

Dear New International Student,

Congratulations on being admitted to the Georgia Institute of Technology. We are delighted that you have been admitted, and we are ready to assist you as you prepare to come to Georgia Tech. We hope you find this letter helpful. This is NOT the letter of admission, which should come to you directly from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions or the Graduate School. **Pay close attention to the information in this letter.** It will help you to have a smooth transition to the United States and an easier adjustment to Georgia Tech. We also recommend that you bring this letter with you to use as a reference.

### **Obtaining A U.S. Visa and Entering United States**

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1. After accepting Georgia Tech's offer of admission, you will receive either an I-20 form (for an F-1 visa) or a DS-2019 (for a J-1 visa). If you are a graduate student, contact your academic department. If you are an undergraduate student and have not yet received your I-20 or DS-2019, contact Brittany Malbrue in the Office of International Education at [brittney.malbrue@oie.gatech.edu](mailto:brittney.malbrue@oie.gatech.edu) or (404) 894-7475 or (fax) (404) 894-9682, Attention: Brittany Malbrue.
  
2. Visa Application
  - a. When you receive your I-20/DS-2019, you SHOULD pay the SEVIS fee (\$200 for I-20, \$180 for DS-2019) on-line with a credit card at: [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com). You will need the SEVIS ID number in the top right corner of your I-20/DS-2019 (N000\*\*\*\*\*) and your passport to pay the fee.
  - b. When you have paid the fee, print out the receipt so you can take it with you to the consulate. You must pay the fee at least three days before your visa interview. The SEVIS fee is a non-refundable application fee, meaning you must pay it before you can apply for the visa, but if you are denied a visa you will not receive the \$200/\$180 back.
  - c. If you are denied a visa, you do not have to pay the fee if you apply for an F-1 visa again in the next 12 months from when you paid the fee. Continuing students or transfer students may not be subject to the SEVIS fee, unless they have had a break in their status. Students who do not need a visa, for example, Canadians, should pay the fee 3 days before arriving at the port-of-entry. They should take the receipt of payment with them.
  - d. To apply for a U.S. visa, go to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate and take with you the I-20 or DS-2019 form, the letter of admission, a bank statement and other evidence of financial support at Georgia Tech, and any other documents that the visa application requires. Check the information for your nearest embassy or consulate at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for more details. The U.S. consul must be convinced that you have adequate financial resources to support your stay in the United States and that you do not intend to become a U.S. immigrant. The intent to remain a non-immigrant is usually established by demonstrating that you have significant ties to your home country that would enhance the chances of your returning. When the U.S. consul is satisfied with your application, you will receive a visa, stamped in your passport. **Please note that the Office of International Education and Georgia Tech have little or no influence on the visa-issuing decision at the U.S. embassy/consulate. If you are denied a visa, however, please tell us and we will do whatever we can to assist.**

3. When you arrive at the port-of-entry in the United States, the immigration officer will give you a small white card called “Form I-94,” and will stamp your passport and page one of your I-20/DS-2019. The I-94 and the I-20/DS-2019 are **very important** documents because they establish your legitimacy in the United States as a non-immigrant student. Keep these documents together with your passport in a safe place.
4. You may have been admitted to several universities in the U.S., but if you plan to attend Georgia Tech, then you **MUST ENTER THE U.S. WITH THE I-20/DS-2019 ISSUED BY THE GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND AN F-1/J-1 VISA MARKED “GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY.”** If you enter using another university’s I-20/DS-2019, then you first need to attend that school before you transfer to Georgia Tech. Please note that this only applies to students who have an I-20 marked “Initial Attendance” and does not apply to transfer students. If you are a transfer student, please see below.

