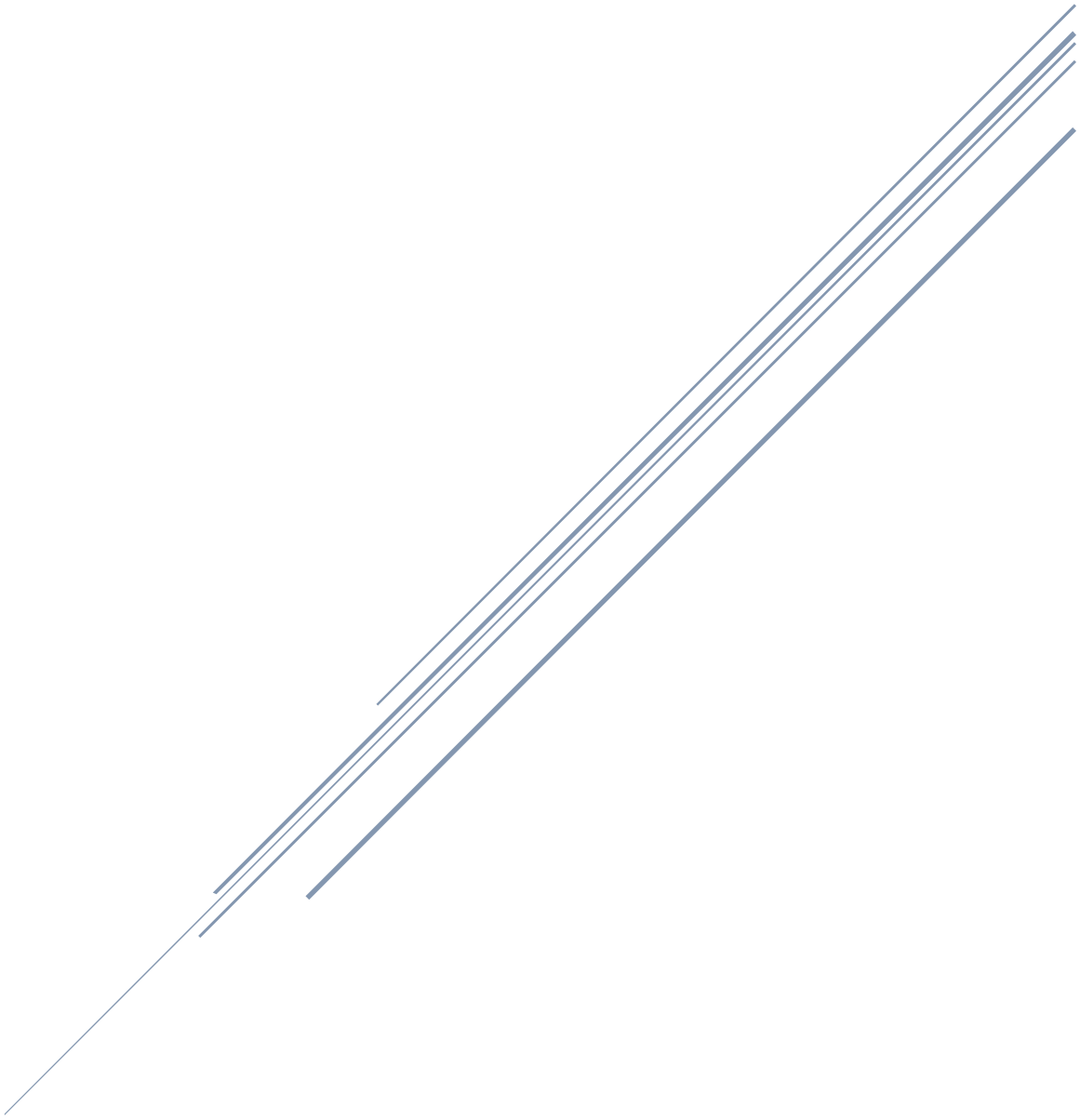

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WELCOME!

A big welcome to our new Golden Wolves!

