

Emmanuel Christian Seminary's

International Student Handbook

Welcome to Emmanuel Christian Seminary. We anticipate your presence among us. We hope this handbook will help you make a smooth transition to your studies in the United States.

If you have any further questions about your arrival at Emmanuel, contact the Admissions Office by mail at Emmanuel Christian Seminary, One Walker Drive, Johnson City, Tennessee, 37601, by phone at (423) 461-1536, or by email at jsuits@ecs.edu.

WELCOME!

Before You Come to Emmanuel

Applying for Admission

Applicants are required to make a satisfactory score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) except in special cases when the applicant is from a country in which English is the common language. A Minimum Total Score of 80 is required, with the following minimum section requirements: Reading: 20; Listening: 20; Speaking: 20; and Writing: 20. The TOEFL test is administered periodically throughout the world by the Education Testing Service (ETS) of Princeton, New Jersey 08540. Applicants should use the Emmanuel Christian Seminary Institutional code of 1189 on their TOEFL application request and test forms to ensure that ETS sends scores directly to our Admissions Office. Applications will not be processed until TOEFL scores are received. If you are accepted as a prospective student, you will need to deposit \$1,500.00 with Emmanuel.

When applying for admission to Emmanuel Christian Seminary, International students must submit certificates of financial responsibility listing sources and verification of support. This is necessary for the Registrar's Office to be able to issue your I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student). You must have an I-20 to apply for your visa. A copy of your visa or birth certification is also needed.

SEVIS is an internet-based system for maintaining information on foreign students and exchange visitors in the United States. The SEVIS I-901 fee went into effect September 1, 2004. New students and exchange visitors with a Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 issued on or after September 1, 2004 are subject to the fee (in most cases it is \$200.00 and must be paid before obtaining your visa).

Applying for your visa

You must have a visa to enter the United States. Take the I-20 form provided by Emmanuel with you to apply for the visa.

Your I-20 form is issued through SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) program by the school you are applying to for admission. You are assigned a (F-1) SEVIS ID number, which is printed on your I-20. There is also an I-20 form with a SEVIS ID number issued for each family member (F-2) that comes with you.

Bringing your family

If you have a spouse and children, you probably should plan from the beginning to bring them. You must have proof on your I-20 form that you have adequate financial support for your family during your stay in the United States.

Bringing clothing and personal items

The climate in the Johnson City area varies with the seasons. The hottest days are in July and August, when temperatures are in the 80 to 90 degree (Fahrenheit) range. The humidity is high, making it seem much hotter. The coldest days are usually in January when the temperature drops to the low teens. The average yearly rainfall is 41 inches, and the average yearly snowfall is 16 inches. Warm clothing is essential for the winter months, lighter clothing for the warm and humid months.

Casual dress is appropriate for classes — women wear slacks, and both men and women wear jeans, sweaters, etc. Dresses and suits are appropriate for church and other formal occasions.

Most Americans are interested in seeing pictures, national dress, and other items that tell about the culture and life of your country. You may also wish to bring some small souvenirs typical of your country to give to friends and hosts.

If you bring small electrical appliances from your own country, such as an iron, hair dryer, or electric razor, you should bring an adapter plug if you wish to use the appliance immediately upon

arrival. U.S. electrical current is 110–115 volts, 60-cycle AC. If you let us know before arrival what items you will need, we can probably arrange to lend you small electrical appliances.

Bringing/sending money

You will need some cash when you arrive to take care of immediate expenses — probably \$500.00 per person. In addition, you should carry traveler’s checks to cover expenses until you can establish a bank account. It usually takes about *two weeks* for banks to cash out-of-town checks. You will also need to have on hand and set aside adequate funds to cover your return trip home in the event of an emergency.

If you are being sponsored by a mission board or other scholarship, make arrangements for them to have your funds waiting at Emmanuel when you arrive. Checks should be made payable to Emmanuel Christian Seminary and sent to Admissions Office, who will see that they are deposited in your student account. If you wish to transfer funds to Emmanuel, contact the Business Office for information.

Mailing packages in advance

If you choose to mail an item to the US before you arrive and you do **not** have anyone to receive it, follow this procedure. Address the items to Emmanuel Christian Seminary, One Walker Drive, Johnson City TN 37601 USA. Write clearly in the bottom left-hand corner: “New Student _____” {Your Name} “_____ Semester, 20____” {Semester of planned arrival}. Small, manageable boxes are best.

