About This Guidebook

The Welcome Guidebook has been prepared to address the most frequently asked questions made by international students about their arrival on campus and feeling at home in Natchitoches. The information is presented in order to suit the needs of a new international student arriving at NSU: from finding housing to recreational activities.

We hope that you will find this guidebook helpful. We welcome any suggestions for new material to enhance the overall experience of international students.

Please contact us at:

international@nsula.edu
Phone (318) 357-3959
Fax (321) 728-4570
Welcome from the Director

Dear International Student:

We are delighted to welcome you to Northwestern State University. We are glad that you have joined us and we hope that your time at NSU will be a successful one filled with exciting opportunities. The ISRC is here to assist you in achieving your academic and career goals.

Our team is committed to facilitating and enriching your experience before you arrive on campus and while you are here in the U.S. We work diligently to provide useful resources through this Guidebook. I encourage you to read this Guidebook to help you ease into your new life here. The information presented here is a compilation of the most frequently-asked questions international students have when they first arrive at NSU.

When you arrive at NSU, there are orientation sessions which will prepare you for a successful stay at our University. Visit our website for more information prepared for international students. For assistance with any questions, contact us at international@nsula.edu.

I am so pleased that you are here, and on behalf of NSU, my staff and I wish you the very best throughout your program. We look forward to getting to know you better.

Best wishes,

Dr. Telba Espinoza-Contreras

TelbaEspinoza-Contreras
Director
contreras@nsula.edu
Northwestern State University
International Student Resource Center
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www.nsula.edu
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International Student Resource Center

The International Student Resource Center is dedicated to assisting international students in their transition from their home countries to becoming a student at NSU. We advise future international students and promote a welcoming atmosphere through intercultural social interactions. Our goal is to make their journey at NSU a lasting memorable experience! We recognize the importance of international education and collaboration in academic learning. The ISRC promotes opportunities for NSU students to participate in long or short-term study-abroad programs. We encourage NSU students to incorporate this life-changing experience as part of their academic plans.

Our Services

– Advising support for international students.
– Assisting in finding housing and other accommodations.
– Facilitating exchange programs.
– Orientation meetings.
– Filling paperwork for student applications (CPT, OPT, Study Abroad, etc.).
– Guidance throughout the admissions process (Undergraduate & Graduate).
– Provide students with updated documents and material regarding Immigration, University Policies, Opportunities on Campus, etc.
– Any other inquiries or requests that students have.

Office Hours

Our staff is available to meet with you on a daily basis. Students can drop-in or make an appointment (“Drop-in” means you don’t need an appointment—simply stop by our office and sign-up). We will see you on a first come, first serve basis.

Our Office Hours are: Monday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m. - 4:30p.m., and Friday from 7:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon.

We are located at:
125 Central Ave., Russell Hall Room 227 &230
Natchitoches, LA 71457

E-mail: international@nsula.edu
Website: https://www.nsula.edu/international/

“Dedicated To One Goal. Yours”
About Northwestern State University

History
Northwestern was established in 1884 in the old Bullard Mansion atop a hill overlooking the bustling river port city of Natchitoches. The campus grew as the school expanded from a two-year degree for teachers at Louisiana State Normal School to the four-year education degree at Louisiana Normal College in 1921. In 1944, the school became Northwestern State College and in 1970 it grew into Northwestern State University.

Today, over 125 years later, three columns remain of the original structure on what is now called Normal Hill. The campus expanded to the south and west as the school grew. Satellite campuses developed in the cities Shreveport, Alexandria and Leesville, and today its Distance Learning Program allows students around the world to study at Northwestern. NSU offers more than 50 degree programs. It has an enrollment of nearly 9,200 students, of whom about 100 are international students. NSU claims more than 70,000 alumni. NSU also hosts the Louisiana Scholars' College, Louisiana's designated Honors College in the Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts.

Vic the Demon
On September 22, 1984, the Demon received his official name by a contest sponsored by the Athletic Department; the contest was open to faculty, staff, and students. Ray Carney, an alum of the University, was the official winner with “Vic” which is short for “Victory”.

