

Section 1: Welcome & Overview

A Word of Welcome!

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

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

Currently, the **International Admissions Office** has been your primary point of contact at Luther. Stacy Soderstrom (sodest01@luther.edu) and Kathy Ferrie (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 Luther offices. Staff members in the **Center for Intercultural Engagement and Support (CIES), Office of Student Engagement (OSE), and the Center for Global Learning (CGL)** will be working collaboratively to support you throughout your Luther career.

Alejandra Cruz (cruzal01@luther.edu), is your primary contact for ongoing student visa support to help you maintain your student immigration status.


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


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


The *Pre-Arrival Guide* is intended for both international students and U.S. students living abroad. Some of the topics will not apply to U.S. passport holders, such as Section 3 of this *Pre-Arrival Guide* on obtaining the visa. Nonetheless, we believe there is lots of good information for both groups.

The *Pre-Arrival Guide* is divided into various sections to make it easier for you to find information. The *Pre-Arrival Guide* contains 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 anytime.

Luther College International Admissions Office
700 College Drive
Decorah, IA 52101 USA
worldadmissions@luther.edu
+1-563-387-1445 (outside U.S.)
+1-563-387-1435 (WhatsApp)
+1-800-458-8437 (free call within the U.S.)

Stacy Soderstrom, Director of International and Transfer Admissions
Abbie Grinager, Assistant Director of International and Transfer Admissions
Kathy Ferrie, International Admissions Coordinator

Center for Global Learning (CGL)
Alejandra Cruz, Assistant Director, International Education, PDSO and ARO
cruzal01@luther.edu

Office of Student Engagement (OSE)
students@luther.edu
+1-563-387-1020

Center for Intercultural Engagement and Support (CIES)
Michelle Boike, Assistant Dean and Director
cies@luther.edu
+1-563-387-1014

Section 2:

Introducing Luther

About Luther

In preparation for your F-1 visa interview, it's useful for you to know a bit more about Luther College.

Founded in 1861, Luther College is a four-year, university-level, residential institution of 1,400 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

Since Luther is over 160 years old, we have a rich and interesting history. A brief history of the college is found online.



www.luther.edu/about/history

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)
- Students may choose to enroll in summer session classes (additional fees apply)

New international students will attend an international student orientation coordinated by the Center for Intercultural Engagement and Success. For students entering Fall semester, international student orientation is a multi-day overview of 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.

Section 3:

Obtaining Your Visa

Applying for Your U.S. Student Visa



Your first step as you prepare for your Luther education is to obtain your U.S. student 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. on a F-1 student visa. Here is the process to obtain a F-1 visa:

☐ **Form I-20:** The I-20 is created by Luther and sent to you electronically. You need to bring this form to your visa interview at a U.S. Embassy/Consulate.

Please note, the I-20 we email you will be accepted at the embassy/consulate. We will mail you a printed I-20 for your records.

☐ **SEVIS I-901 Fee:** SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) tracks all international students. The U.S. government requires students to pay a \$350 I-901 fee to help offset the cost. At Luther (unlike most colleges in the U.S.), **we pay the \$350 SEVIS fee for you! Your SEVIS I-901 fee payment receipt will be included with your I-20.** Bring this SEVIS I-901 fee payment receipt to your interview.

☐ **DS-160 Online Nonimmigrant Visa**

Application: Once you receive your I-20 and the SEVIS I-901 fee receipt, **you will complete the online DS-160 application.** The information from this application is used by the Department of State and the U.S. Consular Offices. As part of the DS-160 application, you will select a visa interview appointment and pay a \$185 fee.



<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.** Add Kathy Ferrie or Stacy Soderstrom. See page 1 of this *Pre-Arrival Guide* for details.

☐ **Schedule your visa appointment:** In some countries the wait time for your interview can be long, so start early. The actual interview is 2-7 minutes. The visa process varies, so follow the procedures specific to your country. For details, review the procedures for the U.S. Embassy/Consulate in your city/country.



www.usembassy.gov/

☐ **Visa Issued:** Once your F-1 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/>

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security highlights 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 common are:

- The student's academic record appeared weak for the program of study intended to pursue.
- The student's financial records did not appear to confirm their 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 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/>

Ten Points to Remember at Your F-1 Visa Interview

NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, has prepared details for students to remember when applying for a visa:

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 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, 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 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 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 make a decision on the impressions they form within the first minute or two, so what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers short and to the point.

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

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 speak to your plan to return home or to leave the U.S. at the end of your program.