### **F-1 Transferring From One Institution in U.S. To Georgia Tech**

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Your I-20 will be marked “Transfer Pending” in Section 3, Page 1 of your I-20. You should have previously contacted the International Student Advisor at your old school as well as the Office of International Education (undergraduate students) or your academic department (graduate students) at Georgia Tech for information on the transfer procedure. Please see our website ([www.oie.gatech.edu](http://www.oie.gatech.edu)) for more information on the transfer procedure. **All students must check in with the Office of International Education upon arrival. You will not be able to register for courses until you have completed check-in, so you should plan to complete check-in prior to the first day of class, January 11, 2010.** If you do not check in with our office, you will not complete the transfer process, and you will be out of status.

If you travel outside of the United States before attending Georgia Tech, you must use the Georgia Institute of Technology I-20 marked “Transfer Pending” in Section 3, page 1 to re-enter the United States. If your F-1 visa that you received for the first school you attended is still valid, it is NOT necessary to get a new F-1 visa. If your F-1 visa has expired, you will take the Georgia Tech I-20 to the closest U.S. Embassy to get a new F-1 visa. You must still check in with the Office of International Education at Georgia Tech in order to be able to register for courses.

### **Medical Entrance Form, Certificate of Immunizations, TB Screening**

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Please see: [http://www.health.gatech.edu/new\\_students/steps.htm](http://www.health.gatech.edu/new_students/steps.htm) for complete information on Student Health Services forms that are **mandatory** to complete prior to your being able to register at Georgia Tech.

### **When to Arrive at Georgia Tech**

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**PLEASE NOTE:** Students with an I-20 marked “**Initial Attendance**” on Page 1, Section 3 are only able to enter the US up to 30 days before the report date on Page 1, Section 5.

The exact time that you should arrive on campus is determined by two factors:

- a. Your class--i.e., whether you are a freshman, transfer student, or graduate student;
- b. Your housing arrangements--i.e., whether or not you have already been assigned housing in a Georgia Tech residence hall;

**If you are not planning to live in the Tech residence halls:** You should plan to arrive in Atlanta as early as possible. Apartments become increasingly more difficult to find as the first day of class approaches for

colleges and universities in the Atlanta area, so the earlier you arrive, the easier it will be to find a place to live. Off-campus information can be found on the OIE and Housing websites.

The residence halls officially open for Spring Semester on:

- Saturday, January 9 & Sunday, January 10, 2010 (9PM to 5PM)
- At check-in time, students will pick up their key and other pertinent information. Details on the check-in locations will be provided at: [www.housing.gatech.edu](http://www.housing.gatech.edu)

Early Arrival Policies:

- Undergraduate TRANSFER students attending FASET may move-in on Friday, January 7 but may be subject to the \$55 per night early arrival fee.
- Any other student may move in early on Friday, January 7 for a \$55 per night fee.

### **Applying for Social Security Number (SSN)**

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You will not be able to apply for a social security number (SSN) until you have been in the United States for at least 10 working days and your SEVIS record is in Active status, which will occur about one week from the close of course registration. If you have an on-campus job, you will be able to get paid without the SSN in the beginning of the semester. However, you will want to apply for the SSN as soon as possible to continue on the payroll.

### **Registration Deadline**

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Classes begin on **January 11, 2010**. The last day to register for the Spring 2010 semester classes is **Friday, January 15, 2010 at 4:00pm**. In order to be enrolled in Georgia Tech for Spring you must be physically present during the registration period. All F-1 and J-1 students must be registered for at least 12 credits by the close of registration.

