Welcome to Virginia Tech!
This year, you will be among the more than 3,500 international students and scholars from over 90 countries who make up Virginia Tech's international community. As you prepare to travel to the United States, you may have questions about arrangements for your trip. This handout gives you important information to help with your planning. Program dates and costs are available on the Virginia Tech Language and Culture Institute (LCI) website at [www.lci.vt.edu](http://www.lci.vt.edu).

LOCATION AND OPERATING HOURS
The Virginia Tech Language and Culture Institute is in the Pointe West Commons building adjacent to the Virginia Tech campus and across from the University Mall on University City Boulevard.

Hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, except for the following holidays:
- New Year's Day – January 1
- Memorial Day – Last Monday in May
- Independence Day – July 4
- Thanksgiving week
- Winter break

YOUR ARRIVAL
Arrival Date
Plan to arrive in Blacksburg before classes begin – but no more than 30 days early. This will give you some time to become familiar with campus, open a bank account, find housing, and recover from traveling before beginning your academic work.

Airport Arrival
Blacksburg is about 40 miles (64 km.) west of Roanoke, Virginia. There are several daily flights into the Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport (ROA) from international airports in New York City, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Miami, and Chicago. Domestic flights from other major U.S. cities are also available.

Ground transportation from the airport to your destination in Blacksburg can be arranged as follows:
- **By Taxi** ([www.roanokeats.com](http://www.roanokeats.com)): Reserve a taxi by emailing roanokeATS@aim.com, calling 1-800-288-1958, or faxing 1-540-362-8006 by 7 p.m. the day before you arrive. Locate your driver at the Roanoke Airport Transportation Desk.
- **By Bus**: The Roanoke Airport is also served by the Smart Way Bus ([www.smartwaybus.com](http://www.smartwaybus.com)). This bus leaves the airport every hour and a half from 6:35 a.m. to 7:05 p.m. daily and to 8:35 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. The ride costs $4, exact cash only.

In case of an emergency related to your arrival, call the LCI at **540-231-9814** (from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday) or call the emergency number after hours (for true emergencies only) at 540-557-7821.

Hotel Options
If possible, arrive at Roanoke Airport before 8 p.m. If you arrive late, plan to spend the night in a Roanoke hotel near the airport with shuttle service.

Airport Hotels:
- **Quality Inn Roanoke Airport**: $59-$69/night 540-366-8861
- **Comfort Inn Airport**: $119-$139/night 540-527-2020
- **MainStay Suites Airport**: $104-$164/night 540-527-3030
- **Blacksburg Hotels**:
  - **The Inn at Virginia Tech**: $120-$180/night 540-231-8000
  - **Hilton Garden Inn Blacksburg**: $139-$169/night 540-552-5005
  - **Comfort Suites University**: $100/night 540-552-5636

HOUSING
Housing on the Virginia Tech campus is subject to availability. Campus housing is available only during the summer. Fees vary by housing type. See room and board rates at [www.housing.vt.edu/rates](http://www.housing.vt.edu/rates).

The on-campus Residence Hall rooms contain basic furniture, including beds, desks, dressers/cabinets and a sink. You must provide your own sheets, towels, and blankets. Wait until you arrive to purchase them because the beds are an unusual "long twin" size. Students usually pay $50 to $100 for these items. Cooking facilities are limited.

On-campus residents are required to purchase a meal plan of at least 15 meals per week. A number of dining facilities and dining plan options are available. Menus are diverse and include vegetarian, kosher, halal, and low-fat selections.

Homestay
Accommodation with an American host in the Blacksburg area may be arranged in advance. A host may be a "traditional" American family with a mother, father, and children; a couple without children; or a single person (with or without children). Homestays include a continental breakfast and dinner each day. You may be responsible for preparing your own breakfast.

Homestay placements are private room (single occupancy). Sheets, blanket, pillow, and towels are supplied, and you will have access to laundry facilities. Most homestay homes are within easy access of public transportation within 30 minutes of the LCI.

“Rules of the family” apply to homestay guests. Smoking, for example, may be prohibited in some homes. If you are a smoker, you could, of course, smoke outside the home.
Americans commonly keep cats and dogs as pets. These animals often live in the house. Indicate to your homestay coordinator if you do not wish to be in a home with a pet.

