



International Student Handbook



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INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been prepared to assist international students at Robert Morris University with their initial adjustment to the United States and to the University. The Center for Global Engagement (CGE) on behalf of all faculty and staff, welcomes you to the Robert Morris community. We extend our best wishes for your successful academic achievement and an enjoyable and memorable experience at Robert Morris University. We are available to serve you in a variety of ways and hope that you will consider our community a home away from home.

In this handbook, you will find answers to the most frequently asked questions from international students. It is designed to be your first reference guide to the University and the city of Pittsburgh. In addition to this handbook, please refer to the Center for Global Engagement, the Robert Morris University Web Site, and the Robert Morris University Schedule of Courses, for additional information.

Please note that this handbook was prepared for informational purposes only. It does not constitute a contract between Robert Morris University and its international students, and should not be construed as such.

WELCOME

Welcome to Robert Morris University! We hope that this handbook will make your transition to the United States and Robert Morris University as easy as possible and will act as your first guide to studying in the United States. If you have any problems or questions, please do not hesitate to call the Center for Global Engagement office at (412) 397-2151. We are here to help and guide you every step of the way.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ROBERT MORRIS UNIVERSITY

Robert Morris University, which is named after the remarkable hero of the American Revolution, was founded in 1921 as the Pittsburgh School of Accountancy. In 1935, the school was named the Robert Morris School in honor of the famous Pennsylvanian who was a financier of the American Revolution. A non-profit corporation purchased the facilities and operations of the Robert Morris School in 1962 with the approval of the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The school then became Robert Morris Junior College. The Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools accepted Robert Morris Junior College as a member in 1968.

In 1969, when the Department of Education of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania authorized the College to grant the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree, Robert Morris Junior College became Robert Morris College. In 1975, the College received permanent approval from the Department of Education to prepare teachers of business and office education. In 1977, the State Department of Education granted the College the right to award the Master of Science degree and in 1989, the right to award the Master in Business Administration and Bachelor of Arts degrees.

In 2002, Robert Morris College acquired university status and became Robert Morris University. Currently, the University offers a large selection of specializations at the undergraduate level and a number of graduate programs, including many Ph.D. programs.

The official colors of Robert Morris University are blue and white. Athletic teams representing the College are nicknamed the Colonials.

STUDENT CIVILITY CODE

The civility code was developed by students of Robert Morris University for all students, so together they'll know how to treat one another with respect.

I will honor all those that have come before me in the pursuit of academic excellence, and I will strive to make Robert Morris University better during my time here for all those yet to come.

I will devote myself to becoming an enlightened student without compromising myself by lying or cheating in my academic endeavors.

I will respect my fellow students as well as all faculty and staff in and out of the classroom.

I will work to develop a safe, friendly, and diverse environment for our university community.

I will strive to understand and respect others' beliefs and values in a courteous, mature manner.

I will acquire professional skills necessary to become a successful graduate.

I will support student organizations and their activities both now and in the future.

I will develop pride in myself and in the traditions of Robert Morris University.

Center for Global Engagement

CEG Services

The Center for Global Engagement (CGE) was created to provide services to all students and faculty. While assisting international students with their admission process to Robert Morris University, the CGE also provides:

1. Academic counseling (international students only)
2. Immigration advising
3. Guidance on social, financial, and personal issues
4. Assistance with study abroad and exchange options for students
5. Assistance with exchange programs for faculty
6. Organization of faculty-led programs for students and faculty

Our Functions

The CGE staff recruits international students for Robert Morris University, evaluates and validates their credentials and financial status before immigration documents are prepared and disseminated to them for visas and subsequent entrance to the U.S. The office processes all letters and immigration documents as needed by international students before and after arrival to the campus and provides orientation for new students.

The staff of the CGE acts as a liaison and advisor to other academic departments and schools on foreign student issues. We advise international students on academic, personal, social, immigration and financial matters during their stay at RMU. We are here to guide you as you navigate your way through college life and beyond.

The office staff liaises with our study abroad partners to provide excellent advising to all Robert Morris University students in their search and preparation to study abroad. We also assist faculty to locate international exchange and short summer program opportunities abroad especially with our overseas partners.

CGE Location and Hours of Operation

The Office is located on the Moon Campus of Robert Morris University, in Nicholson Center, Room 259. It is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. After office hours, the CGE can be reached by calling (412) 397-2151, through fax at (412) 397-2510 or email at internationaloffice@rmu.edu.

**For all immigration questions, please contact CGE immediately.*

International Student Organization (Carpe Mundum)

The CGE can provide you with information on special activities or programs organized for international students. We collaborate with the International Students Organization (Carpe Mundum) to execute many of these activities. Carpe Mundum is a social organization that fosters friendship and understanding among international and American students by scheduling a variety of events, workshops and activities throughout the academic year.

Note:

You are **always** welcome in the Center for Global Engagement (CGE).

ADJUSTMENT PERIOD

HOUSING

The process of settling down into a new culture, which is completely different from the one you are used to, can be a wonderful experience. The most important matter that first comes to mind is accommodation. You may decide to live on-campus or off-campus.

On-Campus Housing

At RMU, twelve (12) Residence Halls on the Moon Township Campus provide on-campus housing to our undergraduate students. These halls are: Adams, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hancock, Madison, Marshall, Monroe, Ross, and Washington. There are also three new apartment-style complexes, Concord, Lexington and Salem. Braddock Hall, which is a short walking distance to campus is open to undergraduate.

For information on on-campus housing, contact:

Office of Residence Life
Washington Hall
Tel.: (412) 397-4300

Off-Campus Housing

Many students decide to stay off-campus in rented apartments. Students do get together in twos and threes to jointly rent apartments too. For apartment rental information, refer to the Apartment Rental Guide, the Apartment Rental Guide Magazine and local newspapers. Also, be on the lookout for notices around campus, especially on bulletin boards regarding available apartments. While looking for an apartment, consider the additional costs that you may have to bear such as utilities and parking, among others.

Always inspect the apartment carefully before making a commitment or signing any paper to be sure you are satisfied with the amenities it provides. Also, survey the neighborhood to be sure it is not far from shops, grocery stores, school, etc. and that it has a public transportation system before you decide to rent, especially if you do not have an automobile.

TELEPHONE SERVICES

In order to make your local and long distance calls, you will need a telephone carrier. Find out which is the local telephone carrier in your area. The carriers are listed in the yellow pages under "Telephone Companies". These telephone companies include AT & T, MCI, Sprint and Verizon, which can be both local and long-distance carriers. You can choose a separate long distance carrier for your calls within and outside the U.S. Find out about all the possible deals before signing up with a long distance carrier. Choose a carrier that is best suited to your

particular needs. If you are a resident student, contact the Office of Residence Life for student telephone service available on-campus. You can also contact the CGE for further information.

Cellular phones are very common among students. However, these may be difficult for international students to purchase since they have not established credit histories in the U.S.

Calling cards that offer special rates to certain countries are also available. If you find yourself stranded with no money and you need to call someone in the U.S., you can make a collect call using phone companies like AT&T (1-800-CALL-ATT) or MCI (1-800-COLLECT). If that person accepts your call and both of you are connected, he or she will be responsible for the payment incurred. COLLECT CALLS are rather expensive, do not make these calls indiscriminately, make them only as last resorts.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT PENNSYLVANIA AND PITTSBURGH AREA

Pittsburgh, once known as the Steel City, is located in Southwestern Pennsylvania, and is a lively and charming place; a city where culture and technology meet to produce a beautiful blend of education, music, fine arts, and business. Pittsburgh is the second largest city in Pennsylvania.

Pittsburgh is also home to a number of schools, colleges and universities, as well as recreational centers, centers for promotion of the arts, parks, and a host of restaurants and diners that cater to the tastes of international visitors. In short, we believe that Pittsburgh is a city that you will grow to love and call "home". Some of the sights to see in Pittsburgh are listed below.

a. Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle

This is the heart of Downtown Pittsburgh, housing some of the world's largest corporations, banks and department stores, a state park at the junction of three rivers, which contains a fountain fed by a little-known underground fourth river. The Golden Triangle is easily accessible via bus or the subway system, both of which are free between downtown stops.

b. Pittsburgh's Inclines

The Monongahela and Duquesne Inclines offer breathtaking views of Pittsburgh. An old-fashioned cable car runs up and down the inclines, transporting visitors and residents from downtown to Mount Washington.

c. Station Square

This is an old railway station that has been converted into a quaint shopping, dining and entertainment complex. It houses a number of specialty shops and restaurants, as well as a railway museum.

Website: www.stationsquare.com

d. Libraries and Museums

Pittsburgh has a number of public libraries and museums which contain information on the city's history, culture, and lifestyle. Museums such as the Carnegie Museum of Art, the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, the Carnegie Science Center, and the like, present high quality educational exhibitions and shows, and are a must for any visitor to Pittsburgh.

Websites: www.fortpittmuseum.com
www.carnegiemuseums.org
www.cmoa.org
www.phipps.conservatory.org

e. Waterfront area

The Waterfront is designed as a small town, and tries hard to capture the ambience of a village where life centers around the main square. The Waterfront is popular for its numerous shops and restaurants.

Website: www.virtourist.com/america/pittsburgh/29.htm

f. Kennywood Park

Kennywood Park is nationally known as America's Finest Traditional Amusement Park. It is beautifully landscaped and designated as a National and State Historic Landmark! The park is filled with an array of thrill, classic, and one-of-a-kind rides. All together there are thirty-one major rides, including three wooden roller coasters – the Phantom's Revenge steel coaster, the Exterminator (an indoor roller coaster), three water rides, and fourteen Kiddieland rides. In addition to these, there are plenty of games, gardens, entertainment and eateries, and picnic areas.

Website: www.kennywood.com

g. Strip District

The Strip District is a region of Pittsburgh, PA, known for its wholesalers, restaurants, and ethnic stores. The Strip is a favorite weekend destination for Pittsburghers and is a must-see for out-of-town visitors. This neighborhood is bustling with businesses where one can find fresh produce, meat, fish, spices, and kink-knacks of all kinds at very affordable prices. People from all ethnic backgrounds and social classes can be found on the crowded sidewalks, squeezing between sidewalk sellers displaying their wares, and food vendors making made-to-order cuisines. It is a vibrant spot for both young and old.

Websites: www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/district6/html/strip_district.html
www.nauticom.net/users/ata/strip.htm

h. South Side

The South Side is located south of both downtown and Oakland, across the Monongahela River. The South Side's East Carson Street is one of the longest neighborhood business districts in Pittsburgh. It features many unique retail shops, galleries, restaurants, and bars. The neighborhood also has a thriving arts and cultural community. It is one of Pittsburgh's prime nightlife centers with lots of great live music and small-scale theatre.

Website: www.southsidepgh.com

i. The Pittsburgh Zoo and Aquarium

The Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium is open every day of the year except Christmas Day! It is located approximately five miles east of downtown Pittsburgh. It is a 77-acre facility that is home to thousands of animals representing hundreds of diverse species. It is also one of only six major zoo and aquarium combinations in the country.

Website: www.zoo.pgh.pa.us

j. Moon Township

Moon Township was created in 1778. It was the first of seven townships to be carved out of Allegheny County. Moon area is located in the South-Western part of Allegheny County and encompasses 24 square miles. It has an excellent school system - Moon Area School District. Robert Morris University main campus is also situated in Moon Township on University Boulevard. Other interesting places in Moon include Moon Park and Moon Library, among others.

Website: www.moontwp.com

k. Robinson Towne Center Mall

While Robinson Towne Center has long been a popular shopping destination for students, the opening of the new Mall at Robinson on October 26, 2002, has drawn even more students to get their shopping appetite satisfied.

Website: www.shoprobinsonmall.com

l. The Pointe

The Pointe was completed in 1974. It symbolizes the historical, commercial, and industrial vitality given to the city by Three Rivers – the meeting of the Ohio, Allegheny, and Monongahela rivers.

m. Pittsburgh International Airport

Pittsburgh International Airport (PIT) is a world-class facility that accommodates nearly 20 million travelers on nearly 450,000 aircraft operations per year. The Allegheny County Airport Authority operates and manages the Pittsburgh International Airport. Safety and security of the customers and employees are priorities of the Allegheny County Airport Authority. Being an international airport, international flights from different countries land at the Pittsburgh International Airport. This airport is just approximately 15 minutes away from Robert Morris University, Moon campus.

Website: www.pitairport.com

THINGS TO DO ON-CAMPUS

The University has a number of activities besides academics that students can participate in. Student team-oriented activities are coordinated by Student Life. The various departments – such as Center for Global Engagement, Center for Student Success, the Dean’s Office, Health Services, Residence Life, Career Center, Student Activities, Intramurals and Recreation – all create opportunities to give the students the tools for leadership, self-management and self-development which permit them to gain the knowledge and experience that will enable them become responsible citizens and participating members of the society; to be better informed about social issues; and to become involved in civic and community issues. The University is concerned with the personal, aesthetic, ethical, philosophical, and developmental learning of the students.

ROBERT MORRIS UNIVEERSITY STUDNT ACTIVITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Getting involved on campus and in the community is part of the total educational experience at Robert Morris University. A wide range of activities and experiences is available to you at RMU. Students are encouraged to get involved in existing activities and/or establish new organizations. For more information, contact the Student Life Office at 412-397-4352 or studentlife@rmu.edu.

Another source for activities available to students is the Robert Morris Website: www.rmu.edu. It provides a calendar of events and important dates.