Scheduling your arrival

If you are coming alone, plan to arrive at least two weeks before classes are scheduled to begin. If you are bringing a family, plan to arrive one month before classes are scheduled to begin. It is best to begin studies in the fall semester rather than the spring semester.

You should arrange for your transportation at least one month before you plan to leave. A number of airlines offer special discount rates, and you should make inquiries early in order to obtain the lowest possible airfares. You should know, however, that if you buy early tickets, they generally cannot be refunded or have the date changed, so be sure of your travel date when you buy them.

Please book your flight to the Tri-Cities Regional Airport in Tennessee (TRI), since this airport is nearest the school. Do not allow the ticket agent to route you to Knoxville, since that is 100 miles from Emmanuel. Tri-Cities Regional Airport is only 25 minutes away from Emmanuel and has jet service.

Once you have booked your flight, please send the Admissions Office the date, time of arrival, airline, and flight number. This information is essential if appropriate arrangements are to be made for you to be picked up. Ultimately, you are responsible for your travel arrangements.

Immigration and customs procedures

Before landing, airlines distribute instructions to their passengers explaining procedures for arrival and customs inspection. If you are bringing with you only personal belongings, you may simply write “personal effects” on the declaration sheet. Articles brought into the U.S. as gifts must be declared. Depending on the value of the item, you may have to pay duty.

Upon arriving in the U.S., everyone is required to undergo inspection by Immigration, Customs, and often, Public Health officials. If your papers (passport, visa, etc.) are in order, the immigration officer will stamp the date on your arrival-departure card, I-94 form, and passport. *Keep your I-94 with you always*; you must surrender it when you leave the U.S.

Your baggage will be brought to the terminal that you enter immediately after the immigration inspection. After you have found your baggage, you should line up for a customs inspector who may open your baggage and inspect the contents. If you have brought food with you, you should consume it before going through customs, because the customs inspector will take all food items. After he has cleared your belongings and any necessary duty has been paid, you may leave the airport or proceed to your next flight.

If your luggage is lost or damaged

If your luggage is not at the baggage claim location, assume it is lost and immediately contact the office of the airline on which you flew. They will trace the luggage for you. Ask them to deliver the luggage to Emmanuel Christian Seminary between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. when it is found.

If your luggage is damaged, go to your airline's agent and show them the damage that your luggage has received. The agent will inspect the damage, have you fill out forms, and make reparation by mail. All claims must be submitted before you leave the airport.

Housing

Please note that housing owned by Emmanuel is **not** automatically provided. You should contact the Admissions Office for help in finding and reserving housing. Unless you do so, you should not assume you have housing.

Housing, including that owned by Emmanuel, generally does **not** come equipped with furniture, dishes, curtains, bedding, cooking items, etc. When the Admissions Office is aware of a need, it will assist in helping you find these items or direct you to the most economical places to purchase them.

On the basis of the housing form that you submit to Emmanuel, the School will try to provide temporary housing until you can find your own.

Electricity, natural gas, and telephone

Emmanuel's Admissions Office publishes a brochure outlining procedures for having utility services started. In short, you will need to contact the appropriate companies to have service connected. There will be a cost for this, ranging from \$75.00 to \$120.00 for each service.

Trash disposal

Costs for trash collection are usually included in the rent; therefore you should not have to make any special arrangements for this service. When you move into your new apartment, ask the manager/owner what day the trash and garbage are collected and what you should do with yours to have it collected.

Garbage/trash is to be placed in a plastic bag and tied closed. This is a neighborhood courtesy and health preference so garbage does not smell or blow out of the container onto the ground.

Laundry facilities

Laundry facilities may be available in your housing. If not, laundry facilities are available in a number of locations with coin-operated washers and dryers that cost approximately \$1 to wash and 75¢ to dry one load of laundry.

Telephone directories

These books are provided free with each telephone. In the front of the telephone book is helpful information such as rates, area codes for other cities and countries, tips on how to save money on long-distance calling, emergency procedures, etc. It would be good to look through this. The last portion of the telephone book is called the "yellow pages" and advertises various services listed in alphabetical order.

Mail and Addresses

You should arrange for personal mail to be sent to either your new home address or to a Post Office box, which can be obtained at the Post Office closest to your residence. The closest U.S. Post Office to Emmanuel is at Milligan College, Tennessee, across the highway from the Emmanuel campus. There you may purchase stamps, send packages, mail letters, purchase envelopes and packing materials, etc.

Although Emmanuel maintains mailboxes for students, these are to be used for on-campus mail only. You will be assigned a student mailbox at registration.

