

## Section 1: Welcome & Overview

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### A Word of Welcome!

Congratulations again on your admission to Luther! We are happy you have made the decision to attend Luther; we look forward to having you join us on campus in the near future.

Once you arrive on campus, you will quickly realize that there are a lot of people who will be involved in helping you be successful at Luther—faculty members, advisors, counselors, administrative and support staff, and other students.


Up to this point, the **International Admissions Office** has been your primary point of contact at Luther. Jon Lund ([lundjon@luther.edu](mailto:lundjon@luther.edu)) and Kathy Ferrie ([worldadmissions@luther.edu](mailto:worldadmissions@luther.edu)) will continue to work with you as you navigate the initial visa process and begin to take steps to arrive on campus.

You will also begin to receive correspondence from a variety of different Luther offices, too. Staff members in the **Center for Intercultural Engagement and Support (CIES)**, in particular, will serve as your primary point of contact for arrival and orientation, and will continue to work with you throughout your Luther career. Alejandra Cruz ([cies@luther.edu](mailto:cies@luther.edu)) is your primary contact. In addition, they will provide ongoing support to help you maintain your student status with respect to SEVIS and your visa.

### About the Luther College *International Student Pre-Arrival Guide*

The *International Student Pre-Arrival Guide* was written to help you navigate the confusing process between college admissions and your arrival on Luther's campus. Please read through the information carefully.

The *Pre-Arrival Guide* is divided into various sections to make it easier for you to find information. In addition, the *Pre-Arrival Guide* contains a variety of symbols to help call your attention to important information. As you read the *Pre-Arrival Guide*, look for the following symbols:

 The “**i**” symbol, short for “information,” alerts you to text that requires special attention.



The “**document**” symbol highlights documents and forms that you will need to complete. We will instruct you to complete and submit several documents prior to your arrival at Luther. For other documents, we will ask you to bring them with you and submit them once you arrive.



The “**computer**” symbol indicates web addresses you should review in order to gain additional information on a given topic.

### Contact Information

We know you will have questions as you prepare for your visa interview, make your travel plans, and travel to the U.S. to begin your studies. Feel free to contact us if you have questions or need help.

#### **Luther College International Admissions Office**

700 College Drive  
Decorah, IA 52101 USA  
[worldadmissions@luther.edu](mailto:worldadmissions@luther.edu)  
+1-563-387-1445 (outside U.S.)  
+1-800-458-8437 (free call within the U.S.)

Jon Lund, Director of International Admissions  
Kathy Ferrie, International Admissions Assistant

#### **Luther College Center for Intercultural Engagement & Support (CIES)**

700 College Drive  
Decorah, IA 52101 USA  
[cies@luther.edu](mailto:cies@luther.edu)  
+1-563-387-1014 (outside U.S.)  
+1-800-458-8437 (free call within the U.S.)

Alejandra Cruz, International Student Coordinator

## Section 2:

### Introducing Luther

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#### About Luther

Founded in 1861, Luther College is a four-year, university-level, residential institution of 1,600 students. One of the outstanding colleges in the Midwest, Luther offers more than 60 majors, minors, and pre-professional programs leading to the bachelor of arts degree.

A Phi Beta Kappa chapter—the most prestigious academic honors society found on only ten percent of American college and university campuses—confirms the academic excellence of the college.

Originally founded by Norwegian immigrants—and named for the sixteenth-century reformer, Martin Luther—the college is affiliated with the Lutheran church and welcomes students of all beliefs and backgrounds to its 1,000-acre (4 square kilometer) campus.

Luther College is located in Decorah, Iowa, a picturesque community of nearly 8,000 people. Decorah has an abundance of clean air, clean water, and is a very welcoming place. The town is frequently recognized as one of the best small towns in the U.S. by publications such as *Niche* and *Architectural Digest*, to name a few.

#### Mission Statement

In the reforming spirit of Martin Luther, Luther College affirms the liberating power of faith and learning. As people of all backgrounds, we embrace diversity and challenge one another to learn in community, to discern our callings, and to serve with distinction for the common good.

As a college of the church, Luther is rooted in an understanding of grace and freedom that emboldens us in worship, study, and service to seek truth, examine our faith, and care for all God's people.

As a liberal arts college, Luther is committed to a way of learning that moves us beyond immediate interests and present knowledge into a larger world—an education that disciplines minds and develops whole persons equipped to understand and confront a changing society.

As a residential college, Luther is a place of intersection. Founded where river, woodland, and

prairie meet, we practice joyful stewardship of the resources that surround us, and we strive to be a community where students, faculty, and staff are enlivened and transformed by encounters with one another, by the exchange of ideas, and by the life of faith and learning.

#### Brief History

After discussions extending over several years, the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America decided on October 10, 1857 to found a college.

In the same year it also decided that, until such time as suitable buildings could be erected, students should be sent to a college in St. Louis, Missouri and that a Norwegian professorship should be established there. The first three students went to St. Louis in 1858 and five more followed the next year.

The Norwegian professorship was filled in 1859, when Reverend Laur. Larsen was appointed, entering officially upon his duties October 14, 1859. Hence October 14 was designated as Founders' Day by the college.

With the outbreak of the Civil War, disorder arose in St. Louis, the college closed in April 1861, and Professor Larsen and students returned home. At its meeting in June 1861, the church decided to proceed at once to establish its own college.