Academic and Professional Organizations

Actuarial Science Club
American Humanics
American Marketing
Association
Association of Computing
Machinery
Association of Future

Accountants
Club Managers Association
of America
Financial Management
Association
History Club
Hospitality and Tourism
Manager’s Association
National Association of

Black Accountants
National Science Teachers
Association
Nuclear Medicine Club
Phi Beta Lambda (Business)
Pre-Law Society
Pre-Med Club
Psychology Club
Public Relations Club

Society for Human Resource Management
Society for the Advancement of Management
Society of Automotive Engineers
Society of Manufacturing Engineers
Society of Women Engineers
Sport Management Association
Student Alliance for Future Healthcare Professionals
Students for Environmental Awareness
Student Nurses Association
Student – Pennsylvania State Education Association

Governing Organizations

Honors Program Advisory Council
Interfraternity Council (Fraternities)
Panhellenic Council (Sororities)
Residence Hall Association
Student Government Association

Service and Philanthropic Groups

Alpha Phi Omega
Big Brothers/Big Sisters
RMU Educators
Advocating Literacy

Campus Ministry Groups

Athletes in Action
Catholic Campus Ministry/Newman Club
Chi Alpha
Coalition for Christian Outreach
New Life Christian Fellowship

Club Sports Teams

Bowling
Men's Baseball
Men's Golf

Men's Ice Hockey (DI, DIII)
Men's Inline Hockey (Tier I, II, and III)
Men's Lacrosse
Men's Soccer
Men's Rugby
Men's Volleyball
Paintball
Short Track Speedskating
Table Tennis
Tennis
Women's Ice Skating
Women's Soccer
Women's Volleyball

Campus Leadership Positions

Academic Integrity Council
Class Officers
Colonial Ambassadors
Council on Institutional Equity
Early Success Program Mentors
First Year Student Mentors
Information Technology Advisory Council
National Society of Leadership & Success
Resident Assistants
Senior Class Gift Committee
Student-Athlete Advisory Committee
Student Conduct Board
Student Tutors
Student Wellness Committee

Greek Organizations Fraternities

Alpha Chi Rho
Kappa Delta Rho
Kappa Sigma
Phi Beta Sigma
Phi Delta Theta
Phi Sigma Kappa

Sororities

Delta Zeta
Zeta Phi Beta
Zeta Tau Alpha

Student Media

RMU Radio
RMU-TV (TV station)
Rune (literary journal)
The Sentry (newspaper)

Special Interest Organizations

Black Male Excellence Network
Black Student Union
Carpe Mundum
Chess Club
College Democrats
College Republicans
Hispanic Student Association
Mosaic
Photography Club
Pittsburgh Promise Cohort
Radio Club
RMU Investment Network
RMU Musicians Association
ROTC Club
Ski/ Snowboarding Club
Sportsman's Club
Student Program Board
Student Alliance for Equality
Swing Dance Club
Veteran's Organization

Honor Societies

Alpha Chi
Alpha Iota Mu
Alpha Mu Alpha
Alpha Psi Omega
Alpha Sigma Lambda
Beta Gamma Sigma
Kappa Kappa Psi
Lambda Nu
Lambda Pi Eta
National Residence Hall Honorary
National Society of Collegiate Scholars
Order of Omega
Psi Chi
Sigma Beta Delta
Sigma Theta Tau
Society of Collegiate

Journalists
Performance Groups
Cheerleaders
Colonial Fife and Drum
Ensemble

Colonial Pep Band
Colonial Theatre
Concert Choir
Dance Team
Jazz Colonials
Jam Blues Marching Band

Majorettes
String Ensemble
Winterguard

ROBERT MORRIS UNIVERSITY NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of Robert Morris University to provide equal opportunity in all educational programs and activities, admissions of students and condition of employment for all qualified individuals regardless of race, color, sex, religion, age, disability, national origin and/or sexual preference.

CAMPUS RESOURCE LIST

Academic Services	Patrick Henry Center, Library Level	412-397-6230
Admissions	Nicholson Center	412-397-5200
Career Center	Patrick Henry	412-397-3200
Center for Student Success	Nicholson Center	412-397-4349
Cassandra Oden, Director	Nicholson Center	412-397-4342
Tracy Gorrell	Nicholson Center	412-397-5859
Nicole Hammond	Nicholson Center	412-397-2220
Sean Callahan-Dinish	Nicholson Center	412-397-3695
Meredith Weber	Nicholson Center	412-397-4345
Randon Willard	Nicholson Center	412-397-5861
Freedom Card Office	Revere Center	412-397-2452
Health Services	Nicholson Center	412-397-3233
Library	Patrick Henry	412-397-3272
Center for Global Engagement	Nicholson Center	412-397-2151
Part-time Faculty Office	Hale	412-397-4200
Public Safety/Parking	Barry	412-397-2424
Residence Life	Washington Hall	412-397-4300

Student Life	Nicholson Center	412-397-4352
Student Financial Services— Student Accounts	Revere Center	412-397-6260
Student Financial Services— Financial Aid Office	Revere Center	412-397-6250
Tutoring	Nicholson Center	412-397-3269

NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

ADDRESS NOTIFICATION

It is mandatory for the CGE, the Academic Services office, and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to know your current address at all times. Therefore, once you have found accommodation inform us of your address immediately. This information will only be used for official purposes and will not be released to any third party without your consent. However, by signing the SEVIS Form I-20, you have given the CGE permission to release the information to USCIS should they request it.

The Academic Services office keeps records of the official addresses for all students. All University mail (invoices, registration notices, and grades, among others) is sent to the address you have on file in the Academic Services office. Therefore, it is important to maintain accurate address information in the RMU system. Notify the Academic Services Office about your new address once you have found accommodation.

In case you move from one accommodation to another, it is important for you to notify the CGE and Academic Services office of your new address. **These offices must have your correct address at all times.**

Please note: The address you indicated on your application form may not be your current mailing address. **After arriving on campus, it is your responsibility to either fill out a change of address form at the Student Support Center in Revere Center to have it changed in the system to your local address OR make the change yourself online via the RMU website.**

UNIVERSITY RECORDS

It is important to have your name recorded accurately and in the proper order in the University database from the first semester of your enrollment at RMU, as you will want it to appear on your diploma when you finally graduate. If you are not satisfied with this record, you can correct it quickly at the Academic Services office, located in Patrick Henry. Remember to have your name in the right order, which is, first, middle, and last names. Once you have established this order, be sure to stick to it to avoid confusion in the future.

Be sure to write your name as it appears on your birth record and passport and use it consistently.

MAIL

Every enrolled resident student at RMU is assigned a mailbox number, so you can receive mail that is sent to you. As long as you remain a resident student, this mailbox number will be yours until you graduate from the school. Once you cease to be a resident student, this mailbox number will also cease to be yours.

As a commuter, your mail will be sent to your off-campus address. Remember to notify the CGE and Academic Services office whenever you change your address while you are at Robert Morris University. The CGE will in turn inform the USCIS about the change. Also, when you change your address while you are in Pittsburgh, it is important to notify the Post Office for a “forwarding order.” The Post Office will then forward your mail to your new address, while you are notifying people – family, friends, etc. of your address change.

You can find a list of Post Offices in the telephone directory. To find the Post Office nearest you, call (412) 359-7860. The minimum cost of mailing a letter within the U.S. is 44 cents. For urgent delivery of mail, you can send it by Express Mail from the Post Office. For mailing of important documents such as your passport etc., you can use Certified or Registered Mail. You can also send mail through couriers such as FedEx, UPS, Airborne Express, DHL etc. Mail will generally reach the recipient quicker than ordinary postage if it is sent via courier, but it is more expensive.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

REGISTRATION

Registration is a very important process, so please see that you adhere strictly to deadlines and the procedures. The Schedule of Courses will be posted on the RMU website prior to registration. It is your responsibility to check the website to review the Schedule of Courses at least two months prior to the beginning of the Spring and Summer terms and in March of each year for the following Fall term. The paper copy of the Schedule of Courses is always available and can be obtained from Academic Services, Center for Global Engagement, Center for Student Success, and the Student Support Centers,. The electronic version of the Schedule of Courses is usually more accurate, so remember to consult both versions while planning your course of study.

New full-time day students will be required to attend a placement evaluation and registration session prior to the beginning of the term. Course selection forms will be completed during this session.

REGISTRATION PROCESS

To determine when you are eligible to register, visit eServices' Registration Status page. For each term, a date and time is displayed. This date was selected through a computer program based on your total credits earned at RMU, transfer credits applied, and credits currently in progress. The closer you are to graduating, the earlier you will be scheduled to register. No student will be permitted to register earlier than the specified date and time displayed on the page. You may register for courses using eServices on the RMU website, the Student Support Centers, Center for Global Engagement, the Center for Student Success, or with an academic department head or academic advisor.

The registration process for freshmen will begin with the Academic Advisor (the faculty member in the academic department who is appointed or selected as your "Advisor"), who will assist you in the selection of courses at the end of your first term for the following term. Be sure to review the versions of Schedule of Classes prior to the meeting with your advisor. Both of you should be sure that there is a clear understanding of the requirements for your program and the prerequisites for these requirements. Your advisor or your academic counselor should be able to assist you in the establishment of an estimated academic plan for fulfilling these requirements.

For international students, you must contact CGE first before you can register for classes. At the CGE, the hold on your registration would be removed to allow you to register; otherwise you would not have access to the registration page. **Remember to maintain your status by being a full-time student at all times.**

How Do I Know My Advisor and Counselor?

On the top page of your academic requirements checksheet, you will find the names, telephone numbers, and email addresses of your Advisor and Counselor. If you check the packet given to you during orientation, there you will find a copy of your checksheet. If you cannot for whatever reason locate your checksheet, the CGE will print a copy for your records.

FULL-TIME STATUS

It is important to remember that international students on an **F-1/J-1 visa have to be full time students in order to maintain their student visa status**. This means that undergraduate students must register for a minimum of 12 credits per semester, and graduate students must register for a minimum of 9 credits per semester. Taking classes in the summer session is optional.

ID NUMBERS

At Robert Morris, every student is assigned a **6**-digit identification number (RMU ID Number). In addition to this number, if you do not have a Social Security number, the university will issue a temporary **9**-digit number which starts with “000” to you. Always remember this **is not** a U.S. Social Security number. If you intend to work in the U.S., particularly on campus, you must apply for a U.S. Social Security number for payroll purposes.

Your RMU records can be accessed using your identification number, whether it is the U.S. Social Security number or the assigned temporary number. Once you have obtained your Social Security number, it is your responsibility to contact the Academic Services office in Patrick Henry to have the temporary **9**-digit number changed.

DEADLINES/LATE FEES

The Academic Services office sets specific dates for the registration process. These dates are published in the Schedule of Courses each term and appear in a variety of other University publications. Failure to meet these deadline dates may result in late fees of **\$100 or more**. It is therefore important for you to adhere strictly to these deadline dates and ask questions if you have any doubts.

IMPORTANT TERMS

Schedule Changes

Course Substitutions

This refers to the changing of one course for another or the changing of the time of a course. Any course substitutions must be done at the same time to be classified as such. Students attending day classes should make changes in person in the Student Support Center. Students

attending evening or Saturday classes may make changes either in person or by calling the Academic Services office. **Only completed course selection cards can be processed at the Student Support Center.** Any course substitutions made in the final two weeks before the start of the term must be done in person.

Drops

This refers to removing a course(s) from your class schedule during the 100% tuition and fees refund period. For Fall and Spring terms only, you can drop a course(s) only during the first week of classes. For more information, look into the paper copy of the Schedule of Classes. All drops should be completed in person in the Student Support Center.. Only those changes made before the final two weeks prior to the term starting can be processed by calling the Academic Services Office at (412) 397-3464.

Note:

If this process is completed by phone, a name should be obtained for verification purposes.

Adds

This refers to adding a course to your class schedule. Once an initial registration has been processed, students attending day classes can add courses in person in the Student Support Center at either location. Students attending evening or Saturday classes may make changes either in person or by calling the Academic Services Office until two weeks prior to the start of the term. Only completed course selection cards can be processed at the Student Support Center.

Withdrawals

This refers to withdrawal from a course or from the University. International students who wish to officially withdraw from a course or from the University must notify the International & Exchange Student Services Specialist, in the Center for Global Engagement first. They must also notify the Registrar in writing. This may be done by completing a withdrawal form in person or by submitting a letter by mail to either office. In special circumstances, a faxed letter will be accepted upon prior arrangement with a member of the Academic Services personnel or with the Registrar at the Moon Campus.

Note:

Notice to the instructor of intention to withdraw is not sufficient. If you stop attending class without an official withdrawal, you may receive a grade of "F." Canceling a housing contract is not sufficient for withdrawal from your classes.

Schedule of Courses

Prior to the start of each term, the Academic Services office publishes a Schedule of Courses. This contains information necessary for registration including Course Offerings, Course Descriptions, Credit Hours, Name of Professor, Number of Seats in the class, and a Wait List if available. The Schedule of Classes (printed booklet) also contains information on the Schedule of Courses, and other academic and student accounts/financial information. It is important to note however that the electronic version of the Schedule of Courses is always more accurate than the paper copy.

Deregistration

Students who have registered and are not financially cleared by the specified dates for each semester will be deregistered i.e. student will lose his/her seat in the class. The classes will then be made available to the general student population.

****Important Reminder****

Students who are considering either dropping a course or withdrawing from the course or from the University should consider the minimum course requirements for international students for maintaining their visa status.

GRADING SYSTEM

The American education system uses quantitative and qualitative measures to determine qualifications for degrees.

Quantitative measures involve the accumulation of “credits.” Every program requires a minimum number of credits to graduate. Please refer to your checksheet for the exact number of credits that you are required to earn for completion of the program you have chosen. Every course in a program is assigned a value in terms of “credit hours.” Most courses are assigned the value of three credits. This value is approximately equal to the number of hours the class meets each week. This implies that if a student has registered for a three-credit course, the class would probably meet for three hours a week.

In addition, each program will require the completion of certain “core” courses that are mandatory, and certain “electives”, which the student can choose.

With respect to **qualitative measures**, performance is evaluated in terms of grades. At the end of each term, a student will receive a grade for each course that he or she has taken. Grades are given out as follows:

<u>Grade</u>		<u>Quality Points</u>
A	Excellent	(4.00 points)
A-		(3.67 points)
B+		(3.33 points)
B	Good	(3.00 points)
B-		(2.67 points)
C+		(2.33 points)
C	Adequate	(2.00 points)
D	Poor	(1.00 point)
F	Failing	(0.00 points)
I	Incomplete	(0.00 points)
P	Passing	Credit granted/ No QPA Computed
W	Withdrew	No credit granted
L	Audit	No credit granted
N	Competency not met	No credit granted

It is important to note that every instructor may have his or her own criteria for evaluation. The grades awarded would therefore depend on each individual instructor. Some courses also require a minimum grade to pass the course, for example Communication Skills courses usually require a minimum grade of C to pass. Most graduate courses require a minimum grade of B to pass.

The progress and achievement of a student is expressed in terms of “Quality Point Average” (QPA). This method combines the quantitative and qualitative measures of evaluation. The following formula is used to compute QPA.