Emmanuel directory

This directory is available online and includes pictures and addresses of Emmanuel students and staff. Much of the information in it does not change from year to year.

Change of address

When you move or leave Emmanuel, please notify each of the following offices of your forwarding address:

- Development Office
- Dean's Office
- Your nation's consulate
- Post Office

Churches

A list of the area churches is available from the Admissions Office. You may look in the yellow pages of your phone book under "Churches" to find a complete listing and other helpful information. There is also a list of local churches in every Saturday edition of the *Johnson City Press*.

You may wish to speak with other students who have a car about getting rides to church. It is good to select a local congregation and become involved in ministry there.

U.S. Currency

The U.S. monetary system follows the decimal system. The basic unit is the dollar and the "\$" is the dollar symbol. Bills in denominations of \$1, \$5, \$10 and \$20 are most widely used, but also come in \$50, \$100 and higher. Paper money is all the same size and color. The dollar can be divided into 100 cents (the cents symbol is ¢). Coins are 1¢ (penny), 5¢ (nickel), 10¢ (dime), 25¢ (quarter), and 50¢ (half-dollar). Since U.S. coins do not have the value marked on them in cents, it would be wise to memorize the names of the coins before coming to the U.S.

Student Accounts

Various expenses such as tuition, student health insurance, binding of thesis (for school copies), etc. will be charged to your student account at Emmanuel. Each month you will receive a record of your student account. Expenses will be itemized, and it is always wise to check over each statement to be sure there are no mistakes. If you wait a period of time before bringing your questions to the Business Office, a late charge may be added to your bill.

When you register for each semester, you are expected to pay your entire balance for tuition, insurance, etc., in full. If you are unable to do this, you must talk to the Director of Finance to work out a payment schedule. If you have been awarded a scholarship covering all or part of your tuition, this will be shown as a credit on your account. Tuition and fees will be deducted from this amount.

Student accounts need to be paid in full prior to registering for the next semester. Grades, transcripts, and diplomas will not be issued if your account is not paid.

Fund-raising

When opportunities arise for you to speak in churches, or to other groups, you may share your testimony of how God brought you to the United States and tell about your ministry in your home country. Unless you have written permission from the Dean you are **not** permitted to use this as an opportunity for raising funds to meet your financial needs. Solicitation from individuals is also discouraged unless you obtain permission from the Dean.

The reason for this policy is that churches often have commitments to give money to Emmanuel and this money is sometimes redirected to individuals. The costs of operating the school are far greater than tuition income can pay. Therefore, if funds promised to Emmanuel in general are redirected to individual students, tuition fees must be raised.

If you are having financial difficulties, please see the Dean before taking other actions related to fund-raising in the U.S.

On occasion you may be asked to do promotional speaking on behalf of your mission society and church. It is a good idea to clear this with the Dean so that no misunderstanding arises.

Currency Transfer Restrictions

Before you come to the U.S., you should become familiar with your government's regulations regarding currency restrictions and the transfer of funds. Some governments restrict the amount of money that can be taken out of the country or require specific documentation before you are allowed to transfer funds. If you need a letter from Emmanuel stating that you have been accepted to study here and estimate of the costs involved, contact the Admissions Office.

From foreign points to the U.S.

If you have a checking or savings account with an American bank that has "correspondent" relationship with a bank in your home country, it will shorten the time necessary to receive the money. The American bank can tell you if it has this status.

You should have the following information for each transfer:

- The name of the individual sending the money
- The name and location of the bank sending the money
- The date the money was sent
- The method by which the money was sent
- The exact destination of the money (receiving bank name, street address and branch number).

All money transfers take time. Sometimes uncontrollable factors can lengthen the time necessary to receive a transfer. It is wise to maintain a savings account to meet your living expenses if such a problem should occur. You should make plans to receive the money well ahead of the time you need it.

Telegrams and money transfers

In the U.S., telegrams and money wire transfers are sent through a company called Western Union, not through the post office. There is a Western Union office listed in the yellow pages of your telephone book, or to find the one nearest you call 1-800-325-6002 from within the United States.

Employment

Permission to work

Employment is defined as the rendering of services either full-time or part-time for compensation (whether paid in money or in financial aid for academic or living costs).

On-campus employment may be accepted by students on F-1 visas from the day of arrival. On-campus employment refers to work for which Emmanuel pays you. Emmanuel has limited on-campus employment opportunities and cannot guarantee to provide this help for you. If you do secure such a job, you are allowed to work up to 20 hours per week during the school semester and up to 40 hours per week during vacations and summer break.

