

# **We're not just Whistlin' Dixie: Advising International Students**



Presented by:

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Student Services

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# Who Are Our International Students?

- 161 students representing 45 different countries
- 90% Undergraduate, 10% Graduate
- 132 degree seeking, 13 exchange students

## Who Are Our International Students?

- Greatest concentration of International students:

Nepal- 28

France- 15

Vietnam- 13

India- 9

Jamaica- 8

Canada and Australia- 7

# Admissions Requirements

- Majority of international students are coming to the US strictly for the purposes of studying at our University.
- Admission requirements for these students depend on their admission type.
- 3 types of International Students:
  - First time freshman
  - Transfers from US colleges or Universities
  - Transfers from foreign Universities

# **Admission Requirements First Time Freshmen**

- Application for admission and fee
- High school transcript in original and English translation
- High School diploma or certificate
- Placement test (SAT or ACT)
- English Proficiency Exam

# **Admission Requirements Transfer from US University**

- Application for admission, application fee
- Official college transcript
- Transfer advisor form

# **Admission requirements**

## **Transfer from Foreign University**

- Application for admission
- Official high school transcript in original language and English translation
- Official College transcripts in original language and English translation
- Course descriptions of all classes in English
- Placement test (SAT or ACT)
- English Proficiency Exam

# Admission Process

## Language Requirements

- Two types of proficiency exams- TOEFL, IELTS
- Exams test students on their ability to read, write, listen, comprehend, and speak English
- Nicholls requires a 61 on the internet based TOEFL (500 on paper based) or a 5.0 band score on the IELTS.
- These scores cannot be waived unless a student comes from an English speaking country

# **Additional information**

## **Financial documentation**

- Students must show financial support for the period of study in the United States
- An affidavit of support and bank statement are required stating that the student or a financial sponsor can afford to study in the US.
- Currently International students coming to Nicholls must show an affidavit of \$18,400

# **Additional Information**

## **Financial requirements**

- Nicholls offers an out of state fee waiver to all qualified students
- The fee waiver is non-competitive and saves the student \$5,400 off the total cost of tuition annually.
- The requirements for the waiver are slightly higher than regular admission

# I-20 Forms

- Once students have been admitted to Nicholls and show financial ability they are issued an I-20 Form
- This document is used by students to secure a student Visa from the U.S Embassy in their home country

Please read Instructions on Page 2

This page must be completed and signed in the U.S. by a designated school official.

1. Family Name (surname): [REDACTED]	
First (given) Name: [REDACTED]	Middle Name: [REDACTED]
Country of birth: MEXICO	Date of birth (mo/day/year): [REDACTED]
Country of citizenship: MEXICO	Admission number: [REDACTED]
2. School (School district) name: Nicholls State University Nicholls State University	
School Official to be notified of student's arrival in U.S. (Name and Title): Marilyn Gonzalez Asst. Dir., International Student Admissions	
School address (include zip code): P.O. Box 2004 Thibodaux, LA 70310	
School code (including 3-digit suffix, if any) and approval date: NOL214F00050000 approved on 01/10/2003	

3. This certificate is issued to the student named above for:  
Initial attendance at this school.
4. Level of education the student is pursuing or will pursue in the United States:  
BACHELOR'S
5. The student named above has been accepted for a full course of study at this school, majoring in Dietetics/Dietitian (RD).  
The student is expected to report to the school no later than 08/20/2007  
and complete studies not later than 12/15/2011. The normal length of study is 48 months.
6. English proficiency:  
This school requires English proficiency.  
The student has the required English proficiency.
7. This school estimates the student's average costs for an academic term of 9 (up to 12) months to be:
- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| a. Tuition and fees                        | \$ 9,420.00  |
| b. Living expenses                         | \$ 4,050.00  |
| c. Expenses of dependents (0 )             | \$ 0.00      |
| d. Other (specify): <u>Books, supplies</u> | \$ 1,530.00  |
| Total                                      | \$ 15,000.00 |

8. This school has information showing the following as the student's means of support, estimated for an academic term of 9 months (Use the same number of months given in item 7).
- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| a. Student's personal funds                         | \$ 0.00      |
| b. Funds from this school                           | \$ 13,500.00 |
| Specify type: <u>Women's Tennis Athletic school</u> |              |
| c. Funds from another source                        | \$ 2,000.00  |
| Specify type: <u>Mother</u>                         |              |
| d. On-campus employment                             | \$ 0.00      |
| Total   | \$ 15,500.00 |
9. Remarks: Student is accepted to Nicholls State University on full athletic scholarship.

