



**SAN FRANCISCO
STATE UNIVERSITY**

International Exchange Student Orientation Information

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS \(OIP\)](#)
- [ORIENTATION PROGRAM](#)
- [OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT SFSU ON THE INTERNET](#)
- [VISA AND IMMIGRATION INFORMATION](#)
- [TRAVEL TO SAN FRANCISCO](#)
- [ARRIVAL AT SFSU AND HOUSING](#)
- [REGISTRATION FOR CLASSES](#)
- [STUDENT HEALTH INSURANCE](#)
- [MEASLES AND RUBELLA IMMUNIZATION](#)
- [FINANCES](#)
- [INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION EXCHANGE COUNCIL \(IEEC\)](#)
- [CONTACT INFORMATION](#)



Welcome to San Francisco State University! We hope you will have a very rewarding and enriching experience at SFSU and in San Francisco. You will be joining 30,000 students who attend classes at SFSU each year, including the SFSU international community of more than 2,000 international students from over 93 countries around the world.

This following orientation information is meant to help you prepare for your first semester at SFSU. Please read this information very carefully:

THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS (OIP)

The [Office of International Programs \(OIP\)](#) assists the university's J-1 visa international exchange students, and at the beginning of each semester conducts a mandatory orientation program for the new international students. We encourage you to stop by the Office of International Programs upon your arrival to meet our staff members (Village at Centennial Square, Building C. See [campus map](#) for our location).

MANDATORY ORIENTATION PROGRAM

We recommend that you arrive 5 to 7 days before the start of the Orientation Program in order to find housing and become acquainted with San Francisco. Please refer to the [orientation page](#) on our website for the schedule, location and date of the orientation.

IMPORTANT: *Orientation is mandatory and a part of your J-1 visa requirement. You must attend every day of orientation! The orientation week is designed to provide you with important information about San Francisco State University. Some of the government-mandated topics will include:*

- Transportation and housing
- Legal and immigration issues
- The US university system
- Budgeting and tips for living inexpensively
- Health insurance
- Finance and banking concerns
- SFSU policies and services
- Safety and security

The orientation will also be a great opportunity for you to meet SFSU students and the other new international students.

VISIT THE [SFSU J1 WEBSITE](#)

The [SFSU J1 home page](#) includes much of the information you will need to know about your semester or year of exchange at SFSU.

NOTE: *Please be sure to check the information only for your visa category on the website (J-1). F-1 visa students (matriculated degree-seeking international students) have different requirements that you.*

We also encourage you to explore the [SFSU general webpage](#), and follow the links provided in this document.

VISA AND IMMIGRATION INFORMATION

SEVIS Visa Fee

The [U.S. Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#) requires that all individuals entering the U.S. in J-1 student status pay a \$180.00 fee (subject to change) to cover the costs for the continued operation of the [Student & Exchange Visitor Information System \(SEVIS\) program](#). The SEVIS fee is a U.S. Government fee paid directly to DHS. It is not a University fee and does not provide any funds or services to San Francisco State University.



The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has set up a website on the Internet to accept electronic submission of Form I-901 and payment of the fee using a credit card at: <http://www.fmjfee.com>. **You will need to retain your proof of payment (paper receipt) when applying for your visa as well as when entering the U.S.**

Additional details on SEVIS and the SEVIS fee can be found on the [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Student and Exchange Visitor Program web site](#).

Information on Applying For A U.S. Visa

You will need a J-1 student visa to enter the United States. You should apply for the visa at the nearest [U.S. embassy or consulate](#) in your home country using the DS-2019 form included in your acceptance packet. Visa procedures vary slightly from one U.S. embassy or consulate to another and have been changed since September 2001 and may continue to change. Before you apply for your visa, check with the U.S. embassy or consulate where you plan to apply to learn about their specific procedures and policies regarding J-1 visa applications as well as to determine exactly what supporting documentation is required. Some US Embassies and Consulates require an appointment which needs to be arranged in advance.

Several standard items are required in support of your application for a U.S. visa:

- Valid DS-2019 Form from SFSU
- Current & original financial documentation from your financial sponsor (parent, relative, school, etc.)
- Valid passport
- Proof that you have a permanent residence outside of the U.S.
- One or more passport-type photographs
- Non-immigrant visa application (available at the U.S. embassy or consulate)
- Proof of SEVIS fee payment

Additional application materials that may be requested by the visa officer may include:

- Evidence of English proficiency
- School records to verify academic preparation
- Acceptance letter from San Francisco State University

NOTE: *An application fee may also be required.*

How to Prepare For the Visa Interview

In most instances, your visa interview will only last a few brief minutes and you should be prepared to respond to the following types of questions:

EXAMPLE QUESTION AND ANSWER:

"Why did you decide to study at SFSU?"