Under immigration regulations students on F-1 visas may apply for off-campus employment after they have been enrolled for one academic year. You should see the Dean or Admissions Director for help with the application process. You **must** file the proper forms and pay the required fee to receive permission to work.

Spouses on F-2 visas are not allowed to work. There are **no** exceptions to this rule.

Health Care and Hospital Insurance

If you or members of your family need to visit a medical doctor, eye doctor, or a dentist, you will need to make an appointment and pay for such services yourself.

The following names and phone numbers are suggested to you as those who have an appreciation of your need for the lowest rates.

Family Physician: Dr. Guy Robins, 301 Med Tech Parkway, Suite 120, Johnson City, TN 37601, 794-1800.

Eye doctor: Dr. David Mills, 502 Elk Avenue, Elizabethton. 542-2512.

Dentist: Dr. Mark Webb, 523 Holston Avenue, Bristol. 968-5112.

OB/GYN & Pediatrics: Johnson City Downtown Clinic, 202 W. Fairview Ave., Johnson City, 926-2500.

W.I.C.

The Health Department operates a program for pregnant women, infants and children. Those qualifying receive selected items of high nutritional value (breads, cereals, and dairy products) and infant formula (baby food), and some basic health care. Locations are listed below.

- Health Department, 415 N. State of Franklin Road, Johnson City. 928-7125.
- Health Center, Holston Avenue, Elizabethton. 543-2521.

Please check with the Health Department for immunizations for your children. These are required for your child to attend school.

Hospitalization Insurance

All students are required to have hospitalization insurance while enrolled at Emmanuel. Unless evidence is presented of participation in another insurance plan, each student is required to participate in the school-sponsored plan. This insurance is designed to protect against major accident and disability requiring hospitalization. Except in a few instances, it does **not** cover outpatient treatment. At registration a student must either purchase hospitalization insurance or provide verification that he/she is adequately covered (including family) by another insurance company. If you want to use your own insurance from home, **be sure it will cover you while you are in the United States** and that it is adequate to cover the **high** medical costs here.

The closest hospitals to Emmanuel are the Johnson City Medical Center in Johnson City and Sycamore Shoals Hospital in Elizabethton. Check your telephone directory for other medical facilities in the area where you live.

Automobiles

Driver's License

You must be 18 years of age or older to obtain an independent driver's license. Please note that Tennessee has a financial responsibility law for every person operating an automobile.

To get your driver's license, you will need to make application at the Department of Safety. You must provide proof of your name and date of birth. Proof would be an original birth certificate, passport, or I-94 form. State law also requires the applicant's social security number on all driver's license applications.

After the application you will have to take a written test, a simple eye test and an actual driving test. Though the license may be obtained in one day, you should take time to study the *Tennessee Driver Handbook* and learn the laws before going to get your license. The Admissions Office can provide information about obtaining the *Driver Handbook*.

Seat belt law

Everyone in an automobile, including the driver, adult passengers, babies and children, must be fastened in with a seat belt at all times. Children under 40 pounds (18 kilograms) are required

to be *restrained in an approved car seat for children*. For the safety of you and your family or passengers — please obey these laws!

Buying and driving a car in the U.S.

The purchase of an automobile is not the total expense involved in ownership of a car. Insurance, state registration, repairs, and the operating costs often far exceed the actual cost of the car itself.

If you live beyond walking distance, or have a family, you will likely need to buy a car. Consider these costs before you decide to come. There is **no** public transportation to the Emmanuel campus.

Borrowing a car

If you borrow a car, you still must have your own driver's license and you must make sure the car is covered by insurance that will also cover you as a driver. (Some insurance policies will not cover accidents if anyone other than the owner and other people actually named in the policy are driving).

Auto Insurance

It is mandatory that you be covered with car insurance. Even "minor" accidents can run into hundreds or thousands of dollars in car repair bills and even more if people are injured. Please know that if you cannot afford auto insurance then you cannot afford to have a car.

Tennessee has a financial responsibility law, which means that insurance is the best way to protect yourself and others. If you have an accident and are uninsured, you may have your license taken away from you and be fined, especially in the case of an injury accident. The minimum legal coverage, which can be obtained from any insurance company, may be inadequate in the case of a major accident or if someone injured in the accident decides to sue you. Listed below are various aspects of car insurance:

Liability coverage is required for bodily injury and property damages. It pays up to certain stated limits, the sums for which you become legally liable in the event you injure someone else or damage his property.

