Welcome Home

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PACKET
Welcome, International Students

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Message from the Dean
Welcome to Keck Graduate Institute!

I want to congratulate you on choosing KGI as the next step in your educational and professional career. At KGI, everything we do is focused on preparing you for the real world. From creating a robust and relevant curriculum focused on solving real industry needs, to enhancing your educational experience with hands-on projects, to hosting several professional and networking events, our motivation is to ensure you will be uniquely prepared to obtain an industry position after you graduate.

Of course, we would like for you to have a balance with your studies. I also encourage you to take full advantage of being in the United States and a part of the KGI campus! Our Office of International Students and Scholars will provide several opportunities to explore the southern California landscape and learn about other cultures. Our Student Affairs team, along with KGI’s Student Government, plan several fun social events throughout the year. There are also a myriad of campus clubs for you to choose from (and you can always start your own!). Lastly, being a part of The Claremont Colleges also means that you have access to the activities and resources across the seven college campuses. You will learn more about these fantastic resources at our orientation program.

I look forward to meeting you at International Orientation in August. Until then, if we can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us. You will find a full directory of offices in the back of this publication. Safe travels!

Regards,

Sofia Toro

Sofia Toro

Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid
Contact Us
KECK GRADUATE INSTITUTE

Office of International Students and Scholars
Admissions and Financial Aid
535 Watson Drive
Claremont, CA 91711
Phone: 909.607.8586
Fax: 909.607.8086
kgi.edu/international

Skype @IntlKGI

Google Chat/Hangouts intlkgi@gmail.com

Instagram @kgiglobal

General Program Inquiries admissions@kgi.edu

Immigration Inquiries international@kgi.edu

Social Media

Fb kgi.edu/facebook
Ig kgi.edu/instagram
Tw kgi.edu/twitter
Li kgi.edu/linkedin
Fl kgi.edu/flickr
Yt kgi.edu/youtube
Pc kgi.edu/itunes
Get Ready to Come to the USA
Getting a Visa

You must obtain a student visa from a U.S. embassy or consulate. Do not enter the U.S. on a B (tourist) visa or visa waiver program as you will not be able to study.

You can find your embassy/consulate office by visiting usembassy.gov. If your country does not have a U.S. embassy or consulate office, you may go to a neighboring country to apply.

Please check with your embassy or consulate for current application procedures, required documents, and processing times. We recommend making your appointment only after you receive your I-20/DS-2019. At minimum, you will be required to submit the following when applying for your visa:

- KGI I-20 (for F-1 visa) or DS-2019 form (for J-1 visa)
- Admission Letter
- Nonimmigrant visa application form DS-160
- Visa application processing fee receipt (for information visit the U.S. Embassy or Consulate website where you will apply for your visa)
- Valid passport (must be valid for at least six months)
- Passport-style photo (2” x 2”)
- SEVIS fee payment receipt (pay at fmjfee.com using the information on your I-20/DS-2019)
- Proof of financial support to cover amount listed on your I-20/DS-2019
- Evidence of intent to return to your home country—this is very important. At the interview, you will need to explain your study plans in the U.S. and how they will benefit you when you return home.

Note: Most Canadian citizens are not required to obtain a student visa. Instead, Canadians present an I-20 and proof of financial support at the port of entry to be issued an F-1 student visa (Canadian citizens must still pay the SEVIS fee).

KGI is unable to intervene on your behalf and cannot guarantee visa issuance. The U.S. consular officer will determine whether you qualify for the student visa.

Tips for your Visa Interview

Prove Strong Ties to Your Home Country

The most common reason for visa denial is because the consular officer feels the student will not return to his/her home country. Be prepared to show that you have strong reasons for returning home after your studies. Take any documentation that will help you show this (for example, a job offer or support letter from your current employer).

Talk About Your Study Plans

Be prepared to explain how your studies in the U.S. will help you in your professional career when you return home. DO NOT REHEARSE A SPEECH. Think about your responses, but let your answers come naturally, and be prepared for follow up questions.

Explain Yourself Clearly

Consular officers have limited time. Keep your answers short and to the point; answer only the question that is being asked.

Minimize Plans to Work

Many students plan on working in the U.S. to support themselves. However, your main purpose in coming to the U.S. is to study. Do not focus on any employment benefits during your interview. If asked, be prepared to explain how any employment benefit (for example, OPT) will prepare you for a career at home.

Be Pleasant and Natural

Remain calm and be friendly throughout the process. Do not argue with the officer. If you are denied a visa, ask for a written reason of the denial and for a list of documents that will help you make a stronger case in the future.
Port of Entry Process

You can enter the U.S. up to 30 days before the start of your program. Upon arrival to the United States a U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officer (CBP Officer) will review your documents and decide to grant you entry.

Documents Needed at Port of Entry (P.O.E.)

Carry these items in your carry-on bag—they will be needed when you enter the U.S.:

- I-20/DS-2019
- Valid Passport (must be valid for at least six months)
- Valid F-1 or J-1 visa (valid for at least six months)
- I-901 SEVIS Fee receipt
- Proof of finances
- Admission Letter

If you do not have these documents with you, you may be denied entry! Make sure to keep them with you and do not put them in your checked luggage bag.

Also, bring your new address in the U.S. with you. You may need to provide the address at the P.O.E. If you do not have your new address yet, you can use KGI’s address:

Keck Graduate Institute
535 Watson Drive, Room 16
Claremont, CA 91711

U.S. VISIT Biometrics

You will generally be asked to provide a digital fingerprint scan and to take a photograph upon entry. This is called the U.S. VISIT biometric procedure. This is standard, and you should follow through with the request.

I-94 Entrance Card

All students entering the U.S. are issued an electronic I-94 admission number. You can download your I-94 card within 72 hours after arrival by visiting i94.cbp.dhs.gov. If you are given a paper card, staple this into your passport, across from your visa page. You will need to turn in the card when you depart the U.S.

Secondary Inspection

Occasionally, students are asked to wait to speak with an additional officer before being allowed entry into the U.S. This is called secondary inspection. There are many reasons you may be sent to secondary inspection. The most common reason is because of a previous termination or cancellation of a SEVIS record (previous I-20/DS-2019 record).

It is wise to plan at least three hours in between connecting flights to account for the possibility of being asked to go through secondary inspection. If you are asked to go to secondary inspection, you will wait in a room until it is your turn to be seen—stay patient and relaxed during this process. Sometimes an officer will collect your documents, do some research, and send you out of the room without speaking to you. This is done in cases where their additional research has answered their questions. Sometimes, though, the officer will need to speak with you directly. If you are asked to speak with an officer, answer his or her questions in an honest, calm, and friendly manner. Do not argue with the officer. When your interview is done, the officer will give you back your documents and most likely tell you to continue with your journey.

Zero tolerance drug policy

The U.S. has a no tolerance policy on drugs. Any prospective entrant to the U.S. who admits to or is strongly suspected of engaging in drug use (including marijuana) will be denied entry. You should understand that a port of entry official may seize and search your phone or laptop. Be mindful of any photos or insignia that may cast you under suspicion.
Welcome, International Students

Travel Tips and Airport Pick Up

You should arrange your flight in time to join us for International Orientation. It is very important to be at orientation—do not miss this important event! You should also only arrange your flight after you have obtained your visa. Please visit kgi.edu/orientation for your orientation date.

Choosing an Airport

Ontario (ONT) is the closest airport to KGI (9.4 miles or roughly 15 kilometers). Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) is roughly 48 miles (about 78 kilometers) from Claremont.

Airport Pick Up and Temporary Homestay

International Place (I-Place) of The Claremont Colleges offers airport pickup and temporary host family services. Students arriving alone can stay with a host family for a few days, during which time they can adjust to the Claremont community and finalize housing processes. You can find information on these services on their website: iplace.claremont.edu/new-students

Private Transportation from the Airport

If you do not request International Place’s Airport Pick Up, it might be helpful to arrange transportation in advance. You can find information on Ontario airport’s ground transportation services at flyontario.com/parking-transports. You can find information on LAX’s ground transportation services at flylax.com/lax-traffic-and-ground-transportation. Please be mindful of the day and time you will be arriving if you will be making private transportation arrangements, especially if you are staying with a homestay family.

Packing

Los Angeles County is located in Southern California, and typically enjoys warm weather, so pack accordingly. You will not need a thick winter coat here!

Check out the Ultimate Travel Checklist created by Projects Abroad for suggestions on what to pack. You can find the list here: https://docs.projects-abroad.co.uk/uk/blog/the-ultimate-travel-checklist.pdf

We also recommend bringing a traditional piece of clothing for International Week celebrations, the International Festival (iplace.claremont.edu/events/festival/), and other cultural events. Clothing is a wonderful way to share your culture with others. There are also opportunities for student performances, so if you need something to show off your talent (for example, a specific outfit or musical instrument), consider bringing that with you as well.

Lastly, as a KGI student you will make several industry presentations and have the opportunity to attend many professional networking opportunities. It is highly recommended that you bring professional attire with you (i.e. suit jackets, dress shirts, and professional dress shoes).

If you take any prescription medicines, please arrange to bring a 30-day supply with you to the U.S. It can take some time to set up your prescriptions here.

Seasonal Temperatures (Average)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Average Temperature</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
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<td>March</td>
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<td>September</td>
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<td>October</td>
<td>80°F</td>
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<td>November</td>
<td>73°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>68°F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Don’t forget

Do not pack your I-20 and passport in your checked luggage! Put these in your carry-on bag with your SEVIS fee receipt, proof of finances, and admission letter.
Mobile Phones

We recommend that you contact your current provider to ask about a temporary international plan or use the CampusSIMs card service offered (you will receive your CampusSIMs SIM card and instructions with your I-20, but can read about the program here: campussims.com). It can be helpful to set up a plan on your current mobile phone for at least one month. This will give you time after you arrive in the U.S. to compare plans from different providers.

Mobile phones are commonly referred to as “cell phones” in the U.S. Most cell phone contracts are for two years, but some cell providers have month-to-month and/or pre-paid plans. You will need to decide which plan is best for you. You can view a list of the most common providers on the International Place website: iplace.claremont.edu/living/cell-phones/.

Medical Insurance and Immunizations

Medical Insurance

Medical insurance is needed to see a doctor in the U.S. All international students are automatically enrolled in KGI’s medical insurance. Though the KGI plan will cover most of your regular needs, you may wish to purchase supplemental insurance from a private vendor when you arrive. In addition, you can choose to opt out of KGI insurance by purchasing a plan from a U.S. provider that meets our minimum requirements. For links to the Student Health Insurance Information site and a Quick Guide to Using Insurance, please visit our Current Students page at kgi.edu/international-current. You’ll find these items under the Informational Guides and Checklists header.

For a link to California’s public insurance marketplace, please visit coveredca.com. Make sure that you properly disclose your immigration status on any health insurance applications. You are eligible for these services, but not disclosing that you are an international student is against the law: coveredca.com/individuals-and-families/getting-covered/immigrants.

Immunizations

The Student Health Center (services.claremont.edu/student-health-services/) requires proof of the following immunizations and tests:

- Measles, Mumps, Rubella
- Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis
- Meningococcal Tetravalent
- Tuberculosis Test

All students must submit the Student Health Services Entrance Form (found on the Admitted Students page under Coming to KGI: kgi.edu/international-admitted) showing test results. If you are unable to obtain proof of these tests/immunizations, you may have them completed at the Student Health Center after you arrive. This form also recommends other vaccinations, but you should also ask your doctor about further recommendations. You can submit the form directly to the Health Center or bring a hard copy to your international student check-in appointment.
Families

Your spouse and children (under the age of 21) may come with you to the U.S. as an F-2 or J-2 dependent. They may stay in the U.S. as long as you maintain your legal status. It is important to consider the needs of your dependents in advance.

Schooling

F-2 adult students may study part time only. J-2 adult students may study full or part time. Part time is typically defined as one or two classes a term, depending on the school. Minor dependents (under the age of 18) may study full time.

California has mandatory schooling laws for kindergarten through 12th grade (typically 5 years old to 17 years old). Schooling months are typically late August or early September through late May or early June. If your child will need to attend school in the U.S. it can be helpful to start the process immediately upon arrival to the U.S.

Once you have determined where you will be living, you can find a school close to you. You can find a list of schools in the area by visiting cusd.claremont.edu/directory (please note the incorrect spelling of the word 'directory' if typing the link manually). You will need to visit the school nearest to your home address in person to begin the enrollment process. You will need to bring your child’s passport and birth certificate, immunization record, and if possible, a letter from your child’s current school saying what grade level they should be placed into in the U.S. Otherwise, you can suggest an appropriate grade level based on your child’s age and grade back home.

For additional resources, the Claremont Unified School District’s contact information is:

107 W San Jose Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711
909.398.0609

Social security number (SSN)

What is a Social Security Number (SSN)? Do I need one?

A social security number is a number issued for the purposes of employment. You cannot apply for a SSN unless you get a job. However, you may be asked for one when filling out applications for things like apartments and cell phones. That is because a SSN is used to access a person’s credit history. Credit history allows lenders to see if the borrower is responsible.

What should I do when asked for one?

Tell the person asking you are an international student and do not qualify for an SSN. They will help you in a different way. You will probably be asked to pay a higher cash deposit for your service. This deposit can typically be returned to you after a period of time. Ask when you are eligible to have the deposit returned to you so you can follow up at that time.
Working

F-2 dependents cannot work. J-2 dependents may apply for work authorization through the U.S. government. The Center for International Studies and Programs can assist J-2s with this application process after you begin your studies.

Dependent Medical Insurance

All persons in the U.S. are required to purchase health insurance. The KGI medical insurance plan will only cover you; you will need to purchase dependent coverage separately. You can purchase this coverage through our health insurance vendor or try searching for individual plans in the public insurance market (see section on Medical Insurance).

Admissions Requirements

Please check your admission letter for any items you may still need to submit to solidify your admission to KGI. Please note that official transcripts indicating that your degree has been conferred is required prior to matriculating to KGI. If this or any other item is needed, we encourage you to work on satisfying the requirements prior to leaving your home country. Some transactions (such as getting official transcripts from your school) can be much harder to do from the U.S. Avoid the hassle and take care of this now! If you have any questions about the documents you need to submit, please contact the Admissions team at admissions@kgi.edu or +1.909.607.8590.

Additional Requirements

As an admitted student you will also be asked to complete a few additional steps to help prepare you to join KGI. You will receive instructions on these items (for example, creating your Sakai account or completing Summer Ramp Up) via email. It is important that you follow the directions provided.

KGI Orientation and International Student Check-In Appointments

You will receive information about KGI’s upcoming orientation in email. Updated information on orientation will also be posted to kgi.edu/orientation. Orientation is mandatory so it is very important that you make plans to arrive in the U.S. in time to join.

When you arrive to the U.S., you will need to have a check-in appointment with your international student advisor. You will be sent instructions for signing up for a check-in appointment via email. Please plan to bring the following items to your check-in appointment:

- Passport containing F-1 visa
- I-94 entrance record (print or download and email to international@kgi.edu). You can access your I-94 record at i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94 within 72 hours of your arrival.
- U.S. local address information (even if temporary)
- Student Health Services form (you may also submit this directly to Student Health)
“Coming to KGI” checklist

Ready to come to KGI? Make use of this checklist to help make your transition a smooth one!

☑ Submit your SEVIS I-901 fee and make an appointment to obtain your visa

☑ After your visa is granted, arrange housing and select your flight in time to attend orientation

☑ Contact International Place for airport pick up and temporary homestay services, if needed

☑ Notify your current bank about traveling to the U.S. Ensure you can access your funds from within the U.S.

☑ Work with your doctor to complete the Student Health Services form

☑ Set up a mobile phone plan for use in the U.S.

☑ Work on completing any outstanding admissions requirements

☑ Complete any additional steps needed to become a successful KGI student (i.e. setting up Sakai). You will receive additional instructions from KGI via email at the appropriate time.

☑ Arrange your international student check-in appointment. You will receive instructions for arranging your appointment via email at the appropriate time.

☑ Pack—remember to bring a special cultural outfit and any prescription medicines! Gather all items needed for the port of entry process and place them in your carry on item. Do not pack the items needed for the port of entry in your checked luggage bags. Don’t forget your home country’s driver’s license, if applicable. California does not recognize the international driver’s license.
Student Life

Academics

One of the biggest cultural changes you might experience is in the classroom. Here are some things you can expect to experience:

Professor/Student Relationship

This relationship is generally more informal in the U.S. than in other countries. Some instructors will ask that you call them by their first name. Others may want you to call them by their title. Professors might sit, stand, or walk around the room as they speak. In some classes, it might be ok for you to speak without raising your hand—other times, this will be expected. Your professor will tell you his or her preferences, typically on the first day of class. It is acceptable for you to also ask these kinds of questions if they are not addressed.
Expected Behavior

You will be expected to participate in class. Participation in the U.S. doesn’t mean just doing your homework. It means that you are expected to ask questions and discuss topics with the instructor. It is not considered impolite or improper to ask questions of your professor or add your own thoughts to the classroom discussion. Here are a few tips to successfully participate in class:

- You are expected to go to class. Missing class will affect your grade.
- You are expected to talk in class. A good rule to follow is to raise your hand to ask a question, unless your professor has told you otherwise. Try to ask a question or make a comment at least once every week. It is common that you will be called on to answer a question. Try to answer. If you don’t know the answer, it’s alright to guess or say that you do not know.
- Show respect for your professor’s or classmates’ point of view. Say, “In my opinion…” or “I think…” before expressing your opinion.
- Practice taking notes instead of trying to write down everything in class. It is a good study habit to later re-write your notes.
- If you do not understand, ask. You can also ask after class to make an appointment with your professor to discuss private matters or get more clarification.

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty rules are different in each culture, so it is important to understand the rules of academic conduct here in the U.S. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- Copying someone else’s work. It is ok to study in a group, but all students are expected to do their own work.
- Asking for someone to write your paper or do your project. You must also not do this for someone else. If you are asked to do this by a classmate, you should report this to your professor.
- Giving or getting information during quizzes and exams.
- Taking the place of another student in an exam.
- Altering grades.
- Plagiarizing (see highlight on the right).
- Violating class rules provided by your professor.

Friends and Family

It is normal for your family to want to check on your progress while you are in the U.S. However, the U.S. has a law called FERPA (Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act), which limits the information we are able to give anyone about you. For example, your parent cannot call us and ask about your grades, financial aid/loan information, etc. Only you will have access to your private records, and only you can choose to share this information with someone else.

This same rule applies to friends or other family members (for example, a husband or wife)—your friends and family cannot pick up documents from our office or request changes to your record on your behalf. In general, you should plan on being responsible for your own academic progress and for sharing your progress with your family.
Housing

It is important to secure housing well in advance of your arrival. KGI’s state-of-the-art Oasis Commons complex is a great option. The Commons is home to an open outdoor plaza, student lounges, a swimming pool, fitness center, BBQ area, and even classroom spaces! You can find information about the Commons on KGI’s Housing page at kg.i.edu/housing.

Want to live off campus? The Claremont Colleges Services offers a Housing Resources page and we have identified some local homestay services that you may wish to contact. You can find links to both of these services on our Admitted Students page, under the Coming to KGI header: kg.i.edu/international-admitted.

In addition, through the International Place of The Claremont Colleges temporary host family program, you can stay with a host family for a few days, during which time you can adjust to the Claremont community and look for local housing options. I-Place will email you directly when this program is available, typically with details about orientation registration, but they can be reached at 909.621.8344 or 909.607.7868 or via email at ipoffice@cmc.edu.

Activities

KGI is committed to more than just academic excellence. We encourage you to make friends from other cultures and experience all that The Claremont Colleges have to offer! Our Office of International Students and Scholars plans several cultural and social outings a semester, and there are plenty of clubs and organizations on campus—including Student Government—that you may consider joining.

You can find information on some of our clubs and activities, and links to follow us on social media, under the “Social” section of our Current Students page: kg.i.edu/international-current.

You are also encouraged to join in the activities on the other campuses, as well as those put on by International Place of The Claremont Colleges: services.claremont.edu/calendar.

Fitness opportunities

Wondering how to balance your fitness goals with your academic goals? KGI students are able to use Harvey Mudd College’s Ronald and Maxine Linde Activities Center at no cost. Visit hmc.edu/studentlife/student-activities/linde-activitiescenter/ to find out more!

We are a smoke-free campus

KGI is a smoke-free campus. Electronic cigarettes are included in this policy. For more information, please review the No Smoking Policy in the student handbook: kg.i.edu/handbook.
Working in the United States

F-1 and J-1 students may work on any of The Claremont Colleges campuses up to 20 hours a week without any permission. Working more than 20 hours on campus is allowed during school breaks (like spring break or summer) only. Each campus has its own process for posting jobs. KGI posts available jobs to Sakai, which you will have access to as a student. International students do not qualify for funds awarded through the federally-funded Work-Study program, so make sure to look for non-work study positions when using the search site.

It should be noted that finding a job on campus may be difficult. Competition for these jobs is quite high and the number of positions is limited. It is best to plan to support your studies without a job. If you find a job on campus, however, you will be able to apply for a Social Security Number (SSN). You will need to bring your job offer letter to the Office of International Students and Scholars before you apply for the SSN. You will be given a receipt by the Social Security Office when you apply for your SSN. Your hiring department will need the receipt so that you can begin work while the application is pending. You will receive your official Social Security card in the mail within 30-45 days.

What if I want to volunteer?

Volunteering is perfectly ok! As long as you do not receive any form of compensation, you may volunteer with any organization you wish. A lot of things can be considered compensation (for example, free clothing, free rides, etc.), so it is best to talk with your international student advisor before starting any volunteer opportunity.

Taxes

All international students are required to file taxes, even if you do not earn income. Every year, the International Place of The Claremont Colleges offers a free tax preparation program to students. You can learn more about this process on their website: iplace.claremont.edu/current-students/taxes/. Depending on your circumstances, you may wish to take advantage of this program, file on your own, or hire a tax preparer.

The US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) website contains a helpful guide through the tax process in the U.S.: irs.com/articles/taxes-for-international-students. Please note that international student advisors are not tax experts—as such they cannot provide tax assistance or advice on the process.
Driving in the U.S.

California is a very car-dependent state. While Claremont is very walkable, you may find it difficult to explore the surrounding area solely by walking, riding a bike, or using public transportation. As a result, many students will choose to lease or purchase a car during their stay.

Driver's License

California does not recognize the international driver’s license. Bring your home country’s license with you. You will be able to drive using this license for up to 30 days. You will need to apply for a California (CA) driver’s license in the U.S. You can apply for a CA driver’s license through the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) 10 days after you arrive. It is highly recommended that you visit dmv.ca.gov to make an appointment.

Vehicle Registration and Insurance

You must register any vehicle you drive through the DMV. You must also maintain valid car insurance at all times. Your insurance company will provide you (the policy holder) with an identification card as evidence of coverage. The card will include the insurance company’s name, address, coverage dates, and policy number. It is wise to keep a copy of this card in your wallet as well as in the glove compartment of your car.

Occasional Driver? Rent a Zipcar!

KGI has partnered with Zipcar (zipcar.com) which allows KGI students to rent a car by the hour or by the day. Gas and insurance is included in the cost of the rental.

Other Transportation Options

Claremont Dial-A-Ride

The Claremont Dial-a-Ride can take you to any location within Claremont for a very reasonable fee. The Dial-A-Ride service will also visit bordering destinations very close to Claremont. For more information, please visit the Explore Southern California section on our Current International Students page at kgi.edu/international-current.

Bus

Foothill Transit provides bus service throughout Los Angeles County. You can purchase a one-time pass or reloadable TAP card at the Claremont Transit Center (200 W First Street). Please visit foothilltransit.org for more information on routes, schedules, and fares, as well as a handy Trip Planner.

Metrolink

The Claremont metro station is conveniently located centrally to The Claremont Colleges, and within a five minute walk of KGI. The Metrolink offers direct train service to Los Angeles and other southern California communities. See metrolinktrains.com for additional information on Metrolink schedules and fares.

Amtrak Train

Amtrak has several routes connecting Southern California to other parts of the country. The closest stations are in the neighboring cities of Ontario and Pomona. Visit amtrak.com/regions/california.html for route information and fares.
Equality and Diversity
KGI, in conjunction with The Claremont Colleges, seeks a campus climate that welcomes, celebrates, and promotes respect for the entire variety of human experience. In our commitment to diversity, we welcome people from all backgrounds and seek to include knowledge and values from many cultures in the campus community. Resource centers like the International Place, the Queer Resource Center, the interfaith Chaplains Office, and the Intercollegiate Feminist Center exist to create safe spaces and help further these conversations. Visit services.claremont.edu/student-services/ to learn more about these valuable services.

Services for Disabled Students
The Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) provides support services to help you achieve your academic goals. Services are provided on an individual basis, tailored to your needs. This can be anything from making sure you have a quiet study space to helping you obtain permission to record lectures or have extended time for tests. Visit services.claremont.edu/sdrc/ to learn about requesting these important services. If you have any questions or concerns about this process, please reach out to our Student Affairs team at student_affairs@kgi.edu or +1.909.607.8444.
American Culture

Cultural Values

Independence and Privacy
Americans place a high value on independence. At age 18, a person is considered an adult and is expected to be self-reliant, and not rely on family and friends when making decisions. This can be very different from other cultures that place a high value on group collectiveness and family guidance.

Respect for Privacy
Privacy is also highly valued. Americans do not share sensitive information about other people. Even among family members, sensitive issues such as money, relationships, and health may not be discussed out of respect for a person’s privacy. At the school level, the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) limits the information a school can share about a student to a third-party. These types of privacy laws exist in other industries as well (for example, health care).
Equality

The U.S. is made up of many different groups with different cultural and religious backgrounds. It is important to treat people of different races, religions, ethnicities, classes, genders, and sexual orientations equally. Remember, we are all human beings. Some international students are surprised to see Americans openly identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. People who are part of this LGBTQ population make up a respected part of society. You will most likely meet someone who identifies this way. Remember to treat the people you meet with the same respect that you want to be treated with. Racist, sexist, or homophobic jokes and remarks of any kind will not be tolerated. Any student experiencing any form of discrimination or harassment due to their race, religion, ethnicity, class, gender, or sexual orientation should seek help from the Student Affairs office.

Efficient Use of Time

Time and efficiency is very valuable. You will not see people sitting down over coffee for a long period of time. People here normally take their coffee “to go” so they can start their errands! This is also why it is important for you to be on time to any meetings you arrange. Being late to a meeting shows the other person that you do not respect them or value their time. Something that can be quite confusing for international students is the way people greet each other. “Hi, how are you?” is a common greeting, but usually the person asking does not wait for a response. This may appear rude, but it is actually not customary for you to provide a long response. Instead, people will usually reply with “fine” or “good, how are you?” and also continue walking. This is not rude! In fact, this is seen as polite as it allows the person saying hello to continue working on their list of things to do.

Directness

Because time and efficiency is very valuable, people are often direct. Americans “get to the point”—they will ask you direct questions and value honesty in responses. While being direct is valued, however, this is not permission to be impolite. For example, when disagreeing with someone it would be impolite to say “that is a stupid idea.” Instead, an appropriate response would be: “I don’t agree with that, and here is why…” You may also notice that Americans are not always direct when they want something from you. For example, if you ordered a delicious meal at a restaurant, an American might say something like “wow, that looks good!” hoping that you offer a taste. It would be rare for the person to say “Give me your food” (unless you are very good friends!).

### Priorities of Cultural Values

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Names

In the U.S., given names are commonly referred to as the “first” names and family names are common referred to as “last” names. Here are some guidelines to help you address people the first time you meet:

• Address people around your own age and status by their first name.
• If the person is an older male, use “Mr.” (pronounced “mister”) and the last name.
• If the person is an older married female, use “Mrs.” (pronounced “missuz”) and the last name.
• Use “Ms.” (pronounced “miz”) to address an unmarried adult woman, or if you are unsure if a woman is married.
• Use “Miss” if addressing a younger unmarried female.
• When you meet someone who has a title, use the title and the person’s last name. For example, if your professor’s name was Sharon Lee, you would address her as Professor Lee or Doctor Lee.
• When introducing yourself to someone of a different age or someone with a title, it is ok to ask “How do you prefer to be addressed?” You may often be given permission to call the person by their first name. It is proper for you to do so, if invited.

Drinking in the United States

The legal age to buy or drink alcohol is 21. You must show ID to access a bar. A passport may not be accepted, so it is a good idea to get a California ID if you are of drinking age.

Alcohol must be consumed in a private location (at a private residence or inside a restaurant or bar). It is illegal to carry an open container of alcohol in public places or in your car.

Laws against drunk driving exist to protect everyone. Never drink and drive. You will not only risk your life and the lives of those around you, but any Driving Under the Influence (DUI) conviction may result in deportation and a ban on future visits to the U.S. A DUI arrest (a charge, versus a criminal conviction) will also result in your visa being revoked. Please note that the DUI rule can be applied to any moving vehicle, including bikes, scooters, and skateboards.

Don’t Be Afraid To Say No!

Because American culture is very direct, you are expected to say no when you do not want something. You may not be used to this and may feel rude openly disagreeing with someone or directly turning down someone’s request. However, there are some situations where saying no is important. Remember, if you do not openly say no, any other answer may be perceived as a yes!

Times When Saying No Is Important

• Joining Organizations. You may be invited to someone’s church or to join an organization. If you are not interested, it is very acceptable to say “Thank you for the offer, but I am not interested.” This will not be considered rude.
• Requests for Money. You may be asked for money by a stranger. Or you may receive a phone call from someone who is trying to sell you a product. You will need to quickly and clearly say no in these situations. To beggars asking for money it is polite to say “I am sorry, I do not have change.” If the person does not listen, simply walk away or hang up the phone.
• Drugs/Alcohol. You may be offered recreational drugs at a party, night club, or bar. It’s all right to say “NO.” You always have the right to say no to things that make you uncomfortable.

Do I need an American name?

Some students prefer to pick an “American” name when coming to the U.S. However, this is not required, and you should not feel pressured to do so.

Instead, try teaching people you meet how to say your given name. You can often do this by speaking your name slowly and breaking your name into single syllables so that the person you meet can practice. For example:

• Kaixuan can be broken into:
  Kai (pronounced “kī”) and Xuan (pronounced “sh-oo-en”; rhymes with the word ‘when’)
• Abdulrahman can be broken into:
  Ab (pronounced “ahb”)  
  Dul (pronounced “dool”)  
  Rah and  
  Man (pronounced “mahn”)
Cultural Adjustment

You will go through a period of cultural adjustment after moving to America. You will be greeted with new food, new customs, new music, and new culture—even though this can be exciting, it can also be confusing and can take some getting used to. This period of cultural adjustment typically includes culture shock. Culture shock happens when you begin to realize that this new culture truly is different. When you are experiencing culture shock, you may feel overwhelmed and may even feel like you want to go home.

It is important to understand that culture shock is normal. It is also important to understand that culture shock is not bad. Actually, it can make you even more aware of your own culture! It is also important to understand that every person reacts differently during this time—your classmates may experience culture shock at a different time or in a different way than you do.

You can’t avoid cultural shock, but you can prepare for it. Here are some helpful tips and resources:

- Visit internationalstudent.com/study_usa/way-of-life/culture-shock/ to learn more. Watch the video to hear from another international student just like you on his experience with culture shock.
- You may also find the links at leaderu.com/isr helpful in giving you an introduction to American culture.

• Understand your feelings are normal, but fight them! For example, if you begin to feel like you want to distance yourself from peers, make even more of an effort to make friends and stay busy instead.

• Stay healthy! Studies show that exercise and a good diet can help reduce feelings of stress.

• Stay connected! Use social media and technology to stay connected with your friends and family back home.

• Lastly, if you are struggling with feelings of culture shock, talk with someone. Your advisors, teachers, and even your classmates can be great resources.

Above all, be patient with yourself and with American culture! Focus on the rewarding parts of your experience, and just remember that cultural adjustment is a normal part of being an international student.

What does culture shock feel like?

Common feelings include:

- Extreme homesickness
- Feelings of loneliness or inadequacy
- Negative feelings and hostility toward American culture and people
- Anger, frustration, confusion
- Tiredness or boredom
- Inability to concentrate or work
- Loss of appetite or enjoyment of daily activities
- Lack of confidence
- Depression and feelings of helplessness
U.S. Holidays

The United States has many holidays. The KGI academic calendar will list all holidays for which the campus will close (and for which your classes will not meet). Some holidays are very social, with specific celebration activities. Others are simply a day of remembrance. Businesses will often provide special sales discounts on holidays.

New Year's Day
January 1
On New Year's Eve (December 31), it is common for Americans to celebrate with a party where they will count down to midnight. When the clock turns to 12 a.m., they will cheer and often times hug and kiss one another. New Year's Day is also the end of the holiday celebrations in the U.S. Schools, companies, and government organizations will generally close from Christmas Eve (December 24) through New Year and will reopen the day after New Year.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Third Monday in January
This holiday celebrates the life of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., a leader of the U.S. civil rights movement.

Presidents' Day
Third Monday in February
This is a day to remember past U.S. presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, who were both born in this month. George Washington was the first U.S. president. Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president. He is credited with ending slavery at the end of the Civil War.

St. Patrick's Day
March 17
This day celebrates the patron saint of Ireland. It is celebrated across the nation with parades and parties. Be warned: If you do not wear green on this day, classmates may pinch you!

Memorial Day
Last Monday in May
This holiday remembers those who gave their lives fighting in wars.

Independence Day
July 4
On July 4, 1776 the Declaration of Independence was signed. This gave America its independence from England. Americans generally celebrate this holiday by holding picnics and watching firework displays at night.

Labor Day
First Monday in September
This holiday celebrates American workers. Many organizations close on this day.

Halloween
October 31
People celebrate this holiday by wearing costumes carving faces on pumpkins. Children go trick-or-treating to get candy, and adults host parties. We encourage you to get in the spirit of this incredibly fun holiday!

Thanksgiving
Last Thursday in November
The first settlers of America gave thanks on this day for their first harvest. We now use this day to give thanks for all the good things in our lives. The tradition is for families and friends to get together and share a turkey dinner. The day after Thanksgiving is Black Friday. This is the biggest shopping day in America with many retailers offering large discounts on products.

Christmas Day
December 25
Originally a Christian holiday, Christmas is now a cultural event often celebrated by people of all faiths and non-religious people alike. The few weeks leading up to Christmas is a time of many holiday parties! People decorate their homes and holiday music is played in shops. On Christmas Eve (December 24) or Christmas, it is customary for families to spend time together sharing traditional foods and exchanging gifts.
Managing Money
Finances
Deciding to study in the U.S. requires a considerable financial commitment. Though many of our students receive scholarships, KGI does not have extra funding to help students who experience difficulties paying tuition or living expenses. Students who arrive without sufficient funds for both tuition and living expenses often cannot complete their courses and end up returning home without completing their education. It is therefore essential that you secure funding to cover all your expenses prior to starting at KGI.

KGI International Student Loan Program
Unlike most other institutions in the U.S., KGI is able to offer an international student loan to assist with tuition costs. As with any loan, responsible borrowing is necessary, but this valuable program allows most students to finance their education instead of needing to secure all their funding up front. To learn more about KGI’s international student loan program, please visit the Office of Financial Aid’s “Funding Your Degree” page at: kgi.edu/funding.

Sample Budgets
You will find sample budgets for your program on the Office of Financial Aid’s “Cost of Attendance” page: kgi.edu/cost. Please note that the living expenses provided in the budget is simply an estimate—how much you will actually spend depends on your personal lifestyle choices and selected living arrangements. It is also good to remember that your expenses will likely increase by a modest percentage each year.

Money Saving Tip: Once you are familiar with some general costs of living, set a realistic budget for yourself and stick to it!

Paying Tuition and Fees
Know When Tuition Is Due
It is important to submit your tuition and fees payment on time to avoid late charges. The Student Accounts department at KGI is responsible for accepting and processing your payment. Tuition due dates are listed under the header Important Dates on the Student Accounts webpage: kgi.edu/student-accounts. You are responsible for submitting payment for any portion of your bill not covered by financial aid (like the student loan) by the due dates listed here. You are also encouraged to familiarize yourself with KGI’s late fee and refund policies.

Explore Your Payment Options
KGI accepts online payments using Paypal (which can be linked to a bank account or major credit card) or payment by check or money order. As your first tuition payment will be due at the start of the term, it may be good to arrange a cashier check or money order to bring with you to the U.S. If Paypal (paypal.com) or credit card will not be an option for you. If neither of these options is appropriate for your situation, you may contact Student Accounts for wire transfer instructions. Wire transfers incur fees, however, so this may not be the preferred option.

Money saving tip
Many places offer student discounts with your student ID card. Even if you don’t see a discount advertised, ask! You may miss out if you don’t.
Banking

Communicate With Your Current Bank
Tell your bank that you are moving to the U.S. for an extended period of time. This will help you be able to access your money from within the U.S. Check with them to see if there are any restrictions on transferring funds to the U.S.—if there are, make sure you find out your options and plan in advance.

If possible, arrange for a major credit or debit card (i.e. Visa or MasterCard). If not possible, arrange for a small number of traveler’s checks. Also check with your bank on any daily limits and fees on your debit or credit card for transactions made in the U.S.

Bringing Money to the U.S.
We do not recommend traveling with a large sum of money. However, it is good to bring a small amount with you to help you upon your arrival. In general, about $200 U.S. should be plenty to help you through the first few weeks of your arrival until you can open a bank account in the U.S. (not including any rent amount you may owe). If you are not able to arrange for a debit or credit card before you leave, you may want to bring closer to $500.

Banking in the U.S.
After you arrive to the U.S. you will be able to open a bank account. You will need to take your passport and I-20 or DS-2019 with you to the bank branch to fill out the paperwork. Take your KGI Student ID Card with you as a second form of ID. This may also qualify you for any special student programs your bank offers. We recommend that you request one book of checks when setting up your account. Checks are a convenient, charge-free way of paying for things like tuition. You should also request a debit or credit card for daily use.

For a list of banks near Keck Graduate Institute, please visit iplace.claremont.edu/living/banking/.

What to look for when selecting a bank in the U.S.

Annual percentage yield (APR) on checking and savings accounts
It is best to select the bank offering the highest APR. This is the interest you will earn on the balance in your accounts. Remember, though, that you generally will not have any credit established in the U.S. (unless you have a social security number). Therefore, you can ignore any special rates that the banks may offer “depending on credit.”

Availability of Automated Teller Machines (ATM)
You can use ATMs to do many things, including to deposit and withdraw cash. Most bank websites will offer you the ability to find ATMs around school and your home. It is good to find one with many options available to you.

No fees (or low fees)
Look for banks that offer a free checking or savings account. Look for banks that charge low international exchange and wire fees.
But...How Much Do Normal Things Cost?

One of the hardest things in planning a budget from abroad is that you may not have a good reference point for what “every day” items may cost. Here is a short list of some examples.

- **Bread**: $3–$5
- **Chicken Breast**: $3.50 per LB (.45 kg)
- **Milk**: $4 per gal (3.7 l)
- **Produce**: $.60–$1.80 per lb (.45 kg)
- **Hamburger**: $5–$15
- **Coffee**: $2–$5
- **Clothes**: from $25
- **Movies**: from $9 (student discount)
- **Oral Hygiene**: $2 Toothpaste | $5 Mouthwash
- **Haircut**: from $20
- **Gasoline**: $2.50–$3.50 per gal (3.7 l)
- **Bus Pass**: $7 = 1-day | $25 = 7-day | $43 = 30-day
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The Claremont Colleges Services

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<td>909.607.3669</td>
<td><a href="mailto:obsa@cuc.claremont.edu">obsa@cuc.claremont.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Safety</td>
<td>909.607.2000</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dispatch@claremont.edu">dispatch@claremont.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicano/Latino Student Affairs (CLSA)</td>
<td>909.621.8044</td>
<td><a href="mailto:clsa@cuc.claremont.edu">clsa@cuc.claremont.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplain’s Office</td>
<td>909.621.8685</td>
<td><a href="mailto:chaplains@cuc.claremont.edu">chaplains@cuc.claremont.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Place of The Claremont Colleges</td>
<td>909.607.4571</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ipoffice@cmc.edu">ipoffice@cmc.edu</a></td>
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<td>Monsour Counseling and Psychological Services</td>
<td>909.621.8202</td>
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<td>Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC)</td>
<td>909.607.7419</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sdrc@cuc.claremont.edu">sdrc@cuc.claremont.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Health Services</td>
<td>909.621.8222</td>
<td><a href="mailto:SHSRecords@cuc.claremont.edu">SHSRecords@cuc.claremont.edu</a></td>
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kgi.edu/park

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Fax: 909.607.8086

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