In August, although a building in Decorah, Iowa had been rented and partially renovated, college authorities decided to make use of a newly erected vacant parsonage at Halfway Creek, Wisconsin, about 13 miles north of La Crosse, Wisconsin. There the school opened September 1, 1861, with two teachers, Laur. Larsen and F. A. Schmidt. Larsen and Schmidt also served as pastors for the immigrants living in the area. The enrollment for the year was 16.

In the summer of 1862 the school was transferred to Decorah; its first home was the building, still standing, at the northwest corner of Winnebago and Main streets. The first building on the college campus was "Main," dedicated October 14, 1865.

The present Main building is the third "Main" to stand on the same site, the two preceding having been destroyed by fire in 1889 and 1942. Though college work was begun in 1861, the Civil War, illness, and other causes left none of that year's freshman class to graduate in 1865. The first graduating class, therefore, was that of 1866.

The classical curriculum established by the founders of the college was changed in 1932 when the requirement that all students take both Greek and Latin was dropped.

For 75 years the school admitted men only; then in 1936 Luther College became coeducational. When the institution celebrated its centennial in 1961, it had an enrollment of 1,357 and a staff of 74 full-time and 12 part-time teachers.

Expansion has marked Luther's second century with the student body at approximately 1,600. The number of faculty has increased to nearly 200. The college has expanded physically since 1960 with an extensive building program that included a union, library, science hall and laboratories, business and computer science facility, field house and athletic complex, residence halls, a music building, an art and theatre building, and a center for worship and performing arts. In 2021, Luther celebrated its 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary!

## Academic Calendar

The academic year at Luther is divided into:


- Fall Semester (late August-December).
- January-term (the month of January; students refer to it as J-Term).
- Spring Semester (February-May).
- In addition, students may choose to enroll in summer session classes; summer session classes have additional fees.

New international students need to attend an international student orientation coordinated by the Center for Intercultural Engagement & Support (CIES). For students entering during Fall Semester, international student orientation is a multi-day overview to the academic experience at Luther and introduces students to life in the U.S. For students who begin mid-year (during J-term or Spring Semester), the international student orientation is compressed into a few days.

Detailed information about international student orientation is found in Section 6 of this *Pre-Arrival Guide*.

## Section 3: Obtaining Your Visa

### Applying for Your U.S. Visa

 Your first step as you prepare for your Luther education is to obtain your U.S. visa.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State determine the visa issuance process. Students attending Luther enter the U.S. under an F-1 student visa. The process to obtain an F-1 visa consists of the following steps:

We sent you a PDF copy of the **Form I-20**. The I-20 is required for you to apply for an F-1 student visa for study in the U.S. You will need to bring this form with you to your visa interview at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your country. **Please note: the I-20 we sent to you as a PDF will also be accepted at the embassy/consulate. You no longer need the official document. We will, however, mail you the official document for your records.**

All students applying for a U.S. visa are also required to pay a SEVIS fee. SEVIS is an acronym for Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. This program tracks all student visitors to the U.S. Students are required to pay a \$350, I-901 fee to help offset the cost of the program. At Luther (unlike most colleges in the U.S.), **we pay the \$350 SEVIS fee for you. We included a SEVIS I-901 fee payment confirmation when we sent you the PDF of your I-20.** Bring this SEVIS I-901 fee payment confirmation with you to your interview.

Once you receive your I-20 and the SEVIS I-901 Fee Receipt, **your next step is to complete the DS-160 Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application form.** The information from the online application is used by the Department of State and the U.S. Consular Offices in countries around the world. As part of the DS-160 application process, you will also select a visa interview appointment and pay a fee, which is usually \$160.



<https://ceac.state.gov/geniv/>

On the DS-160 you will be asked to add the name and contact details for an **Official Luther Contact**. Feel free to list Kathy Ferrie or Jon Lund. See page 1 of this *Pre-Arrival Guide* for details.

**Schedule your visa appointment early.** In some countries the wait time for your interview can be

long, so start early. And once you are at the actual interview, it can be as short as 2-3 minutes in length, or as long as 15-20 minutes. The visa process varies from country to country, so you will need to follow the procedures specific to your country. For details, review the procedures for the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your city/country.



[www.usembassy.gov/](http://www.usembassy.gov/)

☐ Once your U.S. visa is issued, you will be ready to make your travel plans to Luther. Once again, it is important you plan ahead, since the process may take time.

### EducationUSA: A Useful Resource

EducationUSA advising offices are available in almost all countries around the world. EducationUSA is the educational advising branch of the Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs. Students are strongly encouraged to use the resources available through these centers as a way of preparing for the visa interview.

These centers, which typically charge very little or nothing for their services, are great resources for international students. The centers will provide advice on the visa process and offer pre-departure orientations for international students studying in the U.S. We encourage you to locate an EducationUSA advising center near you.



<http://educationusa.state.gov/find-advising-center/>

In addition, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has their own site highlighting information for international students studying in the U.S.



<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/>

### Helpful Tips as You Prepare for Your Visa Interview

While consular officers never give specific reasons for a student being denied a visa, the three reasons most commonly cited are:

- The student's academic record appeared weak for the program of study he/she intended to pursue.
- The student's financial records did not appear to confirm his or her ability to pay for study in the U.S.
- The student did not appear to have ties to the country of citizenship; the consular official

questioned whether or not the student's true motive for study was to immigrate to the U.S.