Uninsured motorist coverage protects you and your passengers if an uninsured or hit-and-run driver causes injury, but only if the other driver is legally liable because of negligent driving.

Collision coverage pays your losses if your own car is damaged in a collision or a single car accident. This is especially valuable if the collision cannot be proven to be someone else's fault. This is generally used on newer, not older, cars.

Comprehensive coverage pays your loss if the car is stolen or damaged by fire, hail, hurricane, vandalism or most other non-collision causes.

Insurance costs can vary greatly from company to company, so it is wise to check with several companies before deciding which one is best for you and your situation. Look in the yellow pages of the phone directory under "Insurance" for other companies.

Accidents

Never leave the scene of an accident without making some kind of arrangements. If you leave without making arrangements, this is called "hit-and-run" and severe legal penalties are involved. If you hit a parked car and damage it, leave a note under the other car's windshield wiper giving your name and phone number so the owner can contact you. You are responsible for repair costs.

If you are in an accident with another moving car, you should find out from the driver and passengers of the other car their names, address, phone number, insurance company, driver's license number, and the license number on the car. You should do this whether it is your fault or not.

Any accident in which any person is killed or injured, or in which damage to property of any one person is in excess of \$200, must be reported to the Tennessee Department of Safety within 20 days of the accident. Generally, it is in your *best* interest to have a police report taken at the

scene of *any* accident. This will help protect you against possible difficulties in settling an insurance claim.

Traffic violations

If you receive a ticket for a traffic violation such as speeding or illegal parking, it is important that you pay it promptly. Failure to do so jeopardizes your driving privilege and increases the amount of your fine.

Maintenance of Student Visa

Passport

You must maintain a valid passport at all times, and it should always be valid at least six months beyond the current date. Renewing your passport is your responsibility; no one will remind you at the appropriate time, so mark the date on your calendar.

Any changes (such as extensions, application for employment authorization documents, optional or curricular practical training requests, etc.) to your I-20 are made through the SEVIS program. Any submitted changes requiring adjudication must have a copy of the new I-20 printed out and sent to the service center with the proper fees and documentation. (Check with the Dean's Office to process any changes or applications.)

When you apply for an extension of your immigration status, the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services will require that the passport be valid for six months beyond the requested extension of stay. To renew your passport, contact your country's consulate or embassy. You may obtain the address and phone number from the Admissions Office. If your consulate requires proof that you are a registered student at Emmanuel, ask the Dean's Office to provide a letter stating that this is the case.

Once you have obtained your passport, keep it in a safe place. For many countries it is extremely difficult to replace a lost or stolen passport. It is advisable to provide the Dean's Office with a copy of your passport when you arrive to keep in your file. This may help with the replacement of your passport if it is lost.

Arrival-Departure Card (I-94 Form)

The I-94 form (the small white card stapled in your passport at the time of your entry into the U.S.) governs your legal status while you are in the U.S. (Once you have actually entered into the U.S. the visa stamped in your passport does not matter unless you leave the country). The I-94 form will list your immigration status, the date it will expire, the school you are authorized to attend, and other valuable information. Those on F-1 status will also have an I-20 ID form attached with the I-94 form. Please keep all these forms.

Full load of classes

The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services requires that the school notify them if you take less than a full-load of classes during the academic year (excluding summer). If you do, your student status will then be terminated.

A full class load at Emmanuel is defined as follows:

M.A.R. student..... 9 hours per semester

M.Div. student..... 9 hours per semester

The Doctor of Ministry program (D.Min.) is done in modular courses, so students would generally come to Emmanuel for periods of less than six months and therefore enter on a visitor's visa rather than an F-1 visa. Special exceptions should be discussed with the Admissions Office.

"Credit hours" or "semester hours" are assigned to each course. Courses are generally 3 hours each.

Extension of status

The date when your authorized stay in the U.S. expires is indicated on your I-94 or I-20 ID form. You should come to the Admissions Office approximately two months before the time your I-94 or I-20 expires. You may apply to the Immigration Service for extension of status between 15 and 60 days prior to its expiration. If you are on F-1 status, your I-94 and I-20 ID should have "D/S" written on it. This means that as long as you are a full-time student at Emmanuel, then you do **not** have to apply to the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) for extension status.

Transfer to or from another school

If you are planning to transfer to another school, you should see the Admissions Officer to have the process explained to you. If you are coming from another school in the U.S. to Emmanuel, please go to the Admissions Office before the second week of classes to be sure that the transfer process is complete.

