

international spouse resource guide

2025-2026



NC STATE
UNIVERSITY

Office of
International Services

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first things checklist



Apply for your N.C. State Visitor ID - an **OPTIONAL** university-issued ID. It can be used to borrow print materials from NC State libraries. Card cost is \$25.



To apply:

1. Contact OIS front desk - so your information can be put into the card system
2. Pick up the ID at the One Card Office at Talley Student Union. Pay the card cost there.
3. Remember to bring your passport or other photo ID!



Go to the NC Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and get a state issued ID, Driver's Permit, or License. With this, you won't need to always carry your passport.



Attend an I.M.O.M (International Moms or Mates) meeting - for female dependents only. Visit the OIS website for more information.



Sign up for OIS programs - spouses are welcome to participate in all programs. See pg. 29 for more details. about our cultural programs.



ABOUT YOUR VISA TYPE

F-2

Be sure to know what your visa type you have and what this implies!

*The F-2 visa is more restrictive and **DOES NOT** allow you to work in the U.S.* However, **YOU CAN VOLUNTEER.**

Keep in mind:

- With volunteer positions, you are not paid or compensated for your work
- Part-time study is now allowed on the F-2 Visa, but contact OIS to schedule an appointment with an immigration advisor before you begin taking classes for credit.

*With a J-2 visa, you can apply for a work permit **AS SOON** as you **physically enter the U.S.** It will take up to **3 MONTHS** to get the work permit, but then you are allowed to apply for any kind of job without restrictions.*

J-2

More information on the employment authorization process is outlined on the Information for Dependents and Families page of the OIS website under "Employment Opportunities for Dependents" dropdown section: internationalservices.ncsu.edu/family/

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

General

- Food Bank of Central & Eastern NC
- Feed the pack Pantry (located at NC State)
- Idealist.com and VolunteerMatch.com
- The Green Chair Project
- Wake County Libraries

Cultural

- Divan Center (Turkish)
- Hindu Society of NC
- Islamic Center of Raleigh
- Triangle Area Chinese American Society

Women's Health & Wellbeing

- Interact of Wake County
- Kiran, Inc.
- NC State Women's Center

Animal Rescue

- SPCA of Wake County
- Wake County Animal Center



HEALTHCARE

Treatment Facility Options

It is recommended that you establish a Primary Care Provider (PCP) at a doctor's office before illness occurs. It will be easier to get an appointment and be seen quickly.



Doctor's Office

- Non-emergency illness or injuries, Preventive Care
- Fees depend on Insurance (Copay)
- Open 8am-5pm, Monday to Friday



Urgent Care

- Non-emergency illness or injuries, Walk-in Appointments accepted
- Flat Rate Fee & Additional Costs
- Open regular hours, plus nights/weekends



Hospital

- Used for EMERGENCIES ONLY, and surgeries
- MOST EXPENSIVE
- Open 24 hours, 7 days a week

Healthcare in the U.S. can be very expensive, which is why it's important to have good healthcare insurance!

Health Insurance & Copays Tips

- **Read your healthcare insurance policy carefully!** Health insurance policies can be confusing, so call your insurance provider if you have any questions about your coverage.
- **Every time you visit a doctor, you will need to have your health insurance card with you.** Medical personnel will need to see your card.
 - It is a good idea to carry your card in your wallet in case of medical emergencies!
- Your card may indicate what your "copay" is for doctor's visits.
 - **COPAY** - What you will be expected to pay at the time of your visit (you MAY be required to pay more later)

Free or Income Based Health Care Clinics

Because NC State's Student Health Center is funded by student fees, its services are not available to dependents of NC State students and scholars. However, **free or reduced cost health care** is still offered in Raleigh:

Wake County Health Clinics

Provides a variety of health care services based on family income

Mariam Clinic

A free health care clinic for those who meet eligibility requirements. Language translators available.

UNC-Chapel Hill Dental Clinic

Offers reduced cost services by students in the doctorate in dental surgery program (D.D.S) and allied dental education programs

****Depending on your household income, you may be eligible for reduced cost surgeries should you need one. Some hospitals and doctor's offices are also willing to work with you on a payment plan if needed.****



Pharmacies available:

- Walgreens
- CVS

pharmacies

What can be found in pharmacies?