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 they 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/Consulate for your visa interview:

- ☐ Signed I-20 (3 pages)
- ☐ SEVIS I-901 fee payment receipt
- ☐ A valid passport. Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months beyond your length of study.
- ☐ Completed DS-160 visa application
- ☐ 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/Consulate in your country

Let Luther Know About Your Visa Status


As soon as you are granted an F-1 visa, please send an e-mail message to the International Admissions Office, worldadmissions@luther.edu to let us know. If you are denied a visa, don't panic. Send an e-mail message to Stacy Soderstrom, sodest01@luther.edu, and she 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 Stacy Soderstrom in advance of your interview indicating the date of your visa interview. Stacy will send an additional letter to you that you may present at the U.S. Embassy/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

 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 Report**. This form will be sent to you electronically with instructions on how to complete and submit. 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 Report** and **submit your immunization records** 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** are automatically 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 [Stacy Soderstrom](#) so that she can connect you with an insurance provider.

☐ Make sure your school sends your **final original or certified copy of your secondary school transcripts** (if we have not received them already). You may have the school send the documents directly to Luther, or you may bring the documents 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 (D or higher), IB Higher Level exam scores (4 or higher), or AP exam scores (4 or higher) will generally result in transfer credit based on the standards established by the Registrar and/or the academic department. Luther requires official exam results directly from examining body, which may be different from your school of attendance. You will be responsible for providing certified English translations, if necessary, or any requested additional documentation. You will not receive credit for prior coursework until the Registrar's Office receives official documentation.

Planning Your Travel to Luther

 Planning your travel to Luther is an important task. We will continue to guide you as you prepare for your arrival.

☐ **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 dates for most international students and U.S. students living abroad are **Wednesday, August 20 or Friday, August 22** depending on participation in the optional [Endeavor Together](#) pre-orientation program. **Important Note for Athletes:** If you are a varsity athlete on one of the fall sports teams (American football, men's and women's soccer, women's volleyball, women's golf, men's and women's cross country, men's and women's 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.

☐ Luther College will provide large group transportation from the MSP airport to campus with arrival at Luther on **Sunday, August 24**. The drive from the airport to campus is about 2 hours and 30 minutes. Transportation costs will be paid by Luther College. **Specific details about an alumni homestay and transportation to campus for New International Student Orientation will be provided to you closer to date of travel by the Center for Intercultural Engagement.** Transportation will be provided to campus for those participating in Endeavor Together Pre-orientation program.

❑ **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 smaller Terminal 2. A free tram connects both terminals.

❑ Luther College will have a welcome table at the Terminal 1 baggage claim upon arrival for New International Student Orientation. If you need general assistance, the **Terminal 1 Information Desk on Level T** is staffed seven days per week, from 5 AM to 1:45 AM. Airport staff members will be able to assist you with ground transportation directions.

❑ Please contact us in advance of your travel if family members will be accompanying you to campus.

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

Section 5: Academics at Luther

What You Need to Know

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

Introducing the Curriculum

During Fall 2023, Luther introduced a new curriculum that was years in the making. The curriculum 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 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 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.

Class registration information will be sent to you electronically from the Office of Student Success.

For More Information

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



<https://catalog.luther.edu>

Section 6: Orientation, Housing & Meals

Orientation: An Overview

Orientation will provide you with a solid start to your Luther career. You will learn important items—including various Luther policies, requirements to maintain 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 other new students. Specific agenda and details coming soon!

Fall Semester 2025 Arrival & Orientation Schedule

ENDEAVOR TOGETHER PRE-ORIENTATION PROGRAM (optional)

Wednesday, August 20: Arrive at the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport (see Section 4 of this *Pre-Arrival Guide*).

Wednesday, August 20: Arrive on Luther’s campus (see Section 4).

Thursday, August 21 – Friday, August 22: Settling in, getting to know campus and community, immigration/new student sessions (for international students and U.S. students living abroad).

Saturday, August 23 – Tuesday, August 26: Endeavor Together – Immersive Outdoor Pre-orientation program (more details to come!)

NEW INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORIENTATION

Friday, August 22: Arrive at the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport (see Section 4 of this *Pre-Arrival Guide*) and arrive on Luther’s campus.

Sunday, August 24 – Friday, August 29: All international students and U.S. students abroad orientation. **Note:** Fall sport varsity athletes will be instructed as to which orientation activities they are required to participate in.

Saturday, August 30 – Saturday, September 6: Welcome Week for all new students (international, U.S. students living abroad, and domestic students).

Wednesday, September 3: Fall semester classes begin.

Please Note: The Registrar's Office posts the general academic schedule for the year online. 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). Follow the arrival/orientation schedule as according to the details you receive from the International Admissions Office and the Office for Student Engagement.



www.luther.edu/offices/registrar/calendar/2025-26

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.

WIFI 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, computer stations are available in the residence halls and labs across campus. Students can also checkout a laptop for short-term use.

