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WELCOME TO SWARTHMORE!

Dear Students,

I am delighted to share this International Handbook with all of our international students at Swarthmore College. The Student Handbook outlines information important to your success at the college and I encourage you to read through it. Moving to a new place and starting at a new school is never easy, but we hope that we can provide you with enough information to make the transition as smooth as possible. As you adjust to life in the United States, you can use this handbook to get to know Swarthmore better and become familiar with the resources that are available to you as an international student. I hope you can refer back to this helpful resource throughout your time at Swarthmore. The International Student Center (ISC) provides a wide range of services to our entire international student population. We are committed to international education and we provide assistance concerning visas and all related immigration issues. We are here to support academic, and personal success throughout your Swarthmore experience and beyond. Thank you for making Swarthmore College and the ISC your home away from home! You are always welcome to reach out to us at any time!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Marks-Gold
Assistant Dean and Director of International Student Programs

Special thanks to Best Chantanapongvanij, Class of 2023, for making the handbook possible.

LIFE ON A US CAMPUS

"What should I expect in an American classroom?"

TEACHING STYLE DIFFERENCES: In American classrooms, there is less emphasis on rote memorization. You are encouraged to speak up, ask questions, and contribute to the discussions.



PROFESSOR IS AN EXTRA RESOURCE:

You can always reach out to your professors! Make sure you COMMUNICATE with them if you need extensions, elaborations, or help of any kind. Emailing is the most common way to reach out to them!

"Where should I go for academic support?"

WRITING CENTER: You can always sign up for a session with a Writing Associate (WA) at the Writing Center. They can help you with ANY writing assignment. We are also lucky to have a **Multilingual Writing Specialist, Natalie Mera Ford**, who arranges one-on-one meetings, workshops, and gatherings:

<https://www.swarthmore.edu/writing/multilingual-writing-specialist>

OFFICE HOURS: Every professor at Swarthmore hold office hours. During these times, you can visit them in their office and/or classroom to ask questions.

DROP-IN STUDY SESSIONS LED BY

PEER MENTORS: Swarthmore is famous for its super fun and helpful peer mentors:

1. Alchemists for Chemistry
2. Wizards for Economics

3. Ninjas for Computer Science
4. Catalysts for Biology
5. Pirates for Mathematics
6. AND MORE!

They host multiple study sessions throughout the week where you can drop in and get help.



"What is it like living in a dorm?"

HOME AWAY FROM HOME: Your dorm will become your community of friends that you go back to after a day of classes. Before you know it, your dorm will become your go-to place to hang out and meet all sorts of cool people. BE EXCITED!



"I'm worried about living with a roommate... What if we don't get along?"

TRUST THE PROCESS: Swarthmore is very good at matching you with people who complement your routine and personality. Be honest when you take the roommate survey, and everything will be okay.

ESTABLISH BOUNDARIES: Establish expectations and rules from the outset of the semester so you are all on the same page!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE BEST

FRIENDS: At the end of the day, you are

NOT expected to be best friends with your roommates.

"Are there people in the dorm and college community I can turn to if I need help?"

SUPPORT SYSTEMS: There are so many people in the dorm that will be happy to help you if you are homesick, stressed, or feeling down. These people include your:

1. Residential Assistants (RAs)
2. Student Academic Mentors (SAMs)
3. Green Advisors (GAs)
4. Residential Communities Coordinators (RCCs)
5. Orientation Leaders (OLs — These people are still there for you even after orientation!)

DON'T. DON'T. DON'T hesitate to reach out to these people! They are more than happy to help you!



CAPS: CAPS provides the college's counselling and psychological services. They are available 24/7 and the counseling sessions are confidential.



"I am home-sick and want to meet people from my country or other international students, where should I go?"

I-20 CLUB: I-20 does not just organize international student orientation! The club actually runs many events throughout the year, including its **weekly dinners!** You can always stop by to meet other international students who know what you are going through.

CULTURAL GROUPS: These are groups for students who have an interest in or are from specific regions of the world! Each group increases awareness on Swarthmore's campus of their respective cultures and provides a space for students of that heritage. Some of these groups include:

1. *Deshi: Swarthmore's South Asian cultural group*
2. *SEASA: Swarthmore's Southeast Asian Student Association*
3. *HAN: Swarthmore's Korean culture club*
4. *Kizuna: Swarthmore's Japanese culture club*
5. *MSA: Swarthmore's Muslim Student Association*
6. *SCS: Swarthmore Chinese Society*

THE Inter Cultural (IC) CENTER:

Though the Inter Cultural Center is not a club, it is a great space for you to meet other international students and staff members who are more than happy to talk to you!



LANGUAGE TABLES: Every language department hosts weekly or biweekly 'language tables' where you can grab lunch and sit down with people and converse in a specific language. These events are attended by students, native speakers, and professors.