<u>Marilyn Gonzalez</u> Name of School Official	<u>Marilyn Gonzalez</u> Signature of Designated School Official	<u>Asst. Dir., International Student Admissions</u> Title	<u>07/11/2007</u> Date Issued	<u>Thibodaux, LA</u> Place Issued (city and state)
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11. Student Certification: I have read and agreed to comply with the terms and conditions of my admission and those of any extension of stay as specified on page 2. I certify that all information provided on this form refers specifically to me and is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I certify that I seek to enter or remain in the United States temporarily, and solely for the purpose of pursuing a full course of study at the school named on page 1 of this form. I also authorize the named school to release any information from my records which is needed by the INS pursuant to 8 CFR 214.3(g) to determine my nonimmigrant status.

[REDACTED] Name of Student	[REDACTED] Signature of Student	<u>20/07/2007</u> Date
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Name of parent or guardian If student under 18	Signature of parent or guardian	Address (city)	(State or Province) (Country)	(Date)
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Form I-20 A-B (Rev. 04-27-88)N

For Official Use Only  
Microfilm Index Number

SEVIS

For Immigration Official User		Student's Copy
Visa issuing post <u>Mexico City</u>	Date Visa Issued <u>07/23/07</u>	
Reinstated, extension granted to:		

# Visas

- The visa stamp is a document issued to allow entry to the U.S. for a specific purpose
- F1 Visa status- for students pursuing a full course of study (degree seeking students)
- J1 Visa status- For students participating in an exchange or visitor program (usually one or two semesters)
- Many other non-immigrant visa categories allow for study (ex H1B, L2, permanent residents)
- B1 or B2 visa- for people traveling as tourist are not allowed to study

# SEVIS- Student & Exchange Visitor Information System

- Department of Homeland Security's internet-based system collects current information on nonimmigrant students and exchange visitors
- Database created in 2002 and mandated in 2003 to track and monitor international students who hold F1 or J1 visas

# SEVIS

- Nicholls was authorized by the Department of Homeland Security to utilize and manage SEVIS in January 2003
- Only authorized users may have access to SEVIS
  - PDSO (Principle Designated School Official) and DSO (Designated School Official) are authorized for F1
  - RO (Responsible Officer) and ARO (Alternate Responsible Officer) for J1

# Reporting Requirement in SEVIS

SEVIS was developed in reference to a complex web of government regulations and users are subject to Federal reporting requirements

- International Student Services (ISS) must meet multiple deadlines
  - SEVIS registration for incoming students- 30 days after start date listed on I-20
  - SEVIS registration for transfer-in students
    - 15 days after start date listed on I-20

# Reporting Requirement in SEVIS

- SEVIS registration for continuing students- 30 days after the first day of class
- ISS must also verify and report full time enrollment and most current physical address each semester
- Students must do their part to maintain legal status and academic departments can assist

# Maintaining Legal Status

- Maintain full-time enrollment for Fall and Spring semesters
- Maintain a valid passport, I-20 or DS2019 at all times
- Make 'normal' academic progress
- Engage in only authorized employment
- Report changes to ISS (change of major, address, dropping a class, desire to transfer)
- Travel out of country requires DSO signature on I-20 or DS-2019

# Exceptions to Full-time enrollment

Must obtain prior permission from ISS

- Not required to enroll during summer term (no permission required)
- If student is in final term of program, they must register for the minimum credits required to graduate
- Serious medical condition verified by licensed medical doctor

# Exceptions to Full-time Enrollment

- Valid Academic reasons- advisor may discuss with ISS:
  - Initial difficulty with English language or reading requirements
  - Unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods
  - Improper course placement
  - Improper course advising
- All incidences of dropping below full time must be reported in SEVIS, only those listed are legitimate reasons

# Exceptions to Full-time enrollment

- Common, but NOT acceptable reasons to drop below full-time:
  - Fear of failing a class
  - Lack of money to pay tuition
  - Not getting a graduate assistanship
  - Course not open
  - Normal pregnancy (not common)

# Consequences for NOT complying with Federal Regulations

- Student considered 'out of status'
- Not allowed to work or hold assistantship
- Not eligible for Practical Training
- Must apply to USCIS for re-instatement and be able to justify the reasons for being out of status
- May have to depart US immediately
- Record terminated in SEVIS, which creates a 'flag' for future visa applications
- In some cases, may not be allowed into US for 3-10 years (ex: criminal cases)

# Authorized Employment

## On-Campus Employment

- International students may work a maximum of 20 hours per week.
- May exceed 20 hours only during Summer and Official School Breaks
- Must be in legal status to work on-campus.
- On-campus is defined as working for the University including outside companies who are providing services on campus (SODEXHO)

# Authorized Employment

## Off-Campus Employment

Student must be in legal F1 status for one academic year to apply for any off campus employment

### Optional Practical Training (OPT)

- Authorized period of employment practical experience in field of study
- Maximum period of 12 months per higher degree obtained.
- Student can utilize the pre-completion, most wait and apply in their final semester (post-completion)
- OPT is authorized by USCIS and student is issued an Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card)

# OPT- Continued

- Workshop held each semester to review the process and encourage careful planning
- Student must go through ISS office to apply for OPT – application requires recommendation by PDSO and a filing fee.
- New ruling allows student to apply for OPT up to 60 days after program ends, but they are encouraged to apply before graduation.