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

Microwaves. Microwaves are located in the kitchens of each residence hall and 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 breaks, international students may continue to stay in certain designated college housing (free of charge). Students are responsible for paying their own meal costs when the cafeteria is closed during breaks. 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 \$280 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, Peace Brunch and the cafeteria.

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



www.luther.edu/dining/

Section 7: Odds & Ends

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 seasons. Climatic conditions vary widely from season to season. Clothing 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.



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, CIES will store the packages for you until you arrive. Send to:

Luther College Center for Intercultural
Engagement and Support
700 College Drive
Decorah, Iowa 52101 U.S.A.
(Label the outside of the package with your
name so we know it belongs to you.)

Things to Bring. Because of luggage weight restrictions, we suggest you bring the essential items you need (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 school supplies, clothes hangers, etc.) once you arrive. The international student orientation provides shopping time.

Towels and Washcloths. Blankets, pillow, sheets, and a towel are provided for you. Most students choose to have their own towels and washcloths. Bring these items with you, ship them, or plan on purchasing them when you arrive.

Book Shop. Luther owns and operates its own on-campus store. The Book Shop stocks Luther College clothing (purchased from certified, “sweatshop-free” manufacturers), greeting cards, gifts, and personal items. The Book Shop also partners with Books by eCampus as the provider of textbooks.



<https://luther.ecampus.com/>

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



www.winmedical.org/location/luther-clinic

Area Health Care. Decorah has a 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. Counseling Services 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 referred to other services or to off-campus mental health professionals as appropriate.

Luther College has contracted with **TELUS Health Student Support** as an extended service of Luther Counseling Service. This service provides Luther students increased access, availability, and individualized choice in receiving mental health support at no additional cost. *TELUS Health Student Support* connects students with free, confidential mental health and wellbeing support available 24/7.



www.luther.edu/offices/student-engagement/counseling/services/telus/

Career Center. The Luther Career Center offers 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.

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 on your initial travel to Luther. After your initial travel to Luther, you may want to coordinate your flights to/from the U.S. with Luther’s scheduled shuttle service. Transportation details may be found online.



www.luther.edu/student-life/support-services/

Computers, Cell Phones, and Technology. Luther’s Technology Help Desk has produced a helpful resource on technology related questions and answers.




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 use at home. If so, you may need to obtain an adapter plug. Visit the following site for pictures and details.



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 F-1 visa. Please note: to enter the U.S. your passport must be valid for at least 6 months beyond the end date of your program.
- ☐ I-20 form (3 pages)
- ☐ SEVIS I-901 fee payment receipt
- ☐ 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, we recommend the following numbers:

➤ Center for Intercultural Engagement & Support (CIES) phone: **+1-563-387-1014**

☐ Luther has a 24/7 Campus Safety phone that is also an important contact in the event of an emergency.

➤ Luther Campus Safety phone: **+1-563-387-2111**

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

What You Can Expect

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 U.S. 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 entry and exit procedures. Careful planning and preparation by students can ensure that any delay based on these procedures is minimal.

A Word of Warning

You may be refused entry into the U.S. if you arrive more than 30 days before the program start date listed on your I-20.

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.
- Place all 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/

Complete Your Entry Paperwork

Flight attendants on your airplane may (or may not) distribute a **Customs Declaration Form** for you to complete while you are in flight. Bring a pen 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.
- Enter the following street address:
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 and have the following available:

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

All visitors to the U.S. must state their reason for entering. You will 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 at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa.** You may be asked to present

some of the documents contained in your Travel Documents envelope.

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 will 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 within 30 days of the start date listed on the I-20. 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. You may go to secondary inspection if you are entering the U.S. 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) Alejandra Cruz in the Center for Global Learning.**

Failure to comply with U.S. government entry-exit procedures may result in you being denied entry to the U.S. Under certain circumstances, the CBP officer may issue a “Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor” Form (I-515A), which authorizes temporary

admission into the U.S. Alejandra Cruz will then work with you to submit the proper documentation.

Section 9: Money Matters

Notes About Finances

Once you arrive, students frequently have questions about costs, scholarships and financial aid, work-study, and taxes. All of these 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, your parents, guardians, or sponsors need to wire funds to the college, there are three primary methods: (1) through a company Luther has partnered with called, *Flywire*, OR (2) through a company Luther has partnered with called PayMyTuition, OR (3) through a bank wire transfer. Detailed instructions for the various methods are found online.



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, exchanging money at the bank is a time-consuming and expensive process.

U.S. Bank Account and Social Security Number

As part of International Student Orientation, we will help you obtain a Social Security Number (an 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. 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. No need to think about it now; we'll help you obtain your work during 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**.

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**. All U.S. 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 (Fall 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 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 (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.

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** (meaning no taxes are paid on 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.



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 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 limited number of hours you are allowed to work each week—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 little money is withheld. Luther's Center for Global Learning will provide you with information on how to complete your tax return.

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