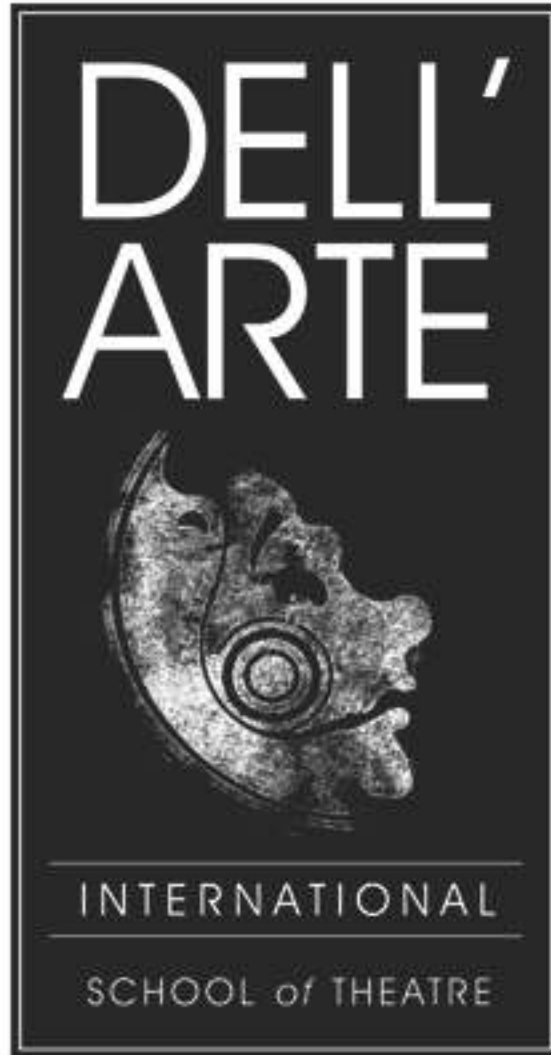


Dell'Arte International
School of Physical Theatre
International Student Handbook and Resource Guide
2018-2019



P.O. Box 816
131 H Street
Blue Lake, CA 95525
+1 707 668-5663 phone/ +1 707 668-5665 fax
info@dellarte.com; www.dellarte.com

Quick Contact Reference

Mailing Address:
Dell'Arte International
P.O. Box 816
Blue Lake, CA 95525

Address for Student Mail:
c/o Dell'Arte
P.O. Box 128
Blue Lake, CA 95525

PHONE: 707-668-5663

FAX: 707-668-5665

International Student Advisor/Primary Designated School Official (PDSO) for the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP):

Alyssa Hughlett
alyssa@dellarte.com
707-668-5663 (office)
413-212-2018 (mobile phone)

Other Primary International Student Contacts:

Roman Sanchez, Student Housing Manager roman@dellarte.com x117
707-633-6579 (home phone for emergency use only)

Lauren Wilson, School Director lauren@dellarte.com x127
914-406-5818 (mobile phone for emergency use only)

Fran Beatty, Executive Director fran@dellarte.com x114
707-672-5565 (mobile phone for emergency use only)

Ruxy Cantir, Alumna, MFA '13 ruxy.cantir@gmail.com

References:

StudyInTheStates.dhs.gov provides information on how to study in the United States and how to maintain your status. This is a great starting point to gather information about studying in the United States.

Usembassy.state.gov provides specific information about embassies and consulates in every country. International student requirements can change at any time, so refer to this website for the most up-to-date forms, fees and guidelines.

http://educationusa.state.gov is an educational advising center. It has videos from students from various countries who have gone through the visa process and offer advice from their experience.

**Thank you International Education Training Services (iets)
for providing source materials for this document.**

Important Dates

Earliest date you may enter the United States:
September 2, 2018*

International Student Orientation:
Friday, September 28, 2018, 3pm**

PTP/MFA Year 1 Orientation:
Saturday, September 29 – Sunday, September 30, 2018

First Day of Classes:

Monday, October 1, 2018

* “The” Program Start Date on your I-20 is the latest date that you can arrive in the U.S. Although your visa may be issued as early as 120 days before the program start date indicated on your Form I-20, federal regulations prohibit entering the U.S. more than 30 days before that program start date. Do not attempt to use your Form I-20 to enter the U.S. earlier than 30 days before your program start date. You may be returned to your home country or be asked to pay a fee to be admitted as a visitor, which does not permit you to attend school. Immigration can also deny your entry if you arrive at the port of entry after this date.

** Please bring the following documents with you to the International Student Orientation:

- Original Form I-20 (including any Form I-20’s from previous schools you attended, if applicable.)
- Passport (including your visa and admission stamp)
- Printout of your I-94 (go to <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home> and select “Get Most Recent I-94”)

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I. PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Admissions Information for Prospective International Students

Financial Plan

Non-US citizens must provide a written statement outlining how they will financially support themselves for each year of the program of study, including tuition, fees and living expenses. This Financial Plan should be submitted with the full application portfolio by the admissions deadline. Upon acceptance into the program, applicants will be asked to provide evidence of financial support in order to apply for a student visa.

English as a Second Language

Instruction in English as a Second Language is not offered at Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre. Students of foreign origin should have a working knowledge of the English language. Applicants should demonstrate this via an interview in English and/or by presenting most of the audition in English. The statement of purpose must also be written in English. Dell'Arte International does not require the TOEFL exam.

II. ACCEPTED STUDENTS

How to Get Your Form I-20

“Form I-20” is the Certificate of Eligibility for F-1 and M-1 Student Status

IMPORTANT: *The information below carefully explains how to get your Form I-20. Please read it and follow the directions completely to avoid delays in getting your I-20.*

Now that you are planning on being a student, there are two things you cannot do:

1. *Do not enter the U.S. with a B-1, B-2, or B-1/2 visa.*
If you use a B Visa, you are saying, “I’m here as a visitor” *only*. Since you have been accepted to our school, this could be seen as misrepresenting your purpose for entering the U.S. and you might be refused permission to extend or change your status to F-1 or M-1 Student. U.S. federal regulations prohibit B Visitors from pursuing a course of study prior to obtaining a change of status to F-1 or M-1 Student.
2. *Do not enter the U.S. on the Visa Waiver Program (WT or WB).*
If you are from a country from which you can enter the U.S. as a visitor by showing a round trip airline ticket, do not do this. You will be permitted to stay for only 90 days. You will not be given more time or allowed to change to F-1 or M-1 Student status.

What is a Form I-20 and why do you need one?

A Form I-20 is a government form that certifies that you are eligible for F-1 (for MFA / AEP – academic studies) or M-1 (for PTP – vocational studies) Student status. This means that:

1. you are or expect to be a “bona fide” student;
2. you meet our admissions requirements;
3. you will pursue a full course of study;
4. you proved to us that you have enough money to study and live in the U.S. without working illegally or suffering from poverty.

You need a Form I-20 to obtain an F-1 or M-1 Student visa or status, or to keep lawful F-1 or M-1 status when transferring or changing schools within the U.S.

Does everybody need a Form I-20?

No. Some international students do not need I-20’s. Please contact us for advisement if have questions about your current status.

What are the steps to getting a Form I-20?

1. *You must be an accepted student enrolled in a full time program of study.* The PTP, MFA and AEP at Dell’Arte are full time programs.

2. *You will then complete the Application for a Form I-20 in Section IV of this handbook: Applications and Forms.*
3. *Next, you will gather all the evidence of your funding sources that will **prove** to us that you can support the costs of living and studying in the U.S. MFA and AEP students must prove this for every year of your program. This is required by the U.S. government in order to issue the Form I-20.*

Living expenses cost approximately \$7,000-8,000 USD for 9 months. We recommend that you budget an additional \$1,000-2,000 USD for emergency funds and \$700 for health insurance. You should also allocate funds for travel expenses, which vary depending on reservation dates and location.