Change of visa status

If you transferred from another school to Emmanuel and are on a visa other than an F-1 or F-2 visa, you must have your visa status changed to F-1.

If you are the spouse of a student (F-2 visa) and are taking full-time courses and would like to be able to work on-campus, you must have your visa status changed. **Spouses on F-2 visas are not allowed to work.** There are **no** exceptions to this rule.

To get your visa changed, see the Admissions Office and International Student Coordinator who will work with you through this process.

Social Security number

In order to work on or off-campus, you must have a Social Security number. The State of Tennessee also requires you to have a Social Security number if you want to open a bank account or obtain a driver's license. To obtain your Social Security number/card, you should be in the United States for more than 10 days before going to the Social Security Administration Office to apply and you should have the Admissions Office activate your SEVIS record at least 48 hours before you go to the SSA Office. The Admissions Office can give you more information on how to do this.

If you obtained a Social Security number during a previous stay in the U.S., you may continue to use that number. You do not need to apply for a new one.

Social Security payments

Under the Mutual Education and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, those on F-1 visas who have received permission to work may be excluded from Social Security coverage. This means that neither you nor your employer have to make Social Security payments.

Travel

Travel Within the United States

If you are traveling from state to state within the United States, you are not required to have passports, visas, or other papers.

To enter Canada

Canada may require you to obtain a visa in order to enter the country. To determine if you must have a visa to enter, call their consulate between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. If you need a visa they can tell you what forms you will need. You must have a valid I-94 from the U.S. in order to enter Canada. You must have your I-20 signed on the *back* by the Dean or Director of

Admissions before getting your visa at the Consulate, or before entering Canada if you do not need a visa.

Travel to other countries

Although regulations may say differently, experience has taught us that ***you must have a recently endorsed I-20 every time you leave the U.S.*** You must also have valid passport, and if traveling to a country besides Canada, you should have a letter from the Dean's office saying you continue to be a full-time student. If family members are to accompany you, this, as well as the purpose of your trip, should also be included in the letter from the Dean.

If you plan to travel and a visa is required, it is best to check with the consulate/embassy that would issue the visa for all necessary information about travel regulations. The nearest consular offices for many foreign countries are in Atlanta. Ask the Dean or Admissions Director to help you.

Re-entering the U.S.

Unless you are planning to reenter the U.S. to resume full-time studies, Emmanuel cannot give you an I-20. Therefore, it would be wise to do your traveling before you complete your studies.

Expired visa

If your visa has expired, or if you have used up the number of entries it allowed, then you will need to go to the U.S. consulate to apply for a new visa. This must be done outside of the U.S. If you will be applying for a new visa in a country other than your own, you will need to prove that you have a valid reason for applying there. If you know your visa will expire before your return to the U.S., see the Admissions Officer before you leave for helpful advice on getting your visa renewed.

American Life and Customs

Problems you may encounter living in the American culture arise because you bring *your* culture with you. *Neither you nor the U.S. culture is to blame.* Visitors from other countries frequently misunderstand the following practices:

Communication

When communicating with others, look for actions that will help you better understand what the person is trying to say. Some of these actions are gestures, facial expressions, "body language" (body motions), eye contact, and voice inflections. These are correct for the speaker, but may seem strange, impolite, or disrespectful to you from your different cultural perspective.

Time

It is said that Americans live by the clock and the calendar. Certain given times are meant to be precise and allow little possibility of being "early" or "late." With doctors, dentists, professors, etc., appointments begin at the minute named. (However, the doctor, professor, etc., is allowed to be late).

In social affairs there is somewhat more flexibility. If you are invited to have a meal in a home, it is wise to arrive between 10 minutes early and the time stated. Many social affairs other than meals give a range of time within which you are expected. Receptions, open houses, buffet suppers and picnics are such events. If you are going to be over 20 minutes late for a meal or another activity that demands promptness, it is wise to telephone to say that you will be late. If you are less than 20 minutes late, an apology at the time of arrival is usually sufficient.

Punctuality is important, and people who are consistently late for appointments (whether formal or informal) are often thought to be inconsiderate.

Lunch hour

In the U.S. the lunch hour is usually from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. and many offices on campus (and some businesses) are closed during this time. At Emmanuel the lunch hour during school days is 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. In the southern mountains and the American south the noon meal is often called “dinner” and the evening meal “supper.”