# Curricular Practical Training - CPT

- Federal regulations define CPT as training that must be an “**integral** part of an established curriculum”
- According to the immigration regulations, this employment may be an internship, cooperative education job, a practicum, or any other work experience that is either required for your degree (as defined in the course catalog) or for which academic credit is awarded.
  - CPT employment must be authorized by the academic department
  - Employment offer must be made before requesting CPT authorization from ISS
  - Part-time or full-time; paid or unpaid
- CPT permission granted by ISS office upon review and approval by academic department

# Work Authorization due to Severe Economic Hardship

Under limited circumstances, an F-1 student may apply for off-campus employment based on severe economic hardship.

Conditions creating this severe economic hardship include:

- loss of financial or on-campus employment without the fault of the student,
- unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support
- substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate
- inordinate increases in tuition and fees
- medical bills or other substantial and unexpected expenses

Circumstances must be documented and recommendation must be made by PDSO

Requires application to USCIS and filing fee

# Transition/Retention Issues

Most challenges faced by international students are the same as domestic students

- Homesickness
- Loneliness/ Alienation
- Overwhelmed by new surroundings

Differences are most often in

- Impact of culture or language
- Student knowledge of resources available
- Ability to make a quick correction of problem

# Academic Challenges

Understanding academic structure and expectations

- Course requirements
- General education requirements
- Relative flexibility of US education
- Classroom expectations
- Attendance/Participation
- Ongoing assessment/Types of testing
- Academic honesty as defined by US cultural norms

# Language

- Adjusting to constant use of English language
- Anxiety about own (perceived or real) language ability
- Academic relationships
- Professor/student relationship
- Student/student relationships

# Social and Cultural Challenges

## Cultural Adjustment

- Academic schedule can leave little time for this normal and important process
- Students (and others) often fail to recognize cultural adjustment problems and thus do not address them
- Everyday challenges include food, religious practices, transportation, friendships
- Family support system is not readily available

# Social and Cultural Cont.

Lack of background and knowledge of typical social and support structures on campus

- Student Life/Student Development
- Counseling/Advising

Some current issues on Nicholls' campus are culture bound and thus not easily understood

- Alcohol use and abuse
- Gender relationships/sexual harassment
- Diversity

# Legal Challenges

Immigration law allows very little flexibility or alternatives for students who are having academic difficulties

- Rare exceptions to full-time enrollment requirement
- Student who has been suspended cannot sit out the required semester or year in the U.S and must return home or be out-of-status

# Financial Challenges

Limited options for students with financial difficulties

- Cannot work off campus without authorization from USCIS and only under certain circumstances
- International students do not qualify for financial aid

# Faculty and Staff- What can we do?

- May need to adjust between assisting student and helping student learn responsibility
- Understanding is different for international student due to cultural background, knowledge of our system and language
- Realize that choice has not been a part of most international student's educational experience
- Student may expect to be told what to do rather than be given alternatives

# Faculty and Staff Cont.

Most avoid natural tendency to view international students needs and concerns through our own and/or US cultural norms

- Can't assume sameness
- Students come to the US to learn about America and interact with Americans.
- Realize the students may be hesitant to challenge or ask questions of “authority”

# Faculty/Staff cont.

Language can be a barrier, often unrecognized

- Often not a question of general fluency, but meanings of specialized words or fine points that get lost in translation
- Don't assume fluency means full understanding

# Resources

## Office of International Student Services (ISS)

- International Student Orientation
  - Student Services (Health, food, housing etc.)
  - Life in the classroom
  - Immigration issues (maintaining status, employment)
  - Practical Issues (Shopping, Bank visit, phone call home)
- Life at Nicholls and other transition issues

# International Admission

- Understanding academic background and credential evaluations
- Recruiting and contact with prospective students

# Faculty/Staff Support

- Understanding unique needs of International students
- Maintain contact with ISS
- Participation in international student events
- Assistance with transportation
- Ideas

# Questions?

Marilyn Gonzalez

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Office of Student Life

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Office of Admissions

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A 3D-rendered globe on a stand, tilted slightly to the left. A white arrow is attached to the globe, pointing towards the top right. The globe is set against a purple background with a white grid pattern. The text "Thank You!" is centered in white, bold font over the globe.

**Thank You!**