4. *Finally, you will submit the application and all financial evidence (i.e. sponsor's affidavits, bank statements, etc.) **electronically** (i.e. scan or fax) or mail us copies. **Do not send us originals!** Keep the originals to take to your visa interview.*
5. *It takes approximately **one week** for your application materials to be reviewed. It is normal for the Primary Designated School Official (PDSO) to request additional items. After all requested items have been reviewed, the PDSO will issue your I-20 and mail it to you. You must have the original form (signed by the PDSO in blue ink) to bring to your Visa interview.*

Please keep in mind....

Do not expect that you will be able to work in the U.S. to help meet your annual costs! Because of the rigorous nature of the training at Dell'Arte, on campus employment is rare and limited. Off-campus employment is strictly controlled by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Funding Sources

Your funding can come from any combination of sources in the U.S. or abroad:

1. *Funds from Sponsors (parents, relatives, friends, organizations).* You may have as many sponsors as you need. Please be aware of the following:
 - a. A sponsor should only promise as much money as he or she is **capable** of giving you.
 - b. It is **highly** recommended that at least part of your financial support come from your home country. This helps when you apply for a student visa!
2. *Personal Funds* come from your own resources, not those of anyone else. If your parents put money in your bank account, please submit the evidence required of sponsors. Unless you have enough cash on hand to support yourself for your entire program of study or can prove other sources of personal income, you will need a sponsor with an income sufficient to support you.
3. *Funds from this School* such as a scholarship or fellowship.

Evidence Requirements

All documents must be:

- Less than 2 months old.
- In English: **We cannot review documents, including bank statements, that are not in English. Documents must be certifiably translated. Untranslated documents will be rejected.**

Evidence Required for Personal Funds:

Bank/asset statement in your name: monthly statement of balances and deposits

Two most recent paystubs: if funds are not yet present in bank account.

Evidence Required for School Funds or Other Granting Organization:

Copy of your award letter or contract stating **exactly** what you will be receiving and for how long.

Evidence Required from Sponsors of Cash Support:

1. *Sponsor's Affidavit and Proof of Annual Cash Support:* This form may be copied for each sponsor. All questions must be answered.
2. *Proof of Income*
 - a. *Individual Sponsor (any of the following) in addition to the most recent pay stub:*
 - i. Most recent income tax returns or receipts, **or**
 - ii. Pay stubs for last six months, **or**
 - iii. Bank/investment statements for last six months.
 - b. *Company Sponsor*
 - i. Submit tax returns and business registration and licenses. The income of a company is **not** the personal income of the owner of the business and will not be accepted as proof of income. The owner/sponsor must still provide proof of personal income as well as the business registration and licenses.
3. *Bank Statement in the name of the sponsor **only**.* If a bank statement is in the name of more than one person, each individual must submit an affidavit of support. We cannot accept bank statements that do not specify monthly balances and deposits. Letters from bank officials will not be accepted. If there is no proof of income provided with a bank statement, the statement balance will be totaled and divided by the number of years in your program of study to determine the amount available to you each year.

Evidence Required from Sponsors of Free Room and Board:

If you are presently in the U.S., you must be living with the sponsor at the time of filing this application for this to be counted towards your means of support.

1. *Sponsor's Affidavit of Free Room and Board*
2. *Proof of Income (any of the following) in addition to the most recent pay stub:*
 - a. Income tax returns or receipts, or
 - b. Pay stubs for last six months, or
 - c. Bank/investment statements for the last six months
3. *Copy of Property Lease, Deed, Rent Receipts, or Utility Bill*

How to Apply for Your Student Visa

The most common reason students are denied the F-1 or M-1 student visa or not admitted to the U.S. is because they were not prepared. Read the following information carefully and contact us if you need assistance or more information.

Begin by visiting <http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students/getting-a-visa>

****Canadian citizens (or anyone exempt from the visa requirement), you must still follow all of the following rules and procedures at the U.S. Port of Entry. Wherever the word “consul” or “visa” is mentioned below, you should substitute the words “Port of Entry Inspector” and “student status.”**

Here are the steps for applying for your Student Visa:

1. *Pay the U.S. SEVIS Fee of \$200 and have a printed receipt (I-901) that proves payment before your visa interview. Find out how to pay at www.fmjfee.com.*
2. *You are required to have a passport valid for travel to the United States and with a validity date at least six months beyond your intended period of stay in the U.S.*
3. *Apply for your visa as soon as possible upon receiving your Form I-20. There may be considerable wait time for both the visa interview and visa processing. Wait time for specific embassies and consulates is available at: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html. Make an appointment for a visa interview in person in the country where you reside. You may schedule your interview at any U.S. embassy or consulate, but be aware that it may be difficult to qualify for a visa outside of your place of permanent residence.*

Apply using the Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application, Form DS-160 found at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html#apply. A separate form is needed for children, even if they are included in a parent's passport. Families should apply at the same time.

You will pay a visa application fee. Keep the visa application fee receipt (also called the 'MRV' receipt) to prove the payment of this fee.

You may be required to pay additional fees, as required by your country of origin.

4. *You will need one photograph. The photograph must be an unmounted, full face photo, taken within the last six months. Details on photograph requirements can be found at http://travel.state.gov/visa/visaphotoreq/visaphotoreq_5334.html.*

5. *When you receive your Form I-20 from the PDSO, sign and date the Student Attestation section at the bottom of page 1 in **blue ink**.*
6. *The embassy/consulate will not issue your visa more than 4 months before your Form I-20's program start date.*
7. *The consul must, by U.S. law, presume that you do not intend to return home after completing your studies in the U.S. Do not take this personally. Student visas are only given to those who can *convince* the consul that they intend to return to their home country. **This is the number one reason for visa denial.** The burden of proof is upon you to establish that you plan to go back home to stay.*
8. *You must have a good educational or professional objective for coming to study at Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre that will prepare you for your career back home. You also must be able to prove that you are academically qualified and have the financial means to pursue it.*
9. *Be brief and answer the questions that are asked. Do not give the consul a prepared speech. Answer the questions that are asked directly and to the point.*
10. *Consuls are impersonal when administering laws. In the U.S., laws are applied equally to all people regardless of status or gender. Do not try to negotiate personal matters with them.*
11. *U.S. government officials require evidence to prove that you qualify for the F-1 or M-1 Student visa. Carefully follow the instructions and take all necessary documents with you. Detailed information regarding this documentation may be found at: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html and on your embassy/consulate's website <http://www.usembassy.gov>.*

Next, be well prepared.

Be ready to clearly explain why you want to come to the United States to study at Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre.

- Why do you want to study in the U.S.?
- Why do you want to pursue this program of study?
- Why did you choose Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre?
- What career will your studies prepare you for back home?

You can provide your statement of purpose as evidence of this.

Take evidence of your educational qualifications for admission to Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre. This may include:

- Acceptance letter and enrollment agreement
- Resume
- Transcripts and diplomas from previous institutions attended

*Also, take **original** copies of the financial documents you gave us. Your financial documents must match what appears on your Form I-20 (in item number 8). You are required to prove that you have the ability to pay for your U.S. stay.*

Be ready to convince the consul that you will return home permanently after you complete your studies. Present documents that can prove that you have strong “ties” to your country, which will necessitate your return. These ties are usually social, economic and/or family.

- Prove that you have a permanent residence in your country that you do not intend to abandon by taking a photocopy of a deed or lease of your home.
- If your family owns a business, take a letter from the bank describing it. If they own property, take the deeds.
- If you have traveled to the U.S. before, emphasize that you have returned home before.
- If you have a brother or sister who studied in the U.S. and then returned home, take a copy of his or her diploma and a statement from his or her employer.
- Get a letter from a possible employer stating that they are interested in hiring people with certificates and degrees like the one you will get at Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre.
- Do not emphasize ties to the U.S. or to family members in the U.S.

Practice your English. You will be required to speak in English. The consul may even ask you to read something and discuss what it says.