The number of credits for each course is multiplied by the number of points corresponding to the grade awarded. The points for all the courses are added up to give the total of the quality points. This total is then divided by the total number of credits completed to give the QPA.

For example:

Course	Credits	Grade Awarded	Points	Total Points
X	3	A	4	12
Y	3	B	3	9
Z	3	C	2	6
Total	9		Total	27

$$\text{QPA} = \text{Total points divided by total credits} = 27/9 = 3 \text{ (B)}$$

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The Student Support Services (SSS) office is located at the Moon Township Campus in the lower level of Revere Center. Students can go to the SSS to complete the following financial transactions:

- Pay tuition and other charges (graduation fees, official transcripts, etc)
- Discuss student accounts
- Demonstrate proof of health insurance
- Obtain RMU forms (name and address change forms, graduation applications, etc.)

The SSS will also process completed registration forms. To better serve our students, however, academic advisement and course planning will be handled by the counselors in the Center for Student Success.

Normal hours of operation is as follows:

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>MOON TOWNSHIP CAMPUS</u></p> <p>Mondays through Thursdays: 10 am – 6 p.m. Fridays: 10 am – 5 p.m. Saturdays: 9 am – 2 p.m.</p> <p>Tel: (412) 397-2450 Fax: (412) 397-2196</p>

ACADEMIC SERVICES OFFICE

The Academic Services Office serves under the Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. It has become an integral part of the academic growth of RMU students. The office functions as the main resource for students, faculty, and staff seeking information and/or services relating to academic affairs within this system.

Academic Services Offices is located on campus and staffed by professional members equipped to take care of students' academic needs. The offices operate out of the Patrick Henry building (by the Library) at the Moon Township Campus.

Primary Functions

Academic Affairs

- Approve course wavier/substitutions
- Approve early final examinations
- Determine the academic status of students
- Evaluate transfer credits

- Evaluate and process academic approval for directed/independent study and off-campus credit
- Interpret and administer academic rules and regulations
- Provide academic clearance for registration and reinstatements

Academic Advising

- Arrange for and participate in freshman placement testing
- Assign students to academic advisors
- Assist the faculty in the advisement system
- Maintain and distribute faculty advisement handbook

Academic Information

- Prepares and distributes Course Schedule Booklet and Planner
- Announce changes in course offerings, programs, and degree requirements
- Provide information relating to academic affairs
- Serve as a referral source to other student support systems

Academic Service

- Audit graduation requirements
- Award degrees
- Maintain all academic records and files of registered students
- Prepare and maintain academic check sheets outlining graduation requirements
- Process change of majors
- Process course/school withdrawals
- Provide information to students studying under the provisions of the Veterans Administration

Academic Testing

- Provide academic approval to students taking departmental and CLEP examinations
- Interpret CLEP scores and award academic credit

Registration

- Process attendance verification for deferments, insurance, and government programs
- Process change of name and address
- Provide cross-registration services with other member institutions of the Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education
- Registration services

Student Records

- Process request for official transcripts

FREEDOM CARD

Robert Morris University is one the pioneers in the “smart card” industry. The Freedom card is referred to as “smart card” because students can put cash onto the microchip that is embedded into the card instead of carrying cash in their pockets. The money put on the chip portion of the freedom card is called Colonial Cash. The Freedom Card is the official Robert Morris University photo identification card. All members of the University community are required to have one. You can “load value” onto the Freedom Card at any of the five Card Value Centers (CVCs) located at the Moon Township.

Remember: Colonial Cash is carried on the chip portion of your card and is accepted anywhere on campus where you see the Colonial Cash symbol.

****Important Reminder****

Before a student with a past due balance is permitted to register for any semester, he/she must stop in the Student Support Center to pay off the balance or contact the Office of Student Financial Services to make financial arrangements. A satisfactory payment schedule must be arranged before a student will be approved to register for another semester.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

BANKING INFORMATION

During your stay in the U.S., there are several ways in which you may choose to handle your expenses and financial matters. If you are a new international student, you are best advised to open a bank account and deposit your money soon after your arrival in Pittsburgh. It is not a good idea to carry large sums of money or keep large amounts of money in your apartment or residence hall room. The official RMU bank for students is the PNC Bank but you are free to choose a different one.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

Traveler's checks in U.S. currency are a convenient and safe way to carry money when you travel. They can be purchased from any bank for a small fee. Certain organizations such as AAA issue Traveler's Checks free of charge to their members. Traveler's Checks can be used at most restaurants, stores, and hotels. They can also be cashed at banks. An advantage to carrying traveler's checks is that if they are lost, they can be replaced. If you are a new international student at RMU, you may be carrying traveler's checks with you. You may use these traveler's checks to open a bank account.

CHECKING ACCOUNT

A checking account is one type of account that banks offer. With this type of account, you will be issued checks under your name to use when paying bills and for most of your shopping needs. To open a checking account, you will need to complete some documents, deposit money, sign a signature card and provide at least two forms of identification (your passport is an acceptable form of identification.) You will be given temporary checks right away; but you should order checks with your name and address printed on them. Many stores will not accept checks if they do not have this information on them. Some banks will charge a small fee for each check you write, others will not, but will require that you keep a minimum balance in the account. Sometimes they will charge you a monthly service fee if you are unable to keep the minimum balance. Before you open an account, be sure to ask which system your bank uses. You should also make sure you understand the other fee schedules the bank may have (such as fees for returned checks or overdraft.)

SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Another type of a bank account is the savings account. This account allows you to earn interest on money that you keep in your account. You can open this type of account at most commercial banks, or at savings and loan associations. Some banks issue "passbooks" for customers to record transactions. A "passbook" is your record of money deposited or withdrawn. When you visit your bank, complete a deposit or withdrawal slip, and the transaction should be recorded in your passbook either by you or the bank teller.

Frequent withdrawals are discouraged in savings accounts. To open a savings account, you will also need to complete a bank form, deposit money, and provide at least two forms of identification.

Besides a regular savings account, there are also savings certificates and money market certificates. These are “Certificates of Deposit” (CD) and have higher interest rates than regular savings account. However, with these types of accounts, you may not be allowed to withdraw your money for a certain period of time. This time frame may range from 90 days to 6 months to a year or even up to 5 years. If you must withdraw money before the specified time allowed, you will be charged a penalty fee.

Note:

You may open an account with a bank where you can have both a checking account and savings account and the two accounts can be linked together so that you can transfer money between the two accounts depending on your needs.

AUTOMATED TELLER MACHINES (ATMs)

An automated teller machine (ATM) is a computerized system that allows bank customers to make deposits or withdraw cash 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You may also do other transactions on the ATM such as transfer money from your savings account to your checking account. You will need an ATM card, issued by your bank, and personal identification number (PIN) in order to use an ATM. There are several kinds of ATMs around. Each machine will have its own instructions for use. You can find ATMs in most malls, at banks, at many grocery stores, and even on campus. If you use another bank’s ATM, you will be charged a fee, which is typically \$1.50 or more per transaction.

DEBIT CARDS

This is a card issued by your bank that allows you to make ATM withdrawals and to make purchases at shops. However, it is not a credit card. The debit card is directly connected to your checking account, and you can only withdraw money or make purchases if you have the amount in your checking account. Since this is not a credit card, it is not insured, and will not help you in building a credit history either.

CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover, and department store cards) are another common way to pay for purchases. However, credit cards are not necessarily easy to obtain, especially for someone new to the U.S. and without any “credit history”. Many credit cards also charge high interest rates on unpaid balances in your credit account, and thus, can be an expensive way to handle your finances. You can inquire at your bank for details on how to obtain and manage a credit card.

RECORDKEEPING

It is very important to keep certain documents like your immigration documents – passport, SEVIS I-20/DS-2019, I-94, among others in a safe place. Also, keep all records of any immigration forms you might have completed during your stay in the United States (example is the Optional Practical Training). You should also keep copies of income tax returns, monthly bank statements; apartment rent payment, important correspondence, tuition payment receipts, registration statements, etc. as you may need these items at a later date. It is wise to build a folder of these important documents at least throughout your stay in the United States and perhaps a few more months after leaving the United States. Do not rely on the CGE to provide you with copies of important documents. Keep these documents for your personal records.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is a U.S. government institution that maintains a benefits program for injured, disabled, or retired people. The money for this program is obtained through withholding from employees' pay and from employers' contributions. The Social Security Administration issues a Social Security (SS) card which bears a number by which people within a Social Security system are identified. This number also serves as a major identification number for U.S. citizens, permanent residents ("green card" holders,) and legal non-immigrants in the U.S.

As international students who will be pursuing your studies in the U.S. for a certain period of time, you are advised to obtain a Social Security number once you have found an on-campus employment. The CGE will not provide you with a recommendation letter to the SS, unless you have a job. A Social Security number is only assigned to people who are authorized to work in the United States. It is used to post wages to Social Security records so workers can become eligible for Social Security benefits. *Social Security Administration will not issue you a card unless you have an on-campus employment.*

This SS card is required for obtaining a driver's license in Pennsylvania. When you come to RMU, you may have been given an 8-digit number. This is not your Social Security number, but a University identification number that can only be used for school records. You may apply for a Social Security number and card at a Social Security office in your area. Visit the CGE to request a letter for a Social Security application. This letter is required to be submitted with your passport and a completed Form SS-5 (Application for a Social Security card) which you can obtain from the CGE. You will also be asked to present a form of photo identification.

Do You Plan To Work? An F-1/J-1 student is permitted under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations to work on-campus for a maximum of twenty (20) hours per week. To obtain on-campus employment, contact the Career Center in Patrick Henry for more information. Since you are authorized to work on-campus, you are eligible for a Social Security Card once you secure a job.

How To Apply For A Social Security Card: You must provide original documents showing your age, identity, F-1/J-1 immigration status and proof that your school has authorized you to work.

Age: Your passport will be sufficient for this.

Identity: The Social Security office must see a document that shows the name you want on your Social Security card. A recently issued document with a photograph, such as your passport or RMU Freedom Card will be adequate in proving your identity.

Immigration Status: Your F-1/J-1 visa, I-94 card issued to you when you arrived in the United States and the student copy of your I-20/DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1/J-1) Student Status must be submitted.

Eligibility to Work: To obtain a Social Security number for work, you must have an on-campus, or Practical Training employment. You must provide SS Office with a letter from your present employer stating that you are enrolled in a full course of study and you need the SSN to complete your employment paperwork.

All documents must be either originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. The Social Security office will not accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents.

How Long Will It Take To Get A Social Security Number?

The Social Security office must verify your documents with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) before a number can be assigned to you. Social Security will issue your number and card within two days of receiving the verification from DHS. Most of the time, they can verify your documents quickly with DHS online. If your documents cannot be verified online, then it may take DHS several weeks or months to respond to Social Security's request. This might take three (3) to six (6) weeks.

INCOME TAX

All non-resident aliens must file a Federal and a State income tax return for the preceding year, **whether or not they worked**, if they resided in the U.S. for some part of that year.

All income earned in the U.S. will have deductions for Federal and State income taxes withheld by the employer. This "withholding tax" is an estimate of the taxes due on what you earned. This amount will depend on the number of exemptions you claim on the W-4 form you fill out when you become employed. By law, international students are only permitted to claim either "0" or "1" exemption unless they are a married citizen of Canada, Japan, Mexico or South Korea.

Every employer is required to report each employee's total earnings for the previous calendar year and the amount of taxes withheld for the worker. This report, called a W-2, is sent to the Federal government and to you by early February. Students who receive scholarships in excess of their educational costs, or earned wages exempt because of a tax treaty will also receive a 1042-S form. A copy of this form is sent to you and to the Federal government in late February

or early March. These forms will be necessary to complete your State and Federal tax returns by April 15. If more has been withheld than what you owe, you will be sent a refund. If less has been withheld, you must pay the difference with your tax forms.

The amount of tax you owe to the U.S. and the State will be affected by: the amount you earn, your immigration status, the length of your residence in the U.S., your purpose for being here, your type of income, and your country of citizenship. The U.S. has a tax treaty with certain countries that exempts a portion of your earned income from U.S. taxes.

ATHLETES

It is mandatory for all international students with athletic scholarships to pay taxes to the U.S. government on the monies received. At the beginning of each semester, athletes receive information from the Athletic Office on the amount they owe the government based on scholarships received. Amounts therefore may vary, and if in doubt, contact the Athletic Office or Student Accounts Department.

If your country has a treaty with the United States, you may be reimbursed this tax money partially or fully. Contact your tax agency for more information.

IMMIGRATION INFORMATION

During your stay in the U.S., you will be asked to comply with various government regulations that apply to students on F-1/J-1 visas. **If you have questions regarding your immigration status, please contact the CGE immediately.** *DO NOT rely on friends, professors or staff in your academic department for advice on immigration matters. While these people have good intentions, they may not know the regulations that pertain to **your** immigration status and situation. One piece of bad advice may put your legal status in jeopardy.*

IMPORTANT NOTICE

U.S immigration regulations change frequently. It is very important that you understand these changes so you can make informed decisions. This section presents an introduction to the following issues, primarily as they apply to students in F-1/J-1 status, but they cannot replace the advice and assistance of the CGE. So always check with the Center for Global Engagement before making a decision to change your course of study, transferring to another institution, traveling out of the United States, considering employment or the completion of your studies. Compliance with immigration regulations is your responsibility. If you have questions regarding immigration matters, please speak with the Director, Office of International Programs, who is a Designated School Official (DSO), or any staff of CGE.

IMPORTANT IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS

There are four important travel documents that you should be made aware of: your passport issued by your country; your entry visa which is your permission to apply for entry into the U.S.; your I-94 which is your authorization of stay, indicating the length of your stay; and your SEVIS Form I-20/DS-2019. **It is your responsibility to keep all these documents updated and valid at all times while in the U.S.**

Note:

Citizens of Canada need only present their passport, SEVIS Form I-20/DS-2019 and proof of SEVIS payment upon entry to the U.S. and will be issued an I-94 immediately. They do not need entry visas.

Passport

The **passport** is the legal document issued by your home country which identifies you as a citizen of that country. While you are in the U.S., your passport must be valid for at least six months into the future. Your passport can be renewed at your government's Consulate or Embassy in Washington, D.C. It must be valid if you plan to leave and re-enter the U.S. You should request information about renewal and apply far in advance of your expiration date since considerable time is required for some countries. Any time you mail your passport, send it by registered or certified mail. Check with CGE for details.