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NSU Campus Map
Natchitoches (Nack-a-tish), is the oldest settlement in the Louisiana Purchase. Established in 1714, Natchitoches’ cultural richness lies in its perfect mix of European and Cajun traditions. This can be appreciated through its architecture, heritage and lifestyle. The City of Natchitoches is the heart of Natchitoches Parish.

The Natchitoches area, is home to historic sites, Creole plantations, and museums all within the boundaries of the Cane River National Heritage Area. The City’s Historic Landmark District, which fronts Cane River Lake and encompasses a 33-block area, includes many historic homes, churches, local boutiques and gift shops, fabulous dining options and plenty of bed & breakfasts. The region is also known for the filming of the famous 80’s movie “Steel Magnolias” as well as year-round festivals including the annual December Festival of Lights. Natchitoches is also the new home to the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame and Northwest Louisiana History Museum.

Places to go...

- 4 Seasons Farm
- Adai Indian Nation Cultural Center
- Bayou Pierre Alligator Park
- Briarwood Nature Preserve
- Christmas in the Park
- City of Lights Christmas Festival
- Dark Woods Haunted House
- Fort St. Jean Baptiste Historic Site
- Grand Ecore Visitors Center
- Historic Cemeteries
- Historic District
- Hodges Gardens State Park
- Immaculate Conception Catholic Church
- Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame and Northwest Louisiana History Museum
- Magnolia Plantation Complex
- Melrose Plantation
- Natchitoches Heritage Art Gallery
- Oakland Plantation
- Toledo Bend Reservoir (Cypress Bend Resort)

For more information on these sites visit; https://www.natchitoches.com/listings/things-to-do/activities?field_location_type_value=All
Map of Natchitoches
Housing

International students can choose to live on or off campus, depending on the length of time they are going to be enrolled in NSU, budget, and preference.

On Campus Housing

  Ranges from $685 – $1,200 per month

  Ranges from $665 – $875 per month

Off Campus Housing

Rental opportunities are varied in price, location, and availability. The following site is a good place to start looking for off-campus rental options:

- [http://www.homes.com/rentals/](http://www.homes.com/rentals/)
- You can also choose to share a house/apartment with other international students.

Health insurance

In order to comply with U.S. immigration regulations, all international students at NSU are required to have health insurance that will provide sufficient medical coverage for hospitalization, surgery or other medical treatments, as well as coverage for medical evacuation and repatriation.

All international students will be automatically added to the NSU Health Insurance plan for international students. At the time of registration, the student will automatically be added to the mandatory NSU contracted plan with Wellfleet and will be charged. The charge will reflect on the student's NSU account.

It is the responsibility of F and J visa international students with an Authorized Medical Withdrawal to carry health insurance that is equivalent to that offered by the NSU Student Health Insurance Plan.
Reporting Your Arrival

U.S. immigration laws require that new international students report to the University after their initial arrival in the country. Failure to do so may result in a termination of program and can lead to serious consequences for your legal status and ability to return to the U.S. in the future.

To report your arrival, pay a visit to the International Student Resource Center on the first week of your arrival, before classes begin. Our office is located in Russell Hall, Room 227. Office hours are 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

When you check in with us, please make sure to bring:

- Passport
- Entry visa
- I-20/DS-2019
- The same types of documents for any dependents arriving with you.
- Initial address where you are staying in Natchitoches.

Identification

Your Passport and Arrival Documents
Use your passport as your main proof of identity until you can get your NSU Student ID Card or your Louisiana Driver’s License or Identification card (if desired).

As soon as you are able to obtain other types of photo identification, put your passport in safe storage and carry a photocopy of it. Having photocopies of arrival documents will also help you considerably when replacing them in the case of loss or theft.

Obtaining your student ID
Students on the Natchitoches campus obtain their student ID cards from the ONE CARD Office, located in the Student Services Building, Suite 359. The ONE Card Office is open Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon.
Orientation Sessions
All newly-admitted international students are offered an orientation session that will prepare you for life at NSU.

