

CAMPUS LIFE

Solicitation

Most of the people in Valpo who approach you will be very friendly and interested in meeting you. You should be aware, however, of some people who have other intentions when they contact you. Americans are used to the “hard sell” and have no problem in saying “no.” A popular means of solicitation is over the telephone -- you will eventually get a call from someone asking you for money or to buy something. The best response is, “It is my policy never to respond to offers on the phone.” If you are interested in what they are offering, have them send you some literature. Never agree to buy something without finding out all the details and having time to think about it. Often a company will give you a low price on one product but then require you to buy other products at higher prices. You may want to join a record club or something similar, but just be aware of your obligations to buy more items in the future. Remember: If it’s too good to be true, it probably isn’t true.

Campus Organizations

There are many campus groups and activities open to your participation. There are also many opportunities made available in the community. If you want to participate, that is fine, but if you do not really want to, then you may politely refuse. You always have the right to say “no.” Americans will not always understand indirect ways of refusal, so it is better to be as clear and direct as possible. However, do not be afraid to explore and try different things. Information about campus organizations can be found at the following websites: www.valpo.edu/union or www.valpo.edu/student/ub.

Health

Full-time students (at least 12 credits for undergraduates and 9 credits for graduates) who pay the general fee may use the University Health Center for most minor medical treatment. Part-time students may not use the Health Center. The general fee also provides for a \$300 student insurance plan. Since this policy is only minimal coverage, you will need to have additional insurance. If you have your own policy, you will need to show it to the OIP. If you do not have medical insurance, we require you to purchase a policy from Wells Fargo Insurance Services, for \$111 a month or \$1332 a year. Students will not be billed in monthly payments, but for the entire amount of \$1332. Holly will share the details of the policy with you, but you should know that it does not cover dental work or eye care. INTERLINK has its own insurance policy.

Given the high cost of health care in the U.S., it is essential that you are covered by insurance for medical treatment. The first place you should go if you are sick or injured is the VU Health Center (**for Undergraduate and Law students only, unless Graduate students pay the general fee**). They may be able to treat your condition successfully, or they may refer you to an outside physician or to Porter Hospital. Check <http://www.valpo.edu/health/> for further information.

Another aspect of good health is emotional and mental health. The Student Counseling and Development Center (<http://www.valpo.edu/coun/>) has professional psychologists, counselors, and social workers who have received extensive training in cross-cultural counseling who are available to talk with you and discuss personal problems in a confidential setting. They also help students to improve their study skills. If you would like to visit the Student Counseling and Development Center, call them at 464-5002 and make an appointment. **(Note: The Student Counseling and Development Center is not available for INTERLINK or Graduate students.)**

Safety

In general, Valparaiso is a very safe place to live. As a newcomer, you should take many precautions until you “learn the ropes.” Some tips: Always keep your door locked when you are not home. Let your friends know where you are going if you are away for long periods of time. Do not walk alone outside the campus at night, especially if you are female. The University Police Office runs a nightly student escort service van, which will pick you up and bring you to your building (if it is on or near campus). Call 464-5243 for information. It is always a good idea to keep emergency numbers (such as those listed in the front of the handbook) close to your phone in case of emergencies.

VISA

There are many student organizations on campus, and you are encouraged to find out about them and join those that may interest you. One student organization you should know about is the Valparaiso International Student Association (VISA), which is open to all students but is especially supportive of international students. You will receive mailings about VISA activities, but be sure to ask for information. They are on Facebook. The VISA officers for the 2008-2009 academic year are:

President	Husain Abbas Saifuddin	Public Relations	Brian Westrick
Vice-President	Ana Estrada	Social Chair	Ariun Zorigt
Treasurer	Moiz Ali	House Manager	
Secretary	Tuvshinbileg (Toshko) Ganzorigt	Student Senate Rep.	Polina Kogay
		Sports Coordinator	Abdullah (Abood) Alferdaws

Campus Activities

For information about activities on the VU campus, please see the VU Activities calendar available online (<http://www.valpo.edu/vuevents/>) and flyers posted around campus. You can also call the Union Board Events Hotline at 464-5555. Or, if you are interested in sports activities, the ARC (Athletics Recreation Center) is also available for students use. This is equipped with a swimming pool, racquetball courts, basketball courts, weight room, etc. You can also find tennis courts around the campus. You can also participate in recreational sports: www.valpo.edu/recsports/index.php

Off-Campus Activities

There are also many things to do off-campus. For a list of information, see the orientation handouts or go to the Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce (phone 462-1105). Website: <http://www.valparaisochamber.org/>

Employment

International students / scholars on F-1 and J-1 visas are in the US for academic purposes, not for employment. However, you are allowed to work on-campus for a limited number of hours each week, if you find a job. We will hold workshops in the beginning of the semester to inform you about this and give further details

After you have been an F-1 student in good standing for one full academic year (2 semesters), but not before, you are eligible for some off-campus work opportunities. Please check with the OIP for further information. Practical training approved by the USCIS allows you to work for up to a year after graduation in a field related to your studies. If you find employers willing to hire you for practical training, then you must notify them about your visa status. Consult Holly Singh for the details on obtaining practical training authorization.

One of the “joys” of working in the US is paying taxes. Payroll taxes will be withheld from your paycheck by the state and federal governments. You will get a full refund of all your withheld Federal taxes (provided you earn \$3350 or

less), but you will need to file the appropriate tax forms to do so. You will also have to file a separate form to get a refund of the Indiana State taxes withheld. The OIP will offer a workshop on filing tax forms in the early part of spring semester.

Social Security

You will need to get a Social Security card if you intend to work on campus. You will need the Employment letter signed by your on-campus employer. You also must obtain a letter from Holly in order to obtain a Social Security card. However, you will not be able to apply for a Social Security Card until AFTER the Employment Workshop. This workshop will be held approximately 2 weeks after the international student orientation, each semester.

All of this information will be discussed during the Workshop. You should not need a Social Security number to open up bank or cell phone accounts. Social Security is a federal program designed to provide retirement income for Americans, using payroll taxes. As an international student, you do not need to pay this tax for the first five years you are in the US. It is very difficult to get money refunded once it has been deducted from your wages. The OIP will ensure that the Office of Human Resources understands this policy if you are working on campus.

To get a Social Security card you must go to the Social Security Office between 9:00-4:00, Monday through Friday, phone number 464-1015. Please come to the OIP for directions. You will need the following items when you go to the Social Security Office:

- Application form
- Letter from on-campus employer
- Letter from Holly Singh
- Passport
- I-94 (the small white card in your passport)
- the I-20 (DS-2019 if you are on a J-1 visa).

It can take up to two weeks for the Social Security card to be issued, if all of the paperwork goes through.

CLOSING

We hope you enjoy your stay at Valparaiso this year!! Once again, feel free to talk to Holly Singh, Julie Maddox, or Pam Zakrzewski in the OIP if you have questions or need help with anything. We are here for you!