Entry Visa

The U.S. **visa** is the multi-colored stamp or sticker on a page of your passport, issued by the U.S. Consulate or Embassy, which permits you to enter the U.S. Most international students at RMU will have an F-1 or J-1 visa. Your visa is stamped on a page in your passport and includes your name and visa classification (F-1/J-1), place and date of issue, visa expiration date, the number of entries into the U.S. permitted on that visa (single or multiple) and the school you are authorized to attend.

The visa DOES NOT grant you the permission to enter or remain in the U.S. It DOES allow the holder of the visa to apply to enter the U.S. at a port of entry, such as an airport. At your port of entry, an immigration officer will review your documents and provided they are satisfactory, issue an I-94 card and attach it to your passport. It is the I-94 (see “I-94” below), your VISA STATUS (Immigration Status), that allows you to enter and remain in the U.S. Once USCIS admits you to the U.S., the visa no longer matters unless you decide to travel abroad with the intention of re-entering the U.S. As long as you remain in the U.S., no one, including the law, cares if the visa expires. A new visa will be required if the original one expires and you travel outside with the intention of re-entering the U.S.

Note:

Canadian citizens are not required to have a visa. They must show their passport, I-20/DS-2019 and proof of SEVIS payment at the U.S. port of entry when entering from Canada.

If you plan to travel abroad and re-enter the U.S., the CGE must check your travel documents before you leave. If your visa is still valid, you need only to present your passport, I-20/DS-2019, and proof of financial resources at your port of re-entry. If your visa expired during your stay in the U.S. or is otherwise invalid, you will need to apply for a new visa at an American Embassy or Consulate in your home country to obtain a new visa to re-enter the U.S.

I-94 Departure Record

This is the small white “Arrival/Departure” card issued by an immigration officer at your port of entry into the U.S. to all non-immigrants, including students, before passing the U.S. border. It is attached to your passport by the immigration officer at the port of entry. It contains your name, USCIS admission number, birth date, citizenship, date and port of entry into the U.S., immigration status, and the length of time you may remain in the U.S. This is the document along with your I-20/DS-2019 that authorizes you to be in the U.S. Students with F-1 visas have “D/S” written on their I-94s. “D/S” means “duration of status” and indicates students can remain in the U.S. for as long as they are studying full-time in educational institutions and maintaining status.

This card is a temporary document. When you leave the U.S., you must surrender your I-94 at the port of departure. A new I-94 card must be issued to you when you re-enter the U.S. Your I-94 is the proof that you have legally entered the country. When USCIS grants permission to you to enter the U.S., an admission number is usually written on your I-20/DS-2019. **YOU MUST CARRY YOUR I-20/DS-2019 WITH YOU WHILE IN THE U.S. AS IT IS A PROOF OF YOUR LEGAL USCIS (F-1/J-1) VISA STATUS.** The I-94 should be kept in the passport at all times.

Form I-20

SEVIS Form I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility for Non-immigrant “F-1” Student Status) is issued to a prospective student after acceptance. Form I-20 is one of the documents used to apply for F-1 visa; Form I-94; permission to leave and re-enter the U.S. as an F-1 student; transfer from one school to another; or a change of status. Your signature on the SEVIS Form I-20 means you understand immigration regulations and will comply with them. It also authorizes the school to release certain information about you to the USCIS if and when requested. **Keep this form with your passport. It is your responsibility as an F-1 student to keep a valid I-20 at all times. See the CGE immediately if I-20 is lost, damaged or you changed program of study.**

In case of transfers, the school will update your immigration record in SEVIS. If traveling outside of the U.S., you must have your I-20 signed by a Designated School Official (DSO) at least one week prior to the trip. Form I-20 automatically becomes invalid **once you are out of status.**

Form DS-2019

SEVIS Form DS-2019 (Certificate of Eligibility for Non-immigrant “J-1” Status) is issued to all exchange visitors and their dependents. Form DS-2019 is one of the documents used to apply for J-1 visa; Form I-94; permission to leave and re-enter the U.S. as a J-1 student; transfer from one school to another; or a change of status. Your signature on the SEVIS DS-2019 means you understand immigration regulations and will comply with them. **Keep this form with your passport. It is your responsibility as a J-1 student to keep a valid DS-2019 at all times. See the CGE immediately if I-20 is lost or damaged.**

DURATION OF STATUS

The completion of studies date in item #5 of the SEVIS Form I-20, or item #3 of the SEVIS Form DS-2019, is the date by which you are expected to complete requirements for your current program. If you are unable to complete your program of study by that date, consult with the CGE at least thirty (30) days before reaching the completion date. If you are eligible for program of study extension, the CGE will assist you to comply with extension requirements.

Responsibilities

Robert Morris University

Robert Morris University has been approved by the USCIS and Department of State (DOS) to work with SEVIS, an Internet-based system which provides tracking, monitoring and access to current information on non-immigrant students. SEVIS enables schools to issue I-20s/DS-2019s and to transmit electronic information via the internet to the USCIS and DOS throughout a student’s stay in the United States. Robert Morris must report the following about F-1/J-1 students each semester:

- Beginning and ending date of studies
- Visa classification
- Enrollment status
- Change of the student or dependent's legal name and address
- Sources of funding
- Practical training
- Date study is completed
- Academic or disciplinary actions due to criminal conviction
- Dropping below a full course of study
- Termination date and reason for termination
- Extensions, school transfers, changes in level of study, employment authorization, reinstatement
- Failure to maintain status or complete program of study

FULL COURSE OF STUDY

International students in F-1/J-1 immigration status are required by law to be full-time students. They must register full-time for Fall and Spring terms. They are not required to take classes during Summer term.

For **undergraduates**, full-time status means the student must register for at least **12 credits** each term and for **graduate** students, they must register for at least **9 credits** each term. If you think you are eligible for a reduced course load during any term, contact the CGE immediately to obtain permission to be registered for less than a full course of study in order to maintain legal F-1/J-1 status. Do not decide on your own to take less than a full load for whatever reason. If you do without permission, you will be **out-of-status**.

Exceptions to the full-time study regulation made for students who are:

1. Placed in an improper course level.
2. In the final term of their academic program and need less than the minimum full-time load to complete that program.
3. Encountering serious medical or academic problems.
4. Master's/PhD. degree students who have completed all course requirements and are working full-time on thesis or dissertation.

Note

If you register for less than a full course of study for any Fall or Spring term, you must submit a letter requesting permission to take less than full course load to the International & Exchange Student Services Specialist, Center for Global Engagement (CGE). This letter must be received at least a month (30 days) before the start of the term in question.

Students who do not have CGE approval for a reduced course load will be reported as being out-of-status to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

MAINTAINING YOUR STATUS

F-1/J-1 students are admitted to the United States for “duration of status” (D/S). This means students are permitted to be present in the U.S. as long as they comply with the rules and regulations pertaining to F-1/J-1 students as set by the USCIS/DOS.

There is a difference between an **F-1/J-1 visa** and **F-1/J-1 status**. An F-1/J-1 visa is the stamped page in a passport placed there for entry purposes only. F-1/J-1 status is granted once a student enters the country and is regulated by the USCIS/DOS. Even if your visa is valid, students can lose legal F-1/J-1 status if they do not comply with the applicable immigration laws regulating their stay in the U.S. Students who fail to maintain their F-1/J-1 status must apply for reinstatement and may be forced to leave the country.

To maintain F-1/J-1 status, students must adhere to USCIS/DOS regulations. Failure to do so will result in a student being considered “out-of-status” (illegal) by the USCIS/DOS. All F-1/J-1 students are required by law to do the following:

- a. Students on F-1/J-1 visa must pursue a full course of study during every academic session or semester (except during official school breaks) at the school listed on their valid Form I-20/DS-2019. Full time status/full course of study is defined at Robert Morris University as being enrolled in a minimum of 9 credits each fall and 9 credits each spring semester for graduate study and a minimum of 12 credits each fall and 12 credits each spring semester for undergraduate study.

Credits completed during summer semester are not considered in establishing full time status/full course of study for already enrolled students.

- b. Keep Form I-20/DS-2019 valid at all times by following proper procedures for an extension of stay, change of educational levels or programs of study, or transfer to another university. A new Form I-20/DS-2019 is required whenever a student changes degree levels or program (i.e., from a bachelors to a masters; from a Masters in Business Administration to a Masters in Information Sciences). Students must apply for an extension of their program of study if they cannot complete the degree by the ending date listed in Section 5 of Form I-20 or section 3 of Form DS-2019. An extension **MUST** be applied for 60 days in advance. Students who do not extend their program in a timely fashion will be considered “out-of-status” with USCIS/DOS and will have to submit an application for reinstatement of status.
- c. After completion of full course of study, students can remain in the U.S. for no longer than 60 days unless they have applied for Optional Practical Training (OPT), moving from one educational level to the other, or school transfer. Contact the Center for Global Engagement for more advice. J-1 students have a 30-day grace period only.
- d. Student must always notify the Center for Global Engagement of any change in address or phone number within 10 days of such change.

- e. Be sure your passport is valid at all times.
- f. Attend authorized school. Don't skip classes.
- g. Limit all employment to 20 hours per week while school is in session.
- h. Students must abstain from off-campus work unless specifically authorized under the regulations by USCIS/DOS. **Never work illegally, it can lead to deportation.**
- i. Students must abide by rules requiring disclosure of information and prohibition of criminal activities.

NOTE: Immigration rules and regulations are constantly changing. ALWAYS check with the Center for Global Engagement before traveling out of the U.S., transferring to another school, accepting employment (including internship), or completion of your studies.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR PROGRAM EXTENSION

You may apply for an extension of your study program provided:

1. You have continually maintained your F-1/J-1 status
2. The delay in completion is “caused by compelling academic or medical reasons, such as change of major or research topic, unexpected research problem, unexpected family emergencies, or documented illness”.
3. Your I-20/DS-2019 has not expired (Form I-20 item #5 or Form DS-2019 item #3)

A student who is ill and cannot attend school must submit a letter from the doctor to the Director, International Programs and Services, verifying that the student is unable to attend classes and why. This documentation must be received during the semester in question (not as an “after thought”) so it can be properly documented. For us to accept medical documentations, they must be from licensed medical doctors, doctors of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologists.

Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are NOT acceptable reasons for program extensions.

A student who fails to complete his or her program within the time prescribed in item 5 of the SEVIS Form I-20 or item 3 of the Form DS-2019, and cannot meet eligibility criteria for program extension is considered “out of status” and must apply for reinstatement to F-1/J-1 student status.

You must apply for an extension of your study program within sixty (60) days before the completion date on your I-20/DS-2019. You must contact the Center for Global Engagement

immediately so that you will have enough time to prepare your application. Also contact Center for Global Engagement immediately if your completion date has passed.

If you fail to comply with your responsibilities, you will not be eligible to continue any type of employment (even on-campus employment through a scholarship, fellowship, or assistantship) or to apply for school transfer, practical training, or other F-1/J-1 benefits.

AVOID BEING A “PUBLIC CHARGE”

International students in the U.S. sometimes experience financial difficulties similar to those experienced by American students. Although the U.S. government has benefit programs designed to assist low-income families living in the United States, most of these programs are only available to U.S. citizens and U.S. permanent residents. Non-immigrants on F, H, and J visas are not eligible. Unfortunately, administrators of many public assistance programs rarely have the expertise to assess eligibility based on immigrant status.

Remember that when you applied for your student or other non-immigrant visa, you had to demonstrate to the U.S. Embassy/Consulate that you had the means to support not only yourself but also your family members if they accompanied you. Acceptance of public assistance can be a violation of your immigration status under the “public charge” ground of exclusion. “Public charge” is a term used by the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the State Department to classify persons who have become dependent on federal or state assistance programs. If the USCIS/DOS finds that you have become a “public charge” because you have accepted public assistance, you could be subject to deportation or denied re-entry to the United States after a trip home. Your non-immigrant visa could even be canceled and you might also be expected to pay back the government for the amount of benefits you have received. **Such a decision is extremely difficult to reverse, so be careful!** Examples of public assistance programs that are not open to non-immigrants are:

- Aid to families with Dependent Children (AFDC)
- Medicaid, which provides reimbursement for medical care for low-income persons
- Food stamps, which provide low-income families with coupons that they use to purchase food
- Some federal housing programs
- Cash assistance for low-income individuals or families

****Important Reminder:****

Remember that even if the administrator of a benefit program finds you eligible for a program and encourages you to apply for benefits, you should NOT apply without checking with the CGE. The benefit administrator may not understand that accepting these benefits could affect your immigration status!

TRANSFER/CHANGE OF PROGRAMS OR SCHOOLS

Eligibility for transfer of degree programs/field of study

The student must:

1. Be fully admitted to the new program.
2. Obtain Form I-20 for the new educational program.
3. Enroll in the new educational program during the 60-day grace period following completion of studies or after completion of optional practical training.

Transferring Schools:

A student who is maintaining a valid F-1 status may transfer that status from one USCIS approved school to another by following the transfer procedure outlined below. If you wish to transfer from one school to another you need to:

1. Notify the Center for Global Engagement of your intention to transfer in order to obtain the verification that you have maintained your student status and you are eligible for F-1 transfer.
2. Submit a letter of request to transfer to another school. With this, you are authorizing CGE to transfer your records in SEVIS to the new school.
3. Arrange for CGE to receive a "Transfer Form" from the new school.
4. Receive an acceptance and a SEVIS Form I-20 from the new school.
5. Obtain a new SEVIS I-20 from the school you plan to attend, and complete item 11 on the I-20 which is the student certification section. The I-20 must be submitted to the International Student Advisor at the new school within fifteen (15) days of beginning classes at that school. He/she must note that the transfer is complete. Keep all student copies of I-20's with your passport. I-20s are records of your F-1 status while studying in the U.S. Do not trash them no matter the age of the document.

If prior to your transfer you were not a full-time student at the previous school, you must apply for reinstatement to F-1 status before requesting a transfer.

If a student will travel outside of the United States immediately before transferring schools, he/she may transfer his/her immigration documents by re-entering the U.S. with the new I-20 of the school he/she will be attending next. The immigration officials will note the transfer upon re-entry to the United States. Visit CGE for more advice before embarking on this journey.

