Guide for International Students and Professionals, Institute of International Education, New York, NY.

Getting Money for Graduate School. 2003. Peterson's, Princeton, NJ.

Paying for Graduate School without Going Broke. 2004. Princeton Review Publishing, LLC, New York, NY.

Peterson's Scholarships for Study in the USA and Canada. 1999. Peterson's, Princeton, NJ.

Personal Statements

Business School Essays that Made a Difference, 3rd Edition. 2008. Princeton Review Publishing, LLC, New York, NY.

Graduate Admissions Essays — What Works, What Doesn't and Why, Donald Asher. 2004. Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, CA.

Graduate Admissions Essays: Write Your Way into the Graduate School of Your Choice, Donald Asher. 2008. Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, CA.

Great Application Essays for Business School, Paul Bodine. 2006. The McGraw-Hill Companies, New York, NY.

How to Write a Winning Personal Statement for Graduate and Professional School — 3rd Edition, Richard J. Stelzer. 1997. Peterson's, Princeton, NJ.

Professional Programs

Dentistry

Official Guide to Dental Schools. Published annually. American Dental Association.

The Pre-Dental Guide: A Guide for Successfully Getting into Dental School, Joseph S. Kim. 2001. iUniverse, Lincoln, NE.

Medicine

The Complete Guide to the MD/PhD Degree, Ben Rosner, Jayakar Nayak, and Brandon Minnery. 2004. J&S Publishing, Inc., Alexandria, VA.

Graduate Medical Education Directory. Published annually. American Medical Association, Dover, DE.

Iserson's Getting into a Residency: A Guide for Medical Students, 7th Edition, Kenneth V. Iserson. 2006. Galen Press, Ltd., Tucson, AZ.

Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR). Published annually. Association of American Medical Colleges, Washington, DC.

Nursing

Peterson's Nursing Programs. Published annually. Peterson's, Princeton, NJ.

The Ultimate Guide for Getting into Nursing School, Genevieve Chandler. 2007. McGraw-Hill Professional, New York, NY.

Veterinary Medicine

Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements in the United States and Canada, Lawrence Heider. 2008. Purdue University Press, West Lafayette, IN.

Law

How to Get into the Top Law Schools, 4th Edition, Richard Montauk. 2008. Prentice Hall Press, The Penguin Group, New York, NY.

The International Students' Survival Guide to Law School in the United States: Everything You Need to Succeed, Rachel Gader-Shafran. 2003. iUniverse, Lincoln, NE.

ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools, 2009 Edition, Wendy Margolis, ed. 2008. Law School Admission Council, Chicago, IL.

English Language Programs

English Language Programs 2002. 2001. Peterson's, Princeton, NJ.

Intensive English USA 2008, Shayne Stephens, ed., 2008. Institute of International Education, New York, NY.

Pre-departure Information

Getting Ready to Go: Practical Information for Living and Studying in the United States (Booklet Four of this series)

International Student's Guide to the USA, Ian Jacobs and Ellen Shatswell. 1998. Princeton Review Publishing, LLC, New York, NY.

NAFSA's International Student Handbook: The Essential Guide to University Study in the USA. 2001. NAFSA: Association of International Educators, Washington, DC.

The Ultimate College Survival Guide, Janet Farrar Worthington and Ronald Farrar. 2009. Peterson's, Princeton, NJ.

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