Welcome to Wilkes University! We are so happy that you have chosen to continue your education at our university.

The following information will help you with visa and travel information. Please read it carefully as you plan for your arrival at Wilkes.

**A Special Note**

If Item 3 of your I-20 form indicates “initial attendance” you are required to pay the Federal SEVIS fee of USD$200 and have a printed receipt that proves payment prior to your visa interview. Also, you may enter the United States no earlier than thirty (30) days before the starting date on your I-20.

Contents:

- Planning for Arrival
  - Travel Documents
  - Your Passport
- Applying for Your U.S. Visa
  - When to Apply
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- What to Do If You are Currently in the United States
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PLANNING FOR ARRIVAL

Travel Documents:

Your form I-20 is necessary to apply for the appropriate visa for entry to the United States. This form will allow you to apply for an F-1 student visa. It is your Certificate of Eligibility to study at Wilkes University.

Your Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20) indicates the latest date by which you should report to Wilkes University. This date is generally the first day of classes. However, you must arrive on campus prior to this date in order to attend the MANDATORY International Student Orientation. Other reasons to arrive early are as follows:
- Finding Off-Campus Housing (mandatory for graduate students)
- Registration for Classes

All of these activities can take time, especially finding housing for the semester. Registration and Orientation are the three days before the start of the semester.

Important note: If your plans change, and you decide not to attend Wilkes University, return the Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20) to the International Student Services Office to notify the office of your decision. If you wish to defer your admission to a subsequent semester, you will need to put the request in writing when you contact the International Student Services Office.

Unless you are a Canadian citizen, you must obtain an F-1 visa before you will be permitted to enter the United States. (Canadian citizens should see the special section that pertains to them).

Your Passport:

You must have a passport valid for travel to the United States and with a validity date for at least six months after your proposed date of entry into the United States.

APPLYING FOR YOUR U.S. VISA

When to Apply:

If you are currently abroad, and do not yet have a valid U.S. student visa, you generally apply for one at the U.S. embassy or consulate with jurisdiction over your place of permanent residence. Although visa applicants may apply at any U.S. consular office abroad, it is generally more difficult to qualify for the visa outside the country of permanent residence.

You should apply for your student visa well in advance of the date you would like to depart for Wilkes-Barre. Remember that you are required to show proof of having paid the Federal SEVIS fee when you appear for your visa interview. Holiday and vacation periods are very busy times at the U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide, and it is important for you to have your visa in time to arrive and begin orientation and registration activities no later than the start date on your I-20. Appointments are now mandatory for all student visas, and some U.S.
embassies and consulates require that appointments be made at least four to eight weeks in advance. The actual visa interview may be as early as 120 days prior to your planned arrival date in the United States. All U.S. embassies and consulates have a website where you can read the latest information on visa procedures. Visit http://usembassy.state.gov/ to locate the embassy or consulate near you. For information on waiting times for student visa appointments, visit this link: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html

What to Bring with You to the Visa Interview:

Be sure to bring the following with you to the visa appointment:

- Passport
- Required photo(s)
- Visa fee or proof of visa fee payment
- Federal SEVIS fee payment receipt
- U.S. non-immigrant visa application forms (unless you will be completing it at the consulate or embassy)
- Wilkes University admission letter
- Wilkes University SEVIS I-20
- Test scores and academic records
- Proof of English proficiency
- Proof of financial support
- Evidence of ties to your home country
- Any other documents required by the embassy or consulate

Remember that if you plan to attend Wilkes, you must present the visa officer with an I-20 issued by Wilkes University. You cannot apply for a U.S. visa using another school’s I-20 and then try to attend Wilkes as that is considered to be a fraudulent entry by the U.S. Immigration authorities.

Strategies for the Visa Appointment:

You are well advised to consider the following matters prior to your visa appointment, as you may be asked about each item.

1. Academics: Be definite and clear about your educational plans. You should be able to explain precisely what you wish to study and why you chose Wilkes for your education. Be especially prepared to explain reasons for studying in the United States rather than your country.