For further information, see Blacksburg Homestay at www.blacksburghomestay.com.

Apartment Housing
Most Virginia Tech students live off-campus. Students who bring their families are required to live off-campus. An apartment — usually with one or more bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, and a bathroom — is normally rented by a family or shared by two or more students. Most students live in apartments or single rooms. Many of these are within walking distance of campus or are on the town bus routes.

Apartment rooms are usually unfurnished and include cooking facilities. Bathrooms are usually shared. Rent may or may not include utilities such as water and sewer or trash collection. Gas and/or electric services may also be a separate expense; these costs can be significant during winter months for heating. Rent for single rooms begins at $299 per month, not including utilities or furniture. One-bedroom apartments, including utilities, cost about $600 per month. Two-bedroom apartments cost $600-$700 per month. Four-bedroom suites are about $1,600 per month.

Occupants must sign a lease, or housing contract, usually for 12 months. Shorter lease terms are difficult to find in August but may be available in January and May. Once signed, a lease cannot be broken or changed.

Almost all apartments come unfurnished. Furnishings are generally acquired from secondhand stores and private “yard sales,” from rental companies, or local stores.

For additional information on off-campus housing, see:
- Virginia Tech Off-Campus Housing Service: vt.offcampuspartners.com
- Resources for Renters: www.studentcenters.vt.edu/vtoch
- Foxridge Apartment Homes: www.foxridgehousing.com
- Terrace View Apartments: www.terraceviewapartments.com

PLANNING FOR YOUR STAY
Financial Matters
Arrive in Blacksburg with sufficient funds for the first four months. You will pay your tuition and housing separately. Acceptable forms of tuition payment are cash, checks drawn on a U.S. account, and credit card (MasterCard, Visa, American Express). Bring a bank cashier’s check or traveler’s checks issued through a U.S. bank in U.S. dollars and open a local bank account immediately.

Housing payment is generally due immediately upon occupancy and, depending upon housing type, at the beginning of each month thereafter.

Tuition
You are required to pay tuition in full by the beginning of the second week of each term. You may use cash, personal checks (made out to Treasurer, Virginia Tech), money orders, traveler’s checks, or credit cards.

No refunds are given for tuition payments. Tuition reductions are not given for late arrivals or early departures. Tuition includes course and books, with the exception of the TOEFL text.

More details about tuition and other fees may be found at www.lci.vt.edu/intensive-english/tuition-and-fees.

 Fees
Fees collected each session include tuition and a student activity fee, which covers technology access, Blacksburg Transit bus use, and use of the student health center.

Your student ID is good for unlimited transportation on the Blacksburg Transit system.

Walk-in care in the university’s Schiffert Health Center for minor illnesses is covered by fees. Access to the health center is not the same as having health insurance, which is required for more serious health issues such as hospital visits.

Course books are purchased separately.

Health and Accident Insurance
Students are required to have a health and accident policy providing protection for themselves and their dependents in the event of major illness or injury.

The university’s minimum insurance requirements:
1. There is an adequate care provider within 50 miles of the campus.
2. Major medical benefits of at least $500,000 per accident or illness.
3. Repatriation of remains coverage $25,000.
4. Minimum of $50,000 for medical evacuation to the home country.
5. Deductible not to exceed $500 per accident or illness.
6. Pregnancy, childbirth, and complications of pregnancy will be covered in the same manner as any other illness under the plan.
7. Prescription Medication coverage (after co-pays) with a minimum of $500,000 per insured per policy year.
8. Outpatient and Inpatient mental health care will be covered in the same manner as any other illness.
9. No international caps coverage, including services, treatment, or surgery.
10. No pre-existing condition waiting period.

The cost of a student health insurance policy is about $1,800 for one year. The LCI can help you purchase insurance after you arrive.

Students may purchase health insurance on their own, but the LCI recommends including the above-listed benefits as a minimum. Note that student insurance does not cover travel to the United States and vacation periods.

For more information, see http://www.co.vt.edu/Risk/studenthealthinsr.

Medical Records
All new students entering Virginia Tech are required to provide a health history (translated into English) that is documented by a licensed health professional and includes immunizations against measles, mumps, rubella, poliomyelitis, tetanus, diphtheria, and Hepatitis B.

