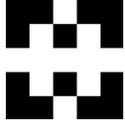


# **INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK**

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## **William Rainey Harper College**

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# **INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK**

Welcome, international students to Harper College! We are very proud and happy that you have chosen to attend this school.

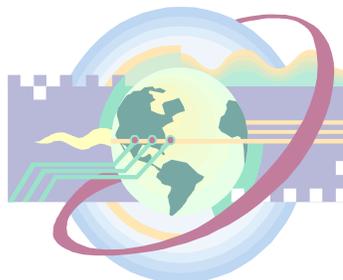
We hope that your educational experiences in the United States will be positive, rewarding, and challenging, and that you will succeed in reaching your personal, career, and educational goals.

This handbook will be extremely helpful in providing important information for you as both a college student and a temporary resident in the United States. However, when you have specific questions or concerns, please come see an advisor in the International Student Office (Academic Resource Center Building, Room F 340).

Good luck in all of your endeavors while you are residing in the United States.

Sincerely,

Jill Izumikawa, International Student Coordinator



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## **I. STUDYING AT HARPER COLLEGE**



### **HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF HARPER COLLEGE**

Harper College was named after William Rainey Harper, the “father” of the two-year college idea. Its main campus first opened to the public in the fall of 1969 with an enrollment of 5,350 students. Today Harper serves students from 23 nearby communities, as well as international students from many countries. It is the 8th largest undergraduate college in the state of Illinois and has an enrollment of 24,000 students. About 1,000 of these students study English as a Second Language (ESL). All of Harper’s courses and educational programs are fully accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. In addition, Harper’s English language program is accredited by the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation. The CEA is a nationally recognized accrediting agency for English Language programs in the U.S.



### **DEGREES OFFERED AT HARPER COLLEGE**

#### **TRANSFERABLE DEGREES (AA, AS, AFA, AES)**

Harper College has four kinds of two-year transferable associate degrees. “Transferable” means that these degrees meet the requirement of two years of full-time study towards a bachelor degree at a four-year college or university. These degrees are the Associate in Arts (AA), the Associate in Science (AS), the Associate in Fine Arts (AFA), and the Associate in Engineering Science (AES). Because Harper is a part of the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), which is a cooperative agreement made with over 100 colleges and universities in the state of Illinois, students who earn an associate degree at Harper can easily transfer to a four year college or university in Illinois without losing any college credits. At the time of transfer these students will be third year students when they enter the four-year school.

#### **ASSOCIATE IN APPLIED SCIENCE DEGREE (AAS)**

Harper also offers an Associate of Applied Science degree in many career areas. These degrees are not for transfer. Instead, they prepare students to enter a particular career after two years of full-time study.

## **GRADING POLICY AT HARPER COLLEGE**

Harper College, like most college and universities in the United States, uses an A through F system (A, B, C, D, F). A, which means excellent, is the highest grade, and F means failure.

**ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)** - ESL courses carry non-degree credit and do not count toward an associate degree. The Intensive English Program (IEP) is one of the ESL programs at Harper College. In the IEP program, students must earn at least a C grade in all classes to pass to the next level. After completing Level D, the highest level of the Intensive English Program, students enroll in the part-time ESL program, where they complete the last level of ESL reading and writing (Level 5). In Level 5, students must earn a grade of A or B in both reading and writing in order to qualify for college English.

**DEGREE CREDIT COURSES** - Although D is a passing grades for degree credit courses at Harper, some four year schools will not accept a D grade from transferring students.

### **GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)**

Your GPA is very important. You must have a 2.0 GPA to graduate from Harper with an associate degree. To transfer to some universities or to pursue certain majors, a GPA much higher than 2.0 may be necessary.

This is the way to calculate your GPA. Most colleges, including Harper, use a 4-point scale to assign points to each grade:

$$A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0$$

If you multiply the number of grade points you earned for a class by the number of credit hours of that course, you will get the total grade points earned for that course. Do this for each course you have enrolled in and add the total grade points. Next, divide the sum of these by the sum of the credit hours you have enrolled in.

Here is an example that shows how to calculate your GPA.

<u>Class</u>	<u>Grade Received</u>	<u>Grade Point</u>		<u>Credit Hours</u>		<u>Total Grade Points</u>
MTH 103	B	3	x	4	=	12
ENG 101	C	2	x	3	=	6
BIO 110	A	4	x	<u>4</u>	=	<u>16</u>
				11		34

34 divided by 11 = 3.09 GPA

Your grade report from each semester includes your GPA for that semester (“semester GPA”) and your cumulative GPA (GPA for all degree credit courses you took at Harper College).

### **FORGIVENESS POLICY**

Under this policy it is possible for a student to petition to have an F grade excluded from the GPA if he/she repeats the class and earns a successful grade.

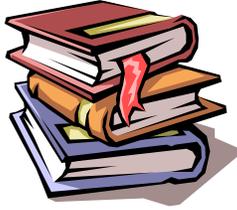
### **ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY**

Most colleges in the United States, including Harper, expect students to be honest in their work. Cheating is seen as a serious offense. This means, **DO NOT**

- look at another person’s paper during an exam
- look at your notes or books during an exam unless the teacher gives you permission
- give someone else answers to an exam question
- copy someone else’s writing and present it as your own
- copy homework answers or have someone else do your homework

### **STUDENT COMPLAINTS**

The college has a complaint procedure for students who believe they have been treated in an improper, unfair or discriminatory manner. You can see an explanation of the procedure in the Harper College Catalog. Look in the index for **Student Code of Conduct and Dispute Resolution Procedures**. The advisors in the ISO are also available to discuss students’ concerns and to guide students in the proper complaint procedure.



## BUYING YOUR TEXTBOOKS

If you are a degree credit student, you can buy your books in the bookstore before classes begin. The bookstore is located in the Liberal Arts Center, L260. You must know the course numbers **and section numbers** of your classes because all sections of a course may not use the same textbook. The section number is the three digits after the course number, for example, ENG 101-003.

If you are in the IEP or taking other ESL courses, you should not buy your books until after your first class. Your teachers will tell you which books you should buy.

When you buy your books, look for used ones if you want to save money. These are less expensive than new ones and are available for many courses. Also you can usually sell your books back to the bookstore at the end of the semester if you keep them in good condition and do not write in them.

Be sure to keep the receipt when you buy your books. If for any reason you have to return some books, you will need the receipt to get your money back.



## TRANSFERRING

If you need help finding the right school to transfer to, Harper offers several ways to help you. One way is by inviting representatives of four-year schools to come to Harper to talk to students and answer their questions. The college also offers visits to other colleges and universities. Harper provides the transportation, and you travel with a group of students to see a college you are interested in learning about. Talk to one of the Academic Student Advisors in D142 or I117. The advisors in these centers can also give you information about various schools and those courses that transfer for a particular degree or university. They can also provide you with the schedule both for representatives' visits and campus tours.

## II. SERVICES AND RESOURCES AT HARPER



### TUTORING

Students who are having difficulty with course material can get free individual tutoring for many courses. Tutoring for degree credit classes is offered at the Tutoring Center of the Academic Resource Center, F315. ESL tutoring is offered in the back of the ESL language lab, F342.

### LIBRARY

The Library is located on the first and second floors of the Academic Resource Center (F). There you will find books, magazines, videos, audiotapes, films and DVDs. All of these can be used in the library, and many of them can be checked out to take home. The computerized on-line catalog and a network of listings of journal and magazine articles will be helpful for research projects. If you need help finding materials, ask the reference librarian. He/she will be happy to help you.



### INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OFFICE

The advisors in the International Student/ ESL/Linguistics Office, F340 of the Academic Resource Center, are here to help you. Some of the reasons students see advisors

immigration and visa questions  
personal problems  
getting a driver's license  
academic counseling  
insurance and health care

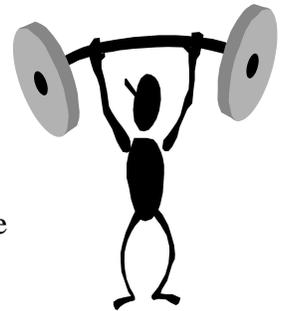
career program information  
getting a social security card  
cultural adjustment issues  
information about social events

## CAREER CENTER

If you have questions about your major or your future career, the Career Center in A347 is the place to go. Career counselors there can help you get information about careers, learn about the educational and performance requirements of specific careers, find out which careers are expected to be in demand in the U.S. job market, assess your interests and abilities, learn how to write a resume and prepare for a job interview. They can also direct you to books in the center and web sites where you can research for additional information.

## BENEFITS FROM YOUR ACTIVITY FEE

When you registered as a full-time student, you paid an activity fee. This fee gives you the right to many services and activities. You can:



- USE the gym, swimming pool and weight room during open recreation and community recreation program times. Go to the Wellness and Sports Center, M219, to check the schedule.
- BE a part of a student club or organization. This is a great way to have fun and make new friends who have similar interests to yours. You can get information about these groups in A336 of the Student and Administration Center.
- GET discount tickets to area movies, sports, music, and theater events. Information is available at the Harper Box Offices J135 and R133.
- ENJOY films, concerts, plays, art exhibits, and lectures at Harper. Many of these events are free. Others have reduced price tickets for students. Contact one of the Harper Box Offices, J135 or R133 for information and tickets.
- GET free copies of the Harper newspaper, The Harbinger and the visual arts/literary magazine, Point of View.
- ATTEND intercollegiate and intramural sports events on campus for free.





### III. REMAINING IN LEGAL STATUS

#### SCHOOL AND WORK REGULATIONS

As an international student, it is very important that you follow all of the immigration laws in the United States. In recent years these laws have become much stricter than they were in previous years. Although you may know students who have not obeyed all of the laws and have not gotten caught, do not be tempted! The violation may not be noticed immediately, but it may be recognized at a future time and bring consequences that will be very serious for you. Here are some regulations you must know and follow:

- Be a full-time student. You must enroll in at least twelve credit hours during the spring and fall semesters. If you are in the IEP, you must take 14 credits (Level A) or 15 credits (Levels B, C, and D). You also must be making normal progress toward completing a full-course of study.
- Work only on campus. Except for special circumstances that must first be approved, you cannot be employed in the community. Also, on-campus work cannot be more than 20 hours a week while school is in session. It may, however, be full-time during vacation periods as long as you intend to register for the next academic term at Harper.
- Keep your passport valid. Passports should be renewed before they are six months out of date.
- When there are five months or less before the completion date on your I-20, seek the advice of an international student advisor.
- If you move, report the change of your residence to the International Student advisor of the college within 10 days of your move. The advisor will inform the government of the change of address.
- If you plan to transfer to another school, inform one of the international student advisers.
- Whenever you plan to travel outside of the U.S., you must take your I-20 to the ISO so it can be signed by a Designated School Official. You should do this two or three weeks before you plan to travel. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT! You may not be able to reenter the U.S without the signed I-20





## Form I-94



The small white card that the immigration officer stapled into your passport at the airport is called the I-94 card. It is an arrival-departure card. It shows your visa status (F-1, B-1, B-2, J-1, etc.) and proves you have permission to be in the United States. Either an expiration date or the letters “D/S” are in the upper right hand corner of the card. International students have “D/S”. These letters stand for Duration of Status and mean that you, as an international student, can remain in the United States as long as you are studying toward your academic goal.



## Form I-20

The I-20 form is the Certificate of Eligibility for Non-Immigrant Student Status and is used by international students to get an entry visa into the United States. This form should be kept in your passport.



## WHAT IS SEVIS?

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is a Web-based system that links schools with U.S. government agencies. It is used to monitor and enforce regulations for F-1 students and exchange visitors. The school is required to enter information about international students into this system. If students are found to be violating their status, they will be required to leave the U.S.

## IV. TIPS ABOUT AMERICAN CULTURE



### SAFETY ON CAMPUS

Although criminal activity is not frequent at Harper College, it is good to remember these safety tips to keep both you and your belongings safe on campus:

Always keep your books and personal property with you.



Lock your car when you leave it.

If you are walking on campus after dark, walk with a friend or classmate.

Always drive and walk slowly when there is snow or ice on the ground.

If you have an emergency on campus, call **PUBLIC SAFETY** at **6211**. They can also be reached for non emergencies, such as a car that won't start, at 6330. There are telephones located in the hallways of most buildings. There are also emergency call boxes in all parking lots. They are located on a light pole, are lighted and have a sign identifying them.



### OTHER SAFETY RULES

If you must walk in an area where there are not many people, walk quickly and with confidence. Look like you know where you are going.

Do not carry large amounts of money with you. Use checks or credit cards for shopping.

Do not leave personal belongings in your car where they can be seen. Put them under the seat or in the trunk.

If you are involved in a traffic accident, get the name, address, phone number, and the insurance company of the other person involved. Also, write down his car license number. Call the police to report the accident.

Don't get "Scammed". This means don't get tricked or deceived. Here are some Ways to avoid getting scammed:

- Don't lend money to anyone, especially strangers.
- Never give your credit-card number, bank account number, or Social Security number to anyone unless you are buying something.
- Be careful about ads and telephone offers that ask you to send money, pay a processing fee, or give your credit card number before they send you complete information about what you are buying. If someone tells you on the phone or through the mail that you "have won a prize" or "have been chosen for a free vacation", say, "No, thank you". This is a way that people are tricked to buy something they don't want.

## BANKING



It is not wise to keep large amounts of money with you or in your home. Instead, you should open a bank account. A checking account is a convenient and safe way to pay for weekly purchases and monthly expenses. In addition to a checking account, many people also open savings accounts, which give them a way to earn interest on their money. Since checking account fees and savings account interest rates vary, you should check the rates at several banks before you decide where you want to open an account.

To open a bank account, you will need to fill out a form and deposit money (usually at least \$50 - \$100). Some banks allow you to set up an account from abroad and to write U.S. dollar checks on funds that are deposited in your home country.

It is also common in the United States to use credit cards to make purchases. Banks issue credit cards such as VISA or Master Charge, which can be used at many places. Also, major department stores issue credit cards which can be used for purchases only at their stores. Keep your credit card numbers in a safe place at home in case the cards become lost or stolen. If this happens, immediately call the store or bank that issued the card and report the loss. If you don't do this and someone else uses your card, you will have to pay

the charges. Be sure you keep a record of how much you are charging on your credit cards. The amount you spend can add up quickly! You will receive a bill for your credit cards every month, and if you do not pay within about 15 days, interest or a finance charge is added to your bill.



## **CULTURE ADJUSTMENT**

Adjusting to a new culture is difficult, and it is common for international students to experience a degree of culture shock. When you first arrive, you will probably feel excited to see and experience the parts of life in the United States that are different from those in your native country. After a while, however, this excitement may begin to be replaced by feelings of frustration, anger and sadness when you experience problems in dealing with everyday life situations that you took for granted in your home country.

The school system may be much different here than in your home country. For example, in your country students may have to follow a series of courses and a set schedule determined by the school, whereas in the U.S. you are allowed to select courses and times of classes from various possibilities. This can seem strange and even overwhelming.

Classroom expectations also can be very different from those which you faced in your home country. International students are sometimes surprised that American professors are very informal. They may dress casually and some of them expect students to call them by their first names. American professors also usually want students to be active participants in the classroom. They expect students to express their opinions and ask questions. This is much different from classrooms in many other parts of the world. The grading system in America may also be different from the system in your country. For example, unlike some countries in which a student's grade is based on the final examination alone, at Harper College and many other colleges in the U.S., attendance and participation, as well as daily homework assignments help determine a student's final grade.

You may also be surprised by the behavior of some American students in the classroom. Some of it may seem rude to you. For example, students may sit with their feet on the

desk or chair in front of them, they may eat or drink in the classroom, or they may sleep. These are behaviors which may be totally unacceptable in your country.

The differences you encounter in this new culture may lead you to notice some unpleasant physical and emotional changes. You may find you are having difficulty sleeping, that you are experiencing headaches or stomachaches, and that you don't want to be with people. These are all symptoms of culture shock. Keep in mind that **these negative feelings are a normal part of cultural adjustment** and that **they will grow weaker with time**. You can help yourself by talking with classmates who may be experiencing similar feelings, or by meeting and discussing your frustrations with an international student advisor. Take time for exercise and get involved with activities where you can make new friends and learn more about American culture. Join a club at school. Invite someone you've met to a movie or for lunch. Continue to make attempts to build a friendship, even if your first invitation is not accepted. Be aware that in a fast-paced and self-reliant society like America, although people may act friendly, close friendships need time to develop. Be patient and don't give up! In time you will have new friends and feel more comfortable with this new culture.