### **What to Do When You Arrive in Atlanta**

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1. It is very important that you plan to arrive on-campus between the hours of 8:00 am and 3:00 pm (Eastern Daylight Time) on a weekday (Monday -Friday). These are regular business hours, and the offices on campus you need to visit upon your arrival will be open.
2. Assuming that you arrive at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, Atlanta, GA, we recommend that you take a taxi to the campus or wherever you will be staying. There are other less expensive forms of transportation, but the taxi would be the most convenient. A taxi from the airport to Georgia Tech should cost approximately \$30 for one person.
3. If you have a residence hall assignment, advise the taxi driver as follows:
  - a. East Campus - East Community Housing Office:  
711 Techwood Drive NW | Tel: 404-894-3045
  - b. West Campus - West Community Housing Office:  
Corner of McMillan Street and Turner Place (between 6th and 8th Streets) |Tel: 404-894-3372
  - c. Graduate Living Center – North Community Housing Office:  
301 10th Street NW | Tel: 404-894-2687
  - d. North Avenue Apartments – North Avenue North Office:  
120 North Avenue | Tel: 404-385-3225

The housing offices listed above are open on a regular basis from 8:00 am -8:00 pm Monday through Friday

4. **If you do not intend to live on campus or you arrive before residence hall check-in, we strongly suggest that you make reservations at an Atlanta area hotel before you arrive in Atlanta.** The following hotels are very close to Georgia Tech:

- 1) Hampton Inn – Tel: (404) 881-0881 - 244 North Avenue
- 2) Marriott Courtyard at Midtown – (404)-607-1112 – Cor. of Techwood Drive and 14<sup>th</sup> St.
- 3) Peachtree Street Days Inn – (404)-874-9200 – 683 Peachtree St.
- 4) Atlanta Renaissance Hotel – (404)-881-6000 – 590 W Peachtree St.
- 5) American Youth Hostel – (404)-875-9449—223 Ponce de Leon (corner of Myrtle and Ponce de Leon) –can make reservations by emailing [rsvp@mindspring.com](mailto:rsvp@mindspring.com)

You may wish to request the Georgia Tech rate, which might be cheaper than the regular rate.

### **Check in with the Office of International Education**

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When you have settled into your housing, on or off campus, your next stop **must be** the Office of International Education (OIE) – Savant Building, 631 Cherry Street, Suite 211. After you arrive on campus, it is very important that you report as soon as possible to the Office of International Education with:

1. Passport, F-1 or J-1 visa,
2. I-94, and
3. I-20/ DS-2019

The staff will tell you what you need to do during your first week at Georgia Tech. You **will not** be able to register until you complete the check in procedure with OIE, so at the very latest you should plan to arrive and check-in prior to the first day of class, January 11, 2010.

### **International Student Orientation**

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The Office of International Education sponsors a **MANDATORY** orientation program for all new and transfer international students. There will be two opportunities to attend the orientation:

- **Friday, January 8, 2:30-4:00pm** - Student Center Theater (#104 on Campus Map)
- **Tuesday, January 12 4:30-6:00pm** – Student Center Ballroom (#104 on Campus Map)

This mandatory orientation will provide information on immigration regulations, campus resources, and cross-cultural adjustment issues.

New undergraduate students and transfer undergraduate students:

You should also attend the FASET (Familiarization and Adaptation to the Surroundings and Environs of Tech) orientation program, which is designed specifically for undergraduate students so that you can receive academic advising and go through registration. If you have not yet received FASET information, please call the FASET office at 404-894-6897 or see the website at [www.faset.gatech.edu](http://www.faset.gatech.edu).

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** There may be some reason why you cannot register for FASET in advance--such as you didn't receive the information in time or your government will not allow you to send the registration fee to the United States before your departure. If this applies to you, call the FASET Office immediately at 404-894-6897, and tell them you plan to participate.

## Housing

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**On-Campus:** The residence halls at Georgia Tech provide housing that is convenient and affordable for students. Rooms are limited, however. We therefore strongly recommend that you obtain a Tech residence hall room as soon as possible. If you are a new student and requested on-campus housing by the corresponding undergraduate and graduate deadlines indicated on the housing application form, contracts will be mailed out at least two months prior to arrival. If you have not yet received your on-campus housing contract, please e-mail [information@housing.gatech.edu](mailto:information@housing.gatech.edu).