- Prescription medicines (require a doctor's note)
- "Over-the-counter" medicines (don't require a doctor's note)
- Basic supermarket items

- Some large stores (Walmart, Target, etc) and some grocery stores have pharmacies inside their stores ↩

They sell generic forms of prescriptions

- **GENERIC:** Same dosage form, strength, quality and performance as brand name medicines, but are almost always cheaper

- When purchasing prescription medicines, you may also have a "copay" determined by your health insurance



J-1 & J-2 Health Insurance Requirements

The Department of State (DOS) **requires** all participants of the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program to have and maintain health insurance which covers the exchange visitor and all accompanying family members for the entire duration of their DS-2019. Please note that this requirement holds even if you or your family members are temporarily abroad. ***Failure of the J-1 or J-2 visa holder to maintain adequate health insurance for the length of the DS-2019 is considered to be a violation of the Exchange Visitor Program regulations, which will result in termination of BOTH the J-1 and J-2 visa status.*** The health insurance plan must cover all participants for accidents, sickness, medical evacuation, and repatriation.

Effective May 2015, your insurance must meet the following requirements:

- Minimum coverage of at least \$100,000 (USD) per accident or illness
- Minimum coverage of \$50,000 for medical evacuation
- Minimum \$25,000 for repatriation of remains
- Maximum deductible of \$500 per illness

OIS RECOMMENDS:

- **The health insurance plan that the State of North Carolina has negotiated with BlueCross BlueShield Global Solutions (formerly called GeoBlue)**
 - Meets the J-1 visa requirements
 - Provides adequate coverage
 - Reasonably priced

****Please note that J-2 visa holders are only eligible for BCBSGS coverage IF the J-1 also has a policy with BCBSGS.***

The following health insurance providers also offer plans that meet the DOS requirements

- INSUBUY
- Visitors Coverage
- Harbour Group
- Cultural Insurance Services International

*****Proof of insurance MUST be provided to OIS no later than 21 days after the J-2 check in date.*****

Proof of insurance will also be required when submitting forms and requests to OIS (programs extensions, travel signatures, etc)

safety ✓

DIAL 911 → for help in emergencies

(If you've been seriously hurt, in a car accident, there is a fire, or someone has stolen from you, etc). Dialing 911 will put you in touch with the police, fire station, or anyone else you may need. Know your location (street address, landmarks, etc) and try to speak in English when you call, if possible. **Translators are available but it will take extra time for you to get help.**



CAMPUS POLICE

For emergencies that occur on campus. Dialing 911 from a land-line on campus connects you with Campus Police. If you need help while on campus for non-emergencies, like if you want to report something suspicious or need a campus safety escort from 10 P.M. to 4 A.M., **call 919-515-3000**



TIPS → to protect yourself

The following are not meant to scare you. The U.S. (and Raleigh area) is generally a safe place to live.

- Always lock your doors (apartment/house door, car door, etc) -> even while driving or at home
- Never leave items unattended in public
- Avoid walking around alone after dark, especially late at night or early in the morning
- Don't hitchhike (don't ask strangers for rides)
- Don't open your door for people you don't know
- Always wear a seatbelt when you're traveling and be aware of child seatbelt safety laws: <http://www.buckleupnc.org/>
- Never leave children alone anywhere!
- Always have your keys ready before you get to your car or house. Always keep one hand free
- Don't talk to strangers on the street, especially those who ask for money
- Don't keep valuables in your car or in your backpack
- Try to stay in well-lit areas and use routes that are frequently traveled by others





- Avoid walking alone through isolated areas. Avoid shortcuts through deserted spaces.
- Always tell a close friend when you will be away for the weekend or a longer period of time.
- **Don't hesitate to call the police - Emergency Off-Campus: 911 or On-Campus: 911 or (919) 515-3000 if you feel threatened by someone or if you experienced or witnessed a crime. Police can be very helpful to you.**
- If you are a victim of physical or sexual violence or abuse, call **(919) 828-7160**: Immigrants Seeking Safety Project in Wake County.
- Attackers often avoid people who look secure, confident, and strong
 - NC State University Police offers several self-defense or basic safety training for men and women. You can find more information on these trainings, as well as when they're offered on the University Police website.
- Be aware of what is going on around you at all time. If you suspect you are being followed, indicate your suspicion by looking behind you. If you are on foot, cross the street, change directions, or vary your speed. In a commercial or residential area, quickly head for a place where there are other people.
- Follow your instincts! If your intuition tells you that you're at risk, try to leave the situation as soon as possible, for example, if you see someone suspicious in a parking lot, leave the area.

public transportation

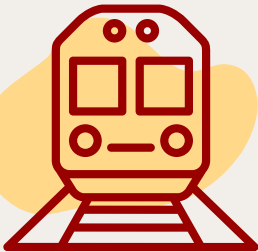
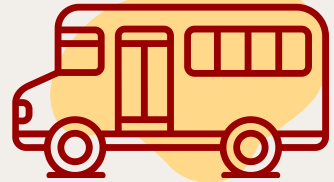