Orientation is designed to help you:
- Adjust to academic and social life at NSU.
- Comply with government regulations pertaining to your stay in the U.S.
- Learn about on- and off-campus resources.
- Learn how to navigate the physical environment of the campus.
- Meet new people and make friends from around the world.

Student Health Services
Health Services provides convenient, on campus assessment, treatment and referral for students needing medical attention. A Registered Nurse is available daily and a Doctor comes in once a week (on Thursdays). Students do not need to pay for a checkup from the nurse. For a more thorough check up, students can visit the Doctor on his weekly stops or at his office, however, the student is responsible for a $20.00 co-pay at the time of service. Other services prescribed by the physician are the responsibility of the student. Optional services are available for an additional fee. Students must present a current University ID for treatment. For more information visit healthservices.nsula.edu or call (318)357-5351.

NSU Policies
Alcohol & Drug Policy
- The university prohibits possession or consumption of alcohol on campus and the possession of alcoholic beverage containers except as provided by university policy that complies with all state and federal statutes.
- Northwestern is a member of the Drug-Free schools and campuses and abides by their standards regarding policies, athletic programs, educational programs, enforcement and assessment. Students and employees who fail to abide by university policies regarding alcohol and other drugs will be subject to disciplinary action according to established university policies and procedures that conform to local, state and federal laws.

Tobacco-Free Policy
- “Smoke-Free” means the prohibition of smoking as defined in R.S. 40:1300.253(14). “Tobacco-Free” means the prohibition of the use of tobacco derived or containing products, as defined in R.S. 40:1300.263(B)(2).
– All facilities, property (whether owned or leased), and all vehicles of Northwestern State University regardless of campus or location are tobacco free. The purpose of this policy is to foster a healthier environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors on Northwestern State University’s campuses by minimizing tobacco use. Effective Date: August 1, 2014.
– The use of all tobacco products in any form (smoking or chewing) is prohibited. Tobacco products shall be strictly prohibited anywhere on the campuses of Northwestern State.
– E-cigarettes are also prohibited anywhere on the campuses of Northwestern State.

Students and employees of Northwestern State University are hereby informed that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of controlled substances is prohibited on university property.

Sexual Assault & Sexual Harassment
Northwestern State University has developed internal policies that prohibit discrimination and sexual misconduct on the basis of sex. It is the intention of the University to take whatever action may be needed to prevent, correct, and if necessary, sanction individuals who act in violation of this policy.
It is essential that students who are sexually assaulted receive proper medical treatment, legal advocacy, and counseling support as soon as possible.

Sexual Misconduct Policy
No student, employee, visitors to campus, third parties, or contractors at Northwestern State University shall be subjected to unsolicited and unwelcome sexual conduct, either verbal or physical. Sexual misconduct violates University policy as well as state and federal laws and is specifically prohibited. It is neither permitted nor condoned. Sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual violence including stalking, domestic and dating violence and abuse are forms of sexual discrimination.

Emergency Phone Numbers
911 This is the national emergency number for police, ambulance services, and fire department.
318-357-5431 Campus Police. 24 hours a day.
Registration

International students in F-1 and J-1 Visa status are required to register full-time. A full-time course load for undergraduate students is 12 credit hours (of which 9 (nine) have to be face to face courses and 3 (three) online), and for graduate students 9 credit hours (of which 6 (six) have to be face to face and 3 (three) online). Failure to do so may result in loss of status.

All currently admitted students must access the NSUConnect registration system through myNSU at https://my.nsula.edu. Enter your user name and password to enter myNSU. If you need assistance in registering your classes please come to our office and we will guide you through the process.

PURPLE ALERT: NSU Emergency Notification System

PURPLE ALERT is a rapid emergency notification system. At its core, PURPLE ALERT is a multi-part communications process for disseminating alerts to NSU students, faculty and staff.

You can register for PURPLE ALERTS at the following link: https://member.everbridge.net/index/453003085612883#/login

Instructions for registering:

- Click the GREEN button that says "Use my network Credentials to login".
- It will redirect you to "My Profile" page where you can edit your information.
- On the "My Profile" page, click EDIT, and then add the ways and contact information for notification during an emergency. The information will not save unless 2 methods of contact are entered.
- Use you NSU e-mail address as your registration e-mail.
- Be sure to clickSAVE.