(Because of the university's strong academic program in your major field of study, its partner relationship with your university, recommendation of a parent/relative/friend who studied at SFSU, etc.)

You may even want to bring a written statement describing in detail your reasons for attending SFSU. You should be prepared to explain how a program or studies at SFSU will help you complete your academic degree at your home university. You will need to verify that you (or your sponsor) has adequate financial resources to meet your expenses (as indicated on your DS-2019 form). Also, you will need to convince the visa officer that these funds will be available to you for the length of your stay in the U.S. If possible, you may want to bring your financial sponsor (parents, relative, etc.) with you to the visa interview to explain how you will be supported financially during your stay in the U.S. You may also need to demonstrate that you have strong ties to your home country (family, property, job offer, etc.) that will compel you to return after you complete your studies in the U.S.

Above all, we strongly recommend that you be honest and truthful during your interview. A lie is the most common reason for denying a visa!

If your visa is granted, the consular officer will place a visa stamp in your passport. If you receive a multiple-entry visa, you may use it to re-enter the United States as often as you like up to the date of its expiration as long as you have a valid DS-2019 Form.



If you encounter any problems obtaining your visa, please contact the J-1 Visa advisors in the Office of International Programs for assistance: j1oip@sfsu.edu

As you arrive in the U.S., you will present your visa and DS 2019 to the immigration officer at your port of entry to the U.S. The immigration officer will then stamp and return the DS 2019 Form to you, and staple an [I-94 card](#) in your passport. (Canadians do not currently need visa stamps to enter the United States, but they do need passports and must show the DS-2019 Form at the port of entry to obtain status as a J-1 Exchange Visitor). The I-94 card must remain stapled in your passport for the duration of your stay in the U.S. Do not remove it!

IMPORTANT: *J-1 visa students are required to arrive in the U.S. no later than the first day of orientation (as indicated in item #3 of the DS-2019 Form). If you cannot arrive in the U.S. before the beginning of orientation, please contact OIP for assistance: j1oip@sfsu.edu*

TRAVEL TO SAN FRANCISCO

Most international students arrive in San Francisco by plane from the [San Francisco International Airport \(SFO\)](#):

The [BART Train \(Bay Area Rapid Transit\)](#) runs directly from SFO airport all over the San Francisco Bay Area. Trains leave every few minutes and takes about 20 minutes to get downtown and costs about \$5-6.

[Door-to-door vans](#) are another transportation option

[Taxis](#) cost from the airport to the university is approximately \$35. The cost to downtown San Francisco is about \$45.

ARRIVAL AT SFSU AND HOUSING

We recommend that you make plans to arrive at least one week before orientation begins so that you will have enough time to locate permanent housing. In the summer, even temporary housing in San Francisco is scarce. Visit the [housing page](#) on our website for more information.

NOTE: *The University is not associated with any temporary or permanent off-campus housing options nor does the University take responsibility for any of the businesses or referrals listed on the webpage. SFSU cannot make any recommendations nor can reservations be made on your behalf.*

On-Campus Housing

Though we recommend exploring off-campus options, on-campus housing is available on a first-come, first-serve basis. There are a limited amount of spots reserved for international students for on-campus housing, and interested students should apply for housing as soon as possible. Please write to j1oip@sfsu.edu to let us know that you will be applying for on-campus housing. You must apply on the SFSU [University Housing website](#) and pay the application fee to be considered.

Off-Campus Housing

We cannot make off-campus housing arrangements for you prior to your arrival. We have, however, organized a "Housing Workshop" to be conducted during the first day of the Orientation Program which will provide you with valuable information to assist you with your off-campus housing search.

NOTE: *We do not recommend that you secure your off-campus housing or pay any deposits over the web before your arrival. There have been numerous instances of fraud perpetrated on international students trying to secure housing before they arrive in San Francisco.*



REGISTRATION FOR CLASSES

Sometime after you receive your acceptance packet, you will receive an email from OIP with comprehensive information regarding class registration. Please be sure that you provided a working e-mail address on your SFSU exchange application! If you have any doubt, indicate the email address you prefer to have your registration information sent to with a message to j1oip@sfsu.edu.

You will be assigned a specific day and time (indicated in the e-mail) at which you can register. You will have priority registration during this time and therefore will have the best chance to get your first choice for classes. **We strongly encourage you to register during your specifically assigned registration day and time, or you may have difficulty finding classes later on!** Registration for classes can be done online.

