

December 3, 2008

Dear Student,

Congratulations on your admission to The College of Staten Island/CUNY! The staff of the Center for International Service is here to help you. We hope to provide you with all the information that you will need to make the transition from your home to our university an easy one.

Your participation is a key to making a successful transition. Your understanding and assistance in the process is critical. Carefully review the immigration, financial and arrival information in this letter. If you should have any questions about the process or about the information that we are sending you, contact us immediately. The contact information is listed below. The admission/orientation process at each American university is very different. Please do not rely on friends who may have studied in the U.S. for assistance. Contact us directly.

IMMIGRATION AND FINANCIAL DOCUMENTATION

Enclosed is your SEVIS Form I-20, which you will need in order to apply for the F-1 visa. If you are already present in the United States, we are not enclosing your I-20 form, as we will need more information from you. (See section (b) and (c) below and follow the instructions carefully).

- a) If you are presently outside the United States, you must first pay the SEVIS fee (\$200) before you apply for the F-1 student visa. Please see the What You Need To Know About the New Federal SEVIS Fee attached for more information on how to do this.
- b) After the SEVIS fee is paid, you must take the I-20 to the nearest United States embassy or consulate and apply for an F-1 student visa. Present certified copies of all financial papers that you sent to the College of Staten Island.
- c) If you already have F-1 student status at another institution and you are in the United States and not planning on travelling abroad before coming to the Staten Island, you must contact your Foreign Student Adviser to indicate your intention to transfer to the College of Staten Island. We will need your current school to complete a Transfer Verification Form from our school before your transfer is complete. Your transfer will be completed as required by law by our office after you have completed the orientation and registration process at this college.
- d) If you are already in the United States under a different visa status other than F-1, please contact us by email with your information as there may be limitations about changing to F-1 status within the United States.

The date entered in item number five of the I-20 is January 12, 2009. If after that date you are outside the United States, you will not be given a visa or permitted to enter the United States. If this is your situation, please contact us about the possibility of beginning your studies here for the Fall, 2009 semester.

ADVICE TO PERSONS APPLYING FOR STUDENT VISAS

Many students who have been admitted to The College of Staten Island find that their plans are ruined when the United States Embassy or Consulate refuses to grant them a visa. Though this happens in some countries more than in others, it is a possible problem for all students planning to come to a United States college from other countries. The following advice is intended to prepare you to provide the Embassy or Consulate with the proper documents and to give the answers most likely to result in approval of your visa application.

You must understand that a student visa (F-1 and J-1) is issued only to persons who intend to return to their own countries after completing their American education. In fact, United States law requires the Embassy or Consulate to assume that you intend to come to the United States permanently and it is your obligation to prove that you are intending to return to your country.

It will help your case very much to do the following:

1. Show convincing reasons for U.S. officials to believe that you intend to return home. Demonstrate ties to your own country, such as employment, ownership of a business or property, or potential future employment, family obligations, and clear explanations, of how you plan to use your education to help your own country or pursue a career there. You should be truthful but do not emphasize too strongly any ties you may have with family or friends in the United States. You must not plan to work in the United States now, or after you complete your education.
2. Be definite and clear about your education plans. Be prepared to explain precisely what you wish to study and why you chose The College of Staten Island for your education. Be especially prepared to explain good educational reasons for studying here rather than in your own country. If you do not understand our programs and degrees, write to us with specific questions and we will supply the answers. Do not show lack of decision about which college you will attend. Your visa records will state the name of the college at which you are to study and you may not study at any other.
3. Be prepared to prove financial ability. Since students may not plan to work to support themselves except in rare cases when fellowships have been granted in advance, you must show the United States officials that you have available the annual amount, in United States dollars, indicated on our Form I-20. You must have evidence in the form of bank statements, scholarship award letters, etc. In many countries, it is far better if you can show that at least a major portion of your funds comes from sources within your country. If all or part of your support is to come from persons in the United States, you must have from them a sworn statement that they will support you (known as an Affidavit of Support) and a statement from their United States bank showing that the funds exist. Your country may require government permission to send funds to the United States. If so, you must show documents to the United States officials that your government has granted permission for money to be sent to the United States for you.
4. Before applying to United States officials, be certain that you have met all requirements of your own government, including passport arrangements.

If any of the above instructions are not clear to you and time permits, write to us for advice and assistance.

MEDICAL CERTIFICATION FOR MEASLES, MUMPS, RUBELLA and MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS IMMUNIZATIONS

New York State law mandates that every student have an inoculation against Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR). In addition, inoculations against Meningococcal Meningitis are recommended. It is therefore necessary to get and provide proof in English that you have had the inoculations. If you have had these inoculations, please have a physician complete the attached form entitled “Medical Certification for Measles, Mumps, and Rubella. Also, please complete and sign the Meningococcal Meningitis Immunizations” and bring it with you on the day of check-in on January 13. If you have not had the required immunizations, we will make an appointment for you to receive your first inoculation for MMR only when you check in on January 13. The Meningococcal Meningitis vaccine is not available at the Student Health Center at CSI. Students who don’t have this vaccine in their home countries can expect to pay approximately \$75 for the vaccine here in the United States.