2. English: Anticipate that the visa interview will be conducted in English. Do not bring parents or family members with you to the visa interview. The consular officer will want to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.
3. Ties to Your Home Country: Demonstrate convincing reasons for consular officials to believe that you intend to return home after studies in the United States. Emphasize ties to your home country such as employment, family, obligations, property or investments that you own or will inherit, and clear explanations of how you plan to use your education to help your country or pursue a career when you return home.

4. Financial Documentation: Be prepared to prove financial ability to pay for your education and living expenses. While some students will be able to work part-time during their studies, such employment is incidental to their main purpose of completing their education. You must show the consular officer that you have the annual amount in United States dollars listed on your I-20 form. Your financial evidence should be in the form of bank statements, affidavits of support, scholarship award letters, etc.

5. Be Concise: Because of the volume of visa applications, all consular officers are under considerable pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impression they form during the first minute or two of the interview. Consequently, what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers short and to the point.

6. Not All Countries are the Same: Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the United States as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from these countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities in the United States.

7. Dependents Remaining at Home: If you have a spouse and/or children remaining behind in your home country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be an especially tricky area if you are the primary source of income for your family. If the consular officer gains the impression that your family members will need you to remit money from the United States in order to support them, your student visa will almost surely be denied.

Visa Denial or Visa Delay:

The vast majority of Wilkes University students will be successful in obtaining their student visas. Despite this, a small number of students may have their visa applications denied.

The most common reasons for visa denial are:

- Failure to prove sufficient ties to your home country, or
- Failure to provide sufficient evidence of financial support

The visa officer must verbally inform you of the reason for the visa denial. If your visa is denied, please send an email message to jonathan.summers@wilkes.edu and provide the date and location of your visa interview, and details regarding the reason given by the visa officer for the denial.

Much more common than a visa denial is a visa delay. This is why it is so important to apply for your visa EARLY! Here are some of the most common reasons for visa delays:

- Closings or reduced hours at U.S. visa issuing posts abroad due to security concerns
- Closings or reduced hours at U.S. visa issuing posts abroad due to political instability in the host country
- Student’s record does not appear in the SEVIS system at the U.S. embassy or consulate, even though the student or scholar presents a SEVIS I-20. **If you are told that you record does not appear in the visa officer’s SEVIS system, immediately contact the International Student and Faculty Services Office at jonathan.summers@wilkes.edu and provide the date and location of your visa interview. We will, in turn, contact the appropriate authority to have your SEVIS record resubmitted directly to the location where you have applied for your visa.**
- Student not presenting proof of Federal SEVIS fee payment
- The need for a security advisory opinion prior to visa issuance if the visa applicant is determined to be pursuing a “sensitive area of study” as indicated on the State Department’s Technology Alert List. The fields of study usually include the sciences and engineering.
- The need for a security clearance prior to visa issuance if the visa applicant has ever been arrested in the United States, or if the applicant has a name identical to or similar to a person with a previous arrest record.
- The need for a security clearance prior to visa issuance if the visa applicant is male, between the ages of 16-46 and a citizen of or born in one of the designated countries requiring security clearances (Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen).
- The need for a security clearance for any non-immigrant visa applicant male or female, age 16 or older who is a national of or permanently residing in Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Sudan or Syria. Such individuals will not be issued visas unless the applicant can show evidence that he or she is not a threat to U.S. national security.
- The new U.S. Department of State requirement that all applicants for non-immigrant visas be interviewed can cause delay. This new policy has slowed the visa issuance process around the world.

Similar to visa denial, the visa officer must verbally inform you of the reason for the visa delay. If your visa is delayed, please send an email message to jonathan.summers@wilkes.edu and provide the date and location of your visa interview, and details regarding the reason given by the visa officer for the delay.
The U.S. State Department has prepared information on student visas on its website that may be useful to you. Visit: [http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html)

**Special Note for Citizens of Canada:**

Citizens of Canada are not required to obtain a U.S. visa to enter the United States. However, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer will inspect your papers, either at a pre-inspection site in Canada or upon entry to the United States. You must have with you:

- Your Canadian passport
- Your admission letter to Wilkes University
- Proof of Federal SEVIS fee payment
- Your Wilkes University Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20)
- Proof of financial support that corresponds to the information on your I-20
- Proof of your ties to Canada

It is essential that you enter the United States in the appropriate status; be sure to have complete documentation with you.

**IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY IN THE UNITED STATES**

**F-1 Students:**

If you already have valid F-1 student status by being enrolled at another U.S. college or university, by now you have already completed the required Transfer Verification Form and requested that the international student advisor at your current school release your SEVIS record to Wilkes University. Your new Wilkes I-20, endorsed and pending transfer, is mailed to you as soon as the release date for your SEVIS record (as determined by your previous school) is reached. Once you are enrolled at Wilkes University and we have confirmed your registration, the transfer process will be complete. If you are in F-1 status, a new I-20 will be issued to you. Be sure to report to the International Student Services Office as soon as possible after your arrival.

**All Other Non-Immigrant Visa Classifications:**

If you are currently in the United States in a visa classification other than F-1, you should contact the International Student Services Office for information.

**HEALTH REQUIREMENTS AND HEALTH REPORT**

You will be informed of any health and immigration requirements when you apply for your visa. The University further requires, as a condition of enrollment, that all students fill out a Health Form and that all students purchase health insurance upon arrival in the United States. The
Health Form is included in your admission packet; information about health insurance is available from the International Student Services Office on campus. You must comply with certain immunization requirements in order to attend Wilkes University. For example, you must show proof of receiving the vaccination for Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) and Meningitis as part of this form and complete submission of this information is a pre-requisite to class registration. It is best for you to complete this form with your own physician at home before coming to the U.S.

Please note that the tuberculin skin test or chest x-ray must be performed in the United States or Canada. University Health Services is prepared to provide the skin test for you. Further information about health requirements and services can be found at Admissions- http://www.wilkes.edu/pages/2374.asp Health Services- http://www.wilkes.edu/pages/752.asp

Please note as well that you will not be allowed to register (enroll) for classes without having a completed health form.

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THINGS TO BRING:

Climate and Clothing: Northeastern Pennsylvania has a varying climate with four distinct seasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Months</th>
<th>Temp. in Fahrenheit</th>
<th>Temp. in Centigrade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>June-September</td>
<td>50 to 90 degrees</td>
<td>10 to 32 degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>September-November</td>
<td>20 to 80 degrees</td>
<td>-7 to 26 degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>December-March</td>
<td>0 to 45 degrees</td>
<td>-18 to 7 degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>April-June</td>
<td>40 to 72 degrees</td>
<td>4 to 22 degrees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Temperatures vary considerably from year to year. During spring, summer and fall, moderate periods of rainfall occur; snow falls periodically throughout the winter months. Three basic types of outerwear are essential. In winter, heavy jackets or overcoats, hats, scarves, gloves and boots are needed. During chilly autumn and spring days, raincoats or medium-weight jackets or coats are worn outdoors and sweaters are often worn indoors. A light-weight jacket is sometimes necessary for cool nights during spring, summer and fall.

Personal Items: Most students like to bring examples of arts, crafts, traditional dress, photographs, tapes or CDs, maps, or other items descriptive of their country and culture, both to show interested Americans and to provide a touch of home decoration in their new homes. You may want to bring items you use regularly that may not be readily available, or may be more expensive, in the United States—for example, eyeglasses, cameras, watches, mp3 players. You may also have the opportunity to visit a duty-free port in the United States where such items may be purchased at a reduced cost.
If you are an undergraduate who will live on campus, basic furniture is provided in campus residence halls (bed and mattress, desk, chair, closet) but bed linens, blankets, pillows and towels are not.

THINGS TO LEAVE AT HOME:

You can obtain a booklet on customs regulations at the consulate or embassy where you acquire your visa. Prohibited items include some foodstuffs, narcotics and items for resale. For more information you can also visit the website of the U.S. Customs Service at: http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id_visa/kbyg/prohibited_restricted.xml

Since students are expected to buy required textbooks for all courses, and supplemental reading materials for review and research are available in libraries, you need not bring any books used in previous study.

