

## **Welcome Guide for New International Students**



**PennState**  
Lehigh Valley

## Contents

Pre-Arrival Guide for New International Students .....	1
Welcome Letter from Penn State Global .....	3
New International Student Checklist .....	4
Steps to Obtain a U.S. Visa .....	5
Request Certificate of Eligibility (I-20) .....	5
Apply for a U.S. Visa .....	5
Preparation for Arrival to Penn State Lehigh Valley .....	6
Tuition and Billing .....	6
Health Insurance .....	6
Immunization .....	6
Off-Campus Housing .....	6
Plan for Departure .....	7
Transportation from Philadelphia International Airport .....	8
New International Student Welcome and New International Student Orientation .....	9
New International Student Orientation .....	9
New Student Welcome .....	10
Penn State Global's Intercultural Programming, Trips, and Events .....	10
Penn State Lehigh Valley Student Organizations and Activities .....	11
Penn State Learning Center and Disability Services .....	11
Penn State Lehigh Valley Campus Directory .....	11
Lehigh Valley and Surrounding Cities .....	11



# PennState Global

## Welcome Letter from Penn State Global

Congratulations on your acceptance to Penn State Lehigh Valley! Penn State Global welcomes you and wishes you much success in your academic journey in the United States. Our office is here to provide support during your initial transition and throughout the duration of your academic career at Penn State Lehigh Valley. We are delighted to welcome you to our diverse and dynamic campus!

Included in this guide you will find information on the following:

- New International Student Checklist
- Steps to Obtain a U.S. Visa
- Preparation for Arrival to Penn State Lehigh Valley
- New International Student Welcome
- Penn State Lehigh Valley Student Life and Student Organizations
- Penn State Learning Center and Disability Services
- Penn State Lehigh Valley Campus Directory
- Lehigh Valley and Surrounding Cities

We look forward to welcoming you to Penn State Lehigh Valley! Please contact us with any questions:

- For immigration-related questions, regarding your Penn State I-20 and F-1 visa, reach out to Diane Sanders, International Student Adviser, at [dcs5845@psu.edu](mailto:dcs5845@psu.edu)
- For event and programming questions, reach out to Ryan Geiger, Global Engagement Coordinator, at [rkg5386@psu.edu](mailto:rkg5386@psu.edu)

Sincerely,  
Ryan Geiger and Diane Sanders, Penn State Global

## New International Student Checklist

This checklist has been created to assist you in completing both mandatory and recommended action items you must take during your first 30 days at Penn State Lehigh Valley.

Item	Action Item	Information	Mandatory/Recommended
1	Obtain I-20 and Apply for F-1 Visa	On or Before July 1, 2025	Mandatory
2	Immunizations	Before August 26, 2025	Mandatory
3	Find Off-Campus Housing	On or Before August 1 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	Recommended
4	Register for New Student Welcome	August 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	Mandatory
5	Mandatory Immigration Check-in	Before September 5 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Mandatory
6	Open a Bank Account	Before August 25 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Recommended
7	Sign Up for a Cell Phone Account *Temporary SIM cards available	Before August 25 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Recommended
8	New Student Welcome	August 20 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Mandatory
9	First day of Classes	August 25 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Mandatory

## Steps to Obtain a U.S. Visa

### Request a Certificate of Eligibility (I-20)

Once you have been admitted to Penn State Lehigh Valley and confirmed your admission offer by paying your acceptance fee, you must apply for your Penn State I-20. You will receive an email with instructions from [international@psu.edu](mailto:international@psu.edu). This email will be sent to you once a month until you complete your request for a Penn State I-20. For more information on how to obtain your I-20 as well as transfer your I-20 record, please visit: <https://global.psu.edu/category/you-arrive>

### Apply for a U.S. Visa

A visa allows you to travel to a U.S. port-of-entry and request entry. You must have your Penn State I-20 and an F-1 visa to request entry into the U.S.

Canadian and Bermudian citizens are visa exempt, but they must obtain an I-20, pay the SEVIS fee and show the receipt of payment at the port-of-entry.