Any questions, please e-mail Purple Alert at purple-alert@nsula.edu
Get involved!!!

Take advantage of these great programs for International students.

**Family Friendship Program**
The International Student Resource Center will pair you up with a local family to learn more about American culture, traditions and way of life. This will give you a unique opportunity to share your culture, and experience more About Natchitoches and Louisiana. Participating families will include you in their activities, invite you for family outings and meals and many other fun activities. This will be an enriching and unforgettable experience.

**Student Friendship Program**
Through this program, the International Student Resource Center will pair an international student with an American student who will help you acclimate to College life at NSU. This is a great way to make new friends and find a helping hand on campus. The ISRC will facilitate the first introduction. After that, the international and the host student will keep in touch throughout the semester or the duration of their stay.

If you are interested in participating in any of these programs, visit our website to find more information or fill out an application online at [www.nsula.edu/international](http://www.nsula.edu/international)

**Cellphone Service**
Some cell phone companies in the U.S. require that you have a Social Security Number (SSN) to purchase a service plan. If you are not be eligible for a SSN immediately, ask the cellphone companies about service plans that do not require it. In most cases, the cellphone companies can offer you a pre-paid plan that requires no credit card or identification numbers.

In Natchitoches, we have three cellphone companies (there are many more online if you decide to purchase it through a cellphone carrier’s website directly).

- ATT Store
  929 Keyser Ave.
  Tel. (318)352-3702

- Cellular One203
  Keyser Ave.
  Tel. (318)357-9596

- Verizon
  707 Keyser Ave.
  Tel. (318)352-9574
Opening a Bank Account

Once you are settled, you might want to open a bank account to keep your money in a secure location. You can open a checking account, savings account or a combination of both. You will be provided with a Debit Card to use it at an ATM. You will need a SSN to open a bank account.

If you are planning to have money transferred or wired from abroad, be aware that there may be a delay of a few days or weeks before you can access your money. Inquire with the bank on wait times depending on the type of deposit you will make.

The following banks are within walking distance from the NSU campus. These banks have ATM machines located throughout the city and state:

Be advised that you may need a SSN to open a bank account in all banks.

- City Bank and TrustCompany
  600 University Parkway
  Tel. (318) 357-3722

- Sabine State Bank and TrustCompany
  780 Front Street #103
  Tel. (318) 352-4401

- Bank of Montgomery
  814 Washington St.
  Tel. (318) 352-3060

- Hancock Whitney Bank
  4115 University Pkwy
  Tel. (800) 448-8812

Social Security Office

950 Keyser Ave.
1(855) 634-4195
Employment Options for International Students

➢ On-Campus Employment

International students with an F-1 and J-1 visa may work on campus as student employees. F-1 students are eligible without special work authorization. J-1 students must have program sponsor authorization (NSU or ISEP). International students are not allowed to work more than 20 hours per week. To be eligible all student employees must be enrolled in at least 6 hours for a fall/spring semester and at least 3 hours for a summer semester or be pre-registered for the following fall semester. Enrollment for all student employees will be verified before the start of each pay period and when making new job assignments. For more information on student employment and how to apply visit: https://www.nsula.edu/financialaid/studentemployment/

Please note that on campus is work for Northwestern State University. Work that takes place at NSU for another employer (a private company housed at NSU, for example) or work that takes place at another school is not "on campus" and would require employment authorization.

➢ Off-Campus Employment

Off-campus employment is an option available only for F-1 students. To be eligible for any type of off-campus work permission, F-1 students must be in status and have completed 2 consecutive academic semesters.

• **Academic Training**: The US Department of State Exchange Visitor Program regulations allow J-1 student visa holders to apply for Academic Training (AT) before and/or after completion of their program of studies. AT is a benefit of J-1 student status that permits off-campus work, training or other experience, either paid or unpaid that is critical or integral to a J-1 student’s academic program. The total training may not exceed the amount of time spend in full course of study. If a third-party program sponsor issued your DS-2019 (i.e. ISEP) for study at NSU, you must contact that sponsor regarding AT authorization.