Prior to your interview, we strongly encourage you to visit EducationUSA's website on steps to U.S. study.



<http://educationusa.state.gov/your-5-steps-us-study/>

### Eleven Points to Remember at Your Visa Interview

NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, has prepared details for students to remember when applying for a visa. Gerald A. Wunsch and Martha Wailes developed these points, with input from the U.S. Department of State. We have adapted them for use below.

**Ties to Home Country.** Under U.S. law, applicants for student visas are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not. You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the U.S. "Ties" to your home country are things that bind you to your hometown, homeland, or current place of residence—job, family, financial prospects that you own, or will inherit, investments, etc. The interviewing officer may ask about your specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other relationships, educational objectives, grades, long-range plans, and career prospects in your home country. Each person's situation is different, of course, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter that can guarantee visa issuance.

**English.** Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language.

**Speak for Yourself.** Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.

**Know the Program and How it Fits Your Career Plans.** If you are not able to articulate the reasons you will study in a particular program at Luther, you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to immigrate. You should also be able to explain how studying at Luther and in the U.S. relates to your future professional career **when you return home.**

**Be Concise.** Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision on the impressions 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 to the officer's questions short and to the point.

**Supplemental Documentation.** It should be clear at a glance to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Remember that you will have 2-3 minutes of interview time, if you're lucky.

**Not All Countries are Equal.** Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the U.S. 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 at home after their study in the U.S.

**Employment.** Your main purpose for coming to the U.S. should be to study, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. While a few students do work off-campus during their studies, most students do not and such employment is incidental to their main purpose of completing their U.S. education. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program. If you are married and your spouse is also applying for an accompanying F-2 visa, beware that F-2 visa holders cannot, under any circumstances, be employed in the U.S.

**Dependents Remaining at Home.** If your spouse and children are remaining behind in your 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.

**Maintain a Positive Attitude.** Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied a student visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and try to get the reason you were denied in writing.

**Know About Luther.** We have provided a brief history of Luther College (see Section 2) and a brief summary of the academic requirements (see Section

5). You should familiarize yourself about Luther prior to your visa interview.

### Important Reminder



Remember to bring these forms with you to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate for your visa interview:

- I-20 form, either official or PDF (3 pages).
- SEVIS I-901 fee payment confirmation.
- A valid passport. Please note: to enter the U.S. your passport must be valid for at least 6 months beyond the date of your arrival.
- Completed visa application form.
- Official Luther College acceptance letter.
- Official Luther College financial aid documents (and your financial support documents).
- Any forms specific to procedures at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your country.

### Let Luther Know About Your Visa Status


As soon as you are granted a U.S. visa, please send an e-mail message to the International Admissions Office, [worldadmissions@luther.edu](mailto:worldadmissions@luther.edu) to let the staff know. If you are denied a visa, don't panic. Send an e-mail message to Jon Lund, [lundjon@luther.edu](mailto:lundjon@luther.edu), and he will help you prepare for a second visa interview.



If you live in a country with a high visa denial rate, send an e-mail message to Jon in advance of your interview indicating the date of your visa interview. Jon will send an additional letter to you that you may present at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate during your interview, urging the U.S. government to grant you a visa.

## Section 4: Things to Do Prior to Your Arrival at Luther

### Getting Ready to Come to Luther

 There are a number of other tasks you need to complete—in addition to obtaining your U.S. visa—prior to coming to Luther. We've listed the tasks below:

Complete the **Student Health Evaluation Form**. This form will be sent to you electronically with instructions on how to complete and return it. Watch for more details. The form has a section for you to provide us with your medical history, a “confidential sharing agreement and consent for treatment” section, and a section on immunizations.

Luther College requires that you complete the **Student Health Evaluation Form** and **update your immunizations** prior to arrival on campus. If you arrive on campus without the proper immunizations, you will be required to receive the inoculations through the Luther Clinic.



**Important Note: any health-related documents MUST be translated into English in order to be valid.**

All **international students** will automatically be enrolled in the college's **student health insurance** plan. The plan will be activated once you arrive in the U.S. There is nothing you need to do in advance. During orientation, you will receive additional information and instructions about the health insurance plan.

All **U.S. students living abroad** are expected to have health insurance coverage. Unlike international students, you are not eligible for coverage under the Luther health insurance plan. If you do not have a health insurance policy that provides coverage in the U.S., contact Jon Lund so that he can connect you with an insurance provider.

You will need to have your school send your **final original or certified copy of your secondary school transcripts** to us (if we have not received them already). You may have the school send the documents directly to Luther, or you may bring the documents along with you.

If you have completed A-Levels, IB (International Baccalaureate), or AP (Advanced Placement) curricula and sat for the related exams, you may be eligible for **transfer credit**. Obtaining A-Level exam scores (scores D or higher), IB Higher Level exam scores (scores of 4 or higher), or AP exam scores (scores of 4 or higher) will generally result in you being eligible for transfer credit to Luther College based on the standards established by the Registrar and/or the academic department. Please be aware that you may have to supply Luther with catalogs, syllabi, or other written documentation of prior coursework. You will be responsible for providing certified English translations, if necessary. You will not receive credit for prior coursework until the Registrar's Office verifies, to its satisfaction, your documentation for all prior coursework.