We are thrilled that you have chosen Alvernia University as your destination for your collegiate experience. One of our most cherished goals is to create a globally diversity community and you make that goal a reality. We are excited to see the continued growth in the number of countries and cultures represented among our student population. The process to access international studies can be complex and difficult at times, but we are confident that now you are here, it will be worth it!

You have many individuals supporting you while here at Alvernia. We hope you find our faculty and staff knowledgeable, kind, and approachable. The three primary offices that will support you are identified below:

INTERNATIONAL ADMISSIONS

Sibel Ahi, Ph.D.

Director of International Student ReTf1 ml t50.0000091

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Kevin Davy, M.S.

Director of International Student Engagement

Email: kevin.davy@alvernia.edu

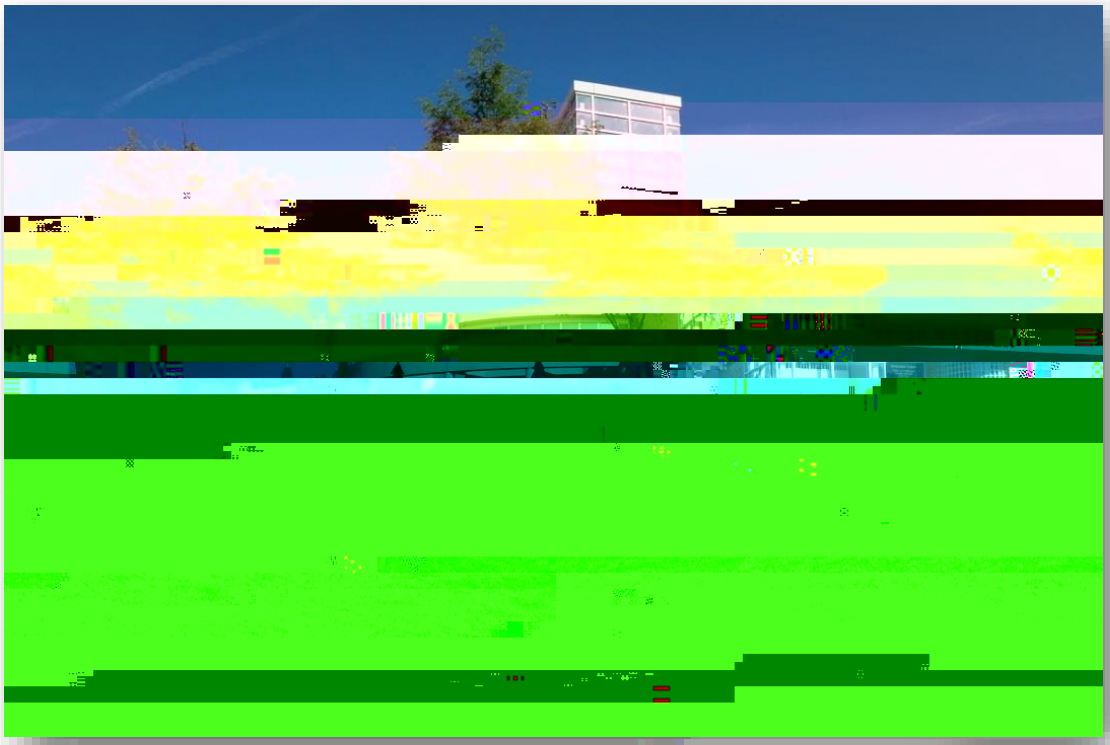
Phone: (610) 796-3254

Office location: Campus Commons, 2nd floor, Rm 204A

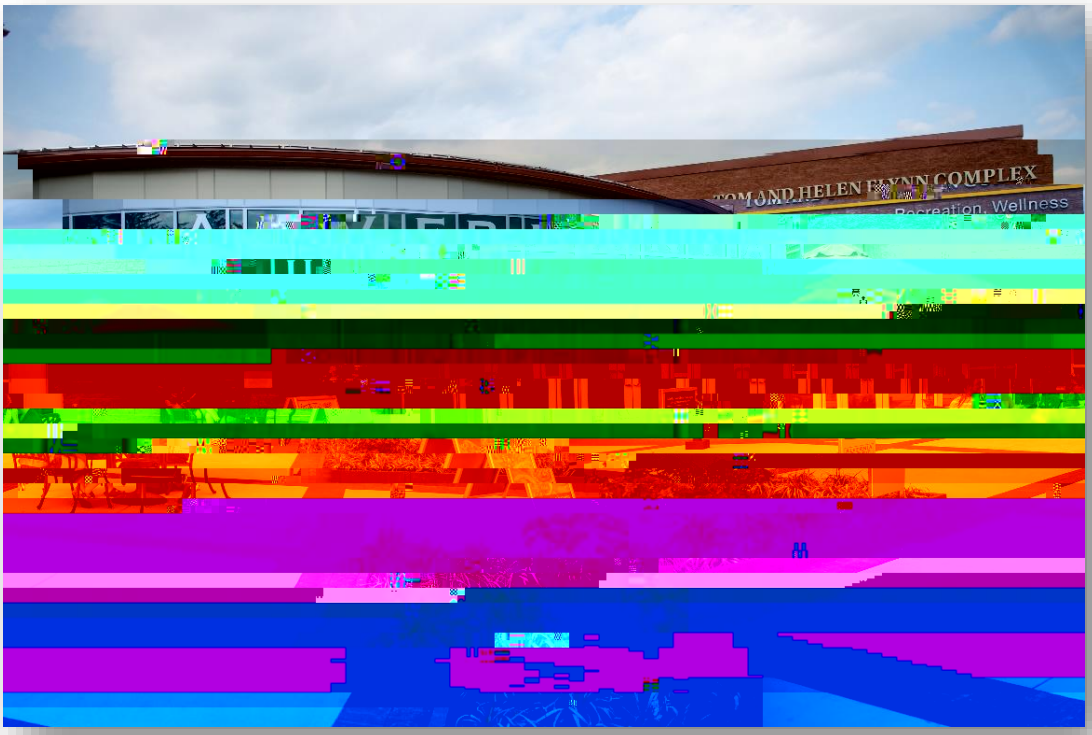
Kevin supports our international students with their transitioning to Alvernia, orientation, and engagement with the many opportunities and resources Alvernia has to offer its students.

The International Student Engagement Office is a

CAMPUS MAP



The Student Center (Dining Services & Bookstore)



The Plex (Indoor Athletics Facility)

ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Alvernia University's academic year is based on the traditional two-semester (fall and spring) calendar. Semesters generally run fifteen to sixteen weeks, depending upon the holiday schedule. Most classes are delivered in lecture format in traditional classroom settings, with science labs meeting in laboratory-equipped classrooms.

COMMUNICATION

AMERICAN CULTURE, SOCIAL LIFE AND CULTURE SHOCK

This is a brief guide to American culture and customs. Because the United States is so varied in its geography, ethnic backgrounds and traditions, it is not possible to comment on every aspect of the culture or to say there is one acceptable or prominent set of social rules. It is a heterogeneous society with some common norms and common culture, but where different cultures coexist.

