

## VIRGINIA TECH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE INSTITUTE PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION

### **Welcome to the National Capital Region!**

This year you will be among the over 2000 international students and scholars from more than 100 countries who make up Virginia Tech's international community. As you prepare to travel to the United States, you may have questions about arrangements for your trip. This handout gives you important information to help with your planning. Program dates and costs are available on the Virginia Tech Language and Culture Institute (VTLCI) website at <http://www.lci.vt.edu>.

### **LOCATION AND OPERATING HOURS**

Virginia Tech's Northern Virginia Center is located approximately 14 kilometers west of Washington, DC in Falls Church, VA, near Route 7 and I-66, across from the West Falls Church Metro Station on the Orange line.

Hours of operation are 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday, except for the following holidays:

New Year's Day - January 1  
Memorial Day - Last Monday in May  
Independence Day - July 4  
Thanksgiving Day - Fourth Thursday in November  
The day after Thanksgiving  
Christmas Day - December 25

### **YOUR ARRIVAL**

#### **Arrival Date**

Plan to arrive in Northern Virginia before classes begin, but no more than thirty days early. This will give you time to become familiar with the area, open a bank account, and find housing before beginning your academic work.

#### **Airport Arrival**

Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD), located 32 kilometers west of Falls Church, handles most international flights. Ground transportation from Dulles airport to Falls Church can be arranged as follows:

- **By Taxi:** Reserve a taxi with Washington Flyer Taxi, (703) 572-8294, by 7pm the day before arrival. Upon arrival, go to the Dulles Airport Transportation desk to locate your driver. The cost for a taxi from the airport to the West Falls Church Metro station is \$35-40.
- **By Bus:** Dulles Airport is served by Washington Flyer Coach Service (<http://www.washfly.com>), connecting the airport with the West Falls Church Metro station. Buses depart every 30 minutes; tickets are \$10. Tickets may be purchased at arrivals door #4 in the main terminal.
- Shuttle service to and from the airport may be arranged with Super Shuttle. For reservations, visit <http://www.supershuttle.com>.

Please be sure the VTLCI knows your date of arrival and flight number. Inform the office of any changes in your arrival plans. In case of an emergency related to your arrival, call the VTLCI at (703) 538-3751 (from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday) or call the Associate Director after hours at (571) 294-6789.

### **Hotel Options**

If possible, arrive at the airport before 8:00 pm. If you arrive late, plan to spend the night in a Dulles Airport hotel with airport shuttle service. These hotels usually have higher rates during the week and offer cheaper rates on the weekend.

Hotels in the National Capital Region:

Inns of Virginia	\$84-119/night	1-703-533-1100
Quality Inn Governor	\$109-149/night	1-703-532-8900
Westin Tyson's Corner	\$99-219/night	1-703-893-1340

The Westin Tyson's Corner Hotel offers shuttle service from the hotel to the West Falls Church metro station.

### **HOUSING**

There is no on-campus housing for VTLCI students in the National Capital Region. **Students must arrange their own housing.**

### **Homestay**

Accommodation with an American host family should be arranged in advance. Meal options are available.

Homestay placements are private rooms (single occupancy). Sheets, blanket, pillow, and towels are supplied, and you will have access to laundry facilities. Most homes are close to public transportation, within 30-minutes of the Institute.

The homestay application form will ask your preferences about family size, smoking, and pets. For information on homestay accommodation in the area please see:

Just Like Home <http://www.justlikhome.com>  
301-649-2389

### **Apartment Housing**

Apartments with one or more bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, and a bathroom are available in Falls Church or the surrounding area; some students choose to live in Washington, DC. Many apartments are within walking distance of the center or accessible via bus or metro.

Rent in Northern Virginia and Washington, DC will cost a minimum of \$900 - \$1200 a month for a one bedroom apartment. If you wish to rent an apartment, we recommend that you stay at a hotel (see attached list) for several days to visit apartments in person before choosing one.

Invent the Future

Apartments may be furnished or unfurnished and include cooking facilities. Rent may or may not include utilities such as water and sewer or trash collection. Gas and/or electric services and telephone are usually a separate expense; these costs can be significant.

Occupants must sign a lease, or housing contract, usually for 12 months. Shorter leases are more difficult to find; *make sure not to sign a one-year lease if you do not plan to stay one year. Once signed, a lease cannot be broken or changed.*

When a lease is signed and a renter moves into the apartment, a security deposit for potential damages is usually required. This can range from one half to one month's rent. Please plan for this deposit in your budget.