Note: J-1 students please contact CGE for further information on transfer of programs or schools.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

F-1/J-1 students are admitted to the U.S. to study. Before a student may be issued an F-1/J-1 visa and admitted to the U.S., the student must show that sufficient funds are available for study. USCIS/DOS rules allow F-1/J-1 students to work in the U.S., but only under certain circumstances. Students must maintain lawful student status.

To be eligible for all types of employment authorization, you must be in and continuously maintain lawful F-1/J-1 status. To maintain eligibility, you must have employment authorization and you must limit your work to no more than twenty (20) hours per week while school is in session. **Do not assume that you are eligible to work without first contacting the CGE.**

There are five categories of employment available to F-1/J-1 students, they are:

1. On-Campus employment
2. Off-Campus employment authorized because of severe economic hardship
3. Special Student Relief program, which is based on the on-campus and economic hardship employment categories
4. Certain employment sponsored by international organizations
5. Practical training (curricular and optional practical training)

ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

Students on F-1 visas may work on-campus up to 20 hours a week during the academic year (Fall and Spring semesters) and full-time during vacation periods. At Robert Morris University, a student is allowed to work full-time during vacation periods provided he or she intends to register for the subsequent academic semester. Working over the 20 hour limit is a violation of visa status. A student may begin working as soon as he or she arrives on the campus, or if you are transferring from another U.S. institution, once you have completed the transfer notification procedure. For details about available jobs, contact the Career Center, located at the ground floor of the Patrick Henry building to see the Career Counselor.

If you should have a visa other than F-1, please contact the CGE to discuss employment opportunities.

Finding a job

International students are not eligible for Federal “work-study” funds and cannot hold these jobs on campus. They must be hired on “departmental funds.” Several departments regularly hire students on departmental funds. Others may have a special project for which they have funds. Students may find jobs by talking with other international students, who work on campus and by making personal inquiries with departments. They can also visit the Career Center located at the ground floor of the Patrick Henry building to see the Career Counselor.

Jobs that qualify as on-campus employment include direct employment by the school, and other employment on the school premises, as long as the employer provides direct services to the students e.g. bookstore, cafeteria, etc.

On-Campus Employment, School Transfer and Completion of Studies

If a student who has been issued a SEVIS Form I-20 to begin a new program in accordance with USCIS regulations, and who intends to enroll for the next regular academic term at the institution that issued the Form I-20, he/she may continue on-campus employment incident to status. Please note that if you intend to continue further study in the U.S., you may not be employed on campus after you've completed a course of study unless you have been granted permission to engage in optional practical training (OPT).

Note: J-1 students please contact CGE for further information about on-campus employment.

OFF-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT BASED UPON SEVERE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

You are eligible for off-campus employment based on severe economic hardship if you:

1. Are in lawful F-1 status.
2. Are in good academic standing.
3. Have been in F-1 status for at least one academic year.
4. Can demonstrate that the employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship due to unforeseen circumstances beyond your control **and that employment on-campus is unavailable or otherwise insufficient to meet your needs.**

This employment is strictly for twenty (20) hours or less per week when school is in session and it is subject to USCIS approval. You may work full-time between terms (when school is not in session) and during summer vacations but you must obtain the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) before the start of the employment. Visit CGE immediately for application forms and advice.

The renewal of the work authorization is contingent upon the maintenance of the student's F-1 status. It is automatically terminated if you fail to maintain lawful status or if you complete your course of study earlier than the expected completion date marked on Item #5 of your I-20. Contact the CGE for more information.

Note: J-1 students please contact CGE for further information about off-campus employment.

EMPLOYMENT WITH AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

This F-1 employment benefit allows F-1 students to work for recognized international organizations. This type of work permission is rare for Robert Morris University students because there are no recognized international organizations in Pittsburgh. However, if you have a summer job opportunity in another city, you may want to investigate this option further. Please contact the CGE for more information.

Note:

Students with F-1 visas have limited off-campus employment opportunities. Students must be enrolled for at least one year before opportunities become available. Approval by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is required, unless work is in the form of an internship for academic credits. Approval is very difficult to obtain, and students should meet individually with the CGE when off-campus employment appears to be necessary.

* J-1 students please contact CGE for further information on employment with an international organization.

PRACTICAL/ACADEMIC TRAINING

Practical/Academic training is an immigration approved employment, which allows the F-1/J-1 student to gain experience in his/her field of study. Under “Practical Training” which applies to F-1s, there are two types, Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT). Internships qualify as CPT. Academic Training for J-1s is limited to 18 months (36 months for postdoctoral training) and requires a job offer.

****Important NOTE:****

Questions about individual student employment limits should be addressed to the Center for Global Engagement (CGE).

* J-1 students please contact CGE for further information on Practical Training

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

Curricular Practical Training must be an integral part of an established curriculum in the student’s course of study. This includes internships, externships, and cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the university. Check with the CGE to be sure the employment you have obtained qualifies for Curricular Practical Training. A request for authorization for CPT must be approved by your department and CGE prior to the student’s commencement of employment. This information must be entered into SEVIS to reach the USCIS before the student can start to work. Contact the CGE for details about CPT.

Note

Curricular Practical Training must not exceed 20 hours when school is in session. You must be simultaneously enrolled to maintain lawful F-1 status.

Eligibility Requirements

Undergraduate F-1 students must have completed at least one academic year of full-time study to be eligible for any form of Curricular Practical Training. If you qualify, visit CGE for advice. If you are a graduate student, you are maintaining lawful F-1 status, and the proposed employment is a required part of your studies, then you may apply for permission to engage in Curricular Practical Training whenever your program requires it, even if it is immediately upon beginning your studies. However, a letter or email from your department approving the internship must be submitted to the Director of CGE. Contact CGE for more information.

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

Optional Practical Training is a twelve-month off-campus employment, which is designed to provide you with an opportunity to gain actual work experience in your field of study. This employment must be directly related to your course of study and must be commensurate with the student's educational level. It is not affected by the student's participation in the Curricular Practical Training/internship/s. **However, if a student had engaged in full-time CPT for a year or more, he or she is ineligible for OPT.** The work may occur anywhere in the United States. Optional Practical Training can be authorized at the following times:

- During the student's annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session if the student is currently enrolled and eligible, and intends to register for the next term or session.
- While school is in session, provided that it does not exceed twenty (20) hours per week while school is in session and the student is in his/her last semester. This is deemed "Part-time Pre-completion Optional Practical Training". Also the student must have been enrolled for at least one year.
- After completion of all course requirements for the degree, excluding thesis or equivalent, if the student is in Bachelors, Masters, or Doctoral degree program.
- After completion of the course of study.

As from January 2003, the USCIS has approved an OPT for each academic level which means a student can now participate in OPT at the undergraduate level, another at the Master's level and yet another at the Doctoral level.

On April 4, 2008, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) approved additional seventeen (17) months of OPT to students in Science, Technologies, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs, to bring their OPT to a total of twenty-nine (29) months. **See discussion below on "OPT Extension."**

Eligibility for Optional Practical Training (OPT)

A student is eligible to apply for OPT if he/she meets the following criteria.

1. If he/she has been lawfully enrolled full-time for at least one academic session (Fall and Spring):
 - As an F-1 student.
 - As a full-time student at a USCIS approved school in another nonimmigrant status before changing your status to F-1.
 - Before falling out of status as an F-1 student, and is subsequently reinstated to student status by USCIS.
2. If the employment to be pursued is directly related to the student's area of study and commensurate with the student's educational level.

Part-time vs. Full-time Optional Practical Training

Part-time Pre-completion Optional Practical Training: If a student still has coursework remaining to complete his/her educational program in the last semester, he/she is limited to twenty (20) hours per week of Optional Practical Training while school is in session. Such a student can, however, apply for full-time Optional Practical Training during his/her official school breaks. Graduate students, who have completed all coursework for the degree, excluding thesis, dissertation, etc., can apply for Optional Practical Training. Remember that there are a total of twelve (12) months available and training before completion of degree will count against the twelve (12) months and reduce the time available after the degree is awarded.

Full-time Post-completion Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training after completion of course of study will only be granted for full-time use i.e. forty (40) hours per week. You must apply for this training within the first week of your last semester before graduation. Your application forms must reach the USCIS office at least ninety (90) days before the completion of your studies. Visit the CGE for more information.

Duration of Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training is available for a cumulative maximum of twelve (12) months except for students in the Science, Technologies, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) program who have a total of twenty-nine (29) months. If you engage in a part-time Optional Practical Training while in school, this period will be deducted from the twelve (12) month limit at 50% rate. Every two (2) months of part-time Optional Practical Training will count for one (1) month of full-time. However, if you start your Optional Practical Training after completion of course of study, then you are entitled to twelve (12) months of employment.

Application and Authorization

Please contact the CGE to obtain the Optional Practical Training (OPT) packet. Your OPT application must be processed at least one hundred (100) days prior to graduation.

You cannot begin employment until Employment Authorization Document (EAD) has been received, and, the start date has been reached. **OPT can only be authorized for a maximum aggregate period of twelve (12) months (twenty-nine (29) months for students in the STEM programs) and it is now approved for each educational level i.e. Bachelors, Master's, and Doctoral levels.**

****Important NOTE:****

The USCIS/DOS has provided a variety of opportunities for you to be lawfully employed during your time in the F-1/J-1 status. Working illegally or without authorization is a serious violation of your status. Please consult with the CGE before accepting any employment off-campus. You are required to comply with the immigration rules and regulations as they pertain to F-1 students. The staff of CGE will counsel and advise you regarding your responsibilities. If you fail to comply with your responsibilities, you may not be eligible for benefits normally available to F-1 students.

Importance of the Actual Date of Completion of the Program of Study/Grace Period

USCIS regulations refer to the date you complete requirements for a program of study, not the date you participate in graduation ceremonies or the date, which is the end of the academic term. Your lawful F-1 status expires after the grace period which is sixty (60) days after you complete your degree requirements. You are expected to leave the U.S. by that date unless you have filed a timely application for Optional Practical Training or made other arrangements to lawfully remain in the U.S.

Change in Employer after Optional Practical Training Has Been Authorized

You may change employer/s during an authorized practical training provided each position is **directly related to your field of study** and **commensurate with your educational level**.

Travel and re-entry after completion of studies but before the issuance of EAD

Be advised that traveling outside of the United States after the application for Employment Authorization Document (EAD) (without receiving the actual approval) may constitute an abandonment of the application. At this point, re-entry may not be guaranteed. Be very cautious about travel unless you have received your EAD. Contact the CGE for more information.

Travel and Re-entry while engaging in Optional Practical Training (OPT)

If you are engaged in part-time OPT before the completion of your program, follow the same procedure for visits abroad and reentry as all F-1/J-1 students.

If you engage in OPT after the completion of your studies, and you travel outside the United States temporarily (less than 5 months), you may be readmitted to resume your employment for the remainder of the period authorized on your EAD card, provided you present:

1. Your I-20 ID that was endorsed by your DSO within the last one year
2. An unexpired Employment Authorization Document (EAD).
3. A letter from your employer stating that you would be returning to your employment.
Also carry a job offer letter if you have it.

Students who fail to meet these requirements may be denied re-entry into the United States. Please consult the CGE before embarking on a journey during Optional Practical Training.

Travel and Re-entry after completion of studies with EAD card but without a job

If your OPT has been approved and you depart before you get a job, OPT ends and you cannot re-enter. Please consult CGE if you find yourself in this kind of situation.

EMPLOYMENT FOR F-2 DEPENDENTS

USCIS regulations prohibit all study and employment for F-2 dependents (spouse and children) of F-1 students.

Note: J-2 dependents please contact CGE for further information on study and employment.

OPT EXTENSION FOR QUALIFIED STUDENTS

On April 4, 2008, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) approved OPT Extension to students whose academic programs are in the Sciences, Technologies, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Under the new rule, these students will be eligible to receive a seventeen (17)-month STEM extension of post-completion OPT. Under the new rule F-1 students seeking initial post-completion OPT must apply during their 60-day departure preparation periods in the same way that they are allowed to apply for a change to H-1B status during their departure preparation periods. Students may apply for an OPT extension at any time prior to the expiration date of their 12-month OPT.

Eligibility requirements for the 17-month post-completion OPT Extension:

1. Student must have a bachelor's, master's or doctorate degree included in the STEM Designated Degree Program List.
2. Student must currently be in approved post-completion OPT period based on a designated STEM degree.
3. Student's employer must be enrolled in E-Verify program with USCIS.
4. Student must apply on time (i.e., before the current post-completion OPT expires).

Rationale for OPT Extension:

This extension of the OPT period for STEM degree holders gives U.S. employers two chances to recruit these highly desirable graduates through the H-1B process, as the extension is long enough to allow for H-1B petitions to be filed in two successive fiscal years. Under the prior regulations, F-1 students had to apply for post-completion OPT prior to graduation. This rule allows F-1 students seeking initial post-completion OPT to apply during their 60-day departure preparation periods in the same way that they are allowed to apply for a change to H-1B status during their departure preparation periods. Students may apply for an OPT extension at any time prior to the expiration date of their current OPT period.

Eligible STEM degrees

The STEM Designated Degree Program List includes the following courses of study:

- Computer Science Application
- Actuarial Science
- Engineering
- Engineering Technologies
- Science Technologies
- Biological and Biomedical Sciences
- Mathematics and Statistics
- Military Technologies
- Physical Sciences
- Medical Scientist

Application Process for OPT Extension

Be sure your post-completion OPT has not lapsed before you apply for OPT Extension. Complete Form I-765, especially #17 with employer's E-Verify information.

- Form I-20 must be endorsed by PDSO/DSO
- Copy of STEM degree must be submitted.
- Pay application fee of \$380

***Note:** To be eligible for an OPT extension the student must currently be in an approved post-completion OPT period based on a designated STEM degree. Thus, for example, a student with

an undergraduate degree in a designated STEM field, but currently in OPT based on a subsequent MBA degree, would not be eligible for an OPT extension.

Contact CGE for OPT packet and more information on application.

Important Note:

If your post-completion OPT expires while the 17-month extension application is pending, students who timely filed their STEM extension applications with USCIS will receive extension of employment authorization after their current employment authorization expires, but for no more than 180 days (6 months).