Do not talk about working in the U.S. You are required to prove that you can support the costs of studying and living in the U.S. Employment is strictly controlled by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and is not guaranteed.

If you already began your studies in another nonimmigrant status and you received a change of status to F-1 or M-1, be prepared to discuss how your original purpose for being in the U.S. changed to that of full time student, or for PTP students matriculating to year 2 of the MFA, how

your status is changing from M-1 to F-1. Provide a copy of your PTP certificate, MFA application, acceptance letter and enrollment agreement.

Applicants with dependents must also provide proof of relationship to their spouse and/or children (i.e. marriage and birth certificates).

Last of all...

See if you can apply for a Social Security Card at the time of your Visa interview (required for MFA/AEP students only). OR Apply for a Social Security Card as soon as you arrive, ideally before school starts.

Once the school year starts, this time-consuming process will interfere with class. To do this once you arrive, you must visit the Social Security Office at 3144 Broadway Street in Eureka.

Review your visa after it is issued.

When your F-1 or M-1 Student visa is issued, make sure that it has been issued correctly **before** leaving the consulate. Check that your name matches your passport name and that it shows that it is an F-1 visa (for MFA/AEP students) or M-1 visa (for PTP students). If either of these things is incorrect, ask for it to be fixed. This is very important! If you do not get your visa fixed, you may have problems later.

What if your visa is denied?

Contact us with complete details of what was said and what documents you presented with your application. Send a copy of any written reason for the denial you may have been given. If you were denied on 214(b) grounds, you did not present enough evidence that you will return home following the completion of your studies. We can advise you how to better prepare for your next visa application.

What You Need to Know About Entering the U.S.

If you follow the instructions outlined below, you should arrive to Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre without difficulty. If you have any questions, contact us.

1. ***Important!*** *Do not arrive earlier than 30 days before your Form I-20's Program Start Date.* You are not permitted to enter the U.S. earlier than that date. Arriving too early, you risk being denied entry or being charged a fee and admitted as a Visitor instead of a Student. Visitors are not allowed to study full time.
2. *Read the "Important Dates" on page 3 of this handbook.*
3. *Do not arrive later than the Program Start Date on your Form I-20 without our permission.* If you think you won't be able to arrive by that date, contact us immediately.
4. *Do not pack your immigration documents.*
5. *Take Alyssa Hughlett's mobile phone number in case of emergency: 413-212-2018*
6. *Have your documents ready to show the U.S Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer.* You will be asked to show your passport containing your student visa, Form I-20, admission stamp, SEVIS I-901 receipt, and proof of funding when you are going through U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Inspection.
7. *Be prepared to explain why you're coming to the U.S.* The CBP officer may ask you a few simple questions about the purpose of your stay in the U.S. Be prepared to tell him or her why you plan to study at Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre.
8. The officer may stamp and notate your documents as follows:
 - Stamp the date of your arrival opposite your student visa.
 - Stamp your passport and/or Form I-20 with an admission stamp. He or she may notate "F-1 D/s" or "M-1 D/s." If this happens, be sure the notation matches your status.
9. *If you do not have your Form I-20, or it is not properly signed, you will be issued a Form I-515A and given 30 days to be in the U.S.* Bring this form to the office at Dell'Arte as soon as you arrive so we can help you extend your permission to be in this country.
10. *You may be asked to go to secondary inspections.* If there are any questions about your documents, the CBP officer may ask you to go to secondary inspections. This is normal and no cause for concern.
11. *Make two sets of copies of your immigration documents.* It is important to maintain copies of your immigration documents in a safe place. Dell'Arte also requires that you bring us a copy, or make a copy at the office, so we can keep them safe and advise you in the future.
12. *Report to the Dell'Arte office on the dates indicated in the "Important Dates" on page 3 of this handbook.*

III. CURRENT STUDENTS

Maintaining Your F-1 or M-1 Student Status

According to Department of Homeland Security Regulations, you are fully responsible for abiding by the rules governing your F-1 or M-1 Student status. We will try to help you understand these rules, but we are required to report to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in SEVIS when an F-1 or M-1 student does not fulfill the following rules of status:

1. *Always be full time.*

The PTP and MFA programs are full time programs of study. If you regularly attend class, you will be full time. Contact the PDSO/School Administrator before you withdraw or stop attending class. There are a few limited exceptions to the full time requirement for which you might qualify if you obtain permission in advance.

2. *Never work without authorization.*

F-1 student status entitles students to lawfully work **on campus part time** (20 hours per week) while school is in session (except during the Holiday Show and the Community Based Arts project, which are considered full time Curricular Practical Training) and **full time** when school is not in session (i.e. during the summer). This does not include during the 60 day grace period after graduation when applying for OPT or in the U.S. for any other reason, unless you are transferring to another school. There is no authorization process for on-campus work.

You can never legally work off campus, unless in cases of severe economic hardship (application required), unless the work is with an educationally affiliated organization and the work is an integral part of your program of study, or if the work is part of OPT. The work must be authorized by the PDSO and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Offices.

Severe Economic Hardship Employment is off-campus employment authorization for F-1 students who are experiencing serious financial difficulties caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond their control. If you believe you qualify for this at any point in your training, contact the PDSO for an application.

M-1 status students can only work via post-completion of studies Optional Practical Training. (See Section III of this handbook: Graduating Students for more information.)

Social Security Numbers/Taxes:

In order to be paid in the United States, you must obtain a social security number. However, you do not need one in order to get hired or *begin* working. If you do not have a social security card, you should apply for one as soon as possible in order to be paid. You will also have to file taxes in the United States. Visit http://www.ice.gov/sevis/faqs/f1_m1_ssa_tax_information.htm, and the SSA website (socialsecurity.gov) for more information.

3. *Obtain a SEVIS transfer to attend another U.S. school.*

If you plan to attend another U.S. school, college or university, you must notify the PDSO and be "Transferred Out" in SEVIS before your F-1 Student status ends.

M-1 status students may not transfer after 6 months from the date you are first admitted to the U.S. unless you are unable to remain at the school due to circumstances beyond your control. M-1 status students must apply for permission to transfer using the Form I-539.

4. *Obtain a Change of Education Level to begin a new program of study.*
If you have been admitted to a new program of study at Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre, you must obtain a Form I-20 for your new program before you complete your current program of study.
5. *Do not remain in the U.S. more than 60 days (F-1 status students) or 30 days (M-1 status students) after completing your program of study unless you have applied for post-OPT employment, School Transfer, or a Change of Education Level.*
You are required to complete your program of study by the completion date on your Form I-20. Once the completion date has passed, you have 60 days (for F-1 status students) or 30 days (for M-1 status students) to either depart the U.S., begin Post-OPT, request a School Transfer, or obtain a new Form I-20 to begin studies in a new education level or program. For application information for any of these options, see the PDSO.
6. *Keep your passport valid at all times.*
Your passport should be valid for at least 6 months after the completion of your program. If your passport will expire, contact your country's embassy or consulate in the United States to renew it.
7. *Report any address or name changes to the PDSO/School Administrator within 10 days of making the change.*
8. *Get an updated Form I-20 when any of its information changes.*
Notify the PDSO if there are any changes in the information on your Form I-20, such as name, citizenship, or funding, and get an updated Form I-20.
9. *Get a travel endorsement on your Form I-20 every term to return to the U.S.*
When you want to travel outside the U.S. you need a travel endorsement (signature on page 3 of your Form I-20) from the PDSO for the current term to reenter. Be sure to submit your request at least 2 weeks in advance of your trip. *Carry your original immigration documents on your person whenever you travel.*
10. *File a Form 8845 federal tax form for every year you are in the U.S., even if you did not receive any income.*
11. *We advise you to carry a copy of your immigration documents and your student ID with you at all times when in the school vicinity.*

Visa Status vs. Visa Stamp¹

There can be much confusion over the word “visa” and what to do when it expires. Do you have to go home? Can it be extended? To answer these questions, it is important to know what “visa” you’re talking about.