CHECK-IN AT THE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL SERVICE

Remember that you must complete your visa arrangements in enough time to allow you to arrive in the United States by January 12, 2009.

You must report to The Center for International Service on:

Tuesday, January 13, 2009

Please report at the time indicated below, using the first initial of your family name as a guide:

Family Names	Time to Report
A-L	9:00 a.m.
M-Z	10:30 a.m.

When you report, please bring your passport, all immigration documents, money for your health insurance and for opening a bank account, and a completed Immunizations form, if applicable. You will have lunch on your own and be prepared to spend the entire day at the College and maybe as late as 5:00 p.m.

The New Foreign Student Orientation Program at CSI is MANDATORY. You will not be allowed to register if you do not participate. Therefore, please read carefully the attached “Tentative New Foreign Student Orientation Schedule” so that you can make your plans accordingly and you will be present for all the activities. Please note that there may be minor changes made to this schedule.

HOUSING

If you need housing in Staten Island, please be advised that we highly recommend that you enter the United States PRIOR to January 12 in order to allow sufficient time for you to seek housing before classes begin. Please note that you will be extremely busy with the mandatory Orientation activities from January 12 to January 22. Therefore, you should not plan to look for housing in the daytime hours during the week once the Orientation activities begin. You will, however, have time on the weekends and during the mid-

week evenings to look for housing. Therefore, we recommend that if you need housing, to allow **at least a week** to concentrate on finding this.

Since we do not yet have on-campus housing, you may be interested in homestay living arrangements. If you do not know anyone in New York, we recommend using a homestay for at least the first month. Below are two homestay agency websites that you can reference to make your housing arrangements. You can email them to request information regarding costs and airport pick-up, if needed.

Sara's New York Homestay, LLC

www.sarahomestay.com

email: sara@sarahomestay.com

New York Accommodations Centre

www.HousingUS.com

email: Director@HousingUS.com

If you choose a homestay, please mention to the homestay agency that you will be attending the College of Staten Island/CUNY.

MONEY FOR THE FIRST FOUR WEEKS

We advise all students to bring enough money in the form of TRAVELER'S CHECKS to cover expenses for at least the first four weeks (or) have availability of funds from an ATM card. Checks of any other kind, including bank checks, can take three weeks to clear for a newly arrived student. Information about banking options will be given to you as part of our New Foreign Student Orientation program. You will be able to open a bank account on the day of your check-in at the Center on January 12. No money is needed to open the account that day.

HEALTH INSURANCE

As you may know, medical costs in the United States are very expensive. As a CSI student, the health insurance is not mandatory but HIGHLY recommended and EXTREMELY important for anyone in the United States. Even the most "routine" check-ups with a doctor can cost hundreds of U.S. dollars. The average costs for insurance are included in your estimated costs to attend the College of Staten Island, so you should already have budgeted for these costs.

At the check-in on Tuesday, January 13, you will have an opportunity to purchase health insurance, which has been specifically designed for participants in international educational exchange. The rates for the coverage depend upon your age and the coverage you select and vary slightly by company. For an updated list of prices and to compare plans and benefits, go to the following company websites:

Compass: www.compassbenefit.com

HTH: <http://www.hthstudents.com>

T.W. Lord: www.twlord.com

We would also suggest that you have health insurance coverage beginning the day you travel to the United States. If this is not possible and you wish to purchase when you arrive here, please bring a money order, personal check or traveler's check payable to the appropriate insurance company when you check-in on January 13. You may also pay by credit card. More information about medical care, the health insurance policy, and filing a claim will be available during our New Foreign Student Orientation.

HOW TO CONTACT US

If you have any questions or if you have difficulty, email, fax, write or call us by the quickest means available and provide as much information as possible about the nature of your difficulty. We will try to help in any way we can.

Email: General questions: [intstudy@mail.cuny.edu](mailto:intstudy@mail.csi.cuny.edu)
Deputy Director: [clark@mail.cuny.edu](mailto:clark@mail.csi.cuny.edu)
Foreign Student Adviser: [kelly@mail.cuny.edu](mailto:kelly@mail.csi.cuny.edu)
College Assistants: [castro@mail.cuny.edu](mailto:castro@mail.csi.cuny.edu)
errico@mail.csi.cuny.edu
pizzolo@mail.csi.cuny.edu
gartenbaum@mail.csi.cuny.edu

Mail: Center for International Service
College of Staten Island/CUNY
2800 Victory Blvd. 2A-206
Staten Island, New York 10314

Phone: (718) 982-2100

Fax: (718) 982-2108

WEB INFORMATION

Information about CSI: www.csi.cuny.edu

Information about the Center for International Service: www.csi.cuny.edu/international

Calendar of Events at CSI: www.csi.cuny.edu/html/eventsdir.html

Please note that we are updating our website so the information there may change throughout the summer.

We look forward to meeting you and wish you a safe trip!

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Clark
Deputy Director

Rosa Kelley
Foreign Student Adviser