TRAVEL AND RE-ENTRY

Visits Abroad and Re-entry in F-1/J-1 Status

Whenever you leave the United States temporarily and you wish to return to continue your studies at Robert Morris University, make sure you secure necessary documents to:

- Permit your entry to another country
- Permit re-entry to the United States

Before traveling, make sure the following documents are up-to-date:

- Passport – Be sure you have a valid passport.
- U.S. Visa - Check your U.S. entry visa (which is stamped in your passport) to be sure that it is still valid for additional entries. If not, you will need to get a new entry visa from the U.S. consulate or embassy while you are outside the U.S. (Special conditions apply when traveling to Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean Islands for less than 30 days. For more information, visit the CGE).
- SEVIS I-20/DS-2019 - Have your I-20/DS-2019 endorsed by a Designated School Official (DSO) or Responsible Office (RO). Verify that the information on your I-20/DS-2019 is still correct.

In addition, you may want to take the following with you on the journey:

- If you are pre-registered for the upcoming semester, we suggest that you take a copy of that registration with you.
- A copy of your transcript.
- Ask the Academic Services to prepare an “Enrollment Certification Form” for you. This will verify that you have been attending and are expected to return to continue your studies at Robert Morris University.
- When you apply for a new visa, the officer will ask to see your financial documentation.

- If you are traveling to a location other than your home country, you may need a visa to enter that country. For more information contact the CGE, or that country's embassy or consulate well ahead of your planned trip; four months is not too early.

Travel In-Country: If you intend to travel within the U.S. during your stay, there are no special documents necessary. Just make sure to carry legal identifying documents in your possession should any problem arise.

Travel Out Of U.S.: If you, or your accompanying dependents, intend to travel temporarily out of the U.S. and return, you will need to have CGE check your documents. All students traveling anywhere outside of the U.S. must have a valid SEVIS I-20 for re-entry. You will also need to have a valid U.S. visa to re-enter and, of course, your passport must be valid. If necessary, make sure you obtain a new U.S. visa at the U.S. Embassy/Consulate abroad before returning as you will not be permitted entry to the U.S. without a valid visa.

Please come to the CGE at least one week before your travel to have your DSO endorse your SEVIS I-20. If you are authorized to engage in Optional Practical Training, you must carry your EAD in addition to the endorsed SEVIS Form I-20.

Travel to Canada, Mexico, Or the Caribbean Islands: Mexico and Canada have distinct entry requirements, which must be investigated by the student. Please check these websites for more information.

- The Canadian Embassy home page is at: www.canadianembassy.org
- The Mexican Embassy home page is at: www.embassyofmexico.org/english/main2.htm

Note: If you have changed to an F-1 status in the U. S. and are leaving the country for a short time (less than 5 months) to return and complete your education, you are required to apply for the F-1 visa while outside the US before returning.

AFTER COMPLETION OF STUDIES

Once you have completed your program of study at RMU, you have a few immigration options.

1. If you did not apply for OPT/Academic Training, you are expected to depart the U.S before the end of the sixty-day grace period for F-1; thirty (30) days for J-1.
2. You may continue in F-1 status by pursuing further F-1 studies either at Robert Morris or in another USCIS approved school.
3. You may apply for OPT/Academic Training at least ninety (90) days before completing your course of study or during the 60-day grace period after completion of study.
4. You may apply to change your F-1 status to another non-immigrant classification during the grace period, no later than sixty (60) days as an F-1, or thirty (30) days as a J-1, after the completion of your course of study.

Note:

If an F-1/J-1 student does not choose one of these options after completing his or her program, he or she will be “out of status.” That student’s “duration of status” will end after grace period.

Failure to Depart

A failure to depart is considered **a violation of status**, thereby making the student **deportable**.

* J-1 students please contact CGE for further information on your options after completion of studies.

ADDITIONAL IMMIGRATION INFORMATION For F-1 Students

EAD APPLICATION PROCEDURE

To apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), all applicants must submit the following (in the listed order below):

- Check or money order payable to the US Department of Homeland Security. Consult CGE for information on the amount. (Do not write on the back of the check.)
- Form I-765 (available from the CGE)
 - In item #3, make sure that the address you indicate will be valid for 2 to 3 months.
 - In item #16, indicate the appropriate code (you should also write next to the code the type of eligibility category) which are:
 - (c)(3)(i) F-1 Optional Practical Training
 - (c)(3)(ii) F-1 Off-campus with qualifying international organization
 - (c)(3)(iii) F-1 Off campus employment due to Severe Economic Hardship.
- Photocopy of Form I-94 (front and back)
- Photocopy of the last EAD (front and back) – if available and applicable.
- 2 Photographs taken no earlier than 30 days before submission to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The applicant’s head should be bare unless the person is wearing a headdress as required by a religious order to which he/she belongs. The photo should not be larger than 1 1/2 x 1 1/2 inches, with the distance from the top of the head to just below the chin about 1 1/4 inches.
- Photocopies of the identification page(s) from the passport (including the page that indicates the passport expiration date).
- Photocopy of the most recent visa

Additionally, for the following, you must submit:

F-1 Optional Practical Training:

- ❑ Photocopy of SEVIS I-20 ID with Optional Practical Training recommendation and DSO's signature on page 3
- ❑ Photocopy of all previous I-20s (all pages)

F-1 Employment with International Organization:

- ❑ Letter of certification from the international organization that the proposed employment is within the scope of its sponsorship
- ❑ Photocopy of I-20 ID endorsed by the DSO within the past 30 days

F-1 Employment Due To Severe Economic Hardship:

- ❑ Photocopy of I-20 ID
- ❑ Evidence/explanation detailing the unforeseen economic circumstances that cause the hardship situation and the unavailability/insufficiency of on-campus employment
- ❑ A list of assets, income and expenses

F-1 Employment under the Special Student Relief Provisions:

- ❑ Photocopy of I-20 ID, with certification by the CGE
- ❑ Evidence/explanation detailing the unforeseen economic circumstances that caused the hardship situation
- ❑ A list of assets, income and expenses

The address you use on the I-765 determines which USCIS Center will process the application. All applications from the Pittsburgh area must be submitted to:

USCIS Service Center
75 Lower Welden Street
ST. ALBANS, VT 05479-0001

Processing time at Vermont Service Center may range from 1 to 3 months. All EADs are mailed to the address provided in the application. Currently all EADs are mailed to CGE. Therefore you must notify us with any change in your address.

INVITING DEPENDENTS AND GUESTS TO U.S.A.

DEPENDENTS:

If after arriving in the U.S., you (F-1/J-1 student) wish to invite your immediate family (wife, husband, or children (unmarried under the age of 21) to join you, you must notify the CGE at once. Dependents will be issued SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019s in the student's name, but also bearing their names individually, for US visa applications. CGE would need to see a proof of financial support (\$5,000.00 for each dependent) for the family's stay before issuing the I-20s. Dependents of F-1 visa holders will receive F-2 visas; for J-1 visa holders, dependents will receive J-2 status.

Note:

Once in the U.S., dependents in F-2 status may not accept employment of any kind, at any time. A J-2 is permitted to work once USCIS has approved and processed the Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

TEMPORARY VISITORS:

If you intend to invite family members other than spouse/children for a short visit to the U.S., you need not send **any** forms, only a **personal** letter to the prospective guests inviting them to visit for a specified time will do. With this, the visitor would apply for a **tourist visa** from the U.S. Embassy/Consulate abroad.

UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES ADDRESS

Some of the previously described procedures require you to physically take the application to the designated USCIS office. The address of the regional USCIS office located in Pittsburgh is listed below.

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
3000 Sidney Street
Suite 200
Pittsburgh, PA 15203
Tel: (412) 390-3900

For additional information on immigration issues, we encourage you to visit the USCIS web-site at www.uscis.gov or contact the Center for Global Engagement at (412) 397-2151.

HEALTH ISSUES

OFFICE OF HEALTH SERVICES MOON TOWNSHIP CAMPUS

The Robert Morris University Office of Health Services offers a level of care similar to that available in a primary care physician's office, with special attention to the unique needs of young adults. The staff is committed to the concepts of "wellness" and hopes that students come to view the Office of Health Services as a "Wellness Center," as well as a place to come when injured or ill. We believe that each individual is responsible for his or her health and that traditional medical care is only one part of health care. Self-care is an important part of health care and includes the process of functioning on one's behalf to promote a healthy lifestyle and detect and prevent possible illness. We would like to be partners in your health care and help you identify areas of self-improvement that could lead to higher levels of physical, emotional and spiritual well being.

Confidentiality

Your health record is a private matter between you and your health care provider. Information can only be released with your permission.

Location and Policies

The Office of Health Services is located on the second floor of the Edward Nicholson Student Center on the Moon Township Campus. A registered nurse is on duty to administer treatment and to make referrals to the University physician and to local hospitals. The number to call is (412) 397-3233 to reach the Health Center.

All resident and non-resident students are required to complete a health form before joining the University. Any student who neglects to turn in a health form may not be treated.

General care will be given to all residents. Some non-prescription medications are provided free of charge. Drugs prescribed by the University physician will be paid for by the student. The Office of Health Services will aid students in obtaining appointments with physicians and dentists in the community, if necessary. Any fees incurred in this manner will be the responsibility of the student.

Commuter students please contact health services at (412) 397-3233 for information.

The Pittsburgh Center does not provide health services. Students needing emergency medical care while attending classes are referred to **Public Safety**. This department may contact the city paramedics and/or at the option of the student contact an individual requested by the student. Students feeling ill or involved in an accident should contact **Public Safety**.

HEALTH INSURANCE

As of fall 2003, all international students must show a proof of valid Health Insurance otherwise, they will be mandated to buy the coverage offered by Robert Morris University. This service will be billed directly to the student's tuition.

Medical expenses in the United States are usually very high, it is therefore required and extremely important that you acquire health insurance for yourself and for any family members who have accompanied you to this country. Please review several health plans and health insurance brochures before deciding which one is best suited to your needs. For questions and further instruction, please visit the Office of Health Services or the Center for Global Engagement.

There are several factors to be considered while deciding on health insurance, some of them are:

- a. The premium, which is the amount you have to pay per month or per year for insurance coverage.
- b. Exclusions for “pre-existing conditions” and other items such as maternity costs, psychiatric counseling, etc.
- c. Coverage of preventive care.
- d. The maximum limit which the insurer will cover.
- e. Deductibles, which mean the amount that you have to pay per visit to a doctor or specialist before the insurance payments begin.
- f. Co-payments, which indicate the percentage of the bill that you have to pay, even after you meet the deductible amount.

You can also indicate personal preferences while choosing a doctor or specialist, such as male or female, etc.

While visiting doctors or specialists, they may ask you several questions; answer them as plainly and honestly as you can. Do not hesitate to ask the doctor any questions; try to clarify all your doubts. If you do not understand why the doctor has recommended a certain kind of treatment, ask him or her why you need that treatment. The physician will expect you to ask questions and will be more than willing to allay your doubts.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Any student may contact the Center for Student Success regarding a student with personal or emotional adjustment concerns. The Crisis Intervention Counselor will be available for assistance in such situations. Call (412) 397-4349 to schedule an appointment with the Crisis Intervention Counselor.

HYGIENE AND CLEANLINESS

Americans generally find the natural smells of people's bodies and breath unpleasant. They feel very strongly about this issue, and most Americans use deodorants, perfumes and breathe mints to avoid odor of any sort from emanating from their bodies. They expect the same from people they interact with. Most Americans will quickly back away from a person who has body odor or bad breath. Moreover, this is a rather sensitive topic, so they may not even mention it. One must, therefore, be very careful to mask all natural body and breathe odors.

Most Americans also value personal cleanliness. Of course, this is true of almost all cultures, but be aware of the fact that people may back away from a person if they consider that person "dirty".

SEXUAL HEALTH

Sexual matters are entirely a matter of personal choice, yet if you choose to be sexually active, you should be careful not to contract any sexually transmitted disease (STD). Unprotected sexual activity can lead to sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancy. If you suspect or discover that you have contracted a sexually transmitted disease, do not panic. Realize that you have to get help. Early detection and treatment is important because most STD's can be cured if detected early. Contact the Health Services office at (412) 397-3233.

HIV/AIDS

One of the incurable STD's is AIDS, which is caused by the HIV virus. The HIV virus can be transmitted through sexual intercourse, through blood by sharing of needles or blood transfusion, or through birth from mother to child. Anyone infected with the HIV virus is presumed to be infectious to others and may remain so for life.

If you have practiced unsafe sex, or are experiencing any STD symptoms, see your doctor, gynecologist or health care physician immediately.

Some health service clinics you can go to are:

Allegheny County Health Departments STD Clinic – 3441 Forbes Ave, Oakland
Tel.: (412) 578-8080

Persad Center – 5150 Penn Avenue
Tel.: (412) 441-9786

Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force (PATF)
Tel.: (800) 662-6080

Pregnancy

If you suspect or discover that you are pregnant, it is important for you to verify it quickly. If the pregnancy is unplanned, there are many options and alternatives. Know all your options before you reach a decision. If possible, consult a friend or a consultant for guidance and support. You may also call the Office of Health Services at (412) 262-8233 for advice.

Some of the clinics you can go to are:

Allegheny Reproductive Health Center – 200 N. Highland Ave, Suite 920.
Tel.: (412) 661-8811

Allegheny Woman's Center – 121 N. Highland Avenue, Suite 333.
Tel.: (412) 362-2920

Bethany Christian Services – 694 Lincoln Ave.
Tel.: (412) 734-2662

Careline – Tel.: (800) 273-8000

The Children's Home of Pittsburgh – 5618 Kentucky Ave. Tel.: (412) 441-4484

Genesis – Tel.: (412) 761-5505

Healthy Start – 907 West St. Tel.: (412) 247-1000

Lifeline – Room 401, Investment Bldg., 239 4th Ave., Pittsburgh. Tel.: (412) 562-0543

Planned Parenthood – 209 9th Street, Pittsburgh. Tel.: (412) 434-8971

Rape or Domestic Violence

If you are a victim of domestic violence or rape, remember that you are not at fault, and you have to do whatever you can to stop it. The best way to stop domestic violence is to get help. You may call the International Student Counselor to discuss this.