It is important to note that some people you meet will be more informed and accepting of cultural differences than others. Many people will be curious about your home culture and will ask numerous questions about the language, society, history, religion, and traditions of your country.

Basic Etiquette

Due to the friendly nature of most Americans, they are quick to use first names. Although this may make those who are accustomed to a more formal social environment somewhat uncomfortable, it is the norm for American culture. Formal titles (Mr., Ms., Mrs., Fr., Sr., Dr., etc.) are used together with the person's family name and should be used if you are speaking with the elderly or people in authority. They may invite you later to address them by their first names.

Punctuality is highly valued in the U.S. and is considered a sign of respect toward the person whom you are to meet. Punctuality for private parties and casual events is more flexible; however, always inform the host of a dinner or formal occasion if you will be late or must cancel.

Students are expected to be on time for class and appointments with instructors. Your grade may be affected if you are late multiple times. Many instructors and administrators welcome personal interactions with individual students. Students are encouraged to ask questions and express their opinions in the classroom. Observe the American students' actions to identify acceptable behavior

Courtesy

Politeness and patience will serve you well in the United States. This includes remembering to say "please" and "thank you." This common form of respect is not reserved only for those in a position of authority, but for each and every person you meet in a store, on the street, in class or in an office. If you need a favor or have a simple request, saying "please" will be much more effective than if you are simply demanding. Similarly, saying "thank you" to someone who tried to satisfy your request or when someone helps you (e.g., holds the door) is also appreciated.