• **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**: CPT is a type of off-campus employment available to international students with an F-1 visa to participate in employment opportunities that are an integral part of the student’s degree program or established curriculum. CPT includes alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum (full and part-time). Work is authorized by the ISRC, not by USCIS. Work authorization comes as additional information on the student’s I-20.
• **Optional Practical Training (OPT):** OPT is a work authorization for F-1 students allowing them the opportunity to apply knowledge gained in their degree program to off-campus work. The work must be directly related to the student’s level and major field of study. OPT is recommended by the ISRC and authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This authorization can take 2 to 3 months to obtain. Students do not need a job offer to apply for OPT. Students are responsible for paying the $380 filing fee to the USCIS.

• **Employment based on Severe Economic Hardship:** USCIS makes case-by-case decisions for off-campus employment for students who can show that new, unexpected circumstances beyond their control have created severe economic hardship. An F-1 student must have remained enrolled for at least one academic year, in status and in good academic standing before USCIS will authorize off-campus employment. The F-1 student must be unable to get on-campus employment, or the pay from available on-campus employment must be insufficient to meet financial needs. The F-1 student must file a Form I-765, "Application for Employment Authorization," and pay a $380 fee to USCIS. Approval for off-campus employment is good for one year. If the F-1 student needs to continue working off-campus, the student must re-apply. Examples of economic hardship are:
  - Loss of financial aid or on-campus employment (if the student is not at fault).
  - Large increases in tuition or living costs.
  - Substantial decrease in the relative value of currency the student depends upon to pay expenses.
  - Unexpected changes in the financial conditions for a student's sources of financial support.
  - Unexpectedly large medical bills not covered by insurance.
  - Other substantial, unexpected expenses.

**IMPORTANT:** Before you engage in any type of employment, you must have proper authorization. Employment without proper authorization is a serious violation of status and can result in deportation.
Post Office
- US Post Office (On NSU Campus)
  175 Sam Sibley Dr.
  Tel. (318) 357-5696

- US Post Office
  240 St. Denis St.
  Tel. (318) 357-1669

- US Post Office
  727 Keyser Ave.
  Tel. (800) 275-8777

Grocery Stores
- Walmart Supercenter (Subway in it)
  925 Keyser Ave.
  Open 24 hrs.

- Super 1 Foods
  5696 Hwy 1 Bypass
  Open until 12:00 a.m.

- Super 1 Foods
  318 Dixie Plaza
  Open until 10:00 p.m.

- Save-A-Lot
  Broadmore Shopping Center
  Open until 8:00 p.m.

Local Restaurants
- Breakfast Nook
  105 Church Street
  Tel. (318) 352-4491

- Burger King
  915 Keyser Ave.
  Tel. (318) 356-9384

- Cane's Chicken Fingers
  409 Keyser Ave.
  Tel. (318) 356-0023

- Cane River Bar & Grill
  1125 Washington St.
  Tel. (318) 352-2600

- Chili’s Grill & Bar (Lunch Specials)
  932 Keyser Ave.
  Tel. (318) 357-0972

- Domino’s Pizza (Coupons)
  101 South Drive
  Tel. (318) 352-6382

- El Nopal (Lunch Specials)
  117 South Drive
  Tel. (318) 214-0219

- El Patron (Lunch Specials)
  109 South Drive
  Tel. (318) 238-3013

- Hana Sushi Bar & Grill (Lunch Specials)
  750 Front Street
  Tel. (318) 356-0989

- Hana Seafood and Hibachi Grill
  814 Keyser Ave.
  Tel. (318) 352-6658
– IHOP
  5119 University Parkway
  Tel. (318) 228-8860

– Johnny’s Pizza (All you can eat lunch buffet)
  312 Dixie Plaza
  Tel. (318) 228-8842