Furnishings for apartments may be acquired from second-hand stores and private "yard sales", from rental companies, or local stores.

Craigslist classifieds for Northern Virginia is a useful website for locating housing and furnishings for apartments. Check to see whether or not the seller offers delivery before making a purchase: <http://washingtondc.craigslist.org/nva/hhh/>

A list of apartments in Falls Church can be found (under Apartments/Housing) on the Falls Church website: <http://www.fallschurchva.gov/>

Short-term apartment rentals are available through Oakwood Worldwide. You may search the web site by city, entering your move-in and move-out dates, and choose whether you would like a furnished or unfurnished apartment. <http://www.oakwood.com/>

International Student House in Washington, DC is a residence for students over 21 years old who are committed to promoting their mission of "tolerance, respect, and friendship among individuals from around the world": <http://www.ishdc.org/>

For additional information on apartment housing in the Northern Virginia area, please see: <http://www.apartmentshowcase.com/> <http://washingtondc.apartments.com/>

## **PLANNING FOR YOUR STAY**

### **Financial Matters**

Arrive in Falls Church with sufficient funds for the first four months. You will pay your tuition and housing separately. Acceptable forms of tuition payment are cash, checks drawn on a U.S. account and credit card (MasterCard, Visa, American Express). Bring a bank cashier's check or travelers' checks issued through a U.S. bank in U.S. dollars and open a local bank account immediately.

Housing payment is generally due immediately upon occupancy and, depending upon housing type, at the beginning of each month or term thereafter.

You are required to pay tuition in full by the beginning of the second week of each term. You may use cash, personal checks (made out to Treasurer, Virginia Tech), money orders, travelers' checks or credit cards to make tuition payments.

No refunds are given for tuition payments. Tuition reductions are not given for late arrivals or early departures.

More details regarding tuition and other fees may be found on our website at: <http://www.lci.vt.edu/elp/apply>.

### **Banking**

The VTLCI recommends that international students open a new bank account at BB&T, Chevy Chase Bank, or Wachovia, which do not require a social security number to open an account. BB&T, Chevy Chase Bank, and Wachovia are all within walking distance of the Northern Virginia Center.

BB&T 703-241-5058  
1224 West Broad Street  
Falls Church, VA 22046

Chevy Chase Bank 703.237.1023  
1100 W. Broad St.

Wachovia 703.442.3610  
1000 W. Broad St.

### **Health and Accident Insurance**

Students at Virginia Tech are required to have a health and accident policy providing protection for themselves and their dependents in the event of major illness or injury. The university's **minimum requirements** for insurance are:

1. Major medical benefits of at least \$50,000 *per accident or illness* (a basic policy of \$50,000 total coverage is not acceptable).
2. Repatriation coverage for each insured in the amount of \$7,500.
3. Medical evacuation of \$10,000.
4. Deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness.
5. Maternity coverage will be covered in the same manner as an illness under the accident or sickness plan.
6. There should be no exclusion of coverage for participation in, travel to, or practice in club sports, intramural or extra mural sports. Only participation in intercollegiate sports may be excluded.
7. The accident and sickness insurance must be effective the date an application and premium is received by the insurer with no qualification requirements.
8. There should be no pre-existing condition that excludes coverage permanently under the policy. After meeting a satisfactory waiting period, all accidents or illnesses must be covered.
9. Benefits paid to a student under any plan prior to the students' initial policy effective date cannot be counted against the maximum benefit payable under the policy.

Virginia Tech's insurance carrier is GM Southwest. You can find information about the university's insurance plan along with registration form on the following website: <https://www.gmsouthwest.com/default.aspx?portalid=44&tabid=412>. A three-month student health insurance policy can be purchased through VTLCI for about \$503.00. Students not selecting to enroll with this carrier must complete the alternative health insurance compliance form.

Students can purchase health insurance on their own, but policies must include the above-listed benefits as a minimum. Note that student insurance does not cover travel to the United States and vacation periods.

### **Medical records for students attending the VTLCI in Blacksburg, VA**

All international students entering Virginia Tech are **required** to submit results of a tuberculin (TB) skin test (PPD, Mantoux) performed in the United States within six months of the start of the program; time tests are not accepted. Exceptions include students with a history of previous positive tuberculin test and students with a history of diagnosed and treated

tuberculosis. *Those students **must** send proof of test and/or any treatment received and current chest x-ray.* Note: Prior BCG vaccination is not a reason to be automatically exempted from the tuberculin-testing requirement. Students unsure of their status should consult with a member of the University Student Health Services staff.