Provided that you are courteous and kind, the person with whom you are speaking will likely return your kindness and view you more favorably.

Personal Space

Americans prefer to maintain about 18 inches (46 cm) of space between themselves and the person with whom they are speaking. This personal space is very important and, if limited, the individual may become uncomfortable. Typically, Americans do not hug or kiss an acquaintance upon greeting, but rather shake hands or nod their heads. They also do not touch while speaking, although a brief touch on the arm or shoulder might indicate sympathy or concern to someone they know well. Once a friendship has developed, some may greet each other with a hug or embrace.

Tipping

In the United States it is expected that you tip for various services. Restaurants, taxis and ordering in (pizza delivery) are all situations that you would be expected to tip. Tipping is not an exact science; it is up to customers to decide how much they are willing to tip. However, there are some general guidelines to follow.

> If you are generally pleased with your service, a tip of 15 percent of your total bill is considered standard.
> If you are very impressed with your service, you might decide to tip 20 percent or more.
> Likewise, if you are dissatisfied with your service you might consider leaving a 10 percent tip.

It is considered extremely rude to leave no tip at all.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is not quite as “shocking” or sudden as most people expect. It is part of the process of learning a new culture that is called *cultural adaptation*. You may experience some discomfort before you are able to function well in a new setting; this is known as the *culture shock* stage of the adaptation process.

Just as you will bring with you to the United States clothes and other personal items, you will also carry invisible “cultural baggage” when you travel. That baggage is not as obvious as the items in your suitcases, but it will play an important role in your adaptation abroad. Cultural baggage may include the values that are important to you and the patterns of behavior that are customary in your culture.

The more you know about your personal values and how they are derived from your culture, the better prepared you will be to see and understand the cultural differences you will encounter while in the United States.

Emerging Differences

Gradually, as you become more involved in activities and get to know the people around you, the differences will become increasingly apparent to you. Those differences may begin to seem more irritating than interesting, and small incidents and difficulties may make you anxious and concerned about how best to carry on with academic and social life. As these differences emerge, they can be troubling and sometimes shocking. But culture shock does not happen all at once. It is a feeling that grows little by little, as you interact with other

students, faculty, and people in the community. For many, this gradual process culminates in an emotional state known as culture shock.

The common symptoms of culture shock are:

- Extreme homesickness
- Desire to avoid social settings which seem threatening or unpleasant
- Physical complaints and sleep disturbances
- Depression and feelings of helplessness
- Difficulty with coursework
- Loss of sense of humor
- Boredom or fatigue

Students are sometimes unaware of the fact that they are experiencing culture shock when these symptoms occur. There are ways to deal with this period of culture shock, so it helps to recognize that culture shock may lie behind physical symptoms and irritability.

Coping With Culture Shock

Throughout the period of cultural adaptation, take good care of yourself. Read a book or rent a video in your native language, catch up with what is going on at home via email and social media, take a short trip if possible, exercise, get plenty of rest, write a letter or telephone home, eat good food and do things you enjoy with friends. Take special notice of things you enjoy about living in the United States.

UNDERGRADUATE INTERNATIONAL ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Students from other nations seeking admission to Alvernia University should submit the following:

1. Completed Application for Admission (

TRANSFER STUDENTS

INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

Alvernia University offers a limited number of international scholarships to full-time freshman or full-time transfer day undergraduate students.

Eligibility Requirements

Full-time freshman or full-time transfer undergraduate students on Alvernia's main Reading campus. Merit scholarships are renewable for four years (up to eight semesters) in the same amount. Other than the Catholic School Scholarship (see below), an international student scholarship cannot be combined with any other scholarships, including government

F-1 VISAS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International Student Visa Issuing Procedure

Alvernia University students need **F-1 visas**, which requires students to obtain an I-20 document:

> ***A matriculating student*** is someone enrolled to earn a degree from Alvernia University. They are usually the same age as domestic matriculating students and have not earned a degree from any other higher-education institution; however, sometimes individuals who studied or completed degrees in another country want to pursue a second diploma from Alvernia University. These students are therefore older than our traditional undergraduate students. These students hold an ***F-1 Visa*** and an ***I-20***.