Visa Status:

Visa status is what you have when you are inside the United States. When you are outside the United States, you have no visa status. Students at Dell’Arte will be either in F-1 status or M-1 status. Your visa status is governed by the dates on your I-20. The end date is how long your program of study is, and when you are expected to be finished. After the end date has passed, F-1 students have 60 days to remain in the United States; M-1 students have 30 days.

Visa Stamp:

Your visa stamp is like your entry ticket to the country. You apply for it at a US embassy or consulate abroad and use it at the port of entry. It is the sticker inside your passport (Canadian citizens do not need a visa stamp). Your visa stamp may be good for one entry, two entries or multiple entries. The end date on the stamp is based on reciprocity tables, not on the dates of your I-20. You may receive a stamp that is good for just a few months or several years. Your stamp is allowed to expire while you are in the United States. It is only needed at the port of entry. However, once you travel outside the country, if your stamp is expired you will have to get a new one to re-enter the country.

¹ Roger Williams University

IV. GRADUATING STUDENTS

General Information

YOUR F-1 STUDENT STATUS OFFICIALLY ENDS 60 DAYS AFTER GRADUATION and YOUR M-1 STUDENT STATUS OFFICIALLY ENDS 30 DAYS AFTER GRADUATION unless you have either: *applied for Post-Completion of Studies OPT or school transfer, obtained a new Form I-20 for a Change in Education Level, or departed the US.*

Planning to depart the US? Immigration requires that you depart the US no later than 60 days after graduation for F-1 status students and 30 days after graduation for M-1 status students.

Optional Practical Training (OPT): F-1 status students: If you would like to get work experience after graduation in a job related to your Ensemble Based Physical Theatre field of study, you may apply for up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). You do not have to have a job offer to apply for OPT!

By law, you may apply for post-completion OPT up to 90 days (3 months) before graduation but not later than 60 days (2 months) after! It presently takes 2-3 months to get your OPT authorized by USCIS, so apply for OPT *now* if you want to travel or start working soon after graduation. The later you file your application, the more likely you will lose some of your 12-month benefit.

If you have travel plans after graduation, it is advisable that you have OPT authorized by USCIS and obtain a job offer before departing the U.S. You will need your EAD card, endorsed I-20 and a letter from an employer to return to the U.S.

Beginning a New Program of Study: If you are planning to begin a new program of study (i.e. doctoral degree) at another school in the U.S., you must request school transfer no later than 60 days after graduation for F-1 status students and 30 days after graduation for M-1 status students.

Please note: F-1 and M-1 Student regulations prohibit beginning a new program of study if you have obtained post-OPT.

OPT Employment Authorization

What is it?

OPT is off-campus employment authorization that lets F-1 status students get work experience in their major field of study. The amount of work you are permitted is a maximum of 12 months of *full-time* employment for each *higher* education level you pursue in the U.S. You can use it during or after your studies. You can work for any employer, anywhere in the country, as long as it is in your field of study (i.e. You cannot work as a chef in a local restaurant).

M-1 status students are availed practical training for Post-completion of studies only. One month of practical training is available for every four months of full-time study, not to exceed a total of six months. Therefore, M-1 status students are availed two months of practical training. There is no nine-month work bar. The PDSO/School Administrator must certify that upon her belief, employment comparable to the proposed employment is not available to the student in the country of the student's residence. This should be included in the "PDSO recommendation." M-1 status students may apply not earlier than **60 days** before completion of studies and not later than **30 days** after.

The OPT "Bank Account":

F-1 status students: In your OPT "bank account" are 12 months of full-time OPT for your current program of study. Let's say you'd like to work full-time for 3 months after your first year at Dell'Arte. That's a 3-month withdrawal of full-time employment, leaving you 9 months to spend during the rest of your MFA degree. After your second year, you decide to work *part-time* (less than 20 hours a week) for 3 months. Since part-time employment counts at half the full-time rate, you've made a withdrawal of 1.5 months of full time employment. With 4.5 months total withdrawn from your "OPT bank account," this leaves you with 7.5 months of full time employment still in your account to use after graduation. If you decide to spend all of your OPT after you complete your degree, you must request all of it at once (the full year). You cannot use it in pieces.

If you decide to go on to a doctoral degree after completing your OPT for your MFA, your bank account will be *full again* with another 12 months available to you!

How can it be used?

Summer vacation – either part time or full-time employment

While school is in session – part time employment only

After completion of all course requirements for the MFA degree, excluding thesis or equivalent – part or full-time employment

After completion of ALL requirements for the course of study – full-time employment only

How can you qualify for it?

1. You must have been enrolled full-time for at least one academic year.
2. You must be able to describe how the type of work you are seeking directly relates to your major. You do not have to have a job offer to apply for OPT. If you are applying for before completion of studies OPT, however, it is wise that you be as sure as possible of a job so that you don't waste any of your OPT "account."
3. If you are seeking post-Completion of Studies OPT, the PDSO must certify the date that you are expected to complete your program of study. You may apply for post-OPT up to 3 months before completing your program of study, but not later than 2 months after. If you apply within the 60 day grace period after graduation, you are likely not to receive your full 12-month OPT benefit due to USCIS processing times.

4. You cannot already have used 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training. **Full time CPT will be authorized for the Holiday Show (3 months) and the Community Based Art Project (1 month), but because these projects total *less than 12 months*, it will not count against post-OPT time.**

How do you apply?

Complete the application and return it to the PDSO. When you return it, she will review it to be sure that it is complete. If everything is in order, she will issue you a new Form I-20 recommending your OPT and contact you to come pick up your application. When you pick up your application, she will provide you with instructions on how to submit your application to USCIS and track its progress.

OPT Application

1. OPT Recommendation Request and F-1 Student Status Responsibilities while on Post-Completion of Studies OPT Form (See attached)
2. Form 1-765: APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION. Go to uscis.gov, complete items 1-16, print out and sign (in black ink):
 - a. Item 3: Address – If you would like the PDSO to help track the adjudication of your application, enter *P.O. Box 816*. Do not enter “c/o Dell’Arte;” just the address.
 - b. Item 10: A-Number or 1-94 Number – Put your 1-94 number unless USCIS has previously assigned you an alien registration number.
 - c. Item 11 – If you have ever applied for hardship or optional practical training employment before, answer yes, where and when you applied, whether it was granted or denied, and attach a photocopy of any EAD card issued for it. If you answer no, go straight to Item 12.
 - d. Items 14 and 15 – These are always “Student.”
 - e. Your Certification – Sign and put your phone number and the date.
 - f. Item 16 – Enter the code that applies to the type of OPT you are requesting: pre-completion OPT – I(3)(A); post-completion OPT – (c)(3)(B)
 - g. Item 17 – DO NOT fill this out. It only applies to STEM extension applications.
3. Form G-1145: E-NOTIFICATION OF APPLICATION/PETITION ACCEPTANCE. Go to uscis.gov, complete, print out and sign (in blue ink) the MOST RECENT Form G-1145 available. Make sure this is paper clipped (not stapled) to the top of your completed application.

Attach the Following Documents to Your Application:

1. Two passport type photographs – Print your name and SEVIS ID number on the back in *pencil*.
2. Forms 1-20 – Photocopies of *all previous* F-1 Forms I-20 issued by us and other schools you have attended. Once you receive your newly issued Form I-20 from the PDSO/School Administrator, you will include this (the original copy) with the DSO OPT recommendation on page 3.
3. Photocopy of any previous EAD card(s)
4. Photocopy of Form I-94 (both sides) or admission stamp in passport
5. Photocopies of your passport identification pages and visa
6. \$410 fee in the form of a check or money order payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security. If you are using a personal check, it must have your name and address on it.

Make a photocopy of all the above documents for your records.