In your initial application you may have provided a preliminary list of courses that you were planning to take. **Our office does not register you for your courses based on this preliminary information.** You will now need to check with the online [class schedule](#) for your semester to make sure the classes you intend to take are indeed available. For a list of important dates for your semester of study, visit the [SFSU Academic Calendar](#).

Choosing Classes for your First Semester at SFSU

In order to help you select your classes for the semester, we recommend that you read the [Class Schedule](#) and the [SFSU Bulletin](#) on the Internet.

Speak with an academic advisor in your department at your home institution if you have questions about which courses to take in your major field of study.

Prerequisite Tests: Please note that the prerequisite tests are not required for J-1 students who are coming to SFSU on exchange programs for a brief period of study (1-2 semesters), unless you want to take an English or Math class that requires an exam as a specific prerequisite. This is one of your many privileges as a J-1 visiting international student.

Major Requirements: Read about requirements specific to your major in the SFSU Bulletin's list of [academic programs](#). Read the specific [course descriptions](#) to determine: if you are eligible to enroll in a course that has prerequisites, and/or if you have already completed an equivalent university-level course.

Advice for Choosing Level of Classes: Undergraduate students should be aware that courses numbered 100-299 are considered "lower division" (for 1st & 2nd year university students) and are usually introductory in nature and have few prerequisites. Courses numbered 300-699 are considered "upper division" (for 3rd and 4th year university students). Courses numbered 700-899 are considered graduate-level courses. For each unit of class time, you should plan to spend at least 2-3 hours per week studying outside of class. **J-1 students are required to take a minimum of 12 units of course work.**

STUDENT HEALTH INSURANCE

Because of the high cost of medical care in the U.S., all international students on a J-1 visa must have adequate medical insurance. San Francisco State University requires a health insurance plan that **exceeds** the U.S. Information Agency requirements and meets California State University (CSU) requirements. You are not required to purchase the [CSU approved policy](#) if you are absolutely certain that your insurance coverage with another insurance provider meets SFSU requirements. Using insurance from your home country requires completion of the [Health Insurance Affidavit](#). **If your insurance does not meet [SFSU requirements](#), you will be required to purchase the CSU Wells Fargo Health Insurance.**

J-1 students are expected to present proof of adequate insurance to OIP immediately upon arrival and are required to no later than the first day of classes. All international students and scholars must maintain insurance coverage during their stay in the United States (United States Information Agency Rule 22 CFR Part 514 and California State University Executive Order no. 622). **Failure to show proof of an adequate insurance policy will result in a cancellation of course registration and dismissal from the J-1 visitor program under the sponsorship of San Francisco State University.** The cost of enrolling in the [University's health insurance policy](#) varies, but is approximately \$500.00 for one semester. For more information, you may call the Student Health Center's



"International Student Health Insurance Voice Mail Information Line" at (415) 338-1932 or send an email message to the SFSU Student Health Service at shsinsur@sfsu.edu.

Additional information on [international student health insurance](#) and [international student health insurance requirements](#) can be found on the [Student Health Service page](#).

MEASLES AND RUBELLA IMMUNIZATION

In addition, California State law requires university students to be immunized against measles and rubella. Therefore, you should bring doctor's certificates in English showing that you have received these immunizations. Otherwise, you will need to be immunized during your first semester at SFSU.

FINANCES

Please remember: no financial aid or scholarships are available to international students. **You are expected to have adequate funds shown on your Financial Statement available for the duration of your studies at SFSU.** Some of the initial expenses you will encounter include your books and university expenses, food, temporary housing costs, and local travel expenses. Please do not bring a lot of cash! We recommend that you use travelers' checks in U.S. dollars as they can be easily replaced if lost or stolen.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION EXCHANGE COUNCIL (IEEC)

J1 students are required to contribute to the internationalization of SFSU per the exchange agreement with partner universities and conditions of the J1 visa. J1 students fulfill this obligation through participation in the [International Education Exchange Council \(IEEC\)](#). The IEEC is a student organization that works with the Office of International Programs to represent and support international students and study abroad at San Francisco State University. With over 1400 members and 6 different choices for contribution, the IEEC is a fundamental part of international student life in San Francisco. Since IEEC will be an integral part of your experience, we encourage you to read about them on their [webpage](#) and visit their profile on [facebook](#) by searching "ieec sfsu".

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact us via telephone at (+1-415-338-1293), via fax at (+1-415-338-6234) or via e-mail at j1oip@sfsu.edu. All of the [staff in the Office of International Programs](#) are looking forward to welcoming you to SFSU, meeting you at the Orientation Program, and working extensively with you during your stay at San Francisco State University. Have a safe and pleasant trip to San Francisco!