All international students are matched with a family through the **Friendship Family Program**. You will meet your family shortly upon arrival. You do not live with the family; instead, your Friendship Family will occasionally invite you to family activities, prepare some meals, and celebrate special holidays or events with you. The Friendship Family Program is an excellent way for you to get to know an American family and learn more about life in America. Your family will, in turn, get to know more about you and your culture. You are not required to have a family. If you **DO NOT** want a family, please contact the Center for Intercultural Engagement and Support (CIES) to let the staff know. You will receive more information about the Friendship Family Program in the summer before your arrival.



[www2.luther.edu/diversity/international-info/new-students/](http://www2.luther.edu/diversity/international-info/new-students/)

## Planning Your Travel to Luther

**i** Planning your travel to Luther is an important task you should accomplish as soon as possible. The Center for Intercultural Engagement and Support (CIES) is your primary Luther contact if you have questions or need additional information about travel. The process is not complicated, but you need to pay attention to the following:

☐ **New International Student Orientation** is an important component of your transition to college life at Luther. See Section 6 of this *Pre-Arrival Guide* for the schedule and details.

☐ The scheduled arrival date for most international students and U.S. students living abroad is **Saturday, August 19. Important Note for Athletes:** IF you are a varsity athlete on one of the fall sports teams (American football, soccer, volleyball, golf, cross country, tennis) OR you are a member of the Luther Cheer Team you may be instructed to arrive on a different date by the coach; please verify the arrival date with your coach.

☐ **Please contact Alejandra Cruz in the CIES Office ([cies@luther.edu](mailto:cies@luther.edu)) BEFORE purchasing a plane ticket**, just to be certain that your planned arrival date and time will work well for ground transportation pick up on this end.

☐ We encourage you to plan your travel so that you **fly into the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport (MSP is the airport code) on Saturday, August 19.** Luther College will provide large group or small group transportation from the airport to campus. The drive from the airport to campus takes about 2 hours and 30 minutes. Transportation costs will be paid by Luther College. **Specific details about transportation from the airport will be provided to you closer to the date of travel.**

☐ **Please note:** the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport has two terminals—Terminal 1 (the main terminal served by all international flights and most domestic flights) and the much smaller Terminal 2. A free tram connects both terminals.

☐ If you need assistance, the **Terminal 1 Information Desk on Level T** is staffed seven days per week, from 6 AM to midnight. Airport staff members will be able to assist you with ground transportation directions.

☐ If family members travel with you, they are welcome to ride the Luther bus to campus. They will need to cover the return costs to the airport, and the Luther Center for Intercultural Engagement and Support will do their best to help with the arrangements, including reservations at local hotels. Please contact CIES in advance of your travel if family members will be accompanying you to campus.

☐ Please do not plan to arrive before August 19. If you have arranged with CIES that you will arrive on a date **other than Saturday, August 19, we recommend that you fly into the regional airport located in Rochester, Minnesota (the airport code is RST).** It is very important that you fly into the ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA airport and NOT the Rochester, New York airport. The U.S. is a huge country and Rochester, New York is a long way from Decorah, Iowa. Luther College will provide transportation from the Rochester airport. **Specific details about transportation from the airport will be provided to you closer to the date of travel.**

☐ **It is very important that you send CIES, via e-mail, a PDF copy of your travel itinerary/plane ticket.** It's also important that you work with Alejandra Cruz in the CIES Office as you make your arrangements since she will be able to help you better coordinate your arrival with bus/shuttle transportation.

☐ As a reminder, U.S. regulations allow you to enter the U.S. **no sooner than 30 days before the start date on your I-20 form.**

☐ If your travel plans change prior to departure (or if you have a flight problem, a delayed flight, miss a connection, or anything else while on your way to Luther) make sure you contact CIES. **See page 13 for Emergency Contact Information.**

## Section 5: Academics at Luther

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### What You Need to Know

Since you are joining an academic community, you should know a bit about Luther College's approach to learning. The following section provides an overview.

### Introducing the Curriculum

Students who enter Luther during Fall Semester 2023 and later will experience a new curriculum, which was designed by the faculty to better prepare students for the futures they will encounter. The curriculum is built around both what we do so very well at Luther and what the world and the workforce need more of in the future. Ultimately, the curriculum helps students explore and prepare for fulfilling lives and careers. It is designed to be flexible, experiential in nature, grounded in place, global in engagement, and tailored to individual student needs and interests.

### The Structure

#### Learning at Luther begins with a Common First-Year Experience

- The Luther experience begins with a unique, yearlong, shared first-year experience called Paideia (Paideia 111 & 112). Luther is among a small handful of colleges in having a yearlong, shared first-year experience for all students, irrespective of major.
- Paideia is designed to provide the necessary foundation for a liberal arts education, particularly with respect to critical thinking, reading, and writing skills.
- Paideia is also designed to help “ground” students to this place—an intentional community of learning with a unique history, mission, and location.

#### Learning at Luther continues across Three Broad Areas of Study

All students will work with their advisors to design a Luther experience that incorporates study in three broad areas: *Literacies*, *Experiential Learning*, and *Global Engagement*.