Your complete application must be received at USCIS within the following deadlines:

1. Within 30 days of the DSO OPT Recommendation on your Form 1-20, that is, signatures on pages 1 and 3.
2. When applying for post-OPT, your application may not be received at the USCIS Lockbox later than 60 days after you have completed your program of study.

3. It is strongly recommended that you send your application by some type of courier service that will provide you with proof of timely receipt. (See second address listed below.)
4. If you are not using our address, send evidence of timely filing and acceptance of your application to the PDSO and keep copies for yourself (i.e. courier delivery receipt; G-1145 E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance.)

File your complete application to the USCIS Lockbox:

For US Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries:

USCIS
P.O. Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For Express mail and courier deliveries:

USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034

Once your application is complete:

1. If everything is in order, the PDSO will issue you a new Form I-20 with her recommendation on it. She will contact you to come in and pick up your application.
2. If you put the Dell'Arte P.O. Box on your Form I-765, USCIS will communicate with us about your application. If they request additional information, the PDSO will contact you. If your application is approved, the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will be sent here, the PDSO will make a copy for your file, and contact you to come and pick it up, along with your "OPT Approved" Form I-20.
3. You cannot begin working until you receive your EAD Card.

OPT Processing and Rules

How long does it take?

After your application is filed at USCIS, plan that it will take about 3 months for your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) to be sent. It could take less or more depending on their workload and any security clearances. If it takes longer than 3 months, you may request “Expeditious Handling” of your application.

It’s important that you take USCIS processing time into consideration when planning the date you want to start working! YOU CANNOT BEGIN TO WORK UNTIL YOU HAVE YOUR EAD CARD!

Track the progress of your application by either contacting the PDSO (if you requested her assistance and used P.O. Box 816) or through the USCIS Case Status Online System at www.uscis.gov.

If your EAD card is being sent to you, be sure to provide the PDSO with a photocopy.

Please note: If, for any reason, your application is returned to you, that means that it *has not been accepted*. Contact the PDSO immediately for information about your options.

What if you want to travel before starting post-OPT?

Travel while OPT is pending is at your own risk. DHS regulations require that you have your EAD card and a job or job offer to return to the U.S.

What about travel after OPT is authorized?

Reentry to the U.S. is allowed to “resume employment” [8 CFR 214.2 (f)(13)(ii)]. You are required to carry the following documents with you (Do not pack them!):

1. I-20 endorsement not older than 6 months
2. EAD
3. Proof of job offer or job
4. Passport valid 6 months into the future
5. Valid visa – Renewing your visa while on OPT is difficult, so it’s best to only return home while the visa is valid.

You can travel on business for OPT work as long as you are gone less than 5 months. According to the SEVP OPT Policy Guidance (7.1.8), “Time spent outside the United States during an approved period of post-completion OPT counts as unemployment against the 90/120-day limits, unless the student is either:

- Employed during a period of leave authorized by an employer; or
- Traveling as part of his or her employment.”

How can you extend your OPT?

You can extend pre-completion of studies OPT by filing another application. You may not continue to work until it has been authorized by USCIS.

Only qualified “STEM” graduates (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) may qualify for an extension of the post-OPT. You will, however, be entitled to another 12-month period of OPT if you go on to a higher level of study.

Study and Post-Completion OPT:

DHS regulations state that, “Authorization to engage in optional practical training employment is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another education level.” Therefore, you should not continue your U.S. studies until after your OPT has ended.

What if you don’t ever find a job? Your options are the same after your 60-day grace period is finished. Leave the U.S. and return home, or go back to school. Write a “Request to Revoke” letter to USCIS. (See your PDSO for the procedure.)

V. APPLICATIONS AND FORMS

Application for the Form I-20

Part I: Personal Information

1. Which program have you been accepted into? PTP MFA AEP (Circle one)

PTP students will apply for M-1 student status (for vocational training). MFA and AEP students will apply for F-1 student status (for academic training.)

2. Name in Passport:

Surname (Family/Last Name) Given Name(s) (First Name, Middle Name, etc.)

-Enter your name exactly as shown in your passport.

-Attach a copy of your passport identification page.

2A. Preferred Name:

3. Date of Birth: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

4. Gender: Male Female Unknown/Other (Please circle one)

5. Country of Birth: _____

6. Country of Citizenship: _____

6. Country of Permanent Residence: _____

7. Permanent address in home country:

Number and Street

City Province/State Postal Code Country

8. Address in the United States (if known):

Number and Street

City State Zip Code

9. Email _____ **Telephone** _____ **Fax** _____

11. Dependents: A student wishing to have his/her family member(s) accompany him/her must document the following amounts for each family member per calendar year of intended study: Spouse: \$2,000 per calendar year; each child: \$2,000 per calendar year.

Important update regarding dependents:

From SEVIS Broadcast Message 1308-01 Form I-20 Issuance Subsequent to the June 26, 2013, Supreme Court Ruling on the Defense of Marriage Act:

On June 26, 2013, the Supreme Court ruled that Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) is unconstitutional.

The Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs has advised consulates that their officials may issue derivative visas based on same-sex marriage if the marriage is "recognized in the place of celebration." That is, if the country where the couple married recognizes same-sex marriage as legal, then the U.S. government will recognize the union as legal for visa issuance, irrespective of where the couple plans to reside. The Department of State will be updating the reciprocity tables pursuant to 9 FAM 41.105 to identify what types of marriages are available for same-sex couples.

A designated school official (DSO) should continue to verify marriages consistent with current practices and should now do so for a same-sex marriage if it is "recognized in the place of celebration." Once the marriage is verified, a DSO then may issue a Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Status," to a same-sex spouse of an F-1 or M-1 nonimmigrant who is seeking admission into the United States as an F-2 or M-2 dependent.

I plan to come without dependents.

The following dependents will accompany me (list names and relationships.)

1.

Name (Family/First/Middle)	Date of Birth (month/day/year)	Country of Birth
Country of Citizenship	Gender	Relation to you (spouse/child)

2.

Name (Family/First/Middle)	Date of Birth (month/day/year)	Country of Birth
Country of Citizenship	Gender	Relation to you (spouse/child)

Part II: If you are in the United States *now*, complete this section. If not, continue to Part III.

What is your immigrant status? _____

You may attend school regardless of your Immigration status.

If F-1:

1. **SEVIS ID Number:** N _____

2. **What is the purpose of your requested Form I-20? (Circle one)**

- i. Transfer In
- ii. Regain F-1 Status
- iii. Initial F-1 or M-1 Status

3. **Do you plan to travel outside the US before school starts?** Yes No (Circle one)

If yes, tell us how you would like to get your Form I-20 in Part III.

If no: If you are F-1, you will receive "Transfer In" or other instructions. If you hold another status, we must meet with you before issuing your Form I-20.

Part III: If you are *not* in the U.S. now, complete this section.

1. **Did you recently attend school in the U.S. in F-1 or M-1 status?** Yes No (Circle One)

If yes, what was the last date of your attendance? _____

If you attended a U.S. school last term and are just home on holiday between academic terms, please contact us immediately for advisement (Be prepared to provide name of school, program, and major).

- 1. Mailing Address:** *Your Form I-20 will be sent standard airmail to the name and address you indicate in the box below. Print your name and address in English, exactly as it should appear on the envelope:*

Part IV: Student's Statement of Financial Support

Total Estimated Costs _____
Minimum = Tuition + \$7,000 USD PER YEAR of study

How will you be funded for your program of study?
If MFA or AEP, account for every year of the 2 - 3 years of training.

