**Spring 2020 Pre-arrival Webinar Series:**
**Getting Started, Travel Arrangements**

**Andrea:** Hello, hello, and welcome to our next webinar in the pre-arrival series for international students who are coming to the university of Iowa in the spring of 2020. Today’s topic is getting started and making travel arrangements. Let’s move on.

**Andrea:** If you have not attended our webinar series, it is an optional series provided to incoming international students before they arrive in Iowa City. The objective of the pre-arrival series is to help international students to arrange plans for travel to and living in Iowa City, to understand orientation expectations and responsibilities, and transition to student life in academics at the university of Iowa. All webinars are recorded and will be posted in our website and the web link is provided here on the slide. It's basically the link that has been shared with you for your webinar registration. We do our best to post the recordings of the webinars within 10 to 14 days of the webinar presentation.

**Andrea:** If you encounter any technical difficulties during the webinar, please let us know in chat function. If you have any questions related to today's topic, please use the Q and A function to post your questions. We will answer them live at the end of the webinar as time permits.

**Andrea:** If you have not received your I-20 or DS-2019 immigration document, please remember to pay the e-Ship Global shipping fee, so that ISSS can mail you this document. Only when you have your I-20 or DS-2019 document can you apply for your respective visa. This information is also contained in the pre-arrival checklist in iHawk and the address is provided here: ihawk.uiowa.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your immigration document, please contact isss-orientation@uiowa.edu and someone will be happy to assist you.

**Andrea:** Some important dates to remember: mid-October is when the residence hall applications open. This would be sometime next week, and you will be notified when this period will start. December 14 is the earliest day to arrive to Iowa City. December 15 is when the disability housing accommodation application is due. January 12 is the latest date to arrive to Iowa City and then January 13 - 17 is when our mandatory orientation for international students will be conducted. Please note that the orientation for the spring 2020 semester is mixed for undergraduate and graduate students. January 21 is when our spring 2020 semester starts.

**Andrea:** Let’s do some introductions for today’s webinar.

**Michael:** Hi. My name is Michael Bortscheller and I’m the associate director of International Student and Scholar Services.

**Andrea:** My name is Andrea Siebenmann and I’m one of the ISSS advisors. I am your webinar moderator today, and also presenting about travel arrangements.

**Andrea:** Let’s review some today’s goals. We will introduce you to MyUI, specifically the admission profile, then we will provide introduction to iHawk system that is used by all international students at the University of Iowa. We will review ISSS pre-arrival checklist, and then finally we will discuss some
travel arrangements for your arrival to Iowa. At the end we will reserve some time for live questions and answers.

**Michael**: OK now I am going to talk about MyUI and specifically your admissions profile in MyUI. So the first thing we're going to talk about is MyUI. So this website is MyUI.uiowa.edu. And this is the student information system at the University of Iowa. So you will use this system for a variety of things to update your information while you're a student here on campus. We're going to look at four of those right here. One common one is your address. Anytime you change your U.S. address, you will update it in MyUI by clicking on the tile for address change. Another tile that's going to be helpful for you before you come to campus is your admissions profile. You'll use this to access the information that I'm going to talk about in a little bit; information about your admissions profile and things you need to do before you arrive. Name pronunciation is a way for you to help University of Iowa's staff and faculty know how to pronounce your name. Your preferred name and pronouns is very useful if you like to be referred to by a nickname, if there's a name other than your official name that you want people to call you, can indicate it with the preferred name. Your pronouns of reference, for example, my pronouns are he/him/his, but if you have different pronouns, you can put your pronouns there, so that any university faculty and staff know how to appropriately refer to you. Now, for all of this information, when you want to update it, you'll do so by going to MyUI and clicking on the HawkID login. Then you'll enter your username and password. It's your HawkID and your password.

**Michael**: After you applied to the University of Iowa, the office of admissions would have sent you a HawkID and password in order to access all university online systems. Once you log in using that information, you can check on the status of your application in your admissions profile. You can find the admissions profile under the quick links and once you do that, once you click on that admissions profile tile that I talked about before, you will see this. So this is your admissions profile and one thing we like to highlight right off the bat are these helpful links. These give you a lot of information: how you can setup a guest account, how you can find out about financial aid opportunities, you can find out information about changing your address, updating your pronouns, all kinds of things under this admissions profile.

**Michael**: Now, this admissions profile will allow you to accept the offer of admission to the University of Iowa, and to pay the acceptance fee so that you can show that you are going to attend here. Your admissions profile also allows you to submit your housing application and it's important to submit your application as soon as possible. If you want more information about on campus housing at the University of Iowa, be sure to check our webinar that we held two weeks ago about housing, both on campus and off campus housing. If it's not on our website yet, it would be there in hours. You can use your admissions profile to set up your free University of Iowa email account. Even if you use another email account for your personal business, this is the official means of communication that the University of Iowa will have with you, so you need to learn to check your university email every day. Your admissions profile will also help you find any required placement tests. For example, if you're going to study at the University of Iowa, most academic advisors prefer if you take the math placement test and the chemistry diagnostic test. Even if you're not interested in those subjects, it's helpful for them to know if you do need to take a math test for something called general elective requirements.
Michael: The admissions profile also helps you download your medical history form which you’ll submit in the pre arrival checklist later on. We’ll talk about it. Now, when you’re in your admissions profile, if you scroll down, you’ll find information about the tests and documents that you’ve already submitted, and you’ll also find things that you still need to do. You see that red bar, right here? That shows which items still need to be submitted. So in this case this test student still needs to submit an acceptance fee and their official transcript, and it actually shows right below the address where official transcripts should be mailed to.

Michael: If you scroll down even further, your admissions profile will tell you your next steps. And the next steps here are getting the immigration document and you can get your immigration document by using your pre arrival checklist in iHawk. We’re going to talk about that in detail in just a little bit. Other things that you may have to do: accept or decline your offer of admission. If you accept admission and pay the acceptance fee, your place is reserved at the University of Iowa, so it’s important to do that as soon as possible.

Michael: OK. Now we’re going to talk about iHawk and the pre-arrival checklist. First, iHawk is the information system for international students at the University of Iowa. So this is the system where if you’re coming as an F-1 or a J-1 student, all of your information will be centrally stored in this system and when you log in you will do so by going to ihawk.uiowa.edu - that’s the same address Andrea mentioned earlier. And when you go to this website, you’re going to log in using your University of Iowa HawkID and your password. You're going to do that by going to the website and clicking on the blue login button we have circled here. After you click that, you enter in your hawkID and your password. One tip that we like to give people is that you should bookmark this link in your internet browser because you will be using this website throughout your time at the university.

Michael: Once you log in, your pre-arrival checklist might look like this; different people will have different checklists. This is the example for an undergraduate student who is coming to the U.S. for the first time. If you’re a transfer student or an exchange student, your checklist might look a little bit different, but you’ll still do all of the same things, you might just do them in a different order. So on these checklists we have separate tabs or steps and we’ll go through all of those very quickly. There’s the welcome, arrival information, information collection, online exams and courses, and finally there’s the orientation tab. So when you’re on that welcome tab, the first thing that you need to do is to give us your passport and financial guarantee. These are documents that we need in order to issue your I-20 or DS-2019. Sometimes students have a problem uploading their passport copy. We ask you to upload a copy of your passport. That’s usually because the file is too big. If you have a problem, if you try to submit it, but it's not working, contact us at isss-orientation@uiowa.edu. You will enter in your passport information and you’ll also give us a copy of a bank statement or some other source that shows how you’re going to pay for your study at the University of Iowa. After you do that, you'll need to submit your e-ship global mailing fee. This is a system that allows you to pay your own shipping fee online. And once you’ve done that, we’ll be able to create your I-20 or DS-2019 and mail it wherever you pay to have it mailed. So if you want to have it mailed to Connecticut in the U.S., we can mail it there. If you want it to be mailed to China, we can have it mailed there. It just depends on what you put in that system. Once you’re on the next section, we have a bunch of other things that we’ll have you fill out. The first one is that we give you information about applying for your US visa. So you will apply for an F-I or J-1 visa at a US embassy or consulate abroad. After that we collect some biographical information from you. And
then we have the health an immunization information. Now, when you're doing this form you should read the text carefully and you should submit all required documents to internationalforms@healthcare.uiowa.edu. Now, when you read that text carefully you will find out that you should not get a TB skin test or a TB blood test or a BCG vaccine before you come to the United States and the reason for that is you'll have an immunization clinic in a TB screening in Iowa City after you arrive. If you're under the age of 18 you should also fill out a minor consent form, because you have to be 18 or older to be considered an adult in the United States.

Michael: After you complete that you'll move on to submitting evidence that you've completed secondary school, in other words, your high school transcripts. The University of Iowa Office of admissions will only accept the originals, so you should either mail them or bring them to us in person. If you don't have your transcripts, you won't be able to register for the next fall semester. Then you'll be able to submit your arrival information and Andrea will talk more about that later in the presentation. And finally, you'll upload your visa stamp. After you've got your visa approved, you can take a cell phone picture of it and upload it, which will help us when you arrive here in Iowa. Remember, if you don't have your F-1 visa, you cannot enter the United States, so it's very important that you get that visa, and that you apply as soon as possible.

Michael: Then we'll move on to the online exams and courses. There's only two options here and these are only going to be required for undergraduate students, so if you're an undergraduate student, be sure that you complete your online placement exams. This is the math placement test and the chemistry diagnostic test. These will help you when your academic advisor meets you during orientation. You cannot take your English test online. And when you get your I-20, it will actually give you information about the English test which will be held in person during orientation. And finally, a required online course for undergraduates is Success at Iowa. This is a course that you will begin taking online before orientation even begins and you'll finish it during your first semester here in Iowa.

Michael: Finally, we have the orientation tab. Now once the schedules are finalized, you'll be able to find your orientation schedule here and it's very important to note that you should follow your own orientation schedule. Every schedule is unique, and you'll bring your schedule with you during your orientation session. Now if you have it on your phone, that's fine. If you prefer to print it out and carry the paper with you, that's fine as well. The last thing that we'll have in the checklist is this useful links and resources and these are links that will help you understand what things will be like in Iowa City and give you information that new students often find helpful.

Michael: Speaking of new students, among those useful links and resources is a link to our new student resource page and so if you go to our website it is international.uiowa.edu/issss/new-students. If you don't want to remember all that or type all that out, you can also just go to our website and where it says international students and scholars, you can go to new students and scholars, and then you'll find this wonderful resource which gathers all information that new students might want. You see right here we have pre-arrival information, highlighting the pre-arrival checklist. We just talked about the pre-arrival webinars series, information about visas, traveling to Iowa City, paying your bill, all kinds of things. Further down on that page, there's also information about orientation and the immigration sessions, frequently asked questions, there is so much information here that we couldn't possibly get to
it all just during this webinar alone. It's a great resource for you to go to when you have questions in the middle of the night, and you want to find an answer.

Michael: That’s all for me. Now I’m going to pass it off to Andrea so she can talk about making travel arrangements to come to Iowa city in the University of Iowa.

Andrea: Thank you Michael. Let's go right in and return back to one of the tabs that Michael has mentioned earlier, and we choose the information collection tab and specifically the arrival information E-form. This is the e-form that will inform you or give you some options to look at in terms of suggested or recommended arrival information. So first of all, we strongly recommend that you would arrive or make any flight arrangements to arrive to the Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids Iowa, and the airport location code is CID. This is really the preferred airport, and I will talk about this a little bit later, but on this e-form we are also providing a first suggestions for the local transportation options and directing you to the website of the eastern Iowa airport to find those transportation options. Secondly, there is a question where are you are going to fly into other than Cedar Rapids airport. These other airports could be Chicago, Des Moines, or Denver, or even Minneapolis. These are typically airports that are quite a bit of distance from where Iowa City is located. And so we are providing you some reminders that you will have to be responsible for securing transportation to Iowa City if you choose to go to these other airports.

Andrea: Let's talk specifically about preparing for your travel and packing and other tips that we have for you. So first of all, the most important for you to take with you would be, of course, the immigration documents and we were touching upon already the I-20 and DS-2019 forms that are obviously very important for you to get the visa. And so that’s one of the documents that you will have to have specifically you will get that in your passport. To have a valid passport, it requires that you, for many countries and cities in so many countries that are coming to United States, they’re required to have a passport validity at least 6 months into the future after their arrival to United States, so make sure to remember that.

Andrea: Then in addition to all of these immigration documents we recommend that you bring along your admissions letter that you received from the University, as well as your financial documentation that you already provided to ISSS in order to issue immigration document I-20 or DS-2019. Frequently or sometimes, more often, the immigration officers are asking for this funding documentation of new students coming to United States. Secondly, there is a link web link provided here that is a resource that was created by our university housing and dining department. And they are on this web link or website, I should say, they are listing very comprehensive a list of items that they are recommending for new students to remember to bring along. So the website address is housing.uiowa.edu/what-to-bring. OK, so if you would like some suggestions on what to bring, please go to this web page and also since we’re talking about packing, let’s just go over some few early essentials that we would like to mention. For example, it is important that students, especially in the first weeks when they are not familiar with the medical system here in United States or don’t know the doctors, it is very good to bring your own prescriptions from your home country either for prescription glasses or medications. Next, I’m going to highlight some information about electronics. Many of you are going to bring up your own phones or computers, and so make sure that you have the correct plugs or converters to be able to charge your electronics correctly. Then we also would like to mention that clothing, especially for this time of year
when you will be arriving in January, it is important to remember to bring sufficient winter clothing with you because the winters in Iowa can be very, very cold, especially if you might be caught up coming from warmer or milder climates, we recommend wearing layers and, especially if you might be walking between your classes or even into the campus. We will be talking that about the campus transportation briefly. But the next item that I would like to mention are some household items that some students like to bring along with you. But we would suggest that you bring only really some essential stuff that you feel you cannot really cook without or eat without, because there are many discount stores here in the area where you are able to purchase some of these items. And, of course, there are a lot of international students here in our community, so I'm sure that you will be able to find either others to borrow from or to purchase at the mentioned stores here on the slide.

Andrea: Speaking about preparing for your travel to Iowa. Let's talk about what you should think or remember to kind of review before you depart from your home country, or from another destination when you are traveling to Iowa. First of all, in terms of checked-in luggage, please make sure that you understand what is the weight allowance for your luggage. And you will most likely find a lot of information on the airline website about the luggage allowance. And they have a lot of specifications for different continents different countries distances, so we would not be able to go over all of this here. So please make sure just to check with the airlines that you are going to use for your flight. Next, other carry-on luggage may have some restrictions. In the United States, are these were instituted after 9/11 here and pertain mostly to liquids and other items that are being restricted. And there are couple of web links here provided on the slide that would give you an idea on what is permitted and what is not permitted to take with you on the plane. OK, in addition to those liquids, we are listing sharp or flammable objects or medications or other items.

Then also depending on the airport where you will be coming from, there could be different airport security procedures, so if you have not flown before internationally, please make sure that you are aware of these procedures and also time your arrival to the airport accordingly, depending on how much luggage you will have. If you have any questions, and so forth. So that might be something to think about. Also be prepared for maybe longer layovers, flight delays, so remaining flexible during the air travel is really the best recommendations we can give you because these days, you just never know. In winter, actually, when you might be arriving in January, there is a possibility especially around the Midwest or Iowa, that we may have a snow storm or a kind of inclement weather that may delay your flight, so that's why we're mentioning it and making sure that you are prepared accordingly. And for that matter if there could be a flight delay for you or if you missed connection and have to stay in another city for a night or something like that, please be prepared to have some funds with you so that you are prepared to spend the night or purchase some incidentals during your travel. All right.

Andrea: Let's move on to after you arrive. So, when you come to the first port of entry in the United States, you will most likely be asked to complete a U.S. customs form. This could be on paper or some larger airports have also electronic kiosks. When you arrive, you can fill out the form on the kiosk and then from there, you will move on to customs and border protection, Immigration check in, where you will actually present your immigration documents that I mentioned earlier. So, they will be checking your passport, visa, your I-20 or DS-2019, and also ask you some standard questions about the purpose of your travel and visit to United States. They may ask you for some other documents. Also at this point, you will once you pass the immigration check in, you will most likely go to retrieve your luggage and
then take the luggage through the agricultural customs checking point. And then, if it is applicable for your situation, you will need to go and catch the connecting flight. Hopefully the lines are not going to be too long or flights are not going to be delayed too much and you will be able to catch your connecting flight. Make sure that you read the departure flight boards for any updates or new gates that maybe assigned to your connecting flight. All right.

Andrea: So, since we were talking about recommending that you fly to Iowa directly or to Cedar Rapids, I thought that showing you where Iowa in general is located within the United States map would give you a better idea. And then this is the state of Iowa detailed map where you can see Cedar Rapids is where the Eastern Iowa Airport is located and then this is where Iowa City is. So the star is where you will be living in Iowa City and as you can see the reason we are recommending Cedar Rapids airport is because it’s in a very close proximity. It's only 25 miles or 40 kilometers distance, so that's why it would be most convenient for you to book your flight to Eastern Iowa Airport.

Andrea: And speaking of the airport. This is how it looks from the outside. This is the rendition after it was renovated recently. And this is how it looks from inside. This is a picture that shows the luggage retrieval carousel on the right, and then some transportation kiosks on the left. The airport is really a small regional airport, so it's very easy to navigate through. It's nothing compared to Chicago airport or Minneapolis, or any major airports that you might be flying into first.

Andrea: In terms of you getting from the airport to Iowa City, I would like to mention the following. The airport does have ground transportation options for you, and it would be very wise and highly recommended for you to please make sure that you book any ground transportation in advance of your arrival. This is because again, it's a smaller airport and the transportation may not be as readily available as for example, in Los Angeles Airport or Dallas or Chicago. So it would be recommended that you make any arrangements ahead of time. And there are several types of transportation such as taxis, limousine service, and the rideshare services such as Uber and Lyft. If you are going to take a taxi, make sure that you hail it, or choose a taxi that is originating from Iowa City and not from Cedar Rapids. If you would take a taxi from Cedar Rapids, unfortunately, it may charge you a lot of money for your ride to Iowa City. So, it's best to check that the taxi is indeed from Iowa City and going back to Iowa City. Also, a small reminder, quick reminder, that ISSS staff does not pick up our students at the airport. We just don't have the capacity and we also just don't have any special arrangement at this time to pick you up at the airport. And then also university does not have any special transportation arrangements in place.

Andrea: That being said though, I would like to show you a resource on our website again, just as Michael mentioned earlier, is the same website and under the link of travel to Iowa City, we have again some suggestions for making travel arrangements. And also we are highlighting here is something that the University of Iowa student government offers to students and there is an airport shuttle transportation. However, this is only for some specific dates during the winter break. So if you would like to use this service, make sure you go to that website, and there are some contact names that you can send email to and inquire whether they would be able to arrange for your travel outside of those days because obviously you would be arriving for your orientation earlier in January. So, make sure to contact those folks and they will get back to you and confirm whether they would be able to help you or not with the transportation.
Andrea: Alright, we have arrived to our Q+A time and we hope that we will be able to answer some questions for you.

Q&A Part

Michael: All right. So, we do have a handful of questions, but if you’re a student listening who has some more questions, feel free to submit a few more. The first question is: if I am a transfer-in student, some of those things that we talked about didn’t sound like they apply to me on the pre-arrival checklist. What do I do? And the answer to that is that if you’re a transfer student, you will not see some of the items. For example, you will not see information about applying for your visa because you already have one. But we do still ask you to upload a copy of your visa, so that we can still check you in when you arrive here on campus. Additionally, transfer students, e-ship global is optional for you. If you are planning to just pick up your I-20 in person in Iowa City, that is completely fine. A related question: are high school transcripts required for transfer students? That’s a very good question. The answer is no. Transfer students should submit their transcripts from their current institution to the office of admissions. You are not required to submit high school transcripts.

Michael: This is something for travel arrangements. How many days before orientation should we be in Iowa?

Andrea: Well, that's a very good question and one that is a kind of individual depending on how soon you feel you could be here, because it depends on several factors. But I would again repeat that the latest day, it would be January 12 before the orientation starts on January 13. Any time before that, for example, if you are an undergraduate student, you would apply for housing on campus in one of the residence halls, then their housing opens on January 11 and the 12th, so for you that would be kind of an easy answer that we would recommend that you come at least two days before the orientation. If you, however, cannot find any other flights or reasonable flights and you have to arrive a few days earlier, then we have some suggestions for you. You could certainly come earlier, but that would require that you would find a short term housing. And the short term housing, we do have some good resources on our website, where we were pointing you earlier, and where we have some recommendations for local hotels where you can stay for a few nights. So again, it depends on your budget if you could afford different distance from the campus or even Iowa City you can find different hotels, but make sure that you make those arrangements and book the rooms before. And if you are a student who, and if you would like to, you can also book, for example, an Iowa house hotel, which is located here on campus at the Iowa Memorial Union. It’s very convenient and it, I believe provide some discounts for students, so the cost would not be as high. But again, it would be recommended to make those arrangements ahead of time. So hopefully this will give you an idea about, you know, if you arrive earlier that you have some options to stay in the city before you find your own housing, for example.

Michael: Excellent. So, the next question is about placement tests, specifically: what kind of placement test can I expect for grad students? And the answer is none. Graduate students are not required to take any placement tests online before they arrive. However, during orientation, you may have to take up to two different English tests. One test is depending on your TOEFL score that you submit and if you need to take that it's called the EPE and you'll get a letter that tells you about it. The other test is if you’re
going to be a teaching assistant, and if you need to take that test, your
department will tell you at the time they offer you a teaching assistantship.
So, you don't need to do anything beforehand, but you may need to do
something once you arrive here for orientation. You'll know that based on
the letters that you get.

Andrea: And I would like to add to that in much detail we will be discussing the placement and English
tests, actually at one of our webinars, and I believe it's the one on November 15 where we will be
covering more orientation and placement tests in greater detail. So, I invite you to attend that webinar
and then at that time you will hear much more about all of those.

Michael: Fantastic. Speaking of other webinars, we have a question about: is on campus housing
available for graduate students? And as we mentioned earlier there was a webinar on housing. It may
not be on our website right now, but it will be on there very soon. And that webinar talked about both
on campus and off campus housing options. Now graduate students cannot live in the University
dormitories, but there are university associated campuses that you can, sorry university associated
apartments, that are adjacent to campus and so the university apartments for graduate students are a
great option.

Michael: We have another travel question. If I find I misplaced my I-20 when I get to the airport, what
should I do?

Andrea: Well, that would be a little bit of stress-inducing situation, but do not despair because what
most likely may happen is that the customs and border immigration officer would most likely offer you a
form that's called I-515A. And if they don't you should request that form. That's one thing that may
happen, and this form actually will permit to admit you to the United States temporarily for up to 30
days. So, when you receive this form and when you make your way to Iowa City and the University we
would strongly recommend that at, in this kind of situation, you need to visit our office as soon as
possible because we will have to issue a new I-20 for you and then help you send this to the department
of homeland security so that they can give you, extend your admission to United States for duration of
status rather than for only 30 days. So that's one item that that would be important to remember. The
other thing that can happen if you don't have your I-20 you may go through what is called a secondary
inspection at the airport. Unfortunately, that may take an unknown amount of time because they are
going to be double checking your background information as a new student, and it may actually take a
little bit more time, and if and when you were going to or you might be going to a connecting flight it
could cause a little bit ...either for you to miss the flight, so be prepared for that kind of situation. But
that's basically what may happen and to expect to happen if and when you don't have your documents
with you.

Michael: That was that last question.

Andrea: That was the last question. OK. So, we don't have any more questions. And we can move on
then to some reminders. The contact information and follow up. Something that we would like to
remind you of is that if you have any other questions about pre-arrival checklist or any other issues that
are related to your arrival, please never hesitate to contact our orientation team at the email isss-
orientation@uiowa.edu and then also, as we were referring to this website earlier through our
presentation today, you’re always welcome to visit our international.uiowa.edu/new-students weblink and website with a lot of good information for our new international students.

**Andrea:** And finally, I would like to remind you that we will be having a couple more webinars on other different topics. And the next webinar will be taking place in a week from today, on October 18, and this webinar we will discuss university billing, the billing system, billing options, deadlines and then also health insurance, types of health insurance that are offered to international students. So, make sure to register for the webinar as well as the next one on November 15. And I would like to also remind you that we also have some prerecorded webinars currently on our webinar home page and these webinars also cover different topics that we’re not able to do during our live presentations this semester. But that will give you a better idea of for example, on academic expectations, on how to get involved on campus and get culturally adjusted, and then also a very good topic an international student employment.

**Andrea:** So, thank you again, very much for attending and joining us today, and we hope to have you join us at the next webinar. Have a good day.

**Michael:** Thanks.

**Andrea:** Bye-bye.