F-1 (non-immigrant) visas require students to have valid passports, proof of financial capability of the students, and proof of SEVIS I-901 Fee payment.

Passports: Students' passports must be valid for at least 6 months beyond the expiration date to do any legal procedures.

U.S. Visa: Students must present a valid visa in their education category.

Initial F-1 students: All new matriculating students recei[(F)] TJETQq0.00000912 0 612 792 reW* nBT/F1 12 Tf352[(-)][6 491.95 Tm0 g0 G1 om Alverni

000912vment. gvide)7(dua)4(te)] TJETQq0.00000912 0 612 792 reW* nBT/F1 12 Tf352[(-)][6 491.95 Tm0 g0 G1 om Alverni

request, students may appeal the decision, or they must prepare to leave the United States immediately.

Reinstatement Application Procedure

1) Make an appointment with a Designated School Official (DSO) who will review a student's eligibility for reinstatement and discuss the application process with the student.
2) Gather the following forms and documentation. Students will need to bring them to their appointment:

    Form I-539 with filing fee payment and Form G-1145

    Photocopies of all previous I-20s

    Current I-94

    A photocopy of new Reinstatement I-20 signed by a DSO

    A letter to the USCIS requesting reinstatement explaining the situation and truthfully stating any and all reasons for the failure to maintain status.

    Any supporting documentation a student might have attesting to the circumstances that led to the failure to maintain status.

    Current transcript and transcripts from every other school the student previously attended in the U.S., if any.

    A photocopy of passport identification and visa pages.
3) Students are advised to make photocopies of the entire application to keep for their records.
4) Students should send their applications by certified mail, requesting a return receipt

Immigration Regulations:

As an undergraduate student, a

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORIENTATION

We are thrilled to have you as an international student, and we understand that transitioning to a new country and culture can be a challenging experience. That's why we have designed an international student orientation program to help you feel comfortable and supported from the moment you arrive on campus.

During the orientation program, you will have the opportunity to meet other international students, as well as faculty and staff who are dedicated to helping you succeed. Our program will provide you with important information about academic requirements, campus resources, and cultural norms in the United States.

We will also offer workshops on topics such as navigating the healthcare system, opening a bank account, and setting up mobile accounts. Additionally, you will have the chance to participate in social events, tours of the campus and surrounding areas, and other fun activities to help you get to know your new community.

At Alvernia, we value diversity and are committed to creating an inclusive environment where all students can thrive. We look forward to welcoming you to our community and supporting you as you embark on this exciting new journey.

As part of our commitment to making your transition as smooth as possible, Alvernia University provides transportation to the international student orientation program. We understand that navigating transportation in a new country can be challenging, so we want to make sure that you have a stress-free arrival to campus. Details on this transportation will be sent through further communications.

We will arrange for transportation from the identified airports to the university, so you don't have to worry about finding your way on your own. We are here to support you every step of the way and want to make sure that you have a positive and memorable experience at Alvernia University.

We require all new students to Alvernia (Freshman & Transfer) to attend the international orientation which will take place 3-4 days prior to the General Orientation that all students attend.

STUDENT ARRIVAL PROCESS

Visa Check-In Procedure for New and Continuing Students

All international students receive check-in procedure emails before the orientation program or the start date of the semesters.

Students must complete their check-in files and submit them to one of the DSO's on campus (Sibel Ahi, Kevin Davy, John Hepler, and Kelly Burr):

1. Create a check in folder for each student with a folder name is the last name and first name of the student with in "FA 23 Check in"
2. The folder will include copies of the ID page of the passport, the student visa, the I-20 and the completed I-94 page *https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home*

Example I-94 Record

DSO's will register international students to complete the check-in process in SEVIS:

a. Go to "Initial Status Student" for new students and "Active Students" for continuing students in SEVIS and
b. Go to "Registration" and enter the current semester end date and the start date of following semester, then update the information at the bottom of the page.
c. For graduating students: if students are in their last semesters, check the box. DSO's do not need to enter start date for the next semester. A DSO can shorten a program if the student is in the graduation list.