Source(s) of my support	Amount
Personal Funds: <i>The amount available to me from my own resources is:</i>	
Funds from this School. <i>Type:</i>	
Funds from Granting Organization. <i>Organization Name:</i>	
Cash Funds from a Sponsor. <i>Sponsor's Name:</i>	
Cash Funds from a Sponsor. <i>Sponsor's Name:</i>	
Cash Funds from a Sponsor. <i>Sponsor's Name:</i>	
Free Room and Board from a Sponsor <i>with whom I will live with.</i> <i>Sponsor's Name:</i>	
TOTAL AMOUNT: <i>This amount must be the same or more than your minimum annual costs.</i>	

Please attach the following (in English or officially translated to English) to prove your funding:

Personal documents:

- Official Bank/Asset statement (most recent month)
- Proof of Income: two most recent paystubs – *only needed if funds are not yet fully saved in bank account*
- Award letter and/or contract from school or granting organization (if applicable)
- Copy of Passport

Sponsor documents:

- Affidavit of support
- Proof of income: most recent paystub plus ONE of the following: Recent tax return/receipt OR 6 months paystubs OR 6 months bank statements
- If providing free room and board in the U.S.: Proof of residence (i.e. deed, rent receipts, or utility bill)

Sponsor's Affidavit and Evidence of Annual Cash Support

What does this affidavit mean?

By completing this affidavit, you are swearing to the U.S. government that you will provide this student with a specific amount of money, from your own financial resources, *for every year* he or she is going to study at Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre and live in the U.S. You are also proving that you can afford the support you are promising with the documentary evidence you have attached.

How long is the course of study?

The Professional Training Program runs for 9 months total, from October through June.

The Master of Fine Arts Program runs from October through June for 3 years total.

The Advanced Ensemble Program runs from October through June for 2 years total.

How to Complete this Form

1. *Fill out this form in English (or have it officially translated). **Promise only the amount of money you are able to give.*** The most common reason we reject affidavits is that we do not believe a sponsor can afford to give as much as promised.
2. *Sign and date the affidavit.*
3. *Attach the supporting evidence listed below.* The affidavit will not be accepted without the required supporting evidence.
4. *Give the student the original documents and have him or her submit them electronically or make photocopies to mail or fax to us with the application for a Form I-20.* The student will need to keep the originals to present to the consul at the visa interview.

Supporting Evidence Required

1. *Proof of Income (any of the following) **in addition to the most recent pay stub:***
 - a. Income tax returns or receipts, or
 - b. Pay stubs for the last six months, or
 - c. Bank/investment statements for the last six months
2. *Bank statements in your name only.* A monthly statement of balances and deposits. If another person's name appears on your bank statement, that person must also complete a separate affidavit. A letter from a bank officer will **not** be accepted.

This is my sworn promise of cash support.

I, _____, promise that I can and will give

My name

_____ no less than U.S. \$ _____

Full name of student

in cash for **every year** of the student's program of study at Dell'Arte International

School of Physical Theatre. My relationship to the student is _____.

My address is

Telephone _____ Fax _____

Email _____

The following persons are fully or partially dependent on me for their support. (Do not include student named above.)

Name	Relationship to me	Age
------	--------------------	-----

Name	Relationship to me	Age
------	--------------------	-----

Name of my employer _____

Annual Salary _____ (USD) Other income _____ (USD)

My proof of income and bank statements are attached. Yes No (Circle one)

I swear that the information I have provided above is true and correct.

Signature of Sponsor

Date

Sponsor's Affidavit and Proof of Free Room and Board

What does this affidavit mean?

By completing this affidavit, you are swearing to the U.S. government that this student will live with you free of charge for room and food *for every year* he or she is studying at Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre. (The student can not be required to provide you with any services such as babysitting, cleaning, etc. in exchange for the room and board, as that is *employment*.) You are also proving that you are the person who owns or rents the property and can afford the support you are promising with the documents you have attached.

Before signing, it is important to understand that you are making a financial commitment to the student that should not be broken. Do not expect that the student can help support the costs through employment. Employment is strictly controlled by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and is very limited.

How long is the course of study?

The Professional Training Program runs for 9 months total, from October through June.

The Master of Fine Arts Program runs from October through June for 3 years total.

The Advanced Ensemble Program runs from October through June for 2 years total.

How to Complete this Form

1. *Fill out this form in English (or have it officially translated).*
2. *Sign and date the affidavit.*
3. *Attach the supporting evidence listed below.* The affidavit will not be accepted without the required supporting evidence.
4. *Give the student the original documents and have him or her submit them electronically or make photocopies to mail or fax to us with the application for a Form I-20.* The student will need to keep the originals to present to the consul at the visa interview.

Supporting Evidence Required

1. *Proof of Income (any of the following) in addition to the most recent pay stub:*
 - a. Income tax returns or receipts, or
 - b. Pay stubs for the last six months, or
 - c. Bank/investment statements for the last six months
2. *Bank statements in your name only.* A monthly statement of balances and deposits. If another person's name appears on your bank statement, that person must also complete a separate affidavit. A letter from a bank officer will **not** be accepted.
3. *Copy of your deed, lease, current rent receipts or current utility bill* to prove that you are the person who owns or rents the property.

This is my sworn promise of free room and board.

I, _____, promise that for each year of his/
My name

her study at Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre,

_____ will live free of charge with me at my
Full name of student

home. My address is

Telephone _____ Email _____

I own this property.

I rent this property.

Does the student currently live with you in the U.S.? Yes No (Circle one)

I will not require any service in exchange for this benefit.

My relationship to the student is _____.

My proof of income and deed or lease are attached. Yes No (Circle one)

I swear that the information I have provided above is true and correct.

Signature of Sponsor

Date

Agreement to Maintain Status

I understand that it is my legal responsibility to comply with the rules and responsibilities of my F-1 or M-1 Student status. I also understand that Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre is required by federal law to report in SEVIS regarding whether or not I am fulfilling the rules of my F-1 or M-1 Student status as explained in the International Student Handbook.

Signature _____ *Date* _____

Print Name _____

OPT Recommendation Request: Student's Acknowledgement of Understanding

I understand that I am requesting the PDSO's recommendation for Optional Practical Training Employment authorization. The PDSO will advise and assist me with reviewing my application for completeness and eligibility. Once the school has recommended the OPT, the application will be returned to me for filing at the USCIS.

I understand that I am completely responsible for properly filing my OPT application with the USCIS and tracking its processing through the USCIS Case Status Online System at uscis.gov.

F-1 Student Status Responsibilities While on Post-Completion of Studies OPT

I understand that during my period of authorized Post-Completion of Studies OPT, I am continuing in my F-1 Student Status and have legal responsibilities:

1. I agree to only work in my major field of study and within the dates that I have been authorized on my EAD.
2. I understand that DHS regulations state, "During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment..." [8 CFR 214.2 (f)(10)(ii)(E)]. I agree to report interruptions of OPT employment to the PDSO/Registrar [8 CFR 214.2 (f)(12)(i)].
3. I understand that I am strongly recommended to keep a record and supporting evidence of all of my OPT related activities, such as:
 - a. Details of job searches, correspondences with perspective employers, interviews, etc.
 - b. Employment information: dates, name/location of employer, position, part/full-time
 - c. Volunteer work: dates, name/location/type of volunteer work, part/full time (Note: Federal law requires that a volunteer may not assume a normally paid position or displace a US worker.)
4. I agree to report a change of name (with proof of my updated passport noting the change) and/or change of address to the PDSO.
5. I understand that beginning a new course of study or transferring U.S. schools automatically terminates OPT employment.
6. I agree to obtain a DSO's endorsement to travel every six months.
7. I understand that employment authorization is automatically suspended in the event of a strike or other labor dispute involving work stoppage at the place of employment [8 CFR 214.2(f)(14)].

Signature

Date

Printed Name

VI. ALUMNI RESOURCES

WELCOME TO DELL'ARTE, everyone! AND! Welcome to the USA!

Are you.... confused? Scared? Homesick? Excited? Eager? Good. This means you're ready for the incredible year that's staring you in the face. You are about to embark on an extraordinary adventure, and to be honest, I'm a little jealous. Have a blast and enjoy every second of it!