**PLEASE NOTE:** Signing a residence hall contract will require a student to live in the Georgia Tech residence hall system for the entire semester. If you want to move out of your residence hall early and terminate your contract early, you will incur a significant financial cost. You should think carefully about the circumstances of life in a residential hall before signing the residence hall housing contract. Some of these circumstances include sharing a room with another student of the same gender and the absence of food preparation facilities.

**Off-Campus:** If you decide to live off campus, you will have to make arrangements to stay somewhere when you first arrive and during the time you will be searching for an apartment. If you have friends in the area, you may want to arrange to stay with them while looking for a place to live. Otherwise, be prepared to stay in a hotel or motel at a cost of approximately \$75.00 to \$120.00 per night until you find permanent housing.

One of the best ways to obtain an off-campus living apartment or room is to contact a student from your home country who has already been at Tech a year and who is living off-campus. They can often help you find a place to live, or arrange for you to share their living accommodations with them --at least temporarily. You can find contact information for other international students on the website for cultural student organizations at Georgia Tech at: <http://involvement.gatech.edu>.

Unfortunately, the Office of International Education cannot find permanent housing for an individual in advance; this is something you must do yourself --either through the Tech residence hall system or by coming early to Tech and seeking housing in the city of Atlanta. We do provide a list of places to begin your housing search on our website: <http://www.oie.gatech.edu/iss/admissions/>. You will also find information on this site for a temporary housing option we provide to new students for 1-2 nights when you are searching for permanent housing.

## Climate

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When you arrive in Atlanta in January, the probable temperature range will be from an average high of 55 degrees Fahrenheit (13 degrees Celsius) during the day to a low at night of around 32 degrees Fahrenheit (0 degrees Celsius). It also rains regularly in Atlanta throughout the school year. We suggest buying as much of your wardrobe as possible here in Atlanta unless you feel the cost would be prohibitive. Student dress on campus is quite casual and entirely according to your personal taste.

## Mandatory Health and Accident Insurance

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**All students in F-1 and J-1 status are required to enroll in the Georgia Tech Pearce & Pearce Insurance Plan.** The premium for the insurance will appear on your tuition and fee bill and can be paid when you are in Atlanta. Cost and further information regarding the plan, including how to waive out of this mandatory plan, will be available on the Health Services website: <http://www.health.gatech.edu>. An explanation of the benefits and coverage of this plan will take place at the international student orientation.

## Costs Involved in Attending Georgia Tech

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We recommend that you refer to your I-20 form for information on estimated costs involved in being a student at Georgia Tech. The following is some information that you can use in your planning:

1. Bring about \$1600 in travelers checks and \$400 in cash to use during your first few weeks in Atlanta. This would cover expenses such as meals, taxi fare, supplies for your room, deposit for an apartment, etc. We strongly recommend American Express traveler's checks, because if they are lost, they can be replaced, and once deposited into a bank account, the funds are immediately accessible.
2. For information on the amount of tuition and fees you will need to pay, please refer to the following website: ([www.bursar.gatech.edu](http://www.bursar.gatech.edu)). Tuition and fees payable directly to Georgia Tech may be in the form of a bank draft or cashier's check that can be paid directly to the Institute during your registration process. Please note that the Bursar's office only accepts American Express and Mastercard credit cards and does **NOT** accept Visa credit cards. Additional fees are associated with using these cards. The preferred method of payment is Web-check. See the Bursar's website for details.
3. When you finally arrive at Georgia Tech, it is very easy to set up a checking account at a local bank so that you can have convenient access to your money.

## **Conclusion**

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In this letter we have tried to address many of the issues raised by new international students coming to Georgia Tech. If there are other questions for which you need specific answers, we would be happy to assist. You may:

- Fax us at: 404-894-9682
- Look for answers on our website: [www.oie.gatech.edu](http://www.oie.gatech.edu)
- E-mail an international student advisor at: [info@oie.gatech.edu](mailto:info@oie.gatech.edu).