F-1 students also must follow these regulations:

Enroll in a full course of study – minimum 12 credits every semester
Consult with a DSO before dropping below a full course of study for any reason
Consult with a DSO to extend or shorten their programs
Report address changes within 10 days period
Contact a DSO before engaging in any employment or practical training or volunteer work
Report any changes in program of study or academic status
Notify a DSO prior to traveling outside the United States
Notify a DSO upon applying for change of nonimmigrant visa status or any changes on the dependent's visa status.
Notify a DSO if the student intends to transfer

School Official Manual.

Check in with the Health & Wellness Center

All international students are required to complete a Medical History form. Immunizations Cards in other languages must be submitted with an official English translation verified by

Check-in with Student Financial Services to Settle Balances

Students are billed by semester and invoices are published online approximately 30 days in advance of the due date. Students with a local address may receive a mailed paper statement when 1st published.

How to make the payment:

Check or Money Order payments must be mailed to: Alvernia University, Attention: Student Financial Services, 400 St. Bernardine Street, Reading, PA 19607.

A semester Payment Plan is available to students who would prefer to pay in monthly installments. There is a fee of $30 to enroll.

Students with government scholarships must submit their proof of Financial Guarantee statement from the government before the semester start.

For more information, see Appendices V, VI.

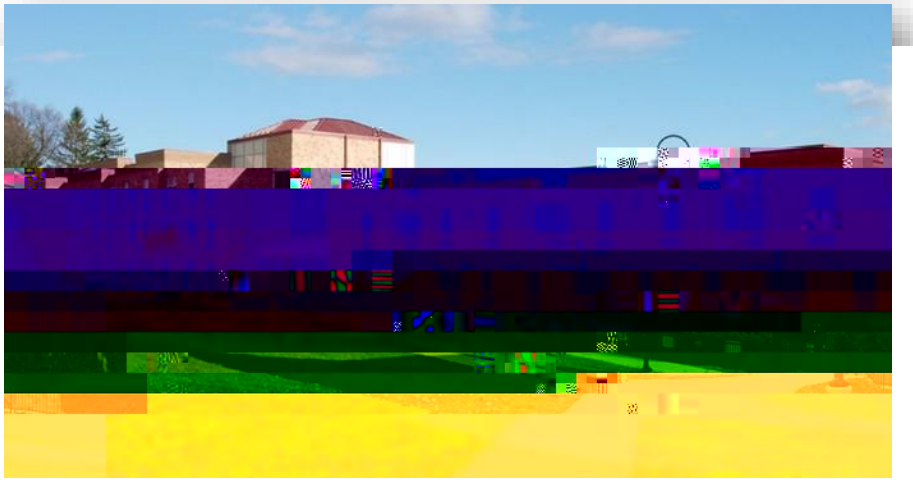
Check-in with Public Safety for Student ID Cards

To obtain Alvernia Student Identification Cards (ID), students should go to the Public Safety office (located inside Francis Library) with valid identification (e.g. student passport & I-20 document) and verification of enrollment status. For new students, initial ID cards are issued free of charge by Public Safety.

Check-in with Residence Life

Student should pick up their keys at the Office of Residence Life, which is located in Veronica Hall (*See Campus Map on pg. 6*). They then can find the assigned building and begin moving in process.

Interior of a Campus Residence Hall



Exterior of a Campus Residence Hall

FINANCIAL GUARANTEES FOR SACM STUDENTS

In order to get their Financial Guarantee, SACM students should follow these steps:

1. Go to https://safeer2.moe.gov.sa/portal/
2. Scholarship Services > Financial Guarantee (FG)
3. Accq0.0./4rns36krms 6(a)4d 6(condi/4rniM)-1ons[( )] TJETQq0.00000912 0 612 792 reW* n

Information on Transfers from Airport to Train Station

You can go to Amtrak website and reserve tickets from an identified train station straight through to Reading (this will be one ticket that will include the bus from Philadelphia to Reading). You can reserve this on their website on the Amtrak APP. But if you are struggling just call them and book, they are very helpful – I 800 872 7245.