My name is Ruxy Cantir and I graduated from Dell'Arte's MFA program. Like you, I was an international student here and before that, I went to college in South Carolina. So I pack some knowledge on what it's like to live as a foreigner here that I impart with you now. This document you're reading is hopefully going to clear away worries you may have about living here and ease your transition in your awesome adventure.

Here we go!

1) US Entry Documents – Passport, I-20, I-94

Your Passport. Oooh, your passport might as well be coated in gold, it's that important. Keep it in a safe place. It contains your American visa and allows you to enter and leave the US. Your passport also serves as your Government identification here in the States. Some places won't accept a student ID, so you may have to carry your passport with you to prove your age. For instance, if you want to buy booze, you may get carded to check if you're over 21, and this is when you whip out your passport and watch the cashier squint her/his eyes over a foreign piece of document. It's fun.

Your I-20. Here's another one you should put in a safe at the bottom of a sea surrounded by sharks. This is the document Dell'Arte gave to you so that it would be possible for you to get your visa from your local US Embassy. This basically offers more detailed information about your visa and stay in the US. There the authorities can see where you go to school, what scholarship you have, etc. This is mostly important for you when you enter the States – the immigration official will look at it and stamp it. If and when, during the school year, you will leave the US, ask Alyssa to sign your I-20. **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT!** The new dated signature is necessary for you to be able to enter the US again.

Your visa. The US Embassy in your country printed a visa in your passport. It is either single entry (which means you are allowed to enter the US only once, so if you've entered now, you are not allowed to leave the country and then come back in, unless you get another American visa) or multiple entry (which means you are allowed to leave the US as many times as you need and come back without a problem as long as your visa is valid). Be advised that you are allowed to leave the US only during a scheduled break at Dell'arte.

Your I-94. It is a good idea to always have a current printout of your I-94 Arrival and Departure information. You get this by going to the [Homeland Security I-94 Information Retrieval website](#)

Your F1 or M1 status. This refers to the type of visa you have. If you are an MFA or AEP student, you are most likely under an F1 status, which is a longer-term visa. If you're in the PTP, you are most likely under the M1 status, which is a shorter-term visa.

Bottom line: Keep all of these documents safe safe safe. Don't carry them with you, unless you absolutely have to. (look below for times you may need to have your passport on you)

I've traveled back and forth between the states and my native Moldova many times, so let me quickly go over a scenario when you enter the states.

Let's say you're flying from Sweden to Chicago and then to San Francisco. This means that when you land on American soil (in this scenario, Chicago), you will go through customs. There's usually a huge line right after you land in Chicago. You will go to stand in the line where it says "Non-American citizens" or "Alien passengers." Be patient, you will be in line for a while. When you get to talk to the Immigration Officer in the booth, he or she will ask for your passport, your I-20, and the form you filled out on the plane (this is a blue one where you are supposed to declare any goods or merchandise you are bringing into the States. Unless you're bringing in incredible amounts of fruits or cheese, or something, you should be fine and check "no" on the boxes on that form). Have these documents ready when you go to the booth. The Immigration officer will take your fingerprints and take a picture of you with a webcam. He/she may also ask you questions about the program you're enrolled in. He/she will stamp your I-20, your passport, say, "welcome to the US" and you will be on your way. You will get your checked luggage and as you exit the customs area of the airport, you will hand the blue form you filled out to the officer standing at the exit. Then, you're set!

Of course, a similar process happens when you enter the country via bus, car, boat, or catapult.

You will need to have your passport on you to:

- open a bank account
- go to the doctor for the first time
- go to a bar or buy booze from a grocery store (this angers me, but it is what it is. The legal drinking age in the US is 21, so you will be asked to show your ID if you look young. Some places only accept a Government Photo ID, so if you're international, they will ask for your passport. Don't get me started on this bullcrap, but if you think you will have a drink somewhere, take your passport with you)
- enter the Blue Lake Casino after 10 PM (I have been turned around many times, which is something else I'm bitter about. FYI, the casino has free tea, coffee, and soda, so..... it's worth going in there sometimes. It also has Karaoke Thursdays and Sundays. A Dell'arte fave. It's a good time.)

2) Bank Accounts

I'm assuming most of you have a bank account or a debit card of some sort in your country where you store money. Your card will most likely be usable in the States, if it is a Visa or Mastercard. Obviously, you will be charged a fee, if you use your card at an ATM, anywhere between one dollar and 5 dollars (the ATM in WinCo Foods in Eureka only charges \$1, fyi). If that is something you can live with – that is, getting cash out from your card every once in a while with an average \$3 fee, then you're set, you don't need an American bank account. Just so you know, though, without an American bank account, you won't be able to cash any checks that you might get – you'll need a friend to cash them for you at an American bank.

My recommendation is that you get an American bank account because it makes certain things, like cashing checks, easier. With a local account, you would also be able to pay for stuff easier

when you go out, order things online with your card, write checks yourself, etc.

If you do decide to get an account here, it is fairly easy. You just need to go to a bank, tell the teller you want to open an account, bring your passport and I-20 form. If they ask you about social security number, just say you are an international student, that should settle it.

Some useful bank names in the Arcata and Eureka area: Bank of America, US Bank, Umpqua Bank, Coast Central Credit Union (a local, less evil bank), Chase, North Valley Bank.

I, myself, have been using Bank of America for about 7 years now, and have been pretty happy with it, even though they are an evil corporation...

You might get tax filing forms from your American bank in the spring. Those are usually sent out automatically to everyone. Even if you don't have an income, you might have to fill out a form or two... but.... to be honest, you probably don't have to worry about it.... The tax stuff for international students has always been somewhat of a mystery to me. Nobody, even in college, has been able to give me a straight and consistent answer about the necessity for international students to file for taxes. I, myself, never had to file anything, even when I was working part-time in college, because THEY (generic "they") said I was making too little to declare. SO my two cents would be to not worry about it until you get something from your bank or the government, then you can figure it out, by either asking your bank more specifically or researching this with Alyssa more intensely.

!!!! Just to note that an advantage of having an American bank account would be that you would be able to write checks – which come in handy when you have to send money via mail, for example – to pay for a bill to a clinic (most of those bills arrive via mail.)!!!!

Speaking of working in the US – again, you are not allowed to work in the US, unless it is associated with the school.

3) Cell Phones

First of all, let me say that one can live in Blue Lake without a cell phone. The PTP community is pretty tight-knit, so you are in contact with one another constantly. Even if you're not, you're probably about a 5-minute walk away from your friends.

If you are convinced you need a cell phone, there are two options for you.

Option number one is that you could get a phone and a “plan” (i.e. you sign a contract with) from a phone company, like AT&T, Verizon, Sprint, T Mobile etc. Most individual plans (you sign a contract alone) start at \$39.99/month. Family plans (multiple users of the plan) start at \$59.99 – this is the type of plan you could share with your friends. The problem with these is that most contracts have a length of 2 years. You need to talk to them individually at an office to customize it for you for one year only. Not hard to do, just an additional step. I have used AT&T for about 3 years now and it's been great, it has good coverage in Blue Lake.

Speaking of coverage, you may have noticed that Blue Lake is situated right smack in the mountains. Which means that some phone service providers literally lay an egg and you won't be able to get any connection. I know for sure Sprint and Virgin Mobile are shoddy in this region. Verizon and AT&T are good.

Option number two is that you get a pre-paid or a pay-as-you-go phone. What this means is that you get a phone and then you buy your minutes, either online or from a store in the form of a card, you charge your phone and you talk and text as long as you have minutes, and then you can re-charge your account again. There are a number of companies that provide this service: Verizon has a few pre-paid options (<http://www.verizonwireless.com>), TracPhone (www.tracfone.com), Virgin Mobile (bad connection in Blue Lake) <http://www.virginmobileusa.com>, Boost Mobile (<http://www.boostmobile.com>), Walmart (<http://www.walmart.com/cp/cell-phones-accessories/542371>), and others. (if you need more companies, just type in “pre-paid phone company” into Google). Most companies normally sell cheap phones that go with this service, too.