- **Literacies** (at least 6 courses covering each of the 6 types of literacies necessary for the future). Literacies are incorporated in courses across the

curriculum and are really less about the content being taught than the skills students acquire. The following literacies and skills are foundational to global citizenship: *Creative*, *Data*, *Religious*, *Scientific*, *Social Systems*, and *Textual*.

- **Experiential Learning** (at least 1 of the following). Experiential learning involves learning by doing and by applying what you know to what you do. Every Luther student is guaranteed an experiential learning experience, which includes doing, reflecting, and presenting on the experience. These include: *Research*, *Service Learning*, *Internship/Practicum*, and *Other Experiential Learning*.
- **Global Engagement** (at least 3 experiences). Global engagement has long been a hallmark of the Luther experience. Students will shape their education, in conversation with their advisors, to select experiences through which they can grow in awareness and understanding of other cultures. Global engagement is designed to help students come to understand culture and cultural positionality. Student will take: *two courses in language or culture* (one course must be taught in a language other than English) and *one additional experience* (additional language study, additional culture course, study away experience, or other global engagement experience).

#### Learning at Luther is connected by two Integrated Components

Students will connect their learning by exploring two related and important themes: *Social and Environmental Justice* and *Wellness*.

- **Social and Environmental Justice (SEJ)** (fulfilled by taking at least one course “tagged” as meeting the SEJ perspective while also meeting other requirements). The SEJ requirement will consider social inequalities (such as racism, sexism, classism, etc.) and/or environmental inequalities (such as climate change, environmental sustainability, etc.).
- **Wellness Experience** (at least one course). Students will focus on developing the habits and lifestyles necessary to ensure good mental, emotional, and physical health.



## Learning at Luther culminates with a Capstone Experience

All students culminate their Luther education with a capstone experience, Paideia 450, that focuses on ethical deliberation and incorporates an intentionally designed community-based learning component.

## Majors

Luther College's liberal arts education balances the breadth symbolized in the general requirements with the depth possible in an individual major. Each major incorporates a body of knowledge, a methodology, applications, and ethical concerns.

In addition, students may combine study in a given major (or majors) with pre-professional preparation in areas that lead to careers in medicine, dentistry, law, journalism, church vocations, engineering, physical therapy, and museum studies, to name a few.

Finally, working with a faculty advisor, students may also propose and design an individualized interdisciplinary major.

## Registration, Orientation, & ADvising (ROAD)

Your academic career at Luther begins with our summer Registration, Orientation, and ADvising (ROAD) Program. **For student beginning Fall Semester 2023, ROAD will be held virtually on the following dates: Tuesday, June 6; Tuesday, June 13; and Wednesday, June 21.** During the virtual ROAD event, you will meet with your faculty advisor and register for Fall Semester classes.

The International Admissions Office (Jon and Kathy) will send you all of the details to prepare for ROAD. So, keep watching your email inbox for additional details.

## For More Information

A full description of all Luther courses is available in the *Luther College Catalog*, found online.



[www2.luther.edu/catalog/](http://www2.luther.edu/catalog/)

## Section 6: Orientation, Housing & Meals

### Orientation: An Overview

Sponsored by the Center for Intercultural Engagement and Support (CIES), international student orientation will provide you with a solid start to your Luther career. You will learn the important stuff—including various Luther College policies, the requirements of maintaining your F-1 visa, how to set up a U.S. bank account, and how to apply for a social security number. It's also a great opportunity to get to know the other new students and form connections.

### Fall Semester 2023 Arrival & Orientation Schedule

**[Important Note:** If you have been in communication with an athletic coach and will be participating as a fall sport varsity athlete or on the Luther Cheer Team, your arrival details may be different and will be sent to you by your coach.

**Sunday, August 20:** Arrive on campus (see Section 4 of this *Pre-Arrival Guide*).

**Sunday, August 20 – Tuesday, August 22:** Settling in, making connections, and getting to know campus and community (for international students and U.S. students living abroad).

**Wednesday, August 23 – Friday, August 25:** New International students and U.S. students living abroad orientation. **Note:** Fall sport varsity athletes will be instructed as to which orientation activities they are required to participate in while also engaged in practices and requirements for their sport.

**Saturday, August 26 – Tuesday, August 29:** Orientation continues for all new students (international, U.S. students living abroad, and domestic students).

**Wednesday, August 30:** Fall semester classes begin.

**Please Note:** The Registrar's Office posts the general academic schedule for the year online (see link below). The general academic schedule is accurate, but may not reflect any changes made to the **arrival and orientation** schedule for new international students (as listed above). So, follow the arrival/orientation schedule as listed above and according to the details you receive from the International Admissions Office and CIES.



<https://www.luther.edu/offices/registrar/calendar/2023-24>

## Housing

Please be aware that all students are required to live on campus, unless you are 25 years or older. You will, most likely, live in a room with one or two other students. Typically, your roommate(s) during your first year at Luther will be an American student(s) who can help you adjust more quickly to life in the U.S. After your first year, you will select your own room and roommate(s). A few notes about your accommodation:

**Rooms.** Each room contains mattresses, dressers, desks, blinds, chairs, and closet space.

**Linen.** The college will provide basic linen packets (a blanket, pillow, sheets, and a towel) for new international students. These items will be returned to the college upon graduation.

