2017 Pre-departure Webinar Series – Getting Started

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Just to check first if people can hear us. If they would just give us a note in chat to say yes I can hear you.

Great! First, welcome future Hawkeyes to Getting Started Webinar presented by International Students and Scholars Services of the University of Iowa. We want you to interact with us today. If you have questions about the contents, if you can add it to the Question and Answer Log, we would appreciate that and we may answer those throughout the webinar and we will most likely answer them toward the end of the webinar. We will have a Q&A time. If there are any technical difficulties, if you want just put that in chat, we would appreciate that. For instance, if the sound stops working or starts to echo, you just let us know and we would try to fix that for you.

So, a couple of introductions. My name is Bob Gutwein, I am the assistant director of International Students and Scholars Services at the University of Iowa. I am somebody that you will meet at orientation.

My name is Andrea Siebenmann, and I am the international students and scholars advisor here at the ISSS office.

My name is Shuhui Lin. I go by Lin, my last name. I am the student support and retention coordinator in the office. I will be mostly moderating the questions and the chat.

First and for most, we want to make sure that everybody received their I-20 or at least knows how to receive their I-20. You need that I-20 to apply for your visa, so we want you to get that as soon as possible and the way to go about that is in iHawk, there is an e-form on the checklist called the eShipGlobal fee e-form, and if you complete that e-form, it will notify us that you have paid for the shipments. We can create your I-20 and we can ship that to you, it will take few days. Of course, this is after you have been admitted to the university. We are going to cover that a little further in the webinar, specifically, how to do that.

Other important things are our orientation dates here. You can look at them at the screen. We are going to talk a little bit more about that later in the webinar as well but it is important to know that orientation is mandatory, you must be here and you can come early. It will be helpful to you to get over jetlag and get settled in. You can come about thirty days ahead of time and if you do so, you really want to make sure that you have accommodations once you get here. If you booked your flight already and it is after these dates, you will need to change that flight time to arrive here before orientation. You can arrive at the Cedar Rapids Airport, The Eastern Iowa Airport and from that location there are shuttles and taxies that can get you to Iowa City and it is about thirty minutes’ drive.
So, today’s goals ... we are going to talk about few important things that you may already be aware of but if you are not aware of them, it is something to keep in mind and it is something to work on. We are going to talk about MyUI, your link to the University. We are going to talk about iHawk system, your link to my office Internal Students and Scholars Services. We are going to talk about the Pre-arrival Checklist, and we are going to talk about that extensively because that is really important and you need to have that completed prior to your arrival here in Iowa. As I said before, we are going to have some time for question and answer time at the end as well if any question come up.

Some important terms, you can read what is on the screen here and get good understanding of what we are talking about. Your HawkID is something you set up after receiving an email for admission and this is important as it is your identifier on campus. Icon is where you are going to find lots of information about your courses throughout your time at Iowa. It is also where you are going to access Success at Iowa course if you are undergraduate. Iowa One Card and Student ID number that is your photo identification card that you will receive once you arrive on campus. It is going to have some information about you on it. You are going to use it in dining hall and residences hall and as well as to access different offices. ISSS is International Students and Scholars Services and that is a place you are going to visit for immigration information, benefit information, to talk about different things, if you are having any trouble with classes or people on campus we can help direct you to the right places. MyUI is your gateway to the University of Iowa. It is somewhere where you can find important dates and enroll in courses, you can see your schedule, it is really all information you need at your fingertips and we will cover that in just a moment here. Office 365 is your email, web based email. We do ask that you check that email at least once daily and pay attention to emails coming from the University of Iowa, specifically coming from ISSS as it is going to be something that is maybe important to keeping your status.

Next, we are going to talk about MyUI and the Admission Profile. And that Admission Profile is part of MyUI. So, when you first log in to MyUI what you will find is the HawkID Login button at the top. You can login your HawkID and password. When you first login, you are going to see a number of different tiles that are available to you such as the Address Change. Once you are on campus, you will need to keep us aware of where you are living in the US. If you are living on campus, your residence hall address will be updated automatically but please note when you move out, it will change back to your home address or your phone address so it is up to you to give us the new address that you will be moving to. Next, you can see where your Admissions Profile tile is. If you click on that you will get to the admission profile and there is lot of information for you that you should be looking at right now and keeping track of. Like I said, we are going to go into that in just a moment. Name Pronunciation, this one is important. When you first arrive in the US, people may have trouble saying your name. We want people to know how to say your name so what you can do, is record yourself saying your name and people that work at the University will have access to that recording and they can hear you saying your name and be able to say your name correctly for you. Preferred Name, so some people will
come to US with a name other than their giving name that they prefer to be called. You can type that name in here and we will see it on the screen that we look at when we have your university ID and when we see your record. That way, we can call you by your preferred name.

Another section of tile here, a few important pieces, your Housing Application. We want you to apply for housing as soon as possible. Housing can fill up and we want to make sure that you have a room when you arrive here. Dining, you can sign up for your dining contract using this tile and there are actually a different number of options for you at different price levels so you can decide what is right for you. Career Services, if you want to work as soon as you get on campus there is a career services that can help you find an on-campus job. Please note that is important to talk to ISSS before taking any job so that we can make sure that is appropriate and that is an on-campus job. International Programs tile will give some information about International Programs and what we can do for you here. And last and certainly not least Academic Support. Using the Academic Support tile you can find different campus resources to help you succeed while you are here at the University of Iowa.

After receiving your application, admission sends you that HawkID password to access university online student services portal. You can use this to track the status of your application and you can start access MyUI. If you have not yet been admitted, we really want you to continue that profile like I said before.

This is what you are going to see once you log in to your admission profile and I think the most important piece if you have been admitted is the Helpful Links tab. There are lot of different information underneath that tab that we are not going into today but we ask that you please explore that and see some information that are important for you.

If you have not yet been admitted, the admission profile like I have said before is really important for you. Through that, you can accept our offer of admission and the acceptance fee. You can submit your housing application as early as possible. You can set up your university email account. You can connect to the required placement tests, in math, chemistry, or world languages, and you can download your medical history form. These are all important pieces.

Once you log in if you have not yet been admitted, here is the screen that you will see and the most important piece right here, is if you note a red bar it is going to let you know what items are missing. If there are missing items, admissions cannot make a decision on your acceptance, so it is really important again to keep watching this section and make sure that you have everything required sent to us. If you have questions about these items, you can contact admissions and they can help you figure out what exactly you need to do.

On this final slide, there are few important things I want you to note. Most specifically, I would like to point out the Immigration Documents. If you look at this section, you can actually link to the iHawk checklist and you are going to find the section that I have talked about before, the pay eShipGlobal fee, and doing that will again alert us that you paid the shipment fee and we can create your I-20 and we will ship it to you. It usually takes 4 to 6 days. Once you have that
document, you will be able to apply for your visa. You won’t be able to apply for your visa until you have this document. It is really important to get your I-20 as soon as possible. The other piece is that if you have not yet accepted your offer of admission, you should do so using the Accept/Decline function there.

I am going to invite my colleague to go through iHawk and the Pre-arrival Checklist with you.

Hello, this is Andrea again and welcome to the webinar and I would like to cover currently the part that deals with iHawk system and then also I will also walk you through the Pre-arrival Checklist. Let’s get started. iHawk is a portal developed for the use by the University of Iowa, specifically, for the use of International Students and Scholars Services. This portal is specifically dedicated to all international students and scholars that are studying at the University of Iowa. We hope that most of you who are participating in this webinar have already accessed this portal and if not let me show you how you can do this. After entering the website address in the red on this slide you will be taken to iHawk portal home page that is also shown on this slide. Here, you will have to click on the blue little button that is titled Login and it will take you to the following page which is going to ask you for your username and password. These are your login credentials that you will be using very frequently while at the university and they are also required to login to iHawk. Again, your user name is your HawkID and then the password was something that you received in the admissions letter. Both of these, the HawkID and the password have been sent to you in your admissions letter. If you have not received it yet, please contact the ISSS orientation team. We would like to also encourage you to bookmark the iHawk home webpage in your internet browser. This will become very useful to you during your studies at the university because you may be using this system quite a bit regarding your different events in the immigration status. After you have successfully logged into your iHawk profile, currently you will be sent or shown the Pre-Arrival Checklist homepage. As you will see, there are five different tabs or steps that you need to complete before you arrive to the university. The tabs are going to be the Welcome tab, Immigration Information tab, Document Collection, Success at Iowa, and finally the Orientation tab. I will walk you through each of these tabs and the different steps within those tabs in more details.

The first one, the first tab is the Welcome tab and here, as it was mention earlier, the most important piece would be to pay the eShipGlobal Mailing Fee. Again, this is required in order for you to be able to apply for visa and be able to travel to United State. After you pay online for this mailing fee the system will create a mailing label for you which will allow us to ship the I-20 form to you, to your current location abroad. Again, once you pay the eShipGlobal fee, it may take between 4 to 6 days for you to receive the I-20.

The next is the Pre-Arrival Contact Information. Please make sur to provide the contact for either your parent or legal guardian. We do not accept the information or contact for the agency that you may be working with, so please keep that in mind and thank you for following our advice on that.
Next item that we would like to highlight is this tab about booking your flight to the Eastern Iowa Airport. It was mentioned earlier that any new student is allowed to enter the United State 30 days before the start of classes or specifically the start of orientation and I would like to also show you briefly the location of the airport in Iowa within the United States. That should give you a better idea of how travel may go. Usually, whoever books tickets to Eastern Iowa Airport should be looking for the International Airport code: CID. That is the code for the Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. This is a fairly small sized airport but it is very convenient and we will be actually covering the travel arrangements in greater details during one of our next webinar that will take place on May 19th. Again, if you would like to hear more information about travel and more advice on how to best access or reach the University of Iowa then please do plan to attend the webinar on May 19th.

Let’s move on to the other item and the final item on the Welcome tab that is about the Orientation Confirmation. Again, orientation is mandatory and we would like to make sure that all new students are well arrived at least minimum a day before the orientation but we recommend more than that to give yourself some time to adjust to the local climate and time. For graduate students, we would like you to arrive by Monday, August 7th because the orientation session begins on Tuesday, August 8th. For the undergraduate students, we would like you to please arrive by Saturday, August 12th because the orientation session will begin on Sunday, August 13th. Again, the attendance is mandatory for the orientation, so if you happen to enter a date of your arrival after the orientation start date, you will be asked to adjust your flight accordingly. If you attend the orientation, it will be very helpful for you and make it smoother for your transition at the university.

The next important tab that you need to complete helps you prepare for receiving your new F-1 Visa. Here are two important steps that we would like you to complete. First, pay the SEVIS fee and then apply for F-1 Visa or confirm you already received your visa. For those of you who have not started this process yet, SEVIS fee is a onetime charge that is assessed by the US Department of Homeland Security or DHS. This fee covers federal government expenses that are associated with maintenance and administrations of the SEVIS system. This is the system where your nonimmigrant status will be recorded and updated throughout your presence during your studies here at the university or elsewhere. The SEVIS Fee that we are asking you to pay can be paid online which is very convenient and after you’ve paid this fee then you can apply for your visa, mostly because you will be asked to print receipt after you’ve paid this fee and you are also asked to bring this receipt to your visa interview. So, it is important that when you are ready to work on your SEVIS fee payment that you have a printer accessible so that you can print the receipt.

The next step would be to apply for visa at the US embassy or consulate nearest your residence. We advise and encourage you to google this information, it should be available. Also, to keep in mind is that the visa process may take different time at different consulate across the world, so please make sure to check with your particular consulate for not only the documentations
required but also for how long it may take for them to issue the visa for you. Also, one item that we would like to note is that ISSS or the University of Iowa do not assist with the visa process so please do work with the consulate officials on your visa. And then again reminder is that if you do not receive F-1 visa unfortunately you will not be able to enter the United States and start your classes at the university as planned. So, make sure you complete this particular tab as completely as possible and as soon as possible.

After completing the tab that relates to immigration documents, we would like to collect some additional documents from you or information. First would be the Biographical Information which is basically your birthday data or other biological data and then we will also be asking for your citizenship and nationality and so forth. It is a very brief e-form so please complete it. Then we would be interested in your checklist. If you see a checkbox with the Complete Placement Exams, make sure that you do complete these exams. This information will be very helpful to your academic advisor who will be able to customize the academic advice based on your academic needs. So, again, if you see this on your checklist, please make sure to follow through with these exams. Also, a little reminder that if you received a blue sheet or a letter with your I-20 or if you receive it very soon then that means you will also need to complete an English Placement Exam or EPE.

The next step on the document collection tab relates to the Health and Immunization Information. There is plenty of texts to read so please read that carefully and do follow the instructions provided here. When you have your health and immunization documents ready, please do send that information to the email address provided on that page. Just as a reminder and it is also written on this next page, is that do not get TB skin or blood test BGC vaccine before traveling to the US. All this need to be done after you arrive to the university. And students who are 18 years and younger will also be asked to fill out and submit minor consent form.

The next item on the document collection tab is regarding your High School Transcript. This is obviously related mostly to undergraduate students. Regarding the transcript, the university ask for originals only and you can either mail this original to the university or when you arrive to the orientation you can bring this in person. And as a reminder, if you do not provide the transcript during your first semester of your studies then most likely the university will have to put a hold on your registration for the next semester. So, make sure that you complete the transcript requirement as soon as you can.

Finally, the last item on the document collection tab relates to the passport and visa and then you will also be asked to upload the actual passport file with the passport photo page. The link here will lead you to the page where you will be shown the different formats and the file sizes available or allowed in order to upload successfully. If you are having problems uploading, that means that most likely you have used a file that is too big in size, so please make sure to read the parameters very carefully. Also, sometimes when the passport upload boxes not checked, it is just a small glitch in the system and instead of doing multiple upload, please just contact the
ISSS office at the ISSS orientation email and somebody will help troubleshoot this issue. One other reminder regarding passport would be that your passport should be valid at least 6 months and more after your arrival date, so make sure that there is plenty of expiration period after your arrival date on your passport. The next slide is going to be commented by Lin.

I will talk a little bit more about the Success at Iowa course. This is a required course for all F-1 undergraduate students, so if you are not an undergraduate student or you are not in F-1 status, you won’t be required to do the course. The course will be automatically added to your schedule and it will be open on June 15th. There will actually be two modules that will be due before the first day of class but we will talk more about it in June 30th webinar on academic expectations. For the checklist, please do check your university email for login page for the course and then on the checklist you can simply hit I understand and submit to indicate that you understand the requirement of the course, and as I said we will talk more about the course on the webinar on June 30th.

Alright! You made it finally to the last tab that is Orientation tab. Here, if you are ready you can submit the form to get your orientation schedule. The schedules are very personalized and they are unique to your particular situation, so please make sure that you do not follow appointments with your friends. None of the two schedules are the same, so if you are attempted to go with your friend to an appointment with them, that may not be appropriate because you may be scheduled somewhere else to meet with somebody else at that time, so make sure to take a good look at your schedule. Also, we would like to ask you that you bring your schedule with you to the orientation session and you can bring it either in printed format but also if you have download this schedule on your phone that is acceptable too. Also, on this tab, you will see Useful Links and Resources. This is primarily leading you to the page that is specifically dedicated to new students at the university and as you will see this is a wonderful page full of various information resources including the information about future webinars that we will be holding, so we would like to encourage you to please take a good look at this URL or the web link website address and again bookmark it in your browser and take a good look at this information even before you depart for the United States. It would be helpful in making your transition to the life at the university smoother.

Here are some other pages that we would like to bring to your attention and again, these pages have some Pre-Departure resources for new students and scholars, and then the other page is specifically dedicated to the orientation overview which you may find as well helpful in order to understand what is expected and what you can expect during the orientation. Finally, the last page that is shown is again about Pre-Departure Webinar Series and it will give you specific dates and time for the webinars and how you can join each of the webinars.

And this is basically closing the Pre-Arrival Checklist overview and I will give it to Bob. On the final page here, what we are asking to do is if there is any information that you need about the admission profile or anything that has to do with admission we ask that you please contact admissions and they should give you contact information and if they think it is a question that
should come to us they would send it over to us, so you don’t have to worry about that but if it seems admission related please do send it to them. Secondly, if there is any other questions such as questions about the iHawk, Pre-Arrival Checklist, about receiving your I-20 or any other information like that, please contact us at isss-orientation@uiowa.edu and that is what is listed here on the screen and those emails are answered fairly quickly. So, once you email keep in mind that there is time difference but we try to answer those within 24 hours. Here you see again a listing of our upcoming webinars and the first one is Money Matters which is coming up on May 19th. I invite you to know more about paying your bill and how the university billing works, how you can wire money to the university as well as some information about benefits and health insurance. And future webinars will talk about Making Travel Arrangement & Move-In, your Academic Expectation is a really important one Friday, June 30th. As Lin said, we will talk more about Success at Iowa during that webinar and then finally Employment Options once you are on campus, and this is for new students but it is also going to give you some information about what you can do in the future as after you’ve been here for a while.
2017 Pre-departure Webinar Series – Getting Started Questions & Answer

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Lin: There are few questions about the I-20. First one, a student says I haven’t received my I-20 yet so when can I get the I-20?

Bob: If you paid the eShipGlobal fee like we said before, that is what is going to alert us about the fact that you are ready to receive your I-20 and as soon as we get that payment confirmation, we will create your I-20 the following day and we usually ship it out the same day. Now if you requested it and did the payment on a Friday, there maybe a few days in between when you request it and when we are able to sign because we are not here on weekends and then it will go out the following Tuesday, so there could be a delay there. If you haven’t yet pay the eShipGlobal fee, go ahead and do that and we will get you your I-20 as soon as possible.

Lin: Is there are a difference if you are graduate student or undergraduate?

Bob: Yes, so if you are a graduate student and you haven’t received I-20 please contact admissions and they can help you with that.

Lin: How can I track where my I-20 is?

Bob: If you have questions whether it has been shipped or not and how to tack it, we invite you to please email isss-orientation@uiowa.edu and the people that answer that mail box can look at those individual’s situations.

Lin: Who will pick me up at Airport?

Bob: Like I have said before, for transportation from the airport you can take a shuttle or taxi. The shuttle is unexpansive especially when you have more people on the shuttle. If you see other students gathered around and you can tell they are students coming to Iowa, maybe you can try to share one of the shuttles with them and like I said, it really reduces the cost, otherwise, there are the taxis. They are little bit more expensive, but if it is an individual ride we do ask that you don’t use cubs or other people that are offering to pick you up, specifically, taxis that don’t look like taxis. If somebody says that they are taxi driver and they don’t have a meter in their car or any marking on their car, please don’t use these services as they are not licensed taxi drivers.

Lin: Another question about getting from the airport to University of Iowa. If the student arrive at Chicago, how can they come to Iowa City?

Bob: Well we do recommend that folks go to Cedar Rapids to complete their flight, so one option is to look for a flight from Chicago O’Hare to the Eastern Iowa Airport. It is a short flight; it is about 55 minutes from takeoff to landing but it is about 4 hours’ drive if you were to try to
rent a car or get on a bus. There are bus services that links Chicago to Iowa City. There is Megabus route as well as Greyhound route, those will take about 6 hours on the bus rather than 3:30 or 4 hours by car. We do recommend flying in to the Eastern Iowa Airport.

**Lin:** We also have few questions about SEVIS fee. First one, do I have to pay my SEVIS fee if I transfer my high school SEVIS record to the University of Iowa?

**Andrea:** Probably not because the SEVIS fee is usually paid when your SEVIS ID number is changed or new, and during the transfer usually the SEVIS ID number doesn’t change so in that regard you are not required to pay a new SEVIS fee.

**Lin:** Another one related to SEVIS fee is that: where can pay the SEVIS fee?

**Andrea:** The SEVIS fee as was shown during the slide presentation is best paid online and there is a weblink [https://fmjfee.com](https://fmjfee.com) and this is the government website that is recommended also by the US government to pay the SEVIS fee. You can pay online with a credit card. You will need a certain documentations and information in order to pay this fee, primarily the SEVIS ID number, and the passport information, so make sure you have all those documentations before you pay the fee. The fee is typically $200 and you are able to receive a payment receipt right away after you payed the fee online.

**Bob:** And if you try to access that by a mobile, in the past it wasn’t available but that is available as a mobile website at this point.

**Lin:** There is a question about iHawk. I have logged in to the iHawk system but found nothing on the checklist.

**Bob:** I would recommend emailing isss-orientation@uiowa.edu. They can check into that situation for you. One thing to make sure of is to check your admission profile to make sure you have been admitted to the University of Iowa, otherwise make sure that you have accepted admission and that could be something that is keeping you from having access to that part of iHawk but best suggestion is to email ISSS.

**Lin:** How about the HawkID and password to login? Where can students find it and what happen if students forget the password to login?

**Andrea:** As was mention earlier during the presentation, the HawkID and also the password were both sent to the student from the admissions office, so either it could have been an email or a formal letter from the admissions, so please make sure to review those documents carefully because that information should be on that document and then if you have forgotten the password it is very easily done, you can reset your password by using you HawkID and there should be a function called “Forgot Password” if you click on that link it will let you reset you HawkID password.

**Lin:** Someone asked: I am wondering if I need approval from ISSS before I may register for classes?
Bob: Actually, registration happens during orientation. You may need to take the English Proficiency Test on campus and that is something you will need to do before you are able to register for classes. During orientation, you will meet with an academic advisor if you are an undergraduate and be able to talk about what type of courses you want to take, what your major is, and they can help you design your course load. If you are a graduate student, this is most likely going to be done in your college.

Lin: How do I know my email address?

Lin: I will answer this question. For your university email address, you should use your first name–last name@uiowa.edu and once you login into Office 365 you will be able to check it over there. If you are not sure, I think you can always check to verify your email on MyUI.

Bob: We are trying to get some more questions here.

Lin: Can I arrive after classes start?

Bob: Like we said before, you do need to arrive in Iowa before orientation because orientation is mandatory. There happen times when students arrived after orientation and after classes has started and they were not able to register. At that point, you know sometime there isn’t a lot we can do for students that are arriving that late and for some cases, students needed to return home rather than starting school for that semester, so we do ask that you arrive prior to orientation and make sure that you attend the orientation schedule.

Lin: I know that there is going to be few questions here as well but what we will do is we will end our webinar for this time right know and we will put the recorded video on our website once we have caption it, and also with a written format of our Q & A session compiling all the questions we have for both the webinars today and then you can find the videos and recording on our website in a few weeks.

Thank you everyone for participating in the webinar today and before we let you go we do want to ask you to fill out our brief survey to share your experience participating in the webinar with us so that we know how to improve the webinars for the future. Thank you so much for participating.

Bob: Thank you everyone.

Andrea: Thank you.