Transportation from Reading:

Bus: Klein Transportation, phone number: (800) 451-6700

https://tours.kleintransportation.com or https://www.ourbus.com

Locations:

- Reading: Boscov's North, 2910 North Fifth St. Hwy Reading, PA 19605
- New York: 5th & Penn, Bus Shelter #2 520 Penn Street, Reading PA 19602

Transportation when you have no car from ABE to Reading:

- **Taxi:**
  Allentown Taxi and Airport Limo Service: (610) 904-8400
  Allentown Transportation: (610) 432-2000

- **UBER:**
  https://www.uber.com/
  Fares range between $100 to $130 depending on time

Transportation when you have no car from JFK to Reading:

- **UBER:**
  https://www.uber.com/
  Fares are changing starting from $368

- **OurBus:**
  You can find the schedule on the website, and you should reserve your seat before arriving. Cost starts from $39, Contact number (844) 800-6828
  Location:
  - New York: Madison Avenue between East 33rd & 34th Streets. (You can go to bus stop from the airport around 60 minutes driving or subway from JFK)
  - Reading: Boscov's North, 2910 North Fifth St. Hwy Reading, PA 19605
    https://www.ourbus.com

- **Andrews Transportation** – will pick you up at airport with sign and bring you directly to Alvernia (610) 587-7368 www.andrewstransportation.net. Please contact for fares.

Transportation when you have no car in Reading:

- **BARTA Bus:**
  The bus schedule and contact number (610) 921-0601
  https://www.bartabus.com/bus-services/schedules

Departure Process

All international students must arrange their own transportation to exit campus.

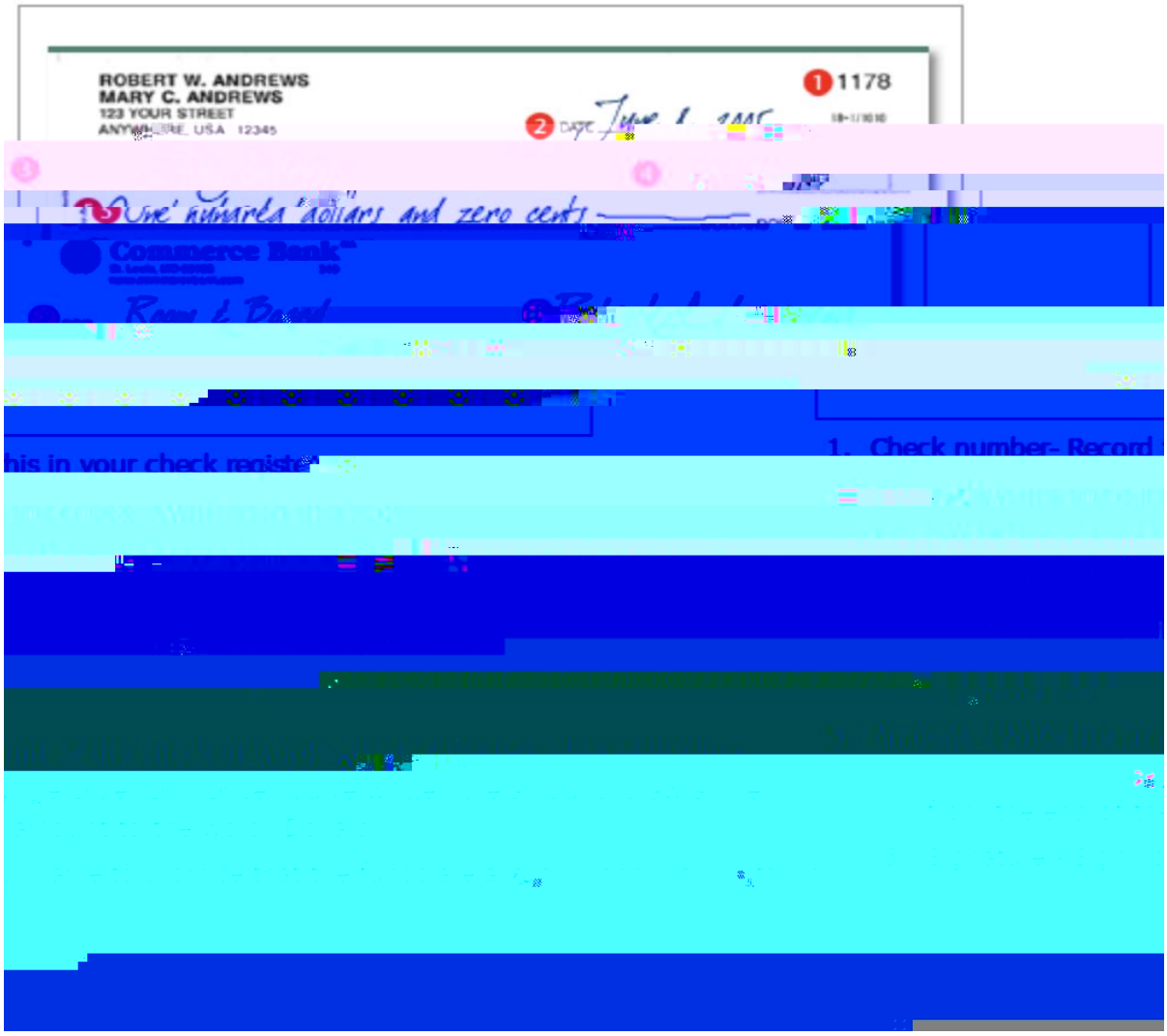
OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT IN THE UNITED STATES