**TVs.** Televisions are located in one public lounge in every residence hall. TVs are allowed in student rooms.

**Data Network.** Each residence hall room is connected to the Luther College network, which includes Internet and e-mail services. During orientation, you will receive instructions on how to use the technology on Luther's campus. If you don't have a computer, hundreds of computer stations are available across campus for your use.

**Laundry.** Each residence hall has laundry facilities available for student use. As part of your housing fees, you have already paid for using the washers and dryers on campus. So, they are "free" for your use. Students provide their own laundry detergent.

**Microwaves.** Microwaves are located in the kitchens of each residence hall for student use. Note: microwaves are not allowed in student rooms.

**Housing During Breaks.** Almost all colleges in the U.S. "close" for various college holidays and vacations. At Luther, the college is officially closed for Winter Break (typically the last two weeks of December) and Spring Break (typically one week in March or April). In addition, the college has a number of short breaks of two to four days. Although the college is closed during the break periods, international students may continue to stay in certain designated college housing areas (free of charge). Students are, however, responsible for paying their

own meal costs when the cafeteria is closed during breaks. Finally, if you choose to live on campus during the summer, there is an additional charge.

## Meals

The general student meal plan included in your costs provides for 19-meals per week (and \$200 in Dining Dollars) each semester while classes are in session. Once you arrive on campus, you will be provided with information on how to modify your meal plan options to best meet your needs.

Dining Dollars may be used anywhere you can buy food on campus: Marty's, Oneota Market, Nordic Mart, Nordic Brew, Grab-N-Go, Sugar Bowl, Peace Brunch and the cafeteria.

Students may eat in a variety of different dining locations across campus. Consult the Dining Services homepage for details.



<https://www.luther.edu/dining/>

## Section 7: Odds & Ends

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### Just So You Know

This section contains important information that doesn't fit easily into the other sections of the *Pre-Arrival Guide*.

**Climate.** Iowa is located in the American Midwest, a region of the country that features four seasonal changes. Climatic conditions vary widely from season to season. Clothing needs will vary from lightweight in the summer when it is typically hot and humid to heavyweight in the winter. We encourage you to explore the average high and low temperatures by month on the Luther website.



<https://www.luther.edu/admission-aid/how-to-apply/international/discover/iowa>

**Shipping Items.** If you want to ship any winter clothing or other items to Luther, the Center for Intercultural Engagement and Support will store the packages for you until you arrive. Send your packages to:

Luther College Center for Intercultural  
Engagement and Support  
700 College Drive  
Decorah, Iowa 52101 U.S.A.

(Please place your name on the outside of the package so we know it belongs to you.)

**Things to Bring.** Because of luggage weight restrictions, we suggest you bring the essential items you need to campus with you (clothing, personal items, special medications, important documents, etc.) and either ship other items to campus or purchase them once you arrive. We recommend you come with a modest amount of money that you can use to purchase items (such as paper, pens, other school supplies, alarm clock, clothes hangers, etc.) once you arrive. The international student orientation schedule provides time and transportation for shopping.

**Towels and Washcloths.** As mentioned earlier, blankets, pillow, sheets, and a towel are provided for you. Most students choose to obtain their own towels and washcloths, though. Bring these items with you, ship them, or plan on purchasing them when you arrive.

**Ethnic Arts Festival.** Each year, the Center for Intercultural Engagement and Support sponsors an Ethnic Arts Festival featuring exhibits and

performances from around the world. We encourage you to bring native clothing, flags, recipes, and other items that represent your country so that they may be represented at the Ethnic Arts Festival.

**Book Shop.** Luther owns and operates its own on-campus store. The Book Shop stocks textbooks, Luther College clothing (purchased from certified, “sweatshop-free” manufacturers), greeting cards, gifts, and personal items.

**WMC Luther Clinic.** Winneshiak Medical Center (WMC), part of the Mayo Clinic Health System, provides student health services and athletic training services on the Luther campus. At the WMC Luther Clinic, Luther students can receive routine, preventative, acute, and ongoing care.



<https://www.winmedical.org/location/luther-clinic>

**Area Health Care.** Decorah has a wonderful hospital and two private clinics. In general, all of your health needs can be met in Decorah. If you require more specialized care, the world-famous Mayo Clinic and Hospitals (widely regarded as the best health care facility in the world) is only a 75-minute drive away.

**Counseling Service.** The Counseling Service assists students in resolving personal concerns. Short-term individual/group counseling is offered on a confidential basis. A licensed psychologist and several certified mental health counselors provide onsite services. Students are also referred to other services or to off-campus mental health professionals as appropriate.

In addition, Luther College has contracted with a program called **My SSP** as an extended service of Luther Counseling Service. This service provides Luther students increased access, availability, and individualized choice in receiving mental health supports at no additional cost. My SSP is available to support students when they need it, from wherever they are. Call. Chat. Anytime. Anywhere. My SSP connects students with free, confidential mental health and wellbeing support conveniently available 24/7 via the My SSP app, telephone and web.

**Career Center.** The Luther Career Center offers a full complement of programs and services addressing the career needs of students. The Career Center works with students in identifying majors, obtaining internships, and preparing for graduate

school and/or employment. A director, an internship coordinator, a career counselor, an employment coordinator, and career resource specialists staff the center.