– Landing Restaurant
  530 Front Street
  Tel. (318) 352-1579

– Lasyone’s Meat Pie Restaurant
  622 2nd Street
  Tel. (318) 352-3353

– McDonald’s (Open 24 hrs.)
  304 Keyser Ave.
  Tel. (318) 352-7474

– Peggy’s Pizza
  4116 University Parkway
  Tel. (318) 356-9200

– Pioneer Pub
  812 Washington St.
  Tel. (318) 352-4884

– Pizza Hut (All you can eat lunch buffet)
  801 Keyser Ave.
  Tel. (318) 357-8559

– Popeye’s Louisiana Kitchen
  218 South Drive
  Tel. (318) 352-9663

– Popeye’s Louisiana Kitchen
  5101 University Parkway
  Tel. (318) 356-9220

– Little Caesar’s Pizza
  244 Keyser Ave.
  Tel. (318) 238-7575

– Lucky Village Chinese Buffet
  929 Keyser Ave.
  Tel. (318) 352-8588

– Mariner’s Restaurant
  5948 Highway 1 Bypass
  Tel. (318) 357-1220

– Maglieaux’s on the Cane
  805 Washington St.
  Tel. (318) 354-7767

– Merci Beaucoup
  127 Church Street
  Tel. (318) 352-6634

– Subway
  122 South Drive
  Tel. (318) 352-2242

– Southern Classic Chicken
  1433 Texas Street
  Tel. (318) 352-7700

– Taco Bell
  127 South Drive
  Tel. (318) 352-1509

– Trail Boss Steakhouse
  301 South Drive
  Tel. (318) 352-2080

– Wendy’s
  5103 University Parkway
  Tel. (318) 352-4224
Religious organizations by denomination

Besides attending school, there are other ways and places to make new friends and to become part of the community. Below is a list of some of the religious organization available in Natchitoches.

BAPTIST
• Baptist Collegiate Ministries. NSU Campus  
• First Baptist Church (North Street). http://firstbaptistnorthstreet.com/
• First Baptist Church (Second Street). http://www.fbcnatchitoches.net/
• Trinity Baptist Church. http://www.tbcnla.net/
• Westside Baptist Church. http://www.westside.life/

CATHOLIC
• Holy Cross Church. http://www.holycross129.org/
• St. Anthony Catholic Church. http://stanthonyofpaduanatchitoches.com/
  Immaculate Conception Church. http://www.minorbasilica.org/#the-minor-basilica

ISLAM
• Islamic Center of Natchitoches. http://www.islamicfinder.org/getitWorld.php?id=27754

METHODIST
• First United Methodist Church. http://www.fumcnla.org/

PRESBYTERIAN
• First Presbyterian Church of Natchitoches. http://www.fpcnatchitoches.org/
• River Community Church
• Friendship Baptist Church

For a complete list of churches and religious organizations in Natchitoches, visit: http://www.churchangel.com/zips/LA-71457/Natchitoches.htm
Other Services for Students

There are three faith based organizations that provide students with 1 free or low-cost meals per week. These are:

**Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM)**

An open faith based ministry founded and supported by Louisiana Baptist that seeks to meet spiritual needs of all students. They provide 1 free lunch meal every Wednesday during the semester. 520 University Pkwy, across Campus.

**Catholic Student Organization (CSO)**

A faith based student organization based around the teachings of the Holy Roman Catholic Church. They are open to all students of all faiths, race, genders, etc. They provide 1 free dinner meal every Wednesday during the semester. 129 Second Street, a few steps across Campus.

**Wesley Campus Ministries (WCM)**

The Wesley Campus Ministry is a Christ-centered, student-led ministry in the Methodist tradition. The programs of this ministry are designed to build holy lives through Worship, Mission, Discipleship, and Fellowship. They provide $1 lunch meals every Tuesday during the semester. The BCM is located at 500 Caspari Street, on Campus.

**NSU FoodPantry**

The Student Food Pantry opens two days per week during the semester. It is located in the Trisler Power Plant building across from CAPA and behind Russell Hall. Nonperishable foods, toiletries and gently-used t-shirts are available to all NSU students with a current NSU ID.