I have never personally used any of these companies. What I hear is that they are ok for sending/receiving texts and calls, but that minutes roll by quickly, and it's a drag to recharge often – you having a phone is not consistent then. Additionally, they are awful for calling overseas... Check out the websites above for their rates per minute and per text. Generally, I encourage you to talk to people at phone companies either face to face or at least over phone or internet.

You shouldn't use phones to call home anyway, unless it's your only option. I say this because you will go bankrupt.

If you must call home from a phone, seriously, for the love of God, go here www.net2phone.com and buy a prepaid international calling card. Minutes to international destinations can cost as low as a cent in some places.

Of course you know about Skype and Google Talk. Right? RIGHT? They are life-savers for keeping in contact with friends and family overseas. In the INCREDIBLE case in which you don't have one of these on your computer, install them now: www.skype.com for Skype and for Google Talk, make yourself a google account here www.gmail.com and the Google talk option is to your left.

Here's a crash course on phone-ing in the US: when you phone someone from the US from a phone, you dial the 3-digit area code (in California, it's normally 707 or some variation on that) and then the 7-digit number. Boom.

4) Medical Insurance

You will need medical insurance for your stay in the US. Some students pull it off without one while they're in the States. I recommend having one – it puts your mind at ease if something unexpected happens during the year. Some countries, like Canada, may be able to transfer the medical insurance one has there to the medical system in the US. Great Britain, Australia, and/or the Scandinavian and European Union states are other countries where this may be possible. If you come from these countries, check with your provider to see if your insurance will be valid or transferable to the US.

For those of you who need and want to get medical insurance when you get to the US, IT IS SO EASY!

You can buy medical insurance by the month here <https://www.isoa.org/>. I have used this website for a number of years now and I've been happy with it. I've only had to use it a few times, and

when I did, the rates were okay, not ideal, but by American Medical Insurance standards, they are good. Now, you will see that this is a website ESPECIALLY for international students to buy medical insurance. They have good rates and a variety of options. On the website, too, they explain what a deductible is, and other insurance vocab. We can go over this in detail, if you get confused.

If you order insurance online from ISO, they will send you an insurance card in the mail and other useful documents. Keep the insurance card in your wallet.

If you choose not to get insurance, that's fine, too. Just know that if you go to the doctor without insurance, you will have to foot the entire bill. A good, cheap clinic to go to is the Open Door Clinic in Arcata. Website here: <http://www.opendoorhealth.com/opendoor/all-locations>
They charge a set fee, if you tell them you are an international and poor student. It is affordable. The service is good. Call to make an appointment – 707.826.8610.
Even if you have insurance, this is a good place to go to. Ladies, free gynecological consultations here, you just have to ask.

You can also get free gynecological consultations and other free services at Planned Parenthood. All you have to do is register with them. Their office is in Eureka. Great service. Website here: <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-center/centerDetails.asp?f=2301&a=90050&v=details>

Here's another scenario that might be useful:

Let's say you got an international student insurance. You made an appointment with Open Door Clinic to have something checked with a doctor. You went to your appointment, gave the clinic your information (i.e. name, insurance card number, date of birth, your address in the US, etc), you ran a few basic tests, then you left. Normally, here's what happens with billing and such: a few days after your doctor consultation, you will get a notice in the mail from your insurance company (ISO works with Klais Co. so don't be confused if that's what the envelope says). They will show you on the bill what service and percentage of the costs from Open Door they are covering as your insurance. They will also show you what part of the bill is your responsibility to pay. A few days later, Open Door Clinic will send you a bill with what you have to pay, they normally attach a self-addressed envelope, so all you have to do is send them a check in that envelope.

(this is a very specific scenario, but the process is normally the same or at least similar with other companies)

If you don't have insurance and you go to the doctor at, say again, Open Door Clinic in Arcata, the process is simpler, and you will basically just receive a bill from the clinic, which you will have to pay.

***2016 Addendum on Insurance: Another option to take advantage of is MediCal. This is a state-run insurance program that is free. It takes at least an hour to sign up for it once you get here. Other international students say this is a good option for students and that the people are helpful and friendly, but also warn that the system is slow. MediCal's contact information will be shared when you arrive.

5) Transportation

Okay, this was a huge deal for me when I first got to the States. At home, I was always able to go everywhere I wanted because of public transportation. In this area of California, there really isn't any. It was a huge adjustment for me, and you may experience the same.

People get around in cars here. It may feel like if you don't have a car, that you are stranded in Blue Lake. Certainly, there may be times when you feel you are stuck and can't even go to the grocery store on your own to get a freaking bottle of shampoo, or some chocolate to eat your feelings. And while all that may be true, it's really not that bad. Like I mentioned before, the Dell'Arte community is so tight, that you will rarely have trouble going to get the things you need. Many of the American students here bring their cars, and what happens every year is that people carpool to go grocery shopping, to go out, etc. It becomes an exciting adventure. Honestly.

There is ONE vehicle that is the closest resemblance to a public transportation service: it is the Blue Lake Rancheria bus. It goes as far as Arcata. There are specific times (in your student packet), pick up and drop-off is at Stardough's.

ALSO! And this is very important! If you need chocolate to eat your feelings, the Blue Lake Casino and the Gas station are within walking distance and they are open 24 hours a day. The food at the casino is awful, but that's what makes it good. Am I right?

FURTHERMORE! You should know that you can get free soda, coffee, tea, and hot chocolate at the Casino at the Lily Pad Cafe. You don't think you need this info right now, but you just wait – a few weeks into the program, you will kill for some sodium and fried food in you!

6) Culture Shock

Here's a thing: you will get tired. Fast. Your first few weeks here – you will be exhausted, and I'm not even talking about when school starts. I am just talking about adapting to a new language (for those for whom English is a second or third language) and living in a new country. Just... expect that.

Some of you may experience culture shock: like why do people drive on the wrong side of the road here or why do Americans take showers in the morning? Most of you will probably be a little confused about some aspects of the culture here. Indubitably, your habits will be a little odd to people here, too. Just take it day by day and be patient with yourself. Most importantly, have a sense of humor about it all. The process of discovering this new culture will be littered with hilarious confusions and events.

People will be curious to hear about your culture and your habits, and most Americans will be happy to show you around and explain all things American to you. The important thing here is to be open and ready to ask for help.

The first couple of weeks are very exciting – you meet everyone, you create your routine, etc. You're probably going to be too busy to even think about home. You might get homesick once you start to get more settled in. Know that that's normal and that it's okay to give vent to those feelings. You will probably get even more homesick when you are having a hard day, or a rough time in general. Talk to your friends and family from home, but make sure you don't close

yourself off too much from people here. The first 10 weeks are when people get to know you and you certainly don't want to miss out on those great times by spending too much time alone and homesick in your room or skyped out.

A quick note for those who don't feel confident in the English language department: patience. Have a lot of it. Don't be too hard on yourself, odds are you are more proficient in English than you give yourself credit for. You will most likely misunderstand and be misunderstood multiple times, especially in the beginning. But be patient – you and your fellows will find the optimal way of communication in time. It always comes, trust me. And don't hesitate to ask people to repeat what they said or tell them to speak slower. That is totally kosher here.

Honestly, you guys, you are in for the ride of your lives. And this culture shock thing... I think it's more fun than anything else. Each one of your days will be full of surprises and discoveries, which..... high five yourselves... that is the way to live!

Finally, just so you know, you landed in a very tight, special community. There are always people around you to help. If you ever run into trouble, any kind of trouble, please know that there are people you can talk to. My experience has been that everyone here, American or non-American, are truly invested in your well-being.

Basically, ask for help if you need it. Talk to people when you need to. Offer support when you can. Be open and patient. Most importantly, enjoy this wonderful year!

-Ruxy

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Feel free to contact me with any questions, concerns, or doubts.