1. F-1 students must pay two fees:

- SEVIS I-901 Fee: The SEVIS fee <https://fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html> can be paid in one of three ways. We recommend paying the SEVIS fee online for immediate receipt of payment. Print the receipt for your records.
- Visa Application Fee (also called MRV fee): Payment for the visa application fee varies among the U.S. consulates. Payment is through a local bank which will issue a receipt with receipt number. For specific instructions on payment requirements, see <https://www.usembassy.gov> to find the U.S. consulate where you will apply for the visa.

2. Complete the visa application (DS-160) <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/> and print the DS-160 confirmation page with the application ID number after you submit online. For more information, please review <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study.html>

3. Schedule the visa appointment. For information on making an appointment, see the U.S. consulate post's instructions at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/list-of-posts.html>

- You will need the DS-160 application ID number, the MRV receipt, passport number, and the SEVIS ID number to make an appointment.
- Attend the visa appointment with the following: DS-160 confirmation page with the application ID number, the MRV (visa application) fee receipt, printed I-20 or DS-2019, photo, and valid passport.
- Additional documents may be requested. Check the instructions and be prepared with all the documentation.

## Preparation for Arrival to Penn State Lehigh Valley

### Tuition and Billing

As an international student, it is important to familiarize yourself with tuition cost and how to pay your tuition and fees before your arrival to the United States.

Penn State partners with Flywire to streamline the tuition payment process for international students. Flywire offers excellent foreign exchange rates, allowing you to pay in your home currency and save a significant amount of money. Flywire accepts payments from any country giving you wholesale foreign exchange rates. For more information on how to pay your tuition please visit

<https://www.bursar.psu.edu/international-students>

### Health Insurance

International students and their accompanying dependents must submit proof of health insurance that meets specific criteria or purchase the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP). More information about SHIP can be accessed at <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/requirements-international-students>

Alternate plans must be filed with the Pennsylvania Department of Insurance or be a sponsored plan that meets waiver standards and is approved by the Penn State Student Health Insurance Office accompanied by a letter of financial guarantee directly from the plan sponsor.

Questions about Student Health Insurance can be directed to University Health Services office of Student Health Insurance at [uhs-insurance@psu.edu](mailto:uhs-insurance@psu.edu) or by telephone at 814-865-7467.

### Immunization

Penn State Lehigh Valley requires you to complete immunizations before arriving to the United States. This is very important and must be completed before arriving to Penn State Lehigh Valley. You can find important information on how to complete this requirement by visiting:

[https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health/immunizations/imm\\_submission.shtml](https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health/immunizations/imm_submission.shtml)

### Off-Campus Housing

Committing to studying in a foreign country is exciting; however, there are key items that must get completed before or soon after you arrive in the United States. Finding a place to stay is one of those important items that must get done. Penn State Lehigh Valley **does not** have dormitory on campus. However, we have many safe and convenient off-campus housing options nearby campus. Penn State Lehigh Valley has partnered with Places4Students, a service that assists students with the search for off-campus housing accommodations, finding roommates, and posting student sublets.

[Search off-campus housing listings through Places4Students >>](#)

[Create a student account on Places4Students >>](#)

In addition to the housing options offered through places4students, there are houses/individual spaces available a short walk from campus (less than ¼ mile). Please see the following website for information and contact information regarding those options: <https://cornerstone4rent.com/>

## **Penn State University Housing Disclaimer**

The listing of rental units, roommates, and personal property is a service to local rental property owners and students, faculty, and staff of The Pennsylvania State University. Rental property owners and other users are responsible for reporting information fairly and accurately. The Pennsylvania State University and third-party vendors cannot guarantee the completeness or accuracy of such information. Inclusion of any listing on websites or printed material does not constitute, and shall not be construed or reported as (1) an endorsement or approval by The Pennsylvania State University or third-party vendors of any landlord, its properties, or its business practices, or of any roommate or personal property listed on a website or printed material or (2) a warranty or representation by The Pennsylvania State University or third party vendors as to the quality, safety or other features of such property and/or its owners or management agent(s). The Pennsylvania State University and third-party vendors expressly disclaim any and all responsibility for any problems that may arise with regard to such property or rental units or with regard to disputes between landlords and tenants concerning such property or rental units. All prospective tenants are responsible for inspecting potential rental units and negotiating lease terms with landlords, and users are encouraged to exercise their own good judgment when evaluating a prospective rental unit, landlord, roommate, or property listed on the printed material or websites.