It is best to purchase electrical appliances after you arrive: appliances manufactured outside the U.S. may not be compatible with the power supply or may not be allowed inside the residence halls.

ARRANGING FOR MAIL:

Until you have a mailing address in Wilkes-Barre, you may have your letters (NOT PARCELS) mailed to you in care of the International Student Services Office.

The address is:

International Student and Faculty Services Office
Wilkes University
84 West South Street
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18766 USA

“Hold for Arrival” should be marked on the envelope.

DO NOT send baggage to the International Student Services Office.

The University cannot be responsible for the security of any forwarded mail.

ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES

Port of Entry Procedures:
Once you have obtained your U.S. student visa, you are ready to finalize your travel plans. Be sure to have your I-20 and your proof of Federal SEVIS fee payment with your passport and visa when you go through your immigration inspection at the U.S. port of entry. Remember that if you plan to attend Wilkes University, you must present a certificate of eligibility (your I-20) endorsed for study at Wilkes.

DO NOT enter on another school’s certificate of eligibility, as that is considered to be a fraudulent entry by the U.S. Immigration authorities.

DO NOT attempt to enter the United States on a visitor/tourist visa (B-2) unless it is designated “Prospective Student” by a consular officer. The U.S. Immigration Service rarely authorizes a change of status from B-2 to F-1, and you will be prevented from enrolling in school until your change of status application is approved, which could take several months.

DO NOT attempt to enter the United States under the visa waiver program, available to citizens from nearly thirty countries throughout the world. The waiver program is designed for tourists only, and attending school under the waiver program is a clear violation of U.S. Immigration law.

Expect to go through both immigration and customs inspection at the U.S. port of entry. You may also be required to go through a pre-inspection procedure at certain airports abroad. At the immigration booth, present your passport, visa, I-20, your proof of Federal SEVIS fee payment, and your completed I-94 arrival/departure card (if the card was distributed on the airplane). Expect to have your index fingers scanned for fingerprint purposes and a digital photograph taken, as required by U.S. federal regulations. In the vast majority of cases, there will be no difficulty. In certain cases, if there is some problem with your documents, you may be issued a 30-day entry on your I-94 card and issued a form I-515, usually with instructions to see your international student advisor. Examine your I-94 card and I-20 carefully as you leave the immigration booth. F-1 students should have their I-94 cards marked “D/S” which means “Duration of Status,” along with a stamp indicating the date you entered the United States. The same stamp and “D/S” notation should also be on the I-20. If an expiration date is written on the I-94 instead of “D/S,” and you are in F status, come to the International Student Services Office as soon as possible.

Anyone who is denied admission at a U.S. port of entry should be very cautious about arguing with the immigration official. You may risk being issued “expedited removal,” which now entails a five-year ban on admission to the United States. If you are denied admission, first try to contact the International Student Services Office for assistance, but also make it known to the immigration official that you are willing to withdraw your application for admission to the country rather than be subject to expedited removal.

**Money:**

It is a good idea to exchange currency for U.S. dollars before your departure, but you should not travel with large amounts of cash—there is too much danger of loss or theft. If you anticipate bringing large sums of money to the United States, ask a bank about the safest and most
convenient means of carrying or transferring funds. Remember that if you carry more than $10,000 in U.S. or foreign currency, traveler's checks, money orders or negotiable instruments, you must report it on your Customs Form at the U.S. port of entry. Failure to do so can result in the seizure of the currency. If you make arrangements for funds to be transferred in U.S. dollars to a U.S. bank before you leave home, that money will be available to you when you arrive on campus. Foreign currency is not readily available in most U.S. cities, and the University and all local businesses accept only U.S. dollars.

When you arrive in the United States, you should have sufficient funds to cover your expenses when you reach Wilkes. The amount depends, of course, on your travel plans. Once you have decided on your itinerary and estimated expenses, you may wish to purchase traveler’s checks in U.S. dollars for the amount of money you need. Traveler’s checks, obtained at banks or travel offices, can be cashed by banks and most businesses, including hotels, restaurants and airports.