Banks may request different requirements to open an account. However, generally international students need to provide two forms of identification: one of them is their passport; and the second document can be a student identification card.

In addition, students must present their I-20 and some form of proof of address, such as a bank statement or a utility bill, sent to their mailing address. They may also need a letter from the International Student Engagement Office at Alvernia University.

Most banks require the account holder to be 18 years old or older.

How to Write a Check



PENNSYLVANIA STATE DRIVER'S LICENSES

During the fall and spring orientation sessions, the DMV application process is covered. Therefore, the student has knowledge of the steps. Please note: these pages contain information for international students who want to obtain a Pennsylvania driver's license. For more detailed information about the licensing process itself, refer to the PennDOT Driver & Vehicle Services website.

Pennsylvania Driver's License

If you were issued a driver's license in your home country, or if you have an international driver's license, you may use these for a limited time. However, local authorities may question the credentials if written in a language other than English.

Students classified as F, M, or J non-immigrants with active status in the SEVIS program are permitted to obtain a Pennsylvania driver's license or identification card. Please note the following conditions:

> Individuals who possess a valid foreign driver's license from their country are authorized to drive in Pennsylvania **for up to one year from their dates of entry into the United States, or upon expiration of their foreign licenses**, whichever comes first.
> International driving permits are strongly recommended, but not required.
> Reciprocity agreements exist with the countries of France, Germany, Korea, and Taiwan allowing for the transfer of a valid non-commercial driver's license without road or knowledge testing; however, a vision test will be administered. (Transfer of a driver's license from Puerto Rico, France, or Germany cannot be completed the same day.)

When can international students apply for a Pennsylvania driver's license or ID card?

International students must wait:

> Ten (10) days after arrival in the U.S. to permit time for data processing through the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program. The Pennsylvania Department of Motor

The cost is on the PennDOT website. When you arrive, present the following documentation:

Items with an * are required

- The completed Form DL-180 Application*
- 2 documents that provide proof of residence in Pennsylvania See PennDOT's Proof of Identity and Residency page for a list of acceptable documents. This information is available in multiple languages.*
- Valid passport with visa (if applicable) *
- Form I-94, ³ $ U U L Y D O ' H S D ‡ U W X U H 5 H F R U G ´
- Form I-20*
- Form I-20 with OPT (for an F student authorized to work off-campus) *
- Form I-766

UNDERGRADUATE INTERNATIONAL ADMISSIONS PROCESS

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1. Completed Application for Admission (

Check-in with Residence Life

Student should pick up their keys at the Office of Residence Life, which is located in Veronica Hall (*See Campus Map on pg. 6*). They then can find the assigned building and begin moving in process.

Interior of a Campus Residence Hall

Exterior of a Campus Residence Hall