"What's the easiest way to get to Swarthmore from the airport?"

UBER: Most of you will fly into Philadelphia International Airport. From there, you can Uber or Lyft to Swarthmore. It costs approximately \$30.

SEPTA: You can also take the SEPTA Airport Line to University City Station and then take the SEPTA Media/Elwyn Line. This method takes a much longer time and requires a lot of coordination, but it is less expensive.



MORE INFO ON SEPTA ON PAGE 7

"What do I do with my stuff over breaks? Do I have to move out?"

ONLY MOVE OUT DURING SUMMER:

You do not need to move out for shorter breaks. You can just leave your stuff in your room during Thanksgiving, Winter, and Spring Break. You only have to move out of your room over the Summer Break!

ON-CAMPUS STORAGE: Swarthmore has on-campus storage spaces for international students. Please use [secure storage](#).



WHAT TO DO IN THE VILLE



"What is there to eat at the Ville?"

DUNKIN DONUTS AND BASKIN

ROBBINS: As you might have seen already, Dunkin and Baskin are located in the same store opposite the train station.

HOBB'S COFFEE: Hobb's is a favorite study spot for Swarthmore students. It has great coffee and great food too! Their bagels are particularly yummy!

CO-OP: The Swarthmore CO-OP is a little pricey, but it is a good place to get high-quality produce, snacks, and groceries you might need. They have prepared foods like sushi, sandwiches, and other entrees too (though you have to heat it up yourself).

RENATO PIZZA: Renato's is Swarthmore's best (and only...) restaurant open for late-night foods. They sell pizza, calzones, and more!

BAMBOO BISTRO: Bamboo Bistro has Japanese, Thai, AND Chinese food! Although their menu says that the sushi is 50% off, it is *always* 50% off.

VICKY'S: Vicky's is a classic American breakfast place in the Ville. The meals are simple, tasty, and pretty cheap!



OCCASIONALLY YOURS: Occasionally yours is an amazing brunch places — their omelets are particularly good!



ARIA: Aria is the local Mediterranean restaurant. It is also Halal!

"Is there a place I can go to for supplies and groceries?"

BOOKSTORE: The campus bookstore has a subsection that holds self-care and cleaning supplies as well as snacks. You can purchase anything from this section using your points!

TARGET: Though you can buy groceries at the CO-OP, it is definitely cheaper to buy them at Target. It is about a 20-minute walk from Parrish, but it'll feel like second if you go with a couple of friends.

"Are there any fun town events?"

FOOD TRUCK-A-THON: Every fall and spring, there is a food truck-a-thon in the Ville. There are always a variety of trucks and cuisines that you can try. It's incredibly fun and lively!

FARMER'S MARKET: During the fall and spring, there is also a weekly farmer's market on Saturdays in front of the Co-Op. There are plenty of vendors selling fruits and vegetables, soups, pastries, and other foods.

"Is the Ville the entirety of Swarthmore?"

THERE'S MORE: If you walk a bit beyond Mary Lyon Hall, you can actually get to another 'part' of Swarthmore. There is a really good pizza place there called Swarthmore Pizza, a Chinese restaurant, and also a comic bookstore.



LIVING IN PA

"How do I get around in Pennsylvania? How do I get to Philly?"

SEPTA: The easiest and cheapest way to get to Philly and around Pennsylvania is through SEPTA, the trains. Your Swarthmore dash tells you the times trains to Philly will stop by, but we also included a table in the back of this booklet! It costs around \$7 for a ticket to Philly if you buy it on the train. However, if you make a refillable SEPTA KEY card in 30th street or Jefferson Street station (it is free), it'll cost you only \$5 to get into Philly. International students can make this card easily.

UBER: Uber and other shared car services are also an option, but it is very expensive. It costs around \$20 dollar to get to Media and even more to get into Philly.

COLLEGE SHUTTLES: The college also has shared vans that run on Fridays and weekends to Media and sometimes to King of Prussia Mall. If you want to go to the latter, however, you have to reserve a spot in advance. This is a great way to quickly and easily get off campus with friends for a night.



"What cities are nearby that I can visit? What can I do there?"

PHILLY: Philly is the closest major city to Swarthmore. It is only a 30-minute train ride away, and there is A LOT of stuff you can do:

1. Visit museums (especially the Philadelphia Museum of Art)
2. Go to Chinatown
3. Watch a Philadelphia 76ers game
4. Watch a Philadelphia Eagles game

5. Go to the movies
6. Explore Reading Market
7. Walk around South Street
8. EAT and EAT and EAT

You all will probably have had a rough sense of what Philly has to offer from your tours during orientation. The fun now is for you to discover the nuances of the city yourself!