**Center for Academic Enrichment.** The Center for Academic Enrichment provides academic support, free tutors, writing support, disability services, and professional assistance with time management, learning assistance, test-taking strategies, and note-taking.

**The Luther Shuttle.** Section 4 of this *Pre-Arrival Guide* covers details related to your initial travel to Luther. We want you to know that after your initial travel to Luther, you may want to coordinate your flights to/from the United States with Luther’s regularly scheduled shuttle service. The Luther bus will bring students to the nearest public transportation locations in LaCrosse, WI and Rochester, MN. From those locations, you can connect with shuttle, air, bus, and train services to get anywhere you need to go. The Luther bus will stop in La Crosse, Wisconsin, at the bus station and the Amtrak train station. From there, the Luther bus will go to the Rochester International Airport in Rochester, Minnesota, where you can either catch a flight or hop on a shuttle to Minneapolis. You will be responsible for arranging your own onward connections.



<https://tickets.luther.edu/online/>

**Computers, Cell Phones, and Technology.** Luther’s Technology Help Desk has produced a very helpful resource on technology related questions and answers for new students. Visit the Technology Help Desk online.



<https://www.luther.edu/offices/its/help-desk/guides/newstudent>

**Adapter Plugs.** Please be aware that the electrical outlet plug type in the U.S. (type A and type B) may be different than what you are used to at home. If so, you may need to obtain an adapter plug. Visit the following site for pictures and details. (Please note: You may also check out an adapter plug through the CIES Office.)



<https://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets/>

## Important Reminder



Remember to bring these documents with you when you travel to Luther:

- A valid passport with your visa. Please note: to enter the U.S. your passport must be valid for at least 6 months beyond the date of your arrival.
- I-20 form (3 pages).
- SEVIS I-901 fee payment confirmation.
- Official Luther College acceptance letter.
- Official Luther College financial aid documents.
- Airline tickets and flight itinerary.
- This *Pre-Arrival Guide*
- Original or certified copies of transcripts for coursework you would like to be considered for transfer credit. You may have to supply syllabi, catalogs, or other documents (with certified English translations, if necessary) to verify the completion of prior college-level coursework.

## Emergency Contact Information



A few important ways to contact us:

- If you would like to leave an emergency contact number with your parents, guardians, or friends prior to your departure to the U.S., we recommend giving them the following numbers:
  - Center for Intercultural Engagement & Support (CIES) phone number: **+1-563-387-1014**.
  - CIES email address: ***cies@luther.edu***
- Luther has a 24/7 Campus Safety & Security phone number that is also an important contact in the event of an emergency.
  - Luther Campus Safety & Security 24/7 phone number: **+1-563-387-2111**
- Prior to your travel to the U.S., you will receive an email message from the Center for Intercultural Engagement & Support with various telephone numbers you may access in case you experience travel issues.

## Section 8: Arriving at a U.S. Port of Entry

### What Can You Expect

So, you've read your *Luther College International Student Pre-Arrival Guide* thoroughly, completed your preparations, and are now ready to enter the U.S. What can you expect?

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is committed to facilitating your stay in the United States while you take advantage of the nation's academic, educational, and cultural offerings. To enhance security without slowing legitimate travel, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has instituted entry and exit procedures. Careful planning and preparation by international students can ensure that any delay based on these procedures is minimal.

### A Word of Warning

You may be refused entry into the United States if you attempt to arrive more than 30 days before the program start date listed on your I-20 form.

### Plan Your Arrival

A few helpful tips as you plan your arrival:

- **Always hand-carry your documents.** Do not place the **Luther College International Student Travel Documents** envelope (enclosed with this *Pre-Arrival Guide*) in your checked luggage.
- Instead, place all of your important documents into the envelope and carry it with you on your flight. Use the checklist on the outside of the envelope to ensure that you have the appropriate documents.

For additional information on procedures for traveling to and arriving in the U.S., visit:



[www.cbp.gov/travel/international-visitors/](http://www.cbp.gov/travel/international-visitors/)

### Complete Your Entry Paperwork

Flight attendants on your airplane may (or may not) distribute one form for you to complete while you are in flight—a **Customs Declaration Form**. Bring a pen along with you on your flight so you can complete this form prior to landing.

- Enter your Last/Family Name and First/Given Name **exactly** as it appears in your passport.
- The document will ask you for your street address where you are staying. You should enter the following:  
Luther College  
700 College Drive  
Decorah, Iowa 52101
- Please note: most airlines will provide detailed instructions on how to complete this form.

### Arriving at the Port of Entry

Once your flight has landed, proceed to the terminal area for arriving passengers. Have the following documents available for presentation:

- Passport and visa.
- I-20 form (3 pages).
- Customs Declaration Form.

All visitors entering the United States must state their reason for wishing to enter the country. You will also be asked to provide information about your final destination. **It is important that you tell the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer that you will be a student.** Be prepared to state that you will be a student at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. You may also be asked to present some of the other documents contained in your Travel Documents envelope at this time.

Once your inspection is successfully completed, the inspecting officer will:

- Stamp your documents for duration of status ("D/S") for F-1 visa holders.