Some of the help centers in Pittsburgh are:

Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh. Tel.: (412) 687-8005

Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (PAAR) – 81 S. 19th Street, South Side.
Tel.: (412) 765-2731

CULTURE SHOCK

COPING WITH CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Culture shock is not quite as shocking or as sudden as most people anticipate. It is the process of adjusting and settling into a new environment, whether it's a new school, home, job or country. It takes time and energy, and affects the mind and body. It is part of the process of learning a new culture that is called "cultural adaptation." Always remember that culture shock is a normal process and every one goes through it at one point or the other.

Some surprises always await you when you arrive in a new environment. People may walk and talk more quickly, traffic patterns may be different and confusing, and buildings may look different than expected. Such differences are easy to see and quickly learned. The manner in which classes are taught, registration for courses, and other procedures may seem strange at first. You may become homesick, just missing everyone you had said "good bye" to when leaving your country. We do understand. The Center for Global Engagement (CGE) is the best place to go for help with such matters. At the CGE, we attempt to ease your adjustment to the country and the Robert Morris community; however, that feeling of ease and comfort may take time to achieve depending on the individual.

Gradually, as you become more involved in Student Activities on campus and get to know the people around you, the culture shock will begin to decrease. Our advice to you will be, "Get involved in RMU activities as quickly as possible and keep an open mind." This attitude will help you make friends easily. While you are trying to make friends and adapt to the American culture, it is important for you to retain your cultural identity.

Here are a few tips that will help you in the adjustment process.

1. Listen and Observe

A lot can be learned if one observes the way in which people interact. Pay attention to the way people speak and act – this includes observation of verbal as well as non-verbal communication, namely gestures and actions.

2. Ask Questions

If you do not understand what is going on, or what is expected of you, do not hesitate to ask questions and clarify your doubts. Most people will gladly help you out. If you do not understand people's slang or accent, politely ask them to repeat what they have said.

3. Keep an Open Mind

You may see a lot of things that are done differently in the U.S. as compared to your home country. Do not assume that what is different is automatically bad. Try to understand the locally prevalent values and attitudes.

4. *Curiosity and Openness*

It is good to be curious and want to know more about the culture of the place that you have come to. Try to learn more about the traditions and values upheld. Similarly, if people ask you about your culture, be open and honest. This builds up trust and confidence between you and others.

5. *Handling Confusion and Frustration*

It is common to feel confused and frustrated when in a new place. Do not be overly concerned about it. As you get used to the place, the confusion and frustration will subside and you will begin to feel like you belong.

6. *Become Involved*

Try and become involved in student groups or organizations. This will help you to meet people with similar interests and hobbies. It will be an opportunity for you to discover new talents.

EDUCATION AND U.S. CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The system of higher education in the U.S. varies from that in other countries. The degrees awarded and duration, and types of programs as well as the types of educational institutions, are varied within the U.S. system. It is important to have an understanding of the University system.

Robert Morris University is recognized and accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Universities. The University confers three types of degrees as well as a variety of certificates of study. The degrees are:

Bachelors – awarded after completion of an undergraduate program.

Masters – first degree awarded at graduate level.

Doctorate – highest degree (2nd degree awarded at graduate level).

Each program within the University has specific requirements for completion. You must check this at the beginning of your program to eliminate any confusion. The method of determining qualifications to receive degrees in American institutions is fairly standard. There are quantitative and qualitative measures used.

Quantitative measures involve the earning of “credits.” Every program requires a minimum number of credits to graduate. Please refer to your checksheet for the exact number of credits that you are required to earn for the completion of your chosen program. Every course in a program is assigned a value in terms of “credit hours.” Most courses are assigned the value of three credits. This value is approximately equal to the number of hours the class meets each

week. This implies that if a student has registered for a three-credit course, the class would probably meet for three hours a week.

In addition, each program will require the completion of certain “core” courses that are mandatory, and certain “electives”, which the student can choose.

With respect to **qualitative measures**, performance is evaluated in terms of grades. At the end of each term, a student will receive a grade for each course that he or she has taken. Grades are given out as follows:

<u>Grade</u>		<u>Quality Points</u>
A	Excellent	(4.00 points)
A-		(3.67 points)
B+		(3.33 points)
B	Good	(3.00 points)
B-		(2.67 points)
C+		(2.33 points)
C	Adequate	(2.00 points)
D	Poor	(1.00 point)
F	Failing	(0.00 points)
I	Incomplete	(0.00 points)
P	Passing	Credit granted/ No QPA Computed
W	Withdrew	No credit granted
L	Audit	No credit granted
N	Competency not met	No credit granted

It is important to note that every instructor may have his or her own criteria for evaluation. The grades awarded would therefore depend on each individual instructor. Some courses also require a minimum grade to pass the course, for example Communication Skills courses usually require a minimum grade of C to pass. Most graduate courses a minimum grade of B to pass.

The progress and achievement of a student is expressed in terms of “Quality Point Average” (QPA). This method combines the quantitative and qualitative measures of evaluation. The following formula is used to compute QPA.

The number of credits for each course is multiplied by the number of points corresponding to the grade awarded. The points for all the courses are added up to give the total of the quality points. This total is then divided by the total number of credits earned to give the QPA.

For example:

Course	Credits	Grade Awarded	Points	Total Points
X	3	A	4	12
Y	3	B	3	9
Z	3	C	2	6
Total	9		Total	27

QPA = Total points divided by total credits = $27/9 = 3$ (B)

U.S. CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

U.S. university classroom procedures are different from other countries. Some of these differences include: exams during the term as opposed to at the end of the year; classroom discussion and participation on the part of the students, professor-student relationships (usually more informal than in other areas of the world).

An awareness of these different practices will contribute to your educational success. Individual professors usually outline course requirements, attendance policies, and the basis for grading, at the beginning of each term. Don't hesitate to check with professors and other students on procedures/policies if you have questions or concerns.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY/PLAGIARISM

Students are expected to do their own work in class, during exams and on assignments. Passing in another person's work as yours is considered a violation of the University's policy on academic integrity. To allow someone else to pass your work as his or hers is another version of the same offense and is punishable in the same manner.

Since the charge of plagiarism is serious, it is important for you to know how to work with other peoples' ideas responsibly. It is important to cite sources of information whenever you use other peoples' materials as references, whether printed or otherwise. If you are not sure as to how you should cite these references, ask your professor for his or her style of citation.

Plagiarism should not be confused with honest sharing of ideas. Writers get advice from different sources including friends and colleagues. In recognition of such contributions, you may want to acknowledge those people who have taken time to share their thoughts with you, in the acknowledgement page of your book or thesis. With this, you'll be thanking them and also acknowledging their contributions. You can read more on academic integrity and how to avoid plagiarism on our website www.rmu.edu.

DAY-TO-DAY ISSUES

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

You can travel in the Pittsburgh area on the bus. The Port Authority Transit (PAT) provides buses that run from downtown to various places in Pittsburgh. Refer to the PAT web-site www.portauthority.org or call (412) 442-2000 for information about buses that run through your area. Bus no. 25A runs between Robinson Towne Center (large shopping complex) and the Moon Township Campus. The schedule for this bus is available in the Office of Student Life located on the 2nd floor of the Nicholson Center.

RMU SHUTTLE SERVICE

The University runs a shuttle service between the Holiday Inn/Yorktown and the Moon Township Campus. For shuttle schedule, refer to the University web-site, or look for the postings around campus. For additional information contact Student Life.

DRIVING

Instead of traveling by public transportation or the University shuttle, you may choose to buy your own vehicle. In order to drive in Pennsylvania, you must have a valid driver's license. Even if you have a current International Driver's License and a Driver's License from your home country, you must still obtain a Pennsylvania Driver's License.

Before receiving a Pennsylvania Driver's License, you must apply for a Learner's Permit. You can obtain a Learner's Permit if you pass a physical examination, an eye examination and a written test. A driver's handbook is available, free of charge, for test preparation. The handbook reviews driving rules and regulations for the State of Pennsylvania. Additional information is available on the PennDOT web site at <http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/>.

AUTOMOBILES

Before buying an automobile, decide whether you want to buy a new or used vehicle, depending on your budget and the resale value of the car, among other factors. Also, consider insurance costs. If you drive, you must have liability insurance. You are financially responsible if your car injures someone or damages property. You should not drive without the minimum required automobile insurance.

DRIVER'S LICENSE AND STATE ID FOR NON-US CITIZENS

Many non-immigrants and their dependents obtain the Pennsylvania driver license or non-driving state ID card. In addition to providing visitors the opportunity to drive, state-issued photo identification can be a good alternative to the passport. The license or state ID card may be used when opening a bank account, paying via personal check, or going to bars and restaurants where alcohol is served. Each state has different requirements for the issuance of driver license and state ID cards. This information is for non-immigrant F, J, and H visitors who wish to obtain a Pennsylvania driver license or state ID card. The relevant rules are set by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (Penn DOT) under the direction of the Pennsylvania state legislature.

II. CONDITIONS AND LIMITATIONS

1. Non-immigrants granted admission to the US for less than one year and those with less than one year remaining on their non-immigrant document (I-20, IAP-66/DS-2019, or H1B/H4 Approval Notice) are NOT eligible to apply for a PA driver's license or state ID card. Generally, visitors who will be in the US for less than one year are expected to use their home country driver's license plus the international driver's permit (in English).
2. For identification, Penn DOT will not accept birth certificates which are issued outside the US.
3. Applicants must present their Social Security Number. For some visitors, including spouses in F2 and H4 status, and some in J2 status, Penn DOT will allow use of the I-94 number in place of the social security number. (See specific information on page 50.)
4. The validity period of the PA driver's license or state ID card will be the same as the validity period of the current non-immigrant document or four years, whichever is shorter.
5. All applicants are required to surrender any out-of-state driver's license or ID card prior to being issued a PA state ID or driver's license.

III. PROCESS

STEP 1: Request Driver's License/State ID Verification letter from the Center for Global Engagement

- For F1 students this letter is required for both the state ID and the driver's license.
- Letter will be available for pick up three days after request in the CGE.

STEP 2: Obtain Social Security Card (or Letter of Denial) from Social Security Administration

STEP 3: Gather required identification documents including proof of residency

2 Forms of Proof of Residency	
<p>For Students and Scholars Living Off Campus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current utility bill (gas, electric, telephone etc.) • Tax records • Lease Agreement • Mortgage Documents (if you own a home) 	<p>For Undergraduates Living On Campus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter Verifying On Campus Residency (request at Residence Life in Washington Hall) • Phone bill for long distance

Additional Required Documents	
F1	Passport + Visa + I-94 + I-20 + Social Security Number (SSN) + CGE Verification Letter
F2	Passport + Visa + I-94 + I-20 of F-1 + SSN or SSN denial letter + CGE Verification Letter
H1B	Passport + Visa + I-94 + Social Security Number (SSN) + Employer Verification Letter
H4	Passport + Visa + I-94 + SSN or SSN denial letter + Employer Verification Letter
J1	Passport + Visa + I-94 + IAP-66/DS2019 + Social Security Number (SSN) + CGE Verification Letter
J2	Passport + Visa + I-94 + IAP-66/DS2019 + SSN or SSN denial letter + CGE Verification Letter

Step 4: Study the PA Driver’s Manual available at any Driver’s License Center

- Follow the procedures to apply for state ID or driver license.

IV. OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

A. Social Security Number (SSN) and alternatives for dependants

Penn DOT requires the Social Security Number (SSN) from all applicants who are eligible to receive it; this includes people in F1, H1B and J1, as well as spouses in F2 and J2 status who have applied for and received work eligibility. Spouses in F2, H4 and J2 status who have not applied for work eligibility are not eligible for the SSN. Those who are not eligible must request and receive a letter of denial from the Social Security Administration in order to apply for the PA driver license. As of October 2002, those not eligible for the SSN may use the I-94 number as an alternative for driver license only. *NOTE:* For other official purposes, the I-94 number is not a substitute for the SSN.

- F1 and J1 students: Both are eligible for SSN provided they have secured on-campus employments. CGE has information on how to apply for a SSN.
- J1 scholars. All are eligible for the SSN. CGE has information on how to apply.

- F2 Dependents: F2 dependents are not eligible for SSNs. F2s must receive the letter of denial from the Social Security Administration and then may use the I-94 number for the license application.
- J2 Dependents: J2s who wish to work in the US may apply for work permission from INS and then apply for a SSN. J2s who do not apply to work are not eligible for an SSN; those J2s must get the letter of denial from the Social Security Administration and then use I-94 number for the license application.
- H4 Dependents: H4s are not eligible for the SSN. H4s must receive the letter of denial from the Social Security Administration and then may use the I-94 number for the license application.

B. Driver License Application Procedure

- Three tests are required for the license: vision, knowledge, and driving. Detailed information on the tests is available in the PA Driver’s Manual available in the CGE.
- Before you apply for a PA driver license you will be required to pass a physical exam. The physician’s recommendation is reported on DL-180 which is included in the PA Driver Manual.
- A waiver of some or all of these tests may be available for those who hold a US driver license.
- Reciprocity agreements exist for citizens of France and Germany, which allow for the transfer of a valid driver license without the skills or knowledge test. However, visitors from Germany or France must have non-immigrant documents which are valid for more than one year.

C. Local PA Driver’s License Centers

State Office Driver’s License Center	Penn Hills Driver’s License Center	Allison Park Driver’s License Center	Bridgeville Driver’s License Center
300 Liberty Avenue	Penn Hills Shopping Center	Duncan Manor Shopping Center	1025 Washington Pike
Pittsburgh, PA 15222	11624 Kelekit Drive	1701 Duncan Ave.	Bridgeville, PA 15017
Phone: (412) 565-7781	Pittsburgh, PA 15235	Allison Park, PA	Phone: (412) 220-0273
	Phone: (412) 371-1960	Phone: (412) 366-3502	

D. Additional Information

Additional information is available on the PennDOT web site:
<http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/>.

LAWS RELATED TO DRIVING

Driving is a serious responsibility and should not be taken lightly. We have listed some of the laws related to driving that you should be aware of:

- a. Driving under the influence of alcohol is illegal and is a punishable offense. (This is applicable even if you are of legal drinking age, which is 21 years of age.)
- b. It is illegal to have an open container of alcohol in a moving vehicle.
- c. You must drive at or below the posted speed limits. Speed limits may differ on different roads.
- d. You must stop for a school bus that has its red lights flashing and its STOP arm extended.
- e. You must make way for police vehicles, ambulances, or other emergency vehicles.
- f. Pennsylvania Law requires that drivers and passengers wear seat belts.
- g. All small children must be seated in the back seat of a car. They should be seated in special car seats with the seat belts fastened.
- h. Only vehicles with special license plates and handicap stickers can park in spaces reserved for handicapped persons. These spaces are noted with a wheelchair symbol.