Wolfline (NC State Buses)

- Run all over campus and a few miles outside of campus
- FREE
- Use the Passio Go! Mobile App to track locations & each stop of each Wolfline bus

GoRaleigh & GoTriangle Bus

- Both buses have routes that run throughout Raleigh and surrounding cities
- GoRaleigh Bus Routes that travel to NC State: 11, 11L, 12
- Require bus fares



Trains

- The Raleigh train station is called the **Amtrak Station**. Visit [Amtrak.com](https://www.amtrak.com) for more information.
- Not the most convenient way to travel (the U.S. train system is not very extensive)
- Useful for traveling from one major city to another, but not traveling within the cities

Bicycles or Scooters

- If you prefer to ride a bike, please visit the following website for information about campus safety and tips: transportation.ncsu.edu/bicycling
- Cardinal Bikeshare is a bike share program that allows you to rent a bike. It is located on Hillsborough street across NC State's campus.



Driving in the U.S.

- Driving by car is the most popular and convenient way to travel in the U.S. The public transportation system in Raleigh is not nearly as sophisticated or convenient as it is in many parts of the world.
- This website (<https://www.ncdot.gov/dmv/Pages/default.aspx>) provides information about vehicle registration & car insurance if you decide to buy a car. More helpful resources at (<https://ncdoj.gov/protecting-consumers/automobiles/>) by the NC Department of Justice about buying a new or used car.

- **To obtain a NC Driver's License,**

1. You will need to bring your visa, passport, I-20 or DS-2019, and your I-94 to the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) as well as proof that you live in NC

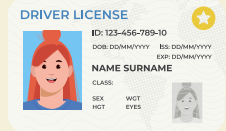
- a. **Nearest DMV: 3231 Avent Ferry Road**

- b. You can take Wolfline Route 50 or 52 to get there

2. You must make an appointment to visit the DMV office

3. You will need to take both a written and driving test

****OIS recommends that you wait 10 days after your J-1 or F-1 spouse has completed their OIS Check-in before you apply for an ID or license with the DMV. This will allow enough time to ensure that you are registered in the government system that allows the DMV to issue ID cards.****



You are permitted to drive with a valid license issued by another U.S. state or by your home country for up to 60 days from the day you arrive in North Carolina.

After 60 days, NC law requires you to obtain a NC driver's license if you wish to continue driving. Please note that an "International Driver's License" is NOT an acceptable license in North Carolina.





money & banking

To Set Up a New Bank Account

- **Bring your passport to the bank** (banks don't accept university IDs as proper identification)
- **If you have a Social Security Number, bring it as well** (Most banks do not require one to open an account but if you have one, they will want it)
- **Ask to set up a "student account" if possible.** Normally, banking fees for students are waived or are cheaper
- **Choose a "pin number"** (secret access code) that other won't be able to guess



If you plan to stay in the U.S. for several years or long-term, **it's important to use your credit card in order to build a "credit history."** A credit history is checked when you want to get a loan for a house or a car. Loans for houses are refused if you don't have a credit history or if your history shows that you didn't pay your credit card balances on time. The company providing the loan may also check with the management of your previous apartment and/or utility companies to verify whether or not you paid your bills on time. If you use a credit card, it is important to pay off the balance each month to avoid paying interest and extra fees.



Try to carry at least some cash with you (\$20). Some small stores and restaurants may not take cards. Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.



To Deposit or Withdraw Money

- Bring picture identification (e.g. Passport/Driver's License)
- Fill out a form in your bank marked "deposit" or "withdrawal" with the amount and your account number.
- You may also use the ATM machines outside of your bank to withdraw money 24/7. Use caution when withdrawing money from an ATM at night.

credit card interest - money that is added to your bill each month that you do not pay your balance in full



Credit Card Tips

- Only have ONE or TWO cards and try to find cards that have NO ANNUAL FEE
- Pay off the entire bill each month. Interest adds up quickly!
- If you can't pay off your entire bill, make certain that your credit card has a low monthly interest rate and pay it off as soon as possible
- Allow for mail delivery time when sending in your payment by mail so that it will arrive before the due date

****NEVER give your name and credit card number, bank account numbers, passport number, social security number, or passwords to anyone over the phone! Scammers will use this information to steal your identity! No credible organization will ever contact you and ask for this information over the phone or email, no matter what the person may claim. Ask for the person's name and contact information and let them know you will call them back, and then contact OIS immediately!****

bank account interest - money the bank pays into your account the longer you keep your money in the account

credit card balance - amount you OWE to the credit card company

Phone, Internet, Mail Services



For Emergencies:

Outside of the country:

- If you need to quickly reach someone outside of the country, you can **contact the international operator at #00** (A little expensive)

In the U.S.