All international students entering Virginia Tech are required to submit results of a tuberculin (TB) skin test (PPD, Mantoux) performed in the United States within six months of the start of the program. (Tine tests are not accepted.) Exceptions to this rule include students with a history of previous positive tuberculin test and students with a history of diagnosed and treated tuberculosis. Those students must send proof of test and/or any treatment received and current chest x-ray. Note: Prior BCG vaccination is not a reason to be automatically exempted from the tuberculin-testing requirement. Students unsure of their status should consult
with a member of the Schiffert Health Center staff for further information.

Bring translated medical records for any accompanying family members as well. Children are not allowed to enroll in school or participate in child-care programs without the required immunizations.

Visit your health care provider before you leave home to get your vaccinations updated and to have the form completed and signed.

Students who do not return the Virginia Tech Student Health History Form to the LCI will be denied continued enrollment until the completed form is returned.

IMMIGRATION AND TRAVEL

Entering the U.S.

When you enter the U.S., you will present your passport, containing a valid F-1 visa and Form I-20 to an immigration officer.

Keep the Form I-20 with your passport for identification purposes; these documents are necessary to leave and re-enter the U.S.

You may enter the U.S. up to 30 days before the start date on your I-20.

Transfer Students

F-1 students transferring from other English language programs in the United States must bring their old I-20 to the office. A new I-20 will not be issued until you turn in your financial certification form and the transfer form that shows that you maintained status at your original school.

Working on Campus

One of the benefits of F-1 status is the ability to work on campus while studying. F-1 students can work up to 20 hours per week during academic sessions and up to 40 hours per week during summer or semester breaks. F-2 visa holders cannot work.

Paying Customs Duties

U.S. Customs Service regulations restrict certain items from being brought into the U.S. Ask at a United States consulate in your home country for a copy of United States Customs Hints for Visitors, which explains customs regulations and may prevent unnecessary inconvenience or expense.

WEATHER AND CLOTHING

The Blacksburg climate is quite pleasant and permits outdoor activities throughout most of the year. Summers are warm with temperatures averaging 80°F (21°C) and sometimes exceeding 90°F (32°C). Winters average 34°F (1°C) in the daytime, with the temperature going as low as -10°F (-23°C) at night.

Rainfall is moderate throughout the year. Snowfall occurs occasionally during the winter months.

A heavy winter coat or waterproof parka, an umbrella or raincoat, and a pair of comfortable waterproof walking shoes are necessities for the winter months.

We also recommend students bring a warm scarf, hat, sweater or sweatshirt, and gloves. Such items may also be purchased in local stores.

DRIVING IN THE U.S.

Driver's License

A valid driver's license is needed for operating a motor vehicle. A driver's license is also a form of identification. Information on obtaining a driver's license can be found on the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles website at www.dmv.state.va.us.

Virginia does not officially recognize the International Driver's License, although it does recognize your home country's driver's license for 30 days. If you already have a valid driver's license from another state in the U.S. and are currently enrolled as a full-time student at an accredited university, you do not need to get a Virginia driver's license.

Applicants for a driver's license must be at least 16 years old and pass a three-part exam designed to test knowledge, vision, and driving skills. The Virginia Driver's Manual and identification requirements for the driving exam may be found on the DMV website. You may apply for a driver's license at any DMV office.

Car Rental

Cars may be rented for trips on weekends or during school breaks. You may rent a car if you are over 21 and have a valid driver's license and a major credit card. Rental companies charge more for drivers under 25 and without U.S. auto insurance. There are various car rental companies in Blacksburg.

FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

Registration

When you come to the LCI for the first time, bring the following:

- Passport
- Printout of I-94 record
- Form I-20
- Student Health Form
- Any insurance information you have from your home country

We are required to check those documents to verify your legal status in the United States and to make copies for your file in the LCI office. The business office will collect your tuition about two weeks after you enroll.

Hokie Passport ID Cards

As part of the registration process, all full-time students will receive a Hokie Passport ID card. The cards are needed to access meal plans, ride the bus, check out books at the libraries, use the athletic facilities, and use the Schiffert Health Center.

SPECIAL NEEDS

If you are a person with a disability who may need accommodation to participate in this program, please contact Elizabeth Loar at 1-540-231-9192 or at eloar@vt.edu. Some accommodations may take time to arrange.

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