If for some reason, you are not able to find off-campus housing prior to your arrival, you can arrange to stay at a local hotel. Although you are free to use any hotel, the two listed below are close to campus and offer a Penn State affiliated rate. When contacting them to reserve a room, mention you are a Penn State international student and ask about the Penn State rate.

[https://homewoodsuites3.hilton.com/en/hotels/pennsylvania/homewood-suites-by-hilton-allentown-bethlehem-center-valley-ABECVHW/index.html?SEO\\_id=GMB-HW-ABECVHW](https://homewoodsuites3.hilton.com/en/hotels/pennsylvania/homewood-suites-by-hilton-allentown-bethlehem-center-valley-ABECVHW/index.html?SEO_id=GMB-HW-ABECVHW)

<https://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/abecv-springhill-suites-allentown-bethlehem-center-valley/?scid=bb1a189a-fec3-4d19-a255-54ba596febe2>

## **Plan for Departure**

Before making travel arrangements, please refer to the checklist on page 4 for information on when you are expected to arrive on campus to comply with visa regulations. Finalize your communication plans with family and friends, emergency plans, and other travel-related items. Remember that you may not enter the United States more than 30 days prior to the start of your I-20.

Consider attending an EducationUSA pre-departure orientation in your home country as part of final preparations to depart for the United States. During the orientation, EducationUSA advisers and students who have returned from their U.S. studies provide information and resources that will prepare you for new experiences as you focus on strategies to adjust to new challenges. To find an orientation, search here <https://educationusa.state.gov/find-event>

When travelling to the U.S., keep your passport (with visa), admission letter, I-20, and financial documents in your carry-on bag or personal item. You will need to access these documents during your travel. DO NOT put these documents in your checked luggage.

While on the airplane, you should receive a U.S. Customs Declaration card. There should be instructions in the

airline magazine on how to complete the card. You must declare cash in the amount of \$10,000 or more.



Upon arrival at the U.S. port-of-entry, present the following documents to the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer:

- Passport with valid and appropriate visa
- Printed I-20
- Customs Declaration Card
- Financial documents

The I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record) is an electronic document proving your legal entry and status, which is retrieved from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>. Select “GET MOST RECENT I-94”. For certain applications in the U.S., an I-94 will be required as evidence of legal status, so it is recommended that you print the electronic I-94 after your arrive to the U.S. See the I-94 Fact Sheet at <https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2016-Mar/i-94-automation-fact-sheet.pdf>

### **Travel and Transportation from Philadelphia International Airport**

New international students have the option to fly into many surrounding airports such as Philadelphia International Airport, Newark International Airport, etc.

It is your responsibility to arrive on campus for our first in-person event on Wednesday, August 20<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, it is recommended that you plan your arrival to Penn State Lehigh Valley campus prior to this date. Unfortunately, there are not that many options to arrive on campus via train or bus and therefore it is recommended you look into the following options.

#### *Taxis*

Taxis can be picked up in Zone 5 of the International Philadelphia Airport at the Commercial Transportation Roadway by baggage claim area.

#### *Uber Philadelphia*

For information on Uber please visit: (<https://www.uber.com/cities/philadelphia/>).

Additionally, when booking flights keep in mind the following dates:

August 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	- All new international students are required to attend the New Student Welcome at Penn State Lehigh Valley
August 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	- First day of classes
November 23 – 29 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	- Thanksgiving Break, no classes
December 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	- Last Day of Classes
December 15 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	- Final Exams

**No student will be excused from or allowed to take a final exam at a different time due to a booked flight. To be safe, do not book flights home or elsewhere until after the last day of final exams, which is December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025.**

## **New International Student Orientation and New Student Welcome**

### **New International Student Orientation (NSO)**

New Student Orientation dates will be between June and August the summer before you begin your fall semester at PSU-LV. You will receive an email and have access to your NSO task list mid to late April with steps to register for one of the New Student Orientation dates. If you are in the U.S., you can attend one of the in-person NSO dates. You will also be able to schedule an appointment with a PSU-LV adviser on Starfish to discuss your academic plan and enroll in courses for the fall semester.