Eating out

Because many Americans are busy and the use of time is an important American value, it is common for people to get together in restaurants instead of inviting someone to their home. A person might also say, “Let’s go out to eat,” which generally means that each person will pay for his/her own meal. This is especially common among students. A safe rule to follow when going out to eat is that you are expected to pay for your own meal *unless* the person inviting makes it clear that you are not to pay since you are his/her guest.

An American custom that is strange to many non-Americans is a “potluck” meal. This means that each person/family is to bring some food items, which are then placed together for a common meal.

Tipping

Tipping is usually limited to very specific situations. Usually a tip of 10–15% is left for waiters/waitresses (except in fast-food restaurants). It is often left under the edge of the plate. Other people to tip are porters, taxi drivers, barbers and hairdressers. Other Americans who do a casual, friendly service will neither expect nor want to be tipped.

Telephoning

Americans generally do not call people before 8:00 a.m. or after 9:30 p.m. (or 10:00 p.m. if the person being called does not have children). When the phone rings late at night or too early in the morning, it generally signals an emergency. If you need to reach someone before they leave for work or before an 8:00 a.m. class and the call cannot wait until later, it is acceptable to call as early as 7:30 a.m. On Saturdays, it is best not to call before 9:00 a.m.

Identification

Your driver’s license or passport will serve as identification. Local grocery stores may require that you obtain their special “check cashing card” to write checks at their store.

Informality

Many non-American students find that Americans are informal in dress, in decorum, and in personal relationships to a degree that may seem inappropriate. Do not be surprised if other students and professors call you by your first name, even when you first meet.

Friendship patterns

Compared to some other countries, Americans seem warm and open with new acquaintances. However, this does not mean that close friendships are forming. Many talks and shared experiences are necessary to form a truly warm friendship. Friendship patterns in the U.S. are generally casual and not normally of an intimate nature.

American women may seem especially forward to people of other cultures and their friendliness and willingness to talk is sometimes misunderstood by international students. In the great majority of cases, their friendliness is an accepted American code of behavior for friends and acquaintances, and they are not indicating interest in a relationship beyond friendship.

There is no rigidly structured code of behavior on the American campus today. Two things will help you: observe the American students on campus carefully, and ask questions. Americans welcome questions and enjoy explaining how and why they act the way they do. Make friends by reaching out to others.

Conversation

Many Americans find silence uncomfortable except between close friends. Thus, there is the common practice of “small talk.” Small talk deals with superficial topics simply for the sake of making conversation. These topics might include the weather, sports, courses, clothing, food, and the like. Small talk is especially useful at parties, when meeting someone for the first time, or when you find yourself in a situation where talk is expected, but serious content is not desired.

Cultures differ widely in regard to the attitude of the body of the listener. Americans expect listeners to look at them and to put aside work to listen. Conversational distance between two people is generally at least two or three feet. Standing closer than this will make many Americans nervous, causing them to lean or step back.

Gaining acceptance within a group of peers is usually related to what one says, not who one is in terms of status, family background, or educational level. Normally at a party, informal gathering or in the classroom a simple, “May I join you?” and a self-introduction is sufficient to become a member of such a group.

Greetings

As you see Americans on campus and other places, they will often ask, “How are you?” and keep on walking. This is just a greeting such as “hello.” Only if people ask this after you are already involved in conversation do they mean it as a question.

Asking questions

If you want to know something, you may say, “Excuse me, could you tell me...?” It may be slightly embarrassing asking a lot of questions when you first arrive, but hopefully you will soon have most of your answers. Ask different people and you can get acquainted as well as learn.

If, after asking other students, you do not find a satisfactory answer to your concern, go to the Dean’s Office, a friend, or a faculty member!

If you have questions regarding your academic program, you should talk with your academic advisor. Other people may unintentionally give you wrong information since they may not know your situation or the various regulations involved.

Questions regarding visas, employment, etc., should be asked in the Admissions Office. These are extremely complicated areas and what may apply to one person and his/her situation may not apply to you. Therefore, information you pick up from other students should be checked with the Dean or Admissions Director.

Culture Shock

Even with the most careful preparation on your part for coming to the United States, you are likely to have overlooked a common hazard of international students – culture shock.

Culture shock is the term used to describe the feeling of disorientation felt by most people when first living in a culture different than their own.

Culture shock affects individuals differently, even within family members. For some it is brief and hardly noticeable. For most, culture shock may cause a variety of symptoms — irritability, resentment, homesickness and depression — that will have to be dealt with for several months, possibly a year or more.

Generally culture shock has *two* low points corresponding to the length of time the person intends to spend in the United States. The first low point can be expected between months three and six, followed by a second dip during months eleven and thirteen.

Positive steps to take:

What can you do to combat the effects of culture shock? There are no easy remedies. Much depends on you and your ability to cope. There are some positive steps you can take to minimize the culture shock. The sooner you take them the better.

- **Know** your host country before you go. Seek out friends or acquaintances that have visited or lived in the United States before. After your arrival the best way to gain information is to ask

questions. There is much to learn about negotiating the unfamiliar territory of another culture. But take heart. The effort will be worth it. Learning about a new country is a rewarding pursuit.

- **Look** for logical reasons behind everything in the American culture, which seems strange, difficult, confusing, or threatening. Try to see patterns and relationships. There **is** a logical explanation for all the things you observe in your host culture. Eventually the pieces will fit together. Relax and enjoy the process.
- **Identify** an American who is sympathetic and understanding and talk with that person about specific situations and about your feelings.
- **Be positive** in your attitude, maintain faith in yourself, in the essential good will of Americans, and in the enriching outcome of your experience.

Spouses and children accompanying the student

Be aware that your spouse may experience many added difficulties, especially if he/she does not speak English. Spouses often feel lonely and alienated, especially if there is no one other than their spouse to talk to with ease. Spouses may feel unfulfilled without ministry activities and studies to keep them busy. One way to make them feel a part of the Emmanuel community is to bring home the *School Calendar* and other notices so that they will know of activities in which they may wish to participate. Several Emmanuel functions throughout the year provide opportunities to meet and know other students. Other community options are available at Milligan College and East Tennessee State University, as well as the possibility of informal fellowship groups of international students living in the area.

For assistance with English, you may contact Adult Education at Science Hill High School in Johnson City. To learn more about their English as a Second Language Program, please call 232-2201.

Children

U.S. law does not allow children under 12 years of age to be left alone. Furthermore, American custom says that when children are outside playing (such as in the park, or near the home) the mother or father should be watching to see that they do not get into mischief, hurt themselves, or make too much noise.

Children should be taught not to accept rides or food from strangers. To do so is to expose them to unnecessary risks.

Schooling for children

Each community has its own school system with nearby schools for children. In most cases, a school bus picks up and returns the children from classes at a set time each day. In some cases parents take turns driving students living in the same apartment complex or nearby community when no bus service is available.

Most of the area schools begin at the end of August, but many are on a year-round schedule. You should plan to arrive so your children can be enrolled to start at the beginning of the school year. You should bring any previous school records, and medical records including proof of any immunizations that your children have had. American schools operate from the end of August through early June and break for the summer months.

Contact Information

Address and phone numbers

Emmanuel Christian Seminary
One Walker Drive
Johnson City TN 37601 USA
Main Phone: 423-926-1186
Fax: 423-926-6198
Internet: www.esr.edu

Internet and email

Internet: www.esr.edu
Dean's office: deanoffice@esr.edu
Admissions office: admissions@esr.edu
Business office: business@esr.edu

Office hours

Emmanuel offices are open 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. They are closed Saturday and Sunday.

Checklists

On Arrival

- If you have made arrangements for Emmanuel housing or need help in locating off-campus housing, visit the Admissions Office located on the first floor of the building.
- Once in housing, arrange to have electricity, natural gas (if necessary), and phone turned on and billed in your name. The student assistant in the Admissions office can help with this. (Be prepared to pay what is called a "deposit" for some utilities. This money is returned to you when you vacate the apartment).
- Apply for a Social Security number. The Registrar's Office can give you information on how to do this.
- If you had packages sent to Emmanuel prior to your arrival, check with the Mailroom to see if they have arrived.
- Open a checking and/or savings account at a bank. You will need to bring all forms of identification, address, phone number and at least \$25 in cash.
- If you are driving a car, apply for a driver's license at the Department of Motor Vehicles in the county in which you live. The Admissions Office can give you information about how to do this.
- If you have children, make an appointment with the guidance counselor at the appropriate school to have your child(ren) enrolled.
- Attend Emmanuel's new student orientation.
- Make an appointment with the Registrar's Office to go over your passport and immigration papers (such as I-20, I-94) to be sure all are in order. The Registrar's assistant will make photocopies of all your papers.

Orientation Week

- Make an appointment with your academic advisor to plan what classes you should take.
- At the appropriate time, register for classes.
- Buy your books at the Emmanuel bookstore. You will be expected to *purchase* many of the books and textbooks you will use in your classes.

Notes