



International Student Guide

Midstate College

www.midstate.edu

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Introduction

Preparing to move to another part of the world to begin a new chapter in your life can be exciting! Midstate College is ready to welcome you to Peoria, Illinois, and to help make the transition as smooth and rewarding as possible. You will take part in an orientation which will provide you with essential information regarding the College, as well as information regarding ways to ensure you are staying in compliance with the regulations necessary to maintain your status.

As an international student, we want you to feel confident, focused, and comfortable, not only on your first day of class, but also throughout your tenure at Midstate College.

While you are studying at Midstate College, questions may arise related to your immigration status. Basic information is found here, and we encourage you to visit your Designated School Official's (DSO) office whenever you are in doubt. Most problems can be handled if you get assistance early, so it is important to keep Midstate informed and contact someone whenever you have questions or a decision to make.

Welcome from the President

On behalf of the Midstate College family, I am pleased to welcome you into the exciting educational journey that you have chosen to pursue. At Midstate, you will be afforded many opportunities to grow and expand your knowledge base, as well as interact with and learn from some of the area's top talent in the classroom, and best of all, achieve the goals you've set for yourself. The atmosphere at Midstate is unique, and I am proud of the comfort our students feel when they enter a classroom, the ease at which they interact with their instructors online, and the guidance they receive throughout their entire experience as a student. I truly believe that you will enjoy those same positive feelings as a student at Midstate College.

As we embark upon our 129th year of service, I am incredibly proud of the rich and distinguished history of Midstate College in Peoria. Our community is filled with thousands of graduates and hundreds of employers who have witnessed the exceptional quality of our fine academic institution. It has been our mission, for over a century, to strengthen the workforce with exceptional graduates and to help each student individually, with a caring, dedicated faculty that is unparalleled.

At Midstate, every member of our family is dedicated to your success. From your first moments on our campus, to the day you walk across the stage for graduation, our staff and faculty will be with you every step of the way. You are so much more than a student to us; you are a member of our family.

Meredith N. Bunch

President, Chief Executive Officer



Who to Contact

For more information about international student enrollment, student services, or general questions, please email internationalstudents@midstate.edu, or call 1-309-692-4092 and ask to speak with an Admissions Representative.

Admissions Requirements

Eligibility

To be eligible for admission into Midstate College, the student must be at least 18 years old prior to the program start date and provide proof of completion of a valid secondary education degree. Any secondary degree equivalency must be approved by the college. Students must also meet the admissions criteria listed below.

Documentation Required

An international student must provide the following documentation to their Designated School Official (DSO) in the Admissions Department in order to obtain a Form I-20 from Midstate College.

1. Student will submit a completed Midstate College application; [click here](#) to fill out the application.
 - a. Student will submit the \$25 application fee.
2. Student will complete the Midstate College entrance exam; a passing score is required.
3. Student will provide proof of English proficiency (see English Proficiency Requirements section).
4. Student will provide evidence of financial support (see below section titled Financial Support).
5. Student will use [World Education Services](#)¹ as a means to provide official high school and/or, if applicable, college transcripts. Applicant will pay for this service.
 - a. Student should demonstrate a high school GPA of 2.0/C average to be considered for admission.
6. Student will submit a photocopy of his or her passport.
7. Student will provide proof of health insurance showing coverage for the duration of the student's time in the United States.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure all documentation is provided to the Midstate College Admission's Department.

Financial Support

All prospective students must submit financial documentation certifying access to funding for the duration of the student's program pursuant to federal code.

If the student is self-funded, he or she must submit an official original bank letter on bank letterhead (in English) which certifies the account holder's name, date account was opened, type of account, current balance in U.S. dollars, and date of statement.

¹ World Education Services: www.wes.org

This certification must show available liquid funds of \$16,230.00 for first-year expenses at Midstate College, exclusive of travel expenses. Certification of funds must be dated within 90 days of issuing the I-20.

If the student has a sponsor, the [Affidavit of Support](#)² (Form I-134) must be filled out and submitted to the admissions representative (DSO) as well as the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). For any questions regarding the Affidavit of Support, please [click here](#)³.

Admissions Procedure

Once interest of attendance has been expressed to Midstate College, the student will be assigned an admissions representative (DSO) to aid in the completion of all required documents prior to the deadline for the desired term. The admissions representative (DSO) will be available to assist the student with information regarding the admissions process, updates on missing documentation, and deadlines that must be met in order to start during the desired term.

Step One: Apply to Midstate College

All new international students will be required to complete the Midstate College application for admission as well as the entrance exam. A passing score is required for admission. The Midstate College entrance examination will determine acceptance into the College as well as aid in placement for some courses. Sample examinations are given to all students to help prepare for the exam.

English Proficiency Requirements

Any applicants, including U.S. citizens, whose first language is not English can prove English proficiency using of the following methods:

	Intensive English	Academic Level
TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)	45iBT	71iBT
IELTS (International English Language Testing System)	5.0 Overall Ban Score	5.5 Overall Ban Score

Step Two: Acceptance to Midstate College

Once the student has been accepted to Midstate College, he or she will receive the following information in the mail:

1. Letter of acceptance
2. The Form I-20
3. Information on obtaining the F-1 Visa

The Form I-20 is a very important document. There is a bar code that is scanned any time an international student enters or leaves the United States. Keeping track of the form I-20, along with the student's passport and visa, are crucial.

² Form I-134: <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/i-134.pdf>

³ Form I-134 explanation: https://www.uscis.gov/system/files_force/files/form/i-134instr.pdf

Step Three: Pay SEVIS fee

Once accepted by Midstate College, the student will be enrolled in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System⁴ ([SEVIS](#)). Midstate College will provide the student with a Form I-20 to present to the consular officer when attending the visa interview. The student is required to pay the SEVIS I-901 Fee. To learn more about paying the I-901 fee, visit the [U.S. Immigration & Customs website](#)⁵.

Step Four: Schedule an Interview

Once the student receives the I-20, the student should contact their local U.S. Consulate in order to setup an interview time. While the interview may vary in each country, typically the student will be asked questions in English, fill out paperwork, and pay a processing fee.

Step Five: Entering the United States

Once the student receives his or her visa, he or she is ready to enter the United States. The student will see the latest date that he or she can enter the United States on his or her I-20; additionally, the student cannot enter the United States more than 30 days prior to the listed date.

Prior to coming to the United States, the student will also fill out an I-94 form; if flying in to the U.S., he or she will receive this form from a flight attendant on his or her plane. Once the student has landed, he or she will need his or her passport, I-20, and I-94; the I-94 will be stamped with a duration of status. The duration of status means that the student can remain in the United States as long as he or she is compliant with regulations required to maintain their visa status. This means that the student will remain in full-time status at the school he or she has been authorized to attend, and as long as the student's I-20 has not expired.

Payment Policy

Payment for scheduled classes for international students is due in advance of attendance in those classes on a per term basis. International students are required to attend on a full-time basis only and are not eligible for Title IV funding.

Housing Information

Midstate College does not offer on-campus housing. International students with housing needs are referred to the housing options available at area apartment complexes.

Estimated Cost Information for Housing (rates are subject to change)

- 1-2 bedroom -- \$600 per month

For more information on housing options, visit www.apartments.com/peoria-il, or contact your admissions representative (DSO). Midstate College will work with students to identify appropriate housing.

⁴ SEVIS Website: <http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis>

⁵ U.S. Immigration and Customs Website: <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.jsp>

Medical Insurance

An international student must maintain proof of having health insurance that provides coverage while in the United States. Proof of purchase for the appropriate health insurance must be turned in along with all required admissions documentation prior to the start of the desired term listed on the student's I-20 Form. Insurance plans can be purchased by [clicking here](#) ⁶.

(Once on the website for obtaining medical insurance, go to the School Requirements Tab, choose Illinois, and then choose Midstate College.)

Important Additional Costs to Consider

Students must consider the costs listed below when determining if they can meet financial obligations. When figuring costs, students should assume 5-7% inflation per year from the publication of this document:

- Travel expenses between home country and the United States. These travel expenses should include the initial visit to the U.S. and traveling back and forth from the U.S. to home country during vacation periods.
- Unexpected large purchases, such as electronics, clothing, and/or furniture.
- Unexpected medical costs not covered by insurance that arise from conditions such as eye care, dental care, and/or other medical conditions developed before entering this country.
- Expenses accrued during summer term, if any, such as tuition, fees, books and room and board.
- Off-campus transportation for personal business.
- Other personal expenses, such as entertainment or social outings.
- Bringing additional family members to the U.S., such as a married student who plans to bring a spouse and/or children.
- Inflation of living expenses, including cost of rent and utilities.

ONCE ON CAMPUS

Checklist of What to Complete Upon Arrival at Midstate College

- Check in with your admissions representative (DSO).
- Present all required documentation, including I-94.
- Register for classes.
- Get student ID card.
- Pay for classes prior to beginning of term.
- Attend international student orientation.

⁶ Medical Insurance Information: www.internationalstudentinsurance.com

Checklist of What to Do as a Midstate College Student

- Maintain full-time status at all times (talk with DSO if status must go below full-time).
- Schedule classes for the following term by the end of week 7 of current.
- Follow United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (U.S.CIS) transfer procedures when changing study levels, programs, or schools.
- Keep the I-20 up-to-date (change on financial information, name, etc.).
- Seek an extension of stay if you need more time to finish your educational program. Request an extension well in advance of expiration of current I-20 or DS-2019.
- Update current address immediately when changes occur.
- Do not work without the proper employment authorization.
- Do not drop courses below full-time enrollment without prior authorization.
- Do not rely on information from other students or friends when it comes to immigration matters. Check with your DSO.
- Do not lose important documents. Keep photocopies of everything.
- Attend class regularly and consistently.
- Check Midstate College email daily.

International New Student Orientation

International students who are new to Midstate College are required to attend the International New Student Orientation which is held the Monday prior to the start of the desired term. This orientation will help educate new international students on cultural adjustments, campus policies, orienting themselves to Peoria, Illinois, and obtaining a driver's license. This orientation will also provide an overview to all new international students on what to expect as a student here at Midstate College and what he or she will experience.

Attendance Policies

The College has established attendance policies based on course delivery mode. If a student attends an on-campus course, he or she will be counted as present. To be considered in attendance for an eLearning course, the student must participate each week by submitting substantial gradable work. Externships, practicums, and internships verify attendance weekly, either through assignments or documentation required by specific programs. Additionally, onsite student participation for externships, practicums, and internships will be tracked for program accreditation records and to ensure that the requirements (i.e. required clock-hours) are met.

A student is considered excessively absent if he or she misses three or more consecutive classes or has been absent more than ten percent of the total scheduled class sessions. In addition, in the event that a student is absent fourteen (14) consecutive days from the last date of attendance in all classes at any time through the term, he or she will be administratively dropped unless the student has indicated a rationale for the absence and expresses the desire not to be dropped.

Students who are excessively absent will be referred to the Office of Student Success. The Office of Student Success will follow up with all student referrals to offer support services (tutoring, study

skills, test taking techniques, etc.) to help students become more independent learners and succeed in their respective classes.

Midstate Mentoring Program

When the student arrives to campus, he or she will be paired up with a staff or faculty person, courtesy of the Midstate Mentoring Program. This program pairs international students with a staff or faculty member to help the student become acclimated with Midstate College, Peoria, and the surrounding areas of Illinois. The student can feel free to contact his/her mentor at any point while at Midstate College.

Traditional and Non-Traditional Delivery Definitions

International students can take both flex and eLearning classes; however, international students are limited to one eLearning class per term. When taking a flex class, the student must attend on-campus if he or she is also enrolled in an eLearning class. International students are required to maintain full-time status to be in compliance with their F-1 status. If extenuating circumstances exist, contact your DSO.

On-campus

An on-campus class is taught in a physical classroom on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.

eLearning

eLearning courses are taught at a distance and delivered asynchronously using the Internet. The College's eLearning management systems provide robust educational platforms for presenting course content while facilitating interaction between students and instructors. Midstate College is committed to providing a quality learning experience for eLearning students that is equivalent to the instruction they would receive in a traditional classroom. eLearning courses do not require a high level of specialized technical knowledge, but students need to have basic computer literacy and access to a reliable Internet connection. Students enrolled in eLearning courses need to be disciplined and self-motivated in the pursuit of their academic goals. Often more convenient than traditional classroom-based learning, eLearning is equally as challenging. Students are expected to produce a substantial amount of quality work while maintaining a high level of interaction with peers and instructors.

eLearning with an On-campus Component

eLearning courses with an on-campus component are taught at a distance and delivered asynchronously using the Internet but contain an on-campus requirement such as a mock interview, a faculty lecture or session, or a proctored assignment. The student in this course may be asked to meet face-to-face with the instructor, proctor, or employer to complete assignments, assessments, etc.

Flex Learning

Flex courses are taught both on-campus and through eLearning. Flex courses offer personalized learning where students can choose each week whether they want to attend on-campus, via eLearning, or both. However, an international student must attend on-campus unless he or she wishes to use a flex class as their one eLearning class for that term.

Arranged with an eLearning component

An arranged class with an eLearning component is a class taught at a distance and delivered asynchronously using the Internet but with the option to meet face-to-face as the student's academic progress dictates. If a student needs a course not being offered, the program director may recommend an arranged class with an eLearning component. The program director will complete an Alternative Delivery form to receive approval. Midstate College recommends that students not take more than 25 percent of the total classes in their program on an arranged basis.

Administrative Drop

Any student who has not been in attendance the first two weeks of class may be administrative dropped. The College believes absenteeism to this extent will result in failure or withdrawal in subsequent weeks. Thus, class attendance is monitored closely. Students will be contacted by their instructors and/or the Student Success staff before they are dropped from course(s).

In addition, in compliance with government regulations, students who have been absent for fourteen (14) consecutive days from the last date of attendance in all classes at any time during the term will be administrative dropped unless the student can provide a substantial rationale for the absences and he or she requests to remain in the class.

If an international student is administratively dropped from his/her classes, or if he or she drops below the required full-time status, then the student has 15 days to leave the United States or transfer to another institution. A DSO will be in contact with the student.

Taking a Term Off

A student is allowed to take a term off if he or she has completed one full year of classes, as defined by the Department of Education. If a student is taking 12 credit hours per term, he or she can take a term off after completing four (4) consecutive terms. If a student is taking 16 credit hours per term, he or she can take a term off after completing three (3) consecutive terms.

In order to remain in compliance, the student must intend to register for the next term. A student must talk to his or her DSO prior to taking a term off.

Traveling Outside of the United States

It is required that international students send an email to internationalstudents@midstate.edu when planning to leave the country during their time enrolled at Midstate College. Students will

receive documentation of his/her enrollment status at Midstate College which may be helpful in re-entering the United States. This documentation does not, however, guarantee re-entry.

Employment

Specific employment requirements must be met by international students as explained by the U.S.CIS. These requirements are detailed below:

On-Campus Employment

International students may work as on-campus employees while maintaining a full-time student status. On-campus employment is limited to part-time (20 hours per week or less) while classes are in session. International students should be aware that full-time enrollment is required for the summer session. International students should further be advised that on-campus employment is difficult to find; students should not expect to use on-campus employment to supplement their finances.

International students should contact his or her DSO regarding the availability of on-campus employment opportunities while attending Midstate College; unauthorized off-campus employment is not permitted while enrolled at Midstate College, per federal regulations.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is available to F-1 students who have maintained full-time student status for at least three full, consecutive terms. The regulations state that curricular practical training must be "an integral part of an established curriculum." This can be defined as "alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school."

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Optional practical training (OPT) is defined in the regulations as "temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student's major area of study."⁷

Optional Practical Training is any practical work experience directly related to a student's degree. OPT can be authorized as part-time (20 hours or less per week) or full-time (more than 20 hours per week) in any combination of the following ways:

1. Pre-completion OPT: prior to completion of all degree requirements
 - A student can only work part-time while attending classes.
 - A student can work either full-time or part-time:
 - During an approved term off (as long as the student will be registered for classes in the following term)

⁷ 8CFR§214.2(f)(10)(ii) - National.edu

- If the start date requested is after completion of all required course work
2. Post-completion OPT: after completion of all coursework or degree requirements, a student may work full-time.

Office of Student Success

The faculty and staff at Midstate College are dedicated to helping students succeed, not only while a student is enrolled at the College but through a lifetime. The Office of Student Success can help students coordinate resources which will assist in making the college experience positive, memorable, and successful. The Office of Student Success is available to students seeking tutoring for individual classes or who need assistance with writing assignments. Information is also available on test and note taking techniques, as well as developing good study skills. Contact Student Success in Room 218 (in person); (309) 692-4092, extension 2180 (phone); studentsuccess@midstate.edu (email).

Career Services Center

The Career Services Department provides students and graduates with information and assistance with part-time and full-time employment opportunities. The Midstate College Career Services Center also provides résumé writing assistance, job evaluation, interview preparation, career counseling, job-related correspondence, referral processing, and job-search skills.

Contact Jennie Greenan, Director of Career Services, with any questions that you may have at 309-692-4092, or at jgreenan@midstate.edu.

Transportation

CityLink, the Greater Peoria Mass Transit District, serves the Peoria area for transportation seven days a week to and from various locations in the Peoria and surrounding areas. Routes and schedules can be found at <http://www.ridecitylink.org/ride-citylink/schedules-routes>.

Some international students may choose to obtain an Illinois driver's license and purchase their own vehicle. Information regarding Illinois driver's licenses and personal vehicles will be presented at the International New Student Orientation.