PARKING

Once you are legally allowed to drive a vehicle, you should be aware of the fact that parking, on and off-campus, involves additional costs. You need a parking permit to park on campus. For more information about parking on-campus, contact the Public Safety office in Barry Center at (412) 397-2424. You can also view a copy of the Motor Vehicle Parking Regulations on the RMU website. Meter parking requires the deposit of quarters into the parking meters at the side of the road. Note that parking rates may differ in different areas of the city. You may also need a parking permit to park the vehicle at your residence.

SHOPPING FOR FOOD

If this is your first visit to the U.S., it is extremely likely that you will miss the food that you are used to. However, Pittsburgh has a number of restaurants and fast food places that offer a variety of cuisines. There are a number of free newspapers such as "In Pittsburgh" which lists restaurants that have ethnic foods according to area, and according to cuisine. We are confident that you will soon find a place where the food tastes the same as what you are used to.

Most people go to supermarkets (generally called grocery stores) while shopping for food. Supermarkets generally have many varieties of food, fresh and canned vegetables, meats, snacks, bakery and dairy products etc. There are some grocery stores close to the Moon Township campus, such as Giant Eagle (across from the main gate in the plaza), Kuhn's (close to K-Mart) and K-Mart. In addition to supermarkets, there are also several ethnic grocery stores and specialty food shops that only sell particular kinds of foods. If there is a particular vegetable or spice that you like and it is not available at the local supermarket, try one of the specialty shops in Pittsburgh.

The Strip District is another place to find ethnic foods at reasonable prices. It is a wholesale area but majority of the stores sell to the general public at retail prices. The Strip is located on Penn Avenue Downtown.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Robert Morris takes the responsibility of providing a safe living and learning environment for our students very seriously. Campus crime statistics are available upon request through our Public Safety department. We are pleased with the low number of incidents at the university when compared to other colleges and universities. Full-time public safety officers operate at both the Moon Township campus and Downtown Pittsburgh Center. If you feel that there is a threat to your safety or life, contact the Public Safety department immediately at the Pittsburgh Center (412-397-6818) or Moon Campus (412-397-2424). If you are off-campus, call 911 in the event of a life-threatening emergency. **Remember that 911 is an emergency number only. Do not use it for general inquiries.**

SHOPPING

Pittsburgh offers a variety of malls and specialty stores that cater to its culturally diverse inhabitants. Some of the common malls and department stores are listed below.

Malls and Department Stores

Century III Mall – Rt. 51, West Mifflin (412-653-1220)
The Galleria Mall – Rt. 19 & Connor Rd., Mt. Lebanon (412-561-4000)
Grove City Factory Outlets – Grove City (on I-79 North) (724-748-4770)
K-Mart Plaza – Coraopolis/Moon Township (412-262-1961)
K-Mart Super Center – Moon Township (412-859-0122)
Macy's – 400 Fifth Ave., Downtown (412-232-2000)
Monroeville Mall – Exit 14 off Parkway East, Monroeville (412-243-8511)
North Hills Village – McKnight Rd., North Hills (412-366-2250)
Northway Mall – McKnight Road, North Hills (412-364-1171)
Parkway Center Mall – 1165 McKinney Lane, Greentree (412-922-1741)
Robinson Town Center – Robinson Township
Ross Park Mall – 1000 Ross Park Dr., North Hills (412-369-4400)
The Shops at Station Square – Station Square (412-261-9911) or (1-800-859-8959)
South Hills Village Mall – Rt. 19 & Ft. Couch Rd., South Hills (412-831-2900)
Waterworks Mall – Fox Chapel (412-366-2252)

U.S. HOLIDAYS

If there is a major religious holiday that is celebrated in your country and you do not feel that you should go to class on that day, you can ask your professors if they will allow you to miss class that day. It is up to the professor to either agree or disagree with your proposal. If you decide to be absent from class without the professor's consent, this absence may affect your grade because attendance is an important factor in the calculation of final grade. Major American holidays are listed below.

Government offices and business will be closed on those that are noted as "official holidays."

New Year's Day: January 1

This is an official holiday for schools, offices and stores. New Year's Eve, December 31, is more important to Americans than New Year's Day itself. Everyone gathers with family and friends to "ring out the old and ring in the new," an expression that reflects the old custom of ringing church bells to greet the New Year.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday: January 15

Official holiday that began in 1986. Martin Luther King, Jr. organized and led the civil-rights movement in America during the 1960's.

Groundhog Day: February 2

Not an official holiday. The groundhog is a small burrowing animal that hibernates during the winter months. Legend has it that he emerges on February 2. If he sees his shadow on a sunny day, he will be frightened and return to this burrow. This is supposed to indicate six more weeks of wintry weather. If he doesn't see his shadow, then spring should arrive soon!

Lincoln's Birthday: February 12

Official holiday in many states; often celebrated in conjunction with George Washington's Birthday or "President's Day." Abraham Lincoln was President during the Civil War (1861 – 1865), a period that had a profound effect on the history of the nation. Believing that a "house divided against itself cannot stand," Lincoln acted to free the slaves and bring the seceded states back into the union.

Valentine's Day: February 14

Not an official holiday. A romantic holiday celebrated by sending cards and giving candy or flowers to special close friends and partners.

Washington's Birthday: February 22 (celebrated on the 3rd Monday in February)

This is an official holiday. It commemorates the birthday of George Washington, commander-in-chief of the Revolutionary Army that freed America from the colonial rule of England. Washington was also the first President of the United States.

Saint Patrick's Day: March 17

Not an official holiday. St. Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland, and this holiday was brought to America by Irish immigrants. People celebrate this holiday by wearing something green, socializing with friends and singing Irish folk songs.

April Fool's Day: April 1

Not an official holiday. As in many other countries, this day is marked by the custom of playing harmless practical jokes on friends or colleagues.

Easter: A Sunday in March or April

Not an official holiday. A religious holiday for Christians who believe that on this day Christ rose from the dead. Many old traditions are now connected with Easter, including the decoration of brightly colored eggs and giving gifts and candy to children.

Mother's Day: Second Sunday in May

Not an official holiday. On this day Americans honor their mothers by sending flowers, buying small gifts, and taking their mothers out to eat so that they don't have to cook or work around the house.

Father's Day: Third Sunday in June

Not an official holiday. Fathers are honored on this day. Children give them cards and gifts.

Memorial Day: Last Monday in May

This is an official holiday. Memorial Day is the day on which Americans remember those who died in military service to their country. Many families visit cemeteries and decorate grave markers with flowers. The day is also marked with patriotic parades. This day is considered the beginning of the summer season.

Independence Day: July 4

This is an official holiday. Independence Day commemorates the day the Declaration of Independence was signed in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. The holiday is celebrated all over the country with picnics, political speeches, and community get-togethers that culminate in fireworks displays.

Labor Day: First Monday in September

This is an official holiday. This holiday was established in recognition of the contribution of the labor movement to the productivity of the country. This day is the last holiday of the summer season and is celebrated with picnics and other outings.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: Late September/Early October

Not an official holiday. Rosh Hashanah, commemorating the creation of the world, is the first of the Ten Days of Penitence, which end with Yom Kippur, the most solemn of Jewish holidays. For Rosh Hashanah, families gather for a feast in which an apple is dipped in honey to express hope for a sweet year ahead. In Judaism, Yom Kippur is a day of judgment; on the eve of Yom Kippur, Jews ask forgiveness from those that they have wronged. The keynotes of the holiday are fasting and a collective confession, repeated several times throughout the day.

Columbus Day: Second Monday in October

Some organizations observe it as an official holiday. The day honors Christopher Columbus who is the explorer credited with discovering America in 1492.

Halloween: October 31

Not an official holiday. This was originally a religious holiday, but its religious character has been lost in the United States, and it is now celebrated mostly as a children's holiday. Traditions include carving out pumpkins with funny or scary faces, as well as dressing up in costumes and going around the neighborhood to receive candy treats. When people come to the door, children say "trick or treat," meaning "If you don't give me a treat, I will play a trick on you." Neighbors are ready with treats to distribute to these visiting children.

Veteran's Day: November 11

This is an official holiday. On this day Americans honor the veterans of all wars. This is also the day when the Armistice was signed after World War I.

Thanksgiving Day: Fourth Thursday in November

This is an official holiday. The first Thanksgiving Day was celebrated by the Pilgrims at Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts in 1621 to give thanks for the bountiful harvest and their triumph of survival over the wilderness. Now it is a time when Americans give thanks for the

good life they enjoy. They celebrate by getting together with family to eat traditional food such as turkey, cranberry sauce, sweet potatoes and pumpkin pie. Since this is the busiest travel time in the U.S., the day following is sometimes a holiday as well so that people can join their families in other cities.

Hanukkah: Eight Days, usually in December

Not an official holiday. This is one of the less solemn of the Jewish holidays, but one widely observed even by non-religious Jews. The only Jewish holiday connected with war, Hanukkah celebrates the victory of Jewish Maccabees over their Syrian ruler in 1678 BC. Hanukkah is marked with parties, games, gifts for children, and the lighting of the nine candles of the menorah.

Christmas: December 25

This is an official holiday. Many people regard Christmas as the most important holiday of the year, with the holiday season extending from a few days before Christmas to New Year's Day. Although its origins are religious in nature, it is a holiday celebrated by almost everyone in the country. Family members travel great distances to be together on this day on which gifts are exchanged, and a traditional dinner is shared. Even families who do not have strong religious convictions decorate a Christmas tree and join in the festivities of the Christmas season.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

The United States is one of the last countries to convert to the metric system; in fact, the attempt to make the conversion has been unsuccessful. There have been some switchovers, but most units of measure in the U.S. will probably be unfamiliar to you.

Distance/length

100 kilometers = 62.5 miles

1 meter = 3.281 feet

1 meter = 39.37 inches

1 centimeter = 0.39 inch

1 mile = 1.67 kilometers

1 yard* = 0.91 meter

1 foot* = 30.5 centimeters

1 inch* = 25.4 millimeters

1 yard = 3 feet, 1 foot = 12 inches

Weight

1 kilogram = 2.2 pounds

1 gram = 0.035 ounces

1 pound* = 0.45 kilograms

1 ounce* = 28.00 grams

*1 pound = 16 ounces

Fluids

1 liter = 4 1/3 cups
1 liter = 1.06 quarts
1 liter = 0.26 gallons
1 cup = 0.24 liters

1 gallon = 3.80 liters
1 quart = 0.95 liters
1 pint = 0.47 milliliters
1 ounce = 29.57 milliliters

Kitchen Measures

Americans use volume rather than weight in measuring quantities for most recipes in home cooking. They also use the term ounce as both a fluid measure and a weight: 16 ounces is both one pound and one pint or two cups. It is very easy to get confused!

The following tables may help you to decipher recipes.

1 teaspoon (tsp or t) = 2 liquid grams
6 and 2/3 tbsp = 100 liquid grams
2 cups = 1 pint (pt) = 454 liquid grams
1/2 pint = 22 liquid grams

1 Tablespoon (tbsp or T) = 6 liquid grams
16 tbsp = 1 cup (c)
4 cups = 1 quart = 907 liquid grams

CLOTHING SIZE CONVERSION TABLE

Dresses/Suits/Coats – Misses

USA	8	10	12	14	16	18	20
British	6	8	10	12	14	16	18
Continental	-	38	40	42	44	46	48

Dresses/Suits/Coats - Women (Waist Sizes)

USA and British	34	36	38	40	42	44
Continental	42	44	46	48	50	52

Dresses/Suits/Coats – Juniors

USA and British	7	9	11	13	15	17
Continental	34	36	38	40	42	44

Stockings

USA and British	8	8.5	9	10	10.5	11
Continental	0	1	2	4	5	6

Blouses/Sweaters

USA and British	30	32	34	36	38	40
Continental	38	40	42	44	46	48

Shoes

USA	5	5.5	6	7	8	8.5	9
British	3.5	4	4.5	5.5	6.5	7	7.5
Continental	35	35	36	38	38.5	39	40

Coats/Suits/Sweaters/Shirts

USA	36	38	40	42	44	46
European	46	48	50	54	56	59

Shirts

USA	14.5	15	15.5	16	16.5
European	37	38	39	40	41

TEMPERATURES

Centigrade (Celsius) and Fahrenheit
(U.S. uses Fahrenheit)

	<u>Centigrade</u> °C	<u>Fahrenheit</u> F
Boiling	100	212
Body Temperature	37	98.6
Room Temperature	20	68
Freezing	0	32

Fahrenheit temperature = $9/5$ (Celsius + 32)

U.S. MONETARY SYSTEM

The money system in the U.S. consists of both coins and paper currency, as it is in other countries. The most commonly used coins and bills and their equivalent to the U.S. dollar (\$), the basic unit, are listed below.

Coins

There are four commonly used coins. They are:

1	one cent or penny	=	.01 dollar	(copper in color)
5	five cents or nickel	=	.05 dollar	(silver in color)
10	ten cents or dime	=	.10 dollar	(silver in color)
25	twenty-five cents or quarter	=	.25 dollar	(silver in color)

Paper Currency

The paper currency called “bills” or “bucks” are commonly circulated in six (6) denominations:

\$1.00 \$5.00 \$10.00 \$20.00 \$50.00 \$100.00

TIME ZONES

The U.S. is divided into 4 time zones:

Eastern (eastern states including Pennsylvania); **Central** (central and Midwest states); **Mountain** (west and southwest states); and **Pacific** (west-coast states). Each zone is one hour different from the adjacent zone, thus if it is 5:00 p.m. in Pittsburgh; the time will be 4:00p.m. in Chicago; 3:00 p.m. in Denver; and 2:00 p.m. in Los Angeles.

CONCLUSION

We hope this handbook will be of immense help to you while studying at Robert Morris University. The information contained therein will prove useful to you at different times, some at the beginning of your studies, others toward the end.

Please feel free to send comments and suggestions to us on how we may better serve you. In case you have other suggestions on how we can improve on this handbook or our services, please let us know. We will appreciate your input very much. **Our office is open to all, feel free to come in and get to know us better. We certainly will love to know you too.**