In addition, there will be a **virtual NSO for international students** with more specific information important to new international students. This online/ virtual orientation will be on:

**Tuesday, August 19, 2025**

NSO for International Students consists of three essential steps:

- **STEP 1:** Online Virtual Academic Advising and Course Selection
- **STEP 2:** Online Virtual New International Student Orientation (Tuesday August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025)
- **STEP 3:** In-Person Arrival and Welcome on Campus

Be sure to visit the New Student Orientation website to access the **NSO Task list**:

<https://orientation.psu.edu/> This is something all new Penn State students must do, and there is additional programming for new international students.

More information about Step 3 In-Person Arrival and Welcome to Campus will be detailed in this packet.

## New Student Welcome

Continue your welcome to the campus on Wednesday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at the required Penn State Lehigh Valley New Student Welcome, where you will hear about campus resources, and meet other new students. Penn State Lehigh Valley will provide lunch and refreshments. You will receive an email about this event and therefore be sure to regularly check your PSU email account.

## Penn State Global's Intercultural Programming, Trips, and Events

Penn State Global offers a variety of programs on campus, around the state, and regional trips to help you connect with other PSU students. Most of these opportunities are offered to you at no additional cost. Popular events and trips that happen every year include:

- New and Returning International Student Welcome: This event is usually held the first weekend after classes begin where students from Northeast Region campuses including Hazleton, Lehigh Valley, Schuylkill, Scranton, and Wilkes-Barre will visit Hershey Park and participate in activities to get to know one another. A Chocolate making experience and enjoy free time in the park.
- Global Engagement and Leadership Experience: This weekend's retreat brings domestic and international students together for a weekend where we explore different cultural and global perspectives. Students participate in a wide variety of thought-provoking activities and gain skills to be a global leader on their campus.
- Global Sustainable Action Weekend: Held at University Park in November and by using the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as a framework, students can come and learn about different aspects of sustainability. If there is a particular SDG that you are passionate about, you can present a session about the topic.
- Day and Overnight Trips to cities including New York City, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Boston: There are many historic cities along the Eastern Coast of the United States. Penn State Global sponsors bus trips to these cities where you can learn the cultural history and explore your own interests in each city.
- Cultural celebrations: We invite you to share aspects of your culture with the campus community. We host a wide variety of cultural celebrations including Lunar New Year, Holi, Diwali, Carnival, Ramadan and more. We can support your interests in sharing information about your culture with the campus community.

If you have ideas on activities or trips you would like to do, please contact Ryan Geiger, Global Engagement Coordinator at [rkg5386@psu.edu](mailto:rkg5386@psu.edu).

## **Penn State Lehigh Valley Student Organizations and Activities**

On our campus, we have many fun and exciting events and organizations you can join to make sure that you take full advantage of getting to know the campus while you are studying at Penn State Lehigh Valley. For more information on joining a student organization or events that are happening on campus please visit the “Get Connected: Engage in Campus Events and Student Organizations” section of your NSO Tasklist at <https://orientation.psu.edu/>

## **Penn State Learning Center and Disability Services**

Students interested in learning center as well as disability services, please visit this website: (<http://lehighvalley.psu.edu/learning-center>).

## **Penn State Lehigh Valley Campus Directory**

You can find important contact information for your faculty and staff at Penn State Lehigh Valley by visiting the following website: (<http://lehighvalley.psu.edu/campus-directory/results>).

## **Lehigh Valley and Surrounding Cities**

Penn State Lehigh Valley campus is only one-hour drive away from major cities such as Philadelphia and New York. Lehigh Valley city and surrounding cities such as Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton are only 15-minute drive away. Please visit the following websites for more information.

Discover Lehigh Valley: <http://www.discoverlehighvalley.com/travel-tip/>

Visit Philadelphia: <http://www.visitphilly.com>

I LOVE NY: <http://www.iloveny.com/>