Bring translated medical records for any accompanying family members. **Children cannot enroll in school or childcare programs without the required immunizations.**

## **IMMIGRATION AND TRAVEL**

### **Entering the U.S.**

When you enter the U.S. you will present your passport, containing a valid F-1 visa and Form I-20 to an immigration officer who will stamp the Form I-20, and return it with an I-94 Arrival/Departure Record. Keep the I-20 and I-94 with your passport for identification purposes; these documents are necessary to leave and re-enter the U.S.

You may enter the U.S. up to thirty days before the program start date in section 5 of your I-20. You have sixty days to leave the country or transfer to another school after the program end date. You may request an extension of your program before the program end date.

### **Transfer Students**

F-1 students transferring from other English language programs in the U.S. must bring their old I-20 to the office. A new I-20 will not be issued until you turn in your financial certification form and the transfer form that shows that you maintained status at your original school.

### **Working on Campus**

F-1 students can work up to 20 hours per week during academic sessions and up to 40 hours per week during summer or semester breaks. F-2 visa holders cannot work.

### **Paying Customs Duties**

United States Customs Service regulations restrict certain items from being brought into the U.S. Ask at a U.S. consulate in your home country for a copy of *United States Customs Hints for Visitors*, which explains customs regulations.

### **Weather and Clothing**

The Northern Virginia climate is temperate and permits outdoor activities throughout most of the year. Summers are rather warm with temperatures averaging 86° F (30° C) and sometimes exceeding 95° F (35° C). Winters average 34° F (1.1° C). Rainfall is moderate throughout the year. Snowfall occurs occasionally during the winter months.

A heavy winter coat, an umbrella and/or raincoat, and a pair of comfortable waterproof walking shoes are necessities for the winter months. We also recommend students have a warm scarf, hat, sweater or sweatshirt, and gloves.

## **DRIVING IN THE U.S.**

### **Driver's License**

A valid driver's license is needed to operate a motor vehicle. The state of Virginia does not officially recognize the International Driver's License; it recognizes your home country's driver's license for 30 days. If you are transferring from another school and have a valid driver's license from another state, you do not need a Virginia driver's license. You may apply at any Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) branch or at any DMV driver license station. For requirements, see: <http://www.dmv.virginia.gov/webdoc/citizen/drivers/index.asp>.

The nearest full-service DMV to the Northern Virginia Center is at 1968 Gallows Road in Tyson's Corner: <http://www.dmv.state.va.us/exec/csc/csc.asp?id=7>

### **Car Rental**

You may rent a car if you are over 21, have a valid driver's license, and a major credit card. Rental companies charge more for drivers under 25 and for those without U.S. auto insurance. There are a number of car rental companies in Falls Church including Enterprise Rent-A-Car: [http://www.enterprise.com/car\\_rental/home.do](http://www.enterprise.com/car_rental/home.do)

Cars can also be rented at Dulles Airport:

[http://www.metwashairports.com/dulles/parking\\_transportation\\_3/rental\\_cars](http://www.metwashairports.com/dulles/parking_transportation_3/rental_cars)

## **FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**

### **Registration**

When you come to the Virginia Tech Language and Culture Institute for the first time, bring the following:

- Passport;
- I-94 Card;
- Form I-20;
- Insurance information

We are required to check documents to verify legal status in the U.S. and to make copies for your file in the VTLCI office.

## **CHILD CARE**

If you have small children, there are daycare centers and preschools available for your children in Falls Church:

Kaye Care Child Care Center                      703-237-9454  
<http://www.kayekare.com/>

The Falls Church-McLean Children's Center    703-534-4907  
<http://www.fcmlcc.org/>

Higher Horizons Day Care Center              703-820-2457  
<http://www.higherhorizons.org/>

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

If you require accommodation for a disability to participate in the VTLCI program, contact Barbara Barrell at (703) 538-8316 (8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday) or at [bbarrell@vt.edu](mailto:bbarrell@vt.edu). Some accommodations may take time to arrange. Please give two weeks for resolution of such requests.

## **MORE INFORMATION**

For more information on topics such as immigration, school rules, academics, health and safety, transportation, housing, food, and living in the U.S., see the VTLCI Student Handbook at: [http://www.lci.vt.edu/elp/stu\\_handbook](http://www.lci.vt.edu/elp/stu_handbook).