Once you have cleared immigration and had your documents verified, you proceed to baggage claim, pick up your luggage, and then clear customs (where you will submit your customs declaration form). After you've cleared customs, you continue on your journey to Luther. Congratulations!

## Once You Have Been Granted Entry into the United States

You are required to report to Luther College within 30 days of the date that appears on the I-20 form. Failure to do so may result in serious consequences by the U.S. government.

### Additional Information

Every so often, your entry into the U.S. may be delayed for a variety of reasons. This does not happen frequently, but you should be prepared in case it does.

**Secondary Inspection Requirements.** If the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer at the port of entry cannot initially verify your information or you do not have all of the required documentation, you may be directed to an interview area known as “secondary inspection.” Secondary inspection allows inspectors to conduct additional research in order to verify information without causing delays for other arriving passengers. In addition, you may have to go to secondary inspection if you are entering the United States from certain countries.

The inspector will first attempt to verify your status by using the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). In the event that the CBP officer needs to verify information with Luther, have the CBP officer contact **Luther’s Principal Designated School Official (PDSO) by contacting the CIES Office.**

Just so you know, failure to comply with U.S. government entry-exit procedures may result in you being denied entry to the United States. Under certain circumstances, the CBP officer may issue a “Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor” Form (I-515A), which authorizes temporary admission into the United States. The CIES staff will then work with you to submit the proper documentation without delay.

## Section 9: Money Matters

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### Notes About Finances

Once you arrive at Luther, students frequently have questions about costs, scholarships and financial aid, work-study, and taxes. All of these issues will be covered in depth during new international student orientation. A few common topics of interest are listed below.

### Wiring Money to Luther

If you or your parents, guardians, or sponsors need to wire funds to the college, there are two primary methods: (1) through a company Luther has partnered with called, *Flywire* OR (2) through a bank wire transfer. Detailed instruction for both wire transfer methods are found online.



<https://www.luther.edu/offices/financial-services/students/payment-options>

### Currency Exchange

If you plan on exchanging money from your home currency to U.S. dollars, you should make the exchange at the airport upon entry to the U.S. Once you arrive in Decorah, the ability to exchange money at the bank is a much more time-consuming and expensive process.

### U.S. Bank Account and Social Security Number

As part of International Student Orientation, the CIES office will help you obtain a Social Security Number (a really important number in the U.S. that is required if you work and is used to obtain government benefits) and will help you open a U.S. bank account. Students open an account with Decorah Bank & Trust (DB&T), a locally-owned bank; your work earnings are deposited into this account. A nice benefit is that we have an ATM on campus tied to DB&T, meaning there are no fees for you to withdraw money and deposit money into your personal account.

### Work-Study Assignments

For most Luther students, having a job on campus is part of the Luther experience. Whether planting flowers with our groundskeepers or working in the cafeteria, we hope students find their position to be a valuable way to serve the Luther community, gain important work experience, and earn money toward tuition and other expenses.

Once you arrive on campus, you will be assigned a work-study position. So, no need to think about it now; we'll help you obtain your work during new international student orientation.

## Taxes

International students attending any college or university in the U.S. need to be aware of three different types of taxes that government agencies may impose: **federal taxes, state taxes, and employment taxes.** Let's start with the federal and state taxes.

**Federal Taxes.** The U.S. tax code currently requires both U.S. students and international students to pay federal taxes for any **scholarships received that exceed the cost of tuition, books, and fees.** Luther and all other colleges and universities must report the income international students receive in the form of scholarships to the U.S. government. The college is also required to report any taxes withheld. At Luther, the withheld scholarship taxes (14 percent) are charged against the student's statement of account twice each year (on the Fall Semester and Spring Semester statements). **For most students, the actual tax rate is a bit lower at 10 percent,** meaning most students eventually receive a refund of the difference.

**State Taxes.** The State of Iowa also currently requires both U.S. students and international students to pay state taxes for any **scholarships received that exceed the cost of tuition, books, and fees.** At Luther, the withheld scholarship taxes (5 percent) are charged against the student's statement of account twice each year (on the Fall Semester and Spring Semester statements). **For most students, the actual tax rate is a bit lower,** meaning most students eventually receive a refund of the difference.

And now to complicate things even more. **For some students, tax treaties between the U.S. government and the students' "tax residency" mean there is no tax liability** (or in plain English, they don't have to pay any taxes on their scholarships). The "tax residency" is usually the home country. The U.S. Internal Revenue Service has an online (and confusing) website that will help you read about tax implications for your country. We will help you determine your "tax residency" and any tax implications after you have arrived on campus.



<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/international-businesses/united-states-income-tax-treaties-a-to-z>

Finally, there is one more tax to be aware of, and that's the employment tax from your on-campus job.

**Employment Taxes.** Almost all employees in the U.S., including student employees, have taxes withheld by the government from each pay period. The amount of tax varies. Because the amount of total annual earnings for the typical college student is rather low—due to the fact that the number of hours you are allowed to work each week is limited—most students will receive a refund of any taxes paid when they complete and file their annual tax return. The refund from employment taxes is usually quite small, since very little money is withheld to begin with. Luther's Center for Intercultural Engagement and Support will provide you with information on how to complete your tax return.

We know that issues around U.S. taxes are somewhat complicated, especially since taxes may vary so much from student to student. We'll help you make sense of it once you arrive.