It is also advisable to carry a small amount of U.S. cash—at least fifty dollars in paper currency and two or three dollars in coins or “change” for telephones, baggage lockers, bus fares, and tips.

American money is based on a decimal system. One US Dollar equals one hundred cents. Paper currency is used for US$1 and over. Coin currency is used for amounts less than US$1. Here is a list of the most commonly used coins in the United States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coin</th>
<th>Figure Pictured</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>1 cent</td>
<td>copper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nickel</td>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>5 cents</td>
<td>silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dime</td>
<td>Roosevelt</td>
<td>10 cents</td>
<td>silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarter</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>25 cents</td>
<td>silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Dollar</td>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>50 cents</td>
<td>silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>100 cents</td>
<td>silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>Sacagawea</td>
<td>100 cents</td>
<td>gold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here is a list of the most commonly used paper bills in the United States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Illustration (on back)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US$1</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Great Seal of the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US$2</td>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>Declaration of Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US$5</td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>Lincoln Memorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US$10</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>U.S. Treasury Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US$20</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>White House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US$50</td>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>U.S. Capitol Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US$100</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>Independence Hall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Payment of tuition, fees, and other charges is due prior to registration (when you enroll for classes). Payment may be made by cash, check or credit card.

If you cannot make full payment at the time payment is due, you must make special payment arrangements with Student Services. If you fail to do so, you will be charged a late fee and may
not be able to register. Sponsored students must submit copies of their award letters to arrange for direct payment by their sponsors. If you wish to deposit funds in your University account before arrival, you may send a check to

Student Services
Financial Management
84 West South Street
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18766  USA

Write on your check the student identification number assigned to you by the University and make the check payable to Wilkes University. If you have any questions about payment procedures, or you need to find out your student identification number, please contact the Office of Student Services at onestop@wilkes.edu

Financial aid for international students is limited at Wilkes University. It is not unheard of, however. There will be a letter in your admission packet outlining your academic scholarship monies if you have received any.

You must plan on meeting your own educational expenses for the duration of your studies. No long term loan funds are available through the University. All students must therefore bring enough money to cover their expenses.

Married students who wish to have their families join them should realize their financial burdens. A married couple who can live inexpensively will require at least USD$5000 more per year than a single student will. Additional funds are necessary for each accompanying child for a minimum standard of living. Visas are not issued to the family of students unless they have sufficient funds for dependents in addition to the amount required for the single student. Many students find it best to delay bringing their families until they have found housing and settled in the community.

Temporary Accommodations:

If you arrive before the residence halls open, or if you plan to live off-campus and have not yet found an apartment, you may need to stay in a local motel. A list of local motels may be found here: http://wilkes.edu/pages/274.asp

REVIEW OF IMPORTANT INFORMATION

We hope this information is helpful to you as you arrange for your new educational experience. You are encouraged to re-read it and carefully note the items that pertain to your situation. Please pay careful attention to your requirements and obligations. To summarize:

1. Make sure your travel documents are in order. Do not finalize your arrangements until you have your passport, form I-20, SEVIS fee receipt and visa stamp. You may enter the
United States only if your Certificate of Eligibility (I-20) is endorsed by the university in which you intend to enroll.

2. Take care of your financial obligation and arrange for proper monetary transfer. Carefully review requirements for obtaining foreign exchange. Make sure you have adequate funds.

3. Plan to arrive on campus on the date designated. If you are an undergraduate and wish to live on campus, contact Jonathan at International Student Services so that you can apply for residence hall accommodations promptly.

4. Be prepared to discuss your academic plans and interests with your department or program. Do not rely on others to plan your program for you, but at the same time do not register for classes without seeing an advisor during the orientation period.

5. If you do not plan to enroll at Wilkes University in the semester for which you have been admitted, return the form I-20 to the International Student Services Office as notification of your decision.

Again, we wish you a warm welcome to Wilkes University. If you arrive on campus after working hours (4:30 p.m.) or on a Saturday or Sunday, and need emergency assistance, please call the Wilkes University Public Safety Office at 570-408-2349.

International Student and Faculty Services
Wilkes University