- Call 911 (For car accidents, injuries, serious threats, etc)

Phone, Cable, Internet Companies

Each of these entities are private companies and are not associated with or endorsed by NC State; Any arrangements you choose to make are strictly between you and this entity.

For Other:

- AT&T - Mobile/Home Phone, Internet
- Spectrum - Home Phone, TV, Internet
- DirectTV - Satellite TV

For Mobile Phones ONLY:

- Verizon
- T-Mobile
- Mint Mobile
- Sprint



Sending Mail or Packages



1. Packaging

Choose an appropriate box or envelope based on the size and weight of your item. Securely tape the package shut to prevent it from opening during transit.

2. Addressing

Write the recipient's address on the front of the package or envelope. Include:

- Recipient's name, street address, city, state, and ZIP code
- Your return address in the top-left corner of the package or envelope.

3. Choosing a Postal Service

- USPS – United States Postal Service (Most common)
 - Includes services like First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, or Priority Mail Express based on your budget and delivery speed requirements.
- Private Courier Services:
 - FedEx, UPS, or DHL (Faster delivery, but more expensive)

4. Paying for Postage

At any post office, you can purchase postage for your item. The cost will depend on factors like the size, weight, and destination of your package.

5. Sending the Package

Hand your package to the postal worker or courier service representative. They will process your shipment and provide you with a receipt or tracking number for your records.

Information for Parents

FUN ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN:

NORTH CAROLINA:

- NC Asheboro Zoo
- Discovery Place (Charlotte)
- Grandfather Mountain
- Carowinds Amusement Park (Charlotte)
- Old Salem (Winston-Salem)
- Emerald Point Waterpark (Greensboro)

RALEIGH:

- Pullen Park (Next to NC State)
- Marbles Kids Museum and IMAX Theater
- Story Times at Local Libraries (wakegov.com)
- NC Museum of Natural Sciences and History
- Lake Johnson (off Avent Ferry Rd.)

To enroll your child in the Wake County's Public School System, contact the **Center for International Enrollment:**

5625 Dillard Drive
Cary, NC 27518

Phone: (919) 431-7404

Email: CIE@wcpss.net

Visit: wcpss.net/academics/english-language-learners



Information for Parents

TYPES OF CHILDCARE AVAILABLE IN RALEIGH:

DAYCARE DATABASE:

Official database of the state with license information. Once you select a center, go through the tabs at the top to see about DCD visits, actions taken, etc. ncdhhs.gov/divisions/social-services/child-support-services/child-care-provider-search

A list of daycares that offer discounts to NC State students & staff can be found NC State's Human Resources under the Benefits tab. You can also find tips for choosing child care in the U.S here. hr.ncsu.edu/benefits-and-wellness/child-care/

FAMILY DAYCARE

Individuals licensed by the state of NC can take care of your children in their private homes. Providers set their own fees. Quality & style will vary greatly between providers. It is important to visit the home and speak with the provider before choosing them.
You may search online for any daycare near you.

DAYCARE CENTERS

They are typically a greater number of caregivers at a daycare center and will therefore have more children as well. Fees are set by the provider and are typically more expensive than family daycare.
You may search online for any daycare near you.

Information for Parents

TYPES OF CHILDCARE AVAILABLE IN RALEIGH:

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS



Many public schools offer “after-school” care. After the school day ends, children can stay for activities and snacks. Contact the school your child will be attending to find out what is available.

BABYSITTERS

A “babysitter” is an individual who will come into your home to care for your child. This is usually on an occasional or part-time basis. You can find babysitters through referrals from other individuals who have hired them.

Many NC State students work as part-time babysitters and are available and willing to provide babysitting services upon request.

There are also many online babysitting websites that let you search up nearby registered babysitters. These websites give you information about these individuals and also allow you to connect with them.

- urbansitter.com
- care.com
- sittercity.com



SHOPPING in raleigh

MALLS & OUTLETS

For clothing and specialty, high-end stores

- Crossroads Shopping Center
- Crabtree Valley Mall
- North Hills Plaza
- Triangle Town Center
- Village District



SHOPPING CENTERS

Carry variety of clothing, supplies, home furniture, tools, food, etc

- Target
- Walmart
- T.J. Maxx
- Marshalls



DISCOUNT STORES

Items range from \$1-\$20

- Dollar Tree
- Family Dollar
- 5 Below





SECOND HAND

SHOPPING in raleigh

"SECOND HAND"

Meaning: Items that have a previous owner; Items are not new and have been used

Purpose: Offer cheaper shopping options while also helping the environment and it makes items last longer.