MEDIA: Media is not Philly by any means, but it is quite sizable. The best thing about it is that the entire town is lined with restaurants. There are plenty of Indian, Thai, Chinese, and Italian restaurants, as well as various dessert and coffee spots. Some favorites include:

1. Dim Sum Mania
2. Fellini Café
3. Shere-e-Punjab
4. Ocean City Coffee Company
5. Nooddi Thai Chef
6. Kung Fu Tea

There is also a movie theater in Media!

KING OF PRUSSIA: King of Prussia is the location of King of Prussia Mall, the second largest shopping mall in the country? If you want to shop, this is probably the place to go. The food court also has some great restaurants, including:

1. Shake Shack (really good if you are craving burgers or shakes. There vegetarian options are also really good)
2. Melt Shop
3. Megumi
4. Cheesecake Factory



NEW YORK CITY: Though this is not (often) a weekend destination, it is relatively easy to go to New York City. Right outside 30th street station, there is a Mega Bus stop. Mega Bus is a bus service that has routes to New York (Penn Station). The ride is around 2 hours, and tickets are purchased online and range widely depending on whether or not it is holiday season (\$8 - \$20). What can you do in New York? Well...everything basically!

WASHINGTON DC: Like New York City, DC is about 2 hours away from Philly. You can also take the Mega Bus to the country's capital. There are a whole bunch of museums and monuments in DC, as well as a lot of good food places.

Mega Bus Info: <https://us.megabus.com/>



LIVING IN THE US (GENERAL How-to)

"I don't earn that much money in the States. What are some ways I can save money?"

STUDENT PROMOTIONS: As college students, there are many promotions for you out there for online services. For example, if you use your college email to register for an Amazon account, you get a free six-month trial of Amazon Prime. Additionally, if you use your college email to register for Spotify, you get a free one-month trial of Spotify Premium and Hulu. If you decide to continue, it is only

\$4.99 a month! Newspapers, like the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, can be accessed online for free through the library's website.

TAKE THE SHUTTLE OR TRAIN: Though we mentioned this earlier, it is important to remember that the train is four times cheaper than Uber if you want to go to Philly, and the shuttle is free if you want to go to Media or King of Prussia. Just check the times and wait for the train/shuttle. It is not worth it to splurge on transportation fees. Save it for food.

BOOK BUYBACKS: The Swarthmore bookstore actually buys back textbooks and other books you use for class during the last two weeks of each semester. Books that are bought back to resell in the store are determined by faculty who have informed the bookstore that they will continue to use that book the following semester. The store offers up to 50% of retail price.

BUY USED BOOKS: Buy used books or find an online PDF when you can. It is much cheaper and makes more sense if you will only spend a week or two on a single book. Some professors even offer photocopied PDFs if you end up only reading a chapter or two from a book.

WINTER CLOTHES: Many of you come from countries with a warmer climate and have not needed winter clothing. Once you get to the US, you will need at least a thick coat, as it *will* get cold. However, winter clothing can be very expensive. The school offers two ways to help:

Winter Clothing Drives! Jennifer Marks-Gold and others bring in heavy coats, jackets, raincoats, hats, gloves, and boots and allow students to drop by and take whatever they need for free.

Outlet Trips! I-20 also organizes trips at the start of every winter to outlet stores, so you purchase discounted jackets and other winter clothing.



"Are there other expenses that the college covers or helps out with that I should know about?"

HEALTH INSURANCE: Your health and some dental expenses are actually covered by your insurance plan. For more information, check this link out: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hLvSP0hpJXw7b_91DFh07t6rgb5vedqX/view?usp=drivesdk

LAPTOPS AND TABLETS: You can borrow laptops FOR FREE through the library or ITS.

ROUND-TRIP HOME: The college pays for one round-trip home for international students who are on financial aid. This is normally offered after the completion of three semesters, but you can reach out to the ISC for more info!

"What mobile plan should I get on?"

THERE ARE OPTIONS: There are so many mobile carriers and mobile plans you can get on in the United States, however we'll just give you the information for the pre-paid plans available for T-Mobile and AT&T, as their shops are relatively close to campus. You can also order SIMs with [Campus SIM](#) to be delivered. Popular providers are:

1. T-Mobile
2. AT&T
3. Verizon



"Are there cultural norms that I have to be mindful of?"

TIPPING: In the United States, tips are a major source of compensation for waiting staff in restaurants. Tips are calculated as a percentage of your total bill: 15-20% is considered the standard range. Tipping less than this range implies that you were dissatisfied with the service, while tipping more implies that you were very happy with the service. Some convenience stores, coffee shops, bakeries, and other small businesses have tip jars. In this case, it is not expected that you leave a tip. As for fast food restaurants, you do not have to tip at all, since you are not sitting in the restaurant.

TAXES NOT INCLUDED: In the United States, there is a weird phenomenon of not including taxes in prices. So, keep that in mind when you are buying stuff.

"Can I apply for internships outside the college during the breaks?"

OPT AND CPT: This question is a bit complicated, and it will require you to understand OPT and CPT if you are an F1 student. More information on the process can be found in the [ISC portal](#).

1. *Optional Practical Training (OPT):* this program provides F1 holders with **up to 12 months** of practical (and often paid) work experience in the US. The **jobs have to directly relate to your major**. Check this site out for more info on OPT and its application process: <https://www.swarthmore.edu/international-student-center/optional-practical-training>
2. *Curricular Practical Training (CPT):* This program is kind of like OPT, but it is specifically for sophomores and juniors. CPT requires the job that you do outside of college

during breaks to be directly related to your Swarthmore degree. To apply for CPT, **you must contact the ISC and work with your advisor and department head.**

Check this site out for more info on CPT and its application process: <https://www.swarthmore.edu/international-student-center/curricular-practical-training>

"Am I able to get a state ID or a driver's license?"

STATE IDs: I-20 club may arrange trips for international students to go to the DMV. You just have to sign up for the shuttle ride and fill in the required documents.

DRIVER'S LICENSE: To be eligible for a Pennsylvania (PA) driver's license, you must have at least 11 months (preferably a year or more) left before your I-20 or DS-2019 program end date. You must also fill in and gather specific documents listed in this link:

<https://global.psu.edu/article/how-internationals-can-get-pennsylvania-drivers-license>

However, if you already have a valid driver's license from home, you can drive in PA for up to one year from your date of entry into the United States, or upon expiration of their foreign license, whichever comes first. International driving permits are **strongly** recommended, but not required.

American Linear Units		American to Metric Units		American Capacity				
12 inches (in)	1 foot (ft)	1 inch	2.540 centimeters	8 fluid ounces (fl oz)	1 cup			
3 feet	1 yard (yd)	1 foot	0.305 meters	16 fluid ounces	2 cups			
36 inches	1 yard	1 yard	0.914 meters	2 cups	1 pint (pt)			
63,360 inches	1 mile (mi)	1 mile	1.609 kilometers	16 fluid ounces	1 pint			
5,280 feet	1 mile	1 gallon	3.78 Liters	2 pints	1 quart (qt)			
1,760 yards	1 mile	1 quart	0.95 Liter	4 quarts	1 gallon			
		1 pound	0.45 kilogram	8 pints	1 gallon			
Weight and Mass		1 ounce	28.35 grams	32 fluid ounces	1 quart			
1 Ton (T)	2,000 pounds	1 fluid ounce	29.57 mL	8 fluid dram	1 fluid ounce			
1 pound (lb)	16 ounces (oz)	1 grain	60 milligrams (mg)	3 teaspoon (tsp)	1 tablespoon (tbsp)			
1 Ton	32,000 ounces	1 teaspoon (tsp)	5 mL	6 teaspoon	1 fluid ounce			
1 metric ton (t)	1000 kg	1 fluid dram	4 mL	2 tablespoon	1 fluid ounce			
60 grains	1 dram	1 tablespoon (tbsp)	15 mL	1 drop (gtt)	1 minim			
Converting American Units		1 pint (pt)	500 mL (approx)	60 drop	1 fluid dram			
Larger unit → smaller unit	Multiply	1 quart (qt)	1000 mL (approx)	60 drop	1 teaspoon			
smaller unit → Larger unit	Divide	1 pound (lb)	453.6 g	60 minims	1 fluid dram			
Metric Units								
mega (M)	* * kilo (k)	hecto (h)	deka (da)	unit (m, g, L)	deci (d)	centi (c)	milli (m)	* * micro (mc) (u)
When going from larger unit to smaller unit move decimal to the right								
When going from smaller unit to larger unit move decimal to the left								
Time		Metric to American Units		Temperature Formulas				
1 day	24 hours	1 km	0.621 miles	$C = \frac{(F - 32)}{1.8}$ $F = 1.8 \cdot C + 32$				
1 hour (hr)	60 minutes (min)	1 meter	1.094 yards					
1 minute	60 seconds (sec)	1 meter	3.281 feet					
1 year (yr)	365.25 days	1 meter	39.370 inches					
1 week	7 days	1 cm	0.3937 inch	Medical Application (Micrograms)				
1 year	12 months (mon)	1 Liter	0.26 gallon	1,000,000 micrograms (mcg)	1 gram			
1440 minutes	1 day	1 Liter	1.06 quarts	1,000,000 micrograms	1,000 mg			
3600 seconds	1 hour	1 kg	2.20 lbs	1 mL = 1 cc = 1 cm ³				
		1 gram	0.035 oz	1 gram = 1 cm ³				
Stones		1 gram	15 grains	Nursing students 1fl oz = 30 mL				
1 carat (karat)	200 mg	1 milliliter (mL)	15 minims	Nursing students 1 in. = 2.5 cm				