

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA  
OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL  
EDUCATION

**SCHOLAR  
HANDBOOK**

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*The Office of International Education welcomes you to the University of Georgia. With this handbook, we hope to make your pre-departure and stay in the United States as manageable as possible. If you have any further questions after reading this handbook, please contact our office at:*

706-542-2900

## Welcome!

Dear International Scholar,

On behalf of the staff of the International Student & Scholar Immigration Services (ISSIS), we welcome you to the University of Georgia (UGA). ISSIS will serve as your help center during your visit in Athens.

ISSIS is committed to providing outreach to scholars as well as information about the federal regulations that govern internationals during their stay. Through our work we strive to create the foundations for global partnerships that support UGA's academic goals as a leading research institution.

Do not be alarmed if you do not understand all of the information presented to you. We are here to help and this welcome handbook will also provide useful information on many of the questions that are common to new scholars.

As a visiting scholar, you are a valued member of our community. Your unique scholarly contributions coupled with active involvement in campus life will help enrich the educational experience for all everyone at UGA.

ISSIS hosts a number of activities throughout the year. Because information is subject to change, we encourage you to visit our website regularly. The ISSIS office staff members are pleased to assist you and with any help or advice. We are committed to providing the best services possible and we look forward to working with you and your family members.

Please visit our website for further information at:

<http://www.issis.uga.edu>

You may also call our office:(706) 542-2900 or email at [issis@uga.edu](mailto:issis@uga.edu)

Again, welcome to UGA!

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### **American Culture and Customs**

There are many nuances to American culture that one can really only learn by being here, however, check this site out for a head start!



<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g191-c3541/United-States:Customs.Habits.And.Etiquette.html>

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### **Applying for a U.S. Visa**



Once you receive the proper documentation from ISSIS, you should apply for your U.S. visa well in advance of your program start date. This website provides all the necessary details:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english.html>

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### **Traveling**



For information on pre-departure orientations in your home country, contact the nearest EducationUSA advising center. Sources for Predeparture Help and Information can be found here:

<http://www.educationusa.info/>

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**SEVIS**



SEVIS ID Number-The number assigned to an exchange visitor within SEVIS that appears on the Form DS-2019 beginning with letter “N”. You will need this number to pay for the SEVIS fee before applying for your J-1 visa. For Student and Exchange Visitor Information System go to:

[www.ice.gov/sevis](http://www.ice.gov/sevis)

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**U.S. Department of State**



The U.S. Department of State (DOS) is responsible for administering the Exchange Visitor Program. Visit:

<http://j1visa.state.gov/>

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**USCIS**



United States Citizenship Immigration Services (USCIS) oversees lawful immigration to the United States. Visit :

<http://www.uscis.gov/>

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### **On Campus Housing**

On-campus housing for both married and single visitors may be available through UGA Housing. If you have further questions about housing, please consult the web page of the

<http://housing.uