International Student Welcome Packet

Kalamazoo Valley Community College

Email: international@kvcc.edu
Website: www.kvcc.edu
Tel: 269-488-4347
WELCOME

Congratulations on your admission to Kalamazoo Valley Community College! We are happy to welcome you and assist you in achieving your education goals.

Meet the Staff

Chris Voss
International Student Services Manager
“Welcome to Kalamazoo Valley! I love meeting people from all over the world and I am especially looking forward to meeting you. The International Student Services office provides the support you'll need to help you transition to living and studying in the United States. We're very excited to have you. Be sure to connect with us when you arrive and stay in touch to learn about student activities and events on campus. I find Kalamazoo a wonderful place to live and I believe you will too. Go Cougars!”

Darren Chase
International Student Services Specialist
“Hello, and welcome to Kalamazoo Valley Community College! You have chosen an excellent place to study and I am happy to be able to help you achieve a degree. As the international student services specialist I am here to provide assistance with immigration questions, admissions, visa regulations, and to make sure you have what you need to succeed at KVCC. I look forward to seeing you on campus and do not hesitate to reach out for help.”
**About Kalamazoo**

Located in Southwest Michigan, Kalamazoo is about two hours from both Chicago and Detroit. With nearly 75,000 residents, Kalamazoo has a big city mindset and small town features. A vibrant and progressive downtown that includes quality dining, nightclubs, microbreweries, shops, live entertainment and the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo is minutes away from sprawling beaches and winding nature trails. Here are some more facts about Kalamazoo:

- Population of Michigan: 9.996 million
- Enrollment at KVCC: 8,484
- International Students at KVCC: 80

**Weather**

Michigan has four seasons and the weather is always changing.

- Summer: 60-80° degrees Fahrenheit, 15-26° degrees Celsius
- Fall: 40-60° degrees Fahrenheit, 4-15° degrees Celsius
- Winter: 15-30° degrees Fahrenheit, -10-1° degrees Celsius
- Spring: 35-55° degrees Fahrenheit, 2-12° degrees Celsius

**Nearby Attractions**

- Lake Michigan
- Wings Event Center
- Air Zoo Aerospace & Science Museum
- Many local parks and lakes
- Restaurants and breweries
BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

Complete Visa Interview

Congratulations on receiving your I-20; the next step is to complete an interview in order to receive your F-1 student visa. All students wishing to study in the United States must apply for a student visa at a US embassy or consulate. Follow the steps below to prepare and hopefully receive your F-1 student visa.

1. Schedule your interview
   a. Find the embassy located closest to you using the USEmbassy.gov webpage and schedule an interview appointment.

2. Pay SEVIS Fee (I-901 fee)
   a. Visit this US government website (www.fmjfee.com) and pay $350 USD. This is required by all international students before appearing for a visa interview.

3. Gather your documents
   a. It is recommended to bring all the documents you submitted to receive admission to KVCC and all document received from KVCC. This includes your passport, financial certification, bank statements, admission acceptance letter, I-20, and proof of payment for the I-901 Fee.

4. Prepare for your interview
   a. The best source of information to prepare for your interview can be found on the US government website Study in the States. Within this website there is an article called “Five ways to prepare for your Visa Interview,” we highly recommend that you read it.
   b. Other tips
      i. Be ready to explain your educational plan including details about the program, why you want to study this program in the US, how much it will cost, how you will transfer to a university (if applicable), etc.
      ii. Explain why you will return to your home country. This is important because the F-1 visa is a temporary visa.
      iii. Try to relax. Speak clearly and slowly
      iv. Wear nice clothes
      v. MOST IMPORTANT – Tell the Truth. Visa official hear lots of fake or rehearsed answers every day and know when people are not being completely honest. Answer each question in your own way and be yourself!

5. Notify International Office about visa interview results
# Arrange Housing/Homestay

Students are responsible for arranging their own housing, there are many great and affordable options near campus and around Kalamazoo. Students have the option of arranging their own apartment or staying with a homestay. In the list provided below you will find options for apartments located near KVCC and Western Michigan University. Depending on preferences some students prefer to live near WMU and others prefer to live near KVCC. Before you decide where to live we also recommend that you check the bus routes near that location. If you will need bus transportation, the most convenient housing locations will be located near bus line 11 which can be taken near the WMU recreation center.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Price Range</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Near KVCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Twenty-Four Lafayette</td>
<td>1324 Lafayette Ave, Kalamazoo MI, 49006</td>
<td>(269) 343-1457</td>
<td>$355-$665</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Contact through application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700 SoHo</td>
<td>700 S Howard Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49006</td>
<td>(269) 373-0700</td>
<td>$384-$609</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Website Contact Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Campus Village</td>
<td>142 S Kendall Ave Kalamazoo, MI</td>
<td>(269) 267-3537</td>
<td>$325-340</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kalamazooprop@gmail.com">kalamazooprop@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near WMU</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(269) 343-1457</td>
<td>$355-$665</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Contact through application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58 West</td>
<td>5800 Jefferson Commons Drive Kalamazoo, MI 49009</td>
<td>(269) 544-1700</td>
<td>$359-$680</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="mailto:live@58-west.com">live@58-west.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700 SoHo</td>
<td>700 S Howard Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49006</td>
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<td>$384-$609</td>
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<td>Website Contact Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arboretum</td>
<td>1010 Emajean Street, Kalamazoo, MI</td>
<td>(269) 978-4676</td>
<td>$385-$445</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="mailto:arboretum@zaragon.net">arboretum@zaragon.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronco Club</td>
<td>3201 Michigamme Woods Drive Kalamazoo, MI 49006</td>
<td>(844) 827-4284</td>
<td>$410-$595</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="mailto:the_bronco_club@aspensquare.com">the_bronco_club@aspensquare.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Court</td>
<td>1701 Knollwood Ave Kalamazoo, MI 49006</td>
<td>(269) 342-9776</td>
<td>$515 -799</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="mailto:campuscourtknollwood@achliving.com">campuscourtknollwood@achliving.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden Hills</td>
<td>4346 Hidden Hills Drive, Kalamazoo, MI</td>
<td>(269) 353-2900</td>
<td>$425-$475</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hiddenhillsleasing@zaragon.net">hiddenhillsleasing@zaragon.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kendall Ridge</td>
<td>313 South Kendall Avenue Kalamazoo, MI 49006</td>
<td>(269) 267-3537</td>
<td>$335-$350</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kalamazooprop@gmail.com">kalamazooprop@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kalamazooprop@gmail.com">kalamazooprop@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Paddock</td>
<td>5900 Copper Beech Ave. Kalamazoo, MI 49009</td>
<td>(269) 341-9930</td>
<td>$375-$710</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="mailto:paddockinfo@foresiterealty.com">paddockinfo@foresiterealty.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wyatt</td>
<td>5200 Croyden Avenue Kalamazoo, MI 49009</td>
<td>(269) 459-3726</td>
<td>$404-$750</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="mailto:leasing@livethewyatt.com">leasing@livethewyatt.com</a></td>
</tr>
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**Steps**

1. Research options and agreements that best fit your needs (ex. Location, furnishings, cost, etc.)
2. Contact apartment complex to learn about process for signing lease
3. Complete paperwork, payment, and arrange move-in dates
Homestay

If you are interested in staying with a local family there is a local company called **Lodge and Learn** that matches students with host families. Contact them directly to learn about available options and more details.

Health Insurance

All international students are required to have health insurance during their studies in the United States. Due to the high costs of healthcare it is important that students have health insurance during their entire stay in the United States, even small injuries can cost thousands when a student does not have health insurance. KVCC requires that you submit your proof of health insurance **before** you enter the US. Listed below is a few companies that offer acceptable health insurance plans:

- ISO Insurance
- iNext
- International Student Insurance

After you have purchased health insurance please send the confirmation page, which should include the expiration date, to international@kvcc.edu

Arrange travel to U.S.A.

Booking your travel and arriving to the USA is very exciting but there are few details to keep in mind when arranging your travel.

- Book your travel as soon as possible **after** you receive your visa
- Arrive **after** the “earliest arrival date” mentioned on I-20 (usually around July 15 for Fall and November 15 for Winter), **you will not be permitted to enter earlier**
- Closest airport is Kalamazoo (AZO)
- Try not to schedule flights with layovers shorter than 2 hours in case of delays
- Book a hotel for the days before you move into an apartment or homestay
- Taxi or Uber/Lyft can be arranged upon arrival
Prepare for Traveling

What to pack?

- Clothes – warm and cold weather clothes, bring a warm jacket especially if arriving in winter. Remember that Michigan experiences all four seasons.
- Shoes – warm and cold weather shoes, bring warm boots if arriving in winter
- Toiletries – toothbrush, shampoo, toothpaste, deodorant, etc.
- Outlet adapter
- Phone/laptop
- **Documents** – Passport, Visa, I-20, Admission letter, financial documents, I-901 receipt
  - Take photos with phone of all important documents
- Some cash & credit card/debit card – recommended to bring couple hundred dollars in case of emergency.

What NOT to Pack?

- Pets of any kind
- Devices using open flame
- Any type of gun/weapon
- Alcohol or illegal drugs

What to expect upon arrival

- You will pass through primary inspection with US. Customs and Border Patrol
- They will examine your documents and ask questions to verify information. Example questions include:
  - What is the purpose of your visit to the US?
  - How long do you plan to visit? How long will you be staying?
  - Do you have the means to support yourself financially while in the US?
- If you are missing documents or the documents cannot be verified you may be directed to a secondary inspection.
  - What is the Form I-515A? This form allows a student to enter the country for temporary admission while you obtain the necessary documentation. You have 30 days to send the necessary documents to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVIS). **Work with your DSO as soon as possible to complete this.**
- If you are approved to enter the US you will receive a stamp and be permitted to continue. For more information see the [Study in the States](#) webpage.
**AFTER YOU ARRIVE**

**Check in with International Office**

Once you have arrived in the US please notify the KVCC international office as soon as possible. You will need to arrange a day to check-in and complete placement tests – this should be done before orientation.

**Check-In**

All students must check-in with the international office before orientation. Please bring all your documents so they can be verified and copies made for you file (passport, visa, I-20, I-94)

**Placement Testing**

After you have checked-in with the international office you will be directed to take the necessary placement tests. Subjects covered in the placement tests include Math and English. Students may be required, depending on documentation submitted, to take one or both.

**Attend Orientation**

All international students are required to attend orientation in order to register for classes. You will receive reminders before arrival regarding orientation, be sure to review the information and come prepared.

**Registration**

During orientation you will have the opportunity to meet with an advisor and plan your courses for the semester. Work with them to build a schedule that suits your lifestyle and needs. As an international student you will be required to take at least 12 credits per semester in order to maintain your status.

**Tuition**

Be prepared to pay tuition within 5 days of registering for classes. Payment plans are available and can be arranged here: [Payment Plans](#)
Maintain F-1 Status

The requirements below are mandated by the US government and must be followed in order to maintain status as an F-1 student. If a student fails to maintain status they risk termination of their I-20 and visa.

Full Time Enrollment
F-1 international students must enroll in at least 12 credit hours each Winter and Fall semester and make progress toward completion of their program. Summer semester is considered vacation period and you are not required to enroll in classes.

Dropping below a Full Course of Study
A student who drops below a full course of study without the prior approval of the Designated School Official (DSO) will be considered out of status.

Financial Support
Students must demonstrate they are financially able to support themselves without working for the entire period of stay in the United States.

Notice of Change of Address
A student must inform the DSO of any legal changes to his or her name or any change of address within 10 days via the personal information update form.

Employment
F-1 visa holders are eligible to work on-campus up to 20 hours per week, however, jobs are very limited and should not be assumed as a source of income. In order to work off-campus F-1 visa holders must attend classes for one year and obtain work authorization through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). Off-campus work options are:

- Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
- Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- Severe Economic Hardship

Travel Signature
It is required to have your I-20 signed by a DSO before travelling internationally. A signature from a DSO is valid for one year.
Important Documents

**Passport** – Your passport is very important. Do not lose it or let it expire. If you passport is lost or going to expire within the next 6 months contact the international office immediately.

**Visa** – The visa allows you the opportunity to enter the US, however, you can still be turned away at the border if a CBP official believes it necessary. A visa can expire without issue while in the US, but a student cannot enter the country with an expired visa.

**I-94** – This document confirms that you entered the country legally and with an F-1 visa. A new I-94 can be printed out at [https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home)

**I-20** – This document verifies you as an F-1 student and cannot be allow to expire. Keep it in a safe place and bring it with you when travelling internationally.

Resources

KVCC and the surrounding area offers lots of resources to help make your experience in the United States rewarding and successful. Please see the information below or contact our Life Resources Coordinator, Coty Dunten, if you need help with non-academic matters.

**Health Services**

**Urgent Care**
- **Borgess Immediate Care Center**
  7901 Angling Road
  Portage, MI 49024
  (269) 324-8400
- **Westside Immediate Care Center**
  6565 W. Main Street
  Kalamazoo, MI 49009
  (269) 375-0400

**Hospital Emergency Room**
- **Bronson Hospital**
  601 John Street
  Kalamazoo, MI 49001
- **Borgess Hospital**
  1521 Gull Road
  Kalamazoo, MI 49001

**Bus Routes**
For detailed information regard bus routes in Kalamazoo please see the [KMetro](https://www.kalamazoo.org) webpage.

**Tutoring**
Have questions about homework or need help with a paper? The Learning Center offers a variety of services to assist in every student’s success. Appointments can be on a drop-in basis or by appointment.

For more info visit the [Learning Center](https://www.vcc.kalamazoo.edu/student-life/services/learning-center).
**Academic Counseling**  
KVCC provides students with academic counseling designed to support the entire student experience and offer guidance throughout their academic career. To learn more about our academic counselors or make an appointment visit the [academic counseling](#) webpage.

**Banking**  
It is recommended to open a checking account during their time in the US, this will avoid foreign transactions fees and enable you to withdraw cash. Below are a few banks preferred by students:

- PNC Bank
- Chase Bank

**Phone**  
The most convenient and inexpensive cellphone plan options are prepaid. Here are some popular choices:

- Mint – sim cards available in international office
- AT&T
- T-Mobile
- Total Wireless (Verizon network)

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**Thank you for choosing Kalamazoo Valley Community College!**

Kalamazoo VALLEY is as unique as you are.

That's why we're glad you found us. Our programs are designed to help ensure your success and build your future. Our instructors challenge, inspire and equip—a truly unique educational experience. It's your education, it's all about you.

We are committed to enriching the lives of our students and communities through quality educational programs and services.
IMPORTANT CONTACTS

International Office
P: 269-488-4347
E: international@kvcc.edu
Room: TTC 9319

Admissions, Registration & Records
P: 269-488-4070
E: arr@kvcc.edu
Room: TTC 9140

Bookstore
P: 269-488-4030
E: bookstore@kvcc.edu
Room: TTC 1100

Computer Lab
P: 269-488-4250
Room: TTC 2310

Pay Station
P: 269-488-4162
E: paystation@kvcc.edu
Room: TCC 5131

Library
P: 269-488-4328
E: libref@kvcc.edu
Room: TTC 3210

Life Resources
P: 269-488-4825
E: cdunten@kvcc.edu

Testing Lab
P: 269-488-4460
E: testcenter@kvcc.edu
Room: TTC 2210

Tutoring
P: 269-488-4397
Room: TCC 2220

Student Success Services/Counseling
P: 269-488-4040
E: success@kvcc.edu
Room: TTC 9300

Public Safety
P: 269-488-4575
E: publicsafety@kvcc.edu
Room: TTC 5120

Internship Office
P: 269-488-4635
E: intern@kvcc.edu