CONSIGNMENT STORES

Sell second hand clothing & accessories; A little more expensive; Items are ***sold*** to the store

- Uptown Cheapskate
- Revolver Consignment Boutique
- Fifi's Fine Resale Apparel
- Clothes Mentor



THRIFT STORES

Sell second hand clothing & household items at low prices; Items are ***donated*** to the stores

- Goodwill
- Salvation Army
- Guardian Angel Thrift
- Treasure Hunt Raleigh





MORE ABOUT

SHOPPING in raleigh

STATE OF NC GOVERNMENT SALE

Items from state agencies are sold: cars, furniture, desks, chairs.

- Must take a picture ID (passport/driver's license)
- Cash or credit card payment is accepted

www.doa.nc.gov/divisions/state-surplus-property

NCSU SURPLUS SALE

Happening every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month. They sell used furniture, computers, and miscellaneous items no longer needed by the university. New items every week

- You must be able to take item with you by 11:30am the day after purchase

procurement.ofa.ncsu.edu/our-services/surplus/surplus-sales

HOW TO SAVE MONEY ON GROCERIES

- Buy generic (the **STORE BRAND** of items)
- Use manufacturer and store coupons found in newspapers and magazines
- Sign up for discount cards that grocery stores have; Go to the store's customer service desk for more information and to fill an application. It is FREE!
 - Food Lion - "MVP Card"
 - Harris Teeter - "VIC Card"
- Watch out for when items go on sale each week through their website or their store newsletters.

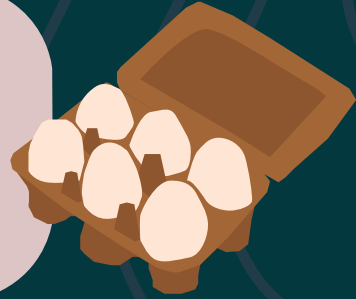
GROCERY

SHOPPING in raleigh

EXPENSIVE

Pricey groceries, but organic, healthier, and more fresh

- Whole Foods
- The Fresh Market
- Wegmans
- The Farmer's Market



MID-PRICED

Price of groceries vary

- Harris Teeter
- Publix
- Trader Joe's

CHEAP

Price of groceries are more affordable

- Walmart
- Food Lion
- Aldi
- Lidl



WHOLESALERS

Require paid membership; Sell groceries, furniture, technology, appliances, hygiene, etc; Prices are lower than most other stores.

- Costco
- Sam's Club
- BJ's





INTERNATIONAL GROCERY STORES

Store Name	Location
AFRICAN	
Cary African & Caribbean Market	1435 SE Maynard Rd (Cary, NC)
NC African Market	2245 New Hope Church Road
ASIAN	
A&C Supermarket	3210 S. Wilmington Street Suite 131
Grand Asia Market	1253 Buck Jones Road
Oriental Store of Raleigh	3601 Capital Blvd. Suite 101
Que Huong Oriental Market	3312 Capital Blvd
Toyo Shokuhin & Gifts	748 E. Chatham St. Suite (Cart, NC)
H Mart	1961 High House Road (Cary, NC)
Han Ah Reum Mart	2431 Spring Forest Rd. Suite 109
Kim's Asian Market	6014 Duraleigh Rd.
EUROPEAN	
Tala Euro-Russian Mart	5720 Capital Blvd. Suite L
FRENCH	
La Farm Bakery	4248 Cary Parkway
GERMAN	
Annelore's German Bakery	308 W Chatham St. (Cary, NC)
INDIAN	
Apna Bazar	3607 Davis Dr. Suite 116 (Morrisville, NC)



Around the World Market	7715 Hillsborough St.
Patel Brothers Indian Store	802 E. Chatham St. (Cary, NC)
Sangam Mart	10300 Chapel Hill Rd. Suite 600 (Morrisville, NC)
Whole India Foods	740 E. Chatham St. Suite A (Cary, NC)
ITALIAN	
Capri Flavors	867 Bass Pro Lane (Cary, NC)
LATIN AMERICAN	
El Mandado	4020 Capital Blvd. Suite 148
El Ranchito	3110 New Bern Ave. Suite 112
International Food	421 Chapanoke Rd.
La Tapatia	1700 St. Alban's Dr.
MIDDLE EASTERN	
Al-Madina Supermarket	1019 Method Rd.
Casablanca Halal Market	1365 SE Maynard Road (Cary, NC)
Jerusalem Bakery & Grocery	2233-105 Avent Ferry Rd.
Neomonde Bakery & Grocery	3817 Beryl Road
Nur Grocery and Deli	2233-108 Avent Ferry Rd
TURKISH	
Harmony Mediterranean Market	663 Cary Towne Blvd. (Cary, NC)
INTERNATIONAL	
Carolina Intl. Mart	3605 Bastion Lane
Caspian International Food Mart	2909 Brentwood Road
International Foods	2215 New Hope Church Rd.



DINING & TIPPING

*It's **expected** that you tip every time you eat at a sit-down restaurant* (where you are served by a waiter/waitress). Tip is optional at fast-food restaurants or cafes. **Tips are separate and not usually included in the bill**, unless you are eating with a large group of people.

You can leave your tip on the table before you leave (as cash) **OR** add it to the bill if you charge it to your card.

Americans usually tip about 18%-22% of the bill, depending on how good the service was.

There are so many great restaurants in Raleigh! Use this website to find your way to great restaurants: visitraleigh.com/foodie/restaurants/. You can also use the YELP app or website to find any food places.

If you want personal recommendations, don't be afraid to ask someone at OIS!

On campus, there are various fast food restaurants at Talley Student Union or the Atrium (next to D.H. Hill Library). There are also 3 Dining Halls.

Visit dining.ncsu.edu/locations/

Other places where tips are expected:

- Taxi Cab Drivers (15%)
- Food Delivery Person (5-15%)
- Hair & Nail Salons (15-20%)
- Any staff from hotels or airports who help you with your luggage (\$1-\$5)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE RESOURCES



1 *English Conversation Club (ECC) at NCSU*

Students, scholars, and spouses meet in small groups with native/fluent speakers for conversation in a very relaxed, informal atmosphere. It's a great way to practice speaking and listening in English! Children are always welcome.

2 *Wake Tech ESL*

Wake Technical community College offers free English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. These classes are basic skills classes for adults age 18 and up (beginner to advanced) and help develop language skills to live in the United States (speaking, listening, writing, reading). Children are not allowed in the classrooms and no childcare is available. Visit the Wake Tech ESL website at www.waketech.edu/programs-courses/non-credit/strengthen-workforce-skills/esl

3 *City of Raleigh FREE ESL Classes*

The Raleigh Parks & Recreation Department offers various ESL classes at multiple locations throughout the week. For details visit, <https://raleighnc.gov/services/parks/cultural-program#paragraph--362567>

4 *Forest Hills Baptist Church*

Forest Hills provides free English conversational classes and American culture classes for children and adults on Wednesdays at 6:30 P.M. (August-May). They do both in person and online Zoom classes. Child care is provided for children under the age of 3. For details, visit <https://www.foresthills.org/international>

5 *Private One-on-One Tutoring*

Triangle Literacy Council volunteers are available for FREE one-on-one tutoring programs for both youths and adults. For more information, call (919) 818-1956. For details, visit https://www.handsontriangle.org/agency/detail/?agency_id=88237

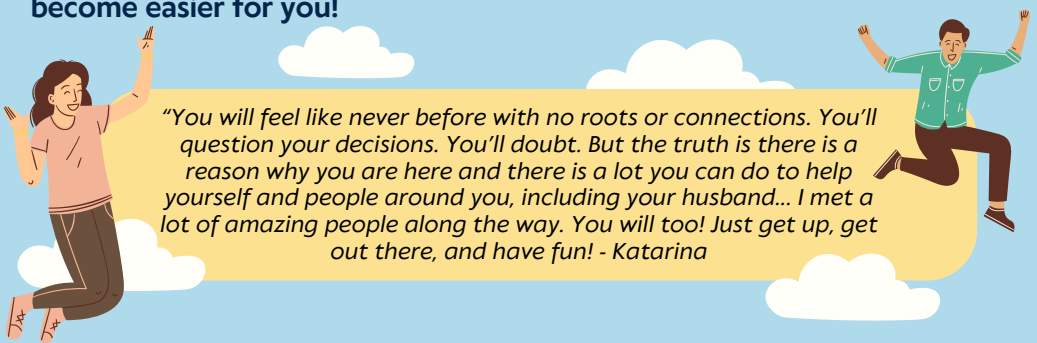
ADJUSTING TO LIFE IN THE U.S.

You have recently left family and career to accompany and support your spouse during his or her studies in the U.S. This transition is difficult and full of many changes, some of which you may not have expected. The most obvious change is the shift to an entirely new country and culture. While you may find life in the U.S. similar to what you expected, you may be surprised by the differences you've experienced so far.

The American media is often the source of misperceptions about life in the U.S. Some internationals arrive believing that all Americans are wealthy, practice immoral behavior, or carry guns. Everyone arrives with some predetermined ideas of what their life will be like in the U.S.

Whatever the differences between life in the U.S. and your home culture, cultural differences from the way you greet another to how you pay your bills may challenge you. The accumulation of all these differences, big and small, can cause "cultural stress." Remember, experiencing cultural stress is completely *normal* for everyone. You may find yourself becoming more easily frustrated or irritated with yourself and others as you learn the cultural norms here in the U.S.

The best way to work through this stage of cultural adjustment is to relax, to get enough rest, to ask questions, and to not be afraid to make mistakes in speaking English or in interacting with others! Over time you will learn how interact with others and everyday life here will become easier for you!




"You will feel like never before with no roots or connections. You'll question your decisions. You'll doubt. But the truth is there is a reason why you are here and there is a lot you can do to help yourself and people around you, including your husband... I met a lot of amazing people along the way. You will too! Just get up, get out there, and have fun! - Katarina


ADJUSTING TO LIFE IN THE U.S.

Adjusting to a new culture takes time and it might be helpful to have a look at the idea of “Culture Shock” in order to mentally prepare for the cultural adjustment process!

TIPS ON HOW TO EASE THE PROCESS OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT




Many international spouses say that it helped them to consciously decide to approach the relocation in a positive way by being open to new opportunities, by getting involved, by participating in events, by going out, by being open-minded, curious, etc.




If you do not expect everything to be the same, you won't be disappointed as easily. Especially because your life will be different!

If you are interested in learning about underlying values in the U.S. in comparison to your home country, you might find Geert Hofstede's website (<https://geerthofstede.com/>) helpful. You can use the comparison tool to identify cultural differences and likely mismatches, which might affect your process of cultural adjustment.



"It is not easy to move to another country especially if you're here for a short period of time (2-5 years). You will not feel the stability because this might just be a transition stage of your life, but try to learn new things and try to visit other places in the U.S. when you get the chance. When you feel bored, there are a lot of places to visit even in Raleigh: museums, parks, lakes, shopping centers, and ethnic stores." - Rasha



GET INVOLVED

I.M.O.M. (International Moms or Mates)

A group for female spouses of international students & scholars at NC State. For spouses, scheduling a separate check-in appointment is encouraged.

International Hangouts

Multiple times a semester, OIS arranges to visit or participate in a campus event open to international students, scholars, and their spouses. Participation is always free but registration is required and space may be limited depending upon the activity. Planned Hangouts are emailed to students and scholars and they are also shared on OIS social media.

English Conversation Club

A fun place to practice your English with American students and teachers. It's a great place to learn idioms and slang that you may not learn in class. No registration or application is required.

ISSERV

Connects international students with service projects at NCSU and in the Raleigh community. It's a great way to meet new people with interests similar to yours! You can volunteer individually or with a group. Application required.

Culture Corps



This program lets you share your country and culture with others at NC State and in the community. Members give presentations in classrooms or for community organizations. It's a great way to practice your English and presentation skills. Application required.

OIS PROGRAMS

SPORTS *and* HOBBIES



One of the biggest challenges that you'll face as the spouse of an international student will be how to fill the hours of "free time" you will have here. Find a way to practice your favorite hobby or learn a new one!



You can take a variety of art classes at **NC State Crafts Center** or **Pullen Park Arts Center!**

- Jewelry Making
- Calligraphy
- Woodworking
- Painting
- Drawing
- Pottery
- Stained Glass
- Sewing
- Photography
- AND MORE!

You must register for these classes.

[crafts.arts.ncsu.edu/
classes-workshops/](https://crafts.arts.ncsu.edu/classes-workshops/)

[https://raleighnc.gov/
arts/places/pullen-
arts-center](https://raleighnc.gov/arts/places/pullen-arts-center)

Carmichael Gym


The NC State gym is a great resource to use! It includes a variety of gym equipment and many different exercise classes. If you are a student with a valid student ID, it is free to use! If you are a spouse, you may sign up for membership by completing a form and bringing it to the Membership Services Suite at the gym.

Cost vary depending upon your length of stay in Raleigh. **You must bring proof of address.**

wellrec.dasa.ncsu.edu/memberships/non-student/



Art



Wake Tech also offers classes on many topics including NC History & Culture, Jewelry Making, Photography, Cooking, Sewing, Languages, and more!

Wake Tech



THINGS TO DO IN RALEIGH

PARKS & GARDENS

- NC State Arboretum
- Pullen Park
- Raleigh Rose Garden
- WRAL Azalea Garden
- Lake Raleigh
- Lake Johnson
- Lake Crabtree
- Lake Wheeler



MOVIE THEATERS

- NCSU Campus Cinema
- Regal Crossroads
- Marbles IMAX
- Alamo Drafthouse
- Paragon Theaters
- AMC Park Place 16

MUSEUMS

- Gregg Museum of Art & Design
- NC Museum of History and Natural Sciences
- NC Museum of Art
- City of Raleigh Museum
- Artspace



Public Libraries

As an international spouse of an NC State student/scholar, you are able to borrow books or any print items from the NC State Libraries after registering your Wolfpack One Card at a library branch:

- **D.H. Hill** (main campus)
- **James B. Hunt** (centennial campus)

As a resident of Raleigh, you also have free access to the public library system. There are more genres of books in there than in the NC State Libraries.

Nearby Public Libraries: Oberlin Regional, Cary Regional, Athens Drive Community, and MORE!

FREE Library Memberships!

Here in the U.S, ***you can apply for a free library membership at public libraries, which gives you your own library card.*** You just visit your local library, fill out a form, and get your card. With it, you can borrow books and use online resources like e-books. Remember to return things on time, and enjoy other library services like computer access and events. If you lose your card or damage something, just tell the library.

For library locations, visit wakegov.com/departments-government/libraries/locations

Helpful Apps



Libby



- Lets you borrow e-books and audiobooks from your local library for FREE
- You can read or listen to them directly in the app

NC State Well and Rec



- Offers schedules for fitness classes, intramural sports, and facility hours at Carmichael Gym
- You can easily register for classes and events through the app.

Eventbrite



- Helps with finding and attending events near you
- Discover a wide range of events (concerts, workshops, etc)
- Search for events based on your interests or location

Duolingo



- Offers fun and interactive lessons for learning languages.
- Includes a wide variety of languages to study
- Covers speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills

NC State Guides



- Your personal assistant for navigating campus life.
- Offers interactive maps to help you find buildings, dining options, and parking locations.
- You can explore campus events, academic resources, and student services.
- Provides schedules for campus transportation like buses and shuttles.
- Keeps you updated with important announcements and campus news.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

CONSUMER INFORMATION

ANNUAL FEE

Amount of money paid each year for use of a credit card. Fees range free to \$75.00 a year.

CHECK

Written form of payment, which directs the bank to pay money out of your checking account.

CREDIT CARD

Card that allows items to be purchased on credit, which is a form of loan. Interest accrues on a monthly basis can be as high as 21%.

DEBIT CARD

A card that allows money to be deducted directly from your bank account

DEBT

Money that is owed

MONTHLY BILL

Amount of money that is owed each month for services given (Rent, Utilities, Credit Cards, etc)

UTILITIES

General term for electricity, gas, water, and telephone in an apartment or house

800/888/866/ 877 NUMBERS

Phone numbers for which there is no charge to call

900 NUMBERS

Phone numbers which can cost as much as \$4.00 - \$5.00 per minute or more. Includes 976 numbers.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

HEALTHCARE INFORMATION

You can find general health insurance information on the Student Health Center website: healthypack.dasa.ncsu.edu

DEDUCTIBLE

The portion of money that you're responsible for paying. Example: \$200 policy year or annual deductible means that you're responsible for up to \$200 of medical cost for a given year and beyond that insurance company will cover a large percentage of the bill.

LIMITATIONS & EXCLUSIONS

Items your health insurance policy WILL NOT pay for. This is a very important policy - be sure to read it carefully!

OUTPATIENT

Procedure or healthcare service that does not require an overnight hospital stay.

PRE-EXISTING CONDITION

A physical condition (illness) you had before you enrolled in a new insurance plan. Some insurance companies will not pay for expenses related to a pre-existing condition.

PREMIUM

Payments to the insurance company for your insurance policy

PREFERRED CARE PROVIDER

(PCP or "In-Network Provider") A physician who is part of your insurance company's "preferred provider" list. Generally, if you visit a PCP, the doctor will file all the insurance claim forms and your portion of the bill will be lower than if you had visited a physician who is not on the company's preferred list. For a list of PCPs, check your insurance company's website or call them.

REFERRAL

When a doctor suggests you go to another, more specialized physician for further health care.

KEEPING IN TOUCH...

with family and friends back home has never been easier since services like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, etc make international communication simple and free. While it's important to stay connected with friends and relatives back home, its equally important that you "disconnect" from your home country and connect with your temporary home in the U.S. You must fully embrace your life in the U.S. If your body is physically here in NC, it's a good idea to have your heart and mind here too in order to truly appreciate life in the U.S. and enjoy your time.

The Office of International Services hopes that you enjoy your time here in Raleigh. We are happy to answer any questions you may have during your stay – we're glad that you and your family are part of the NC State community. Welcome to the Wolfpack!

A special thanks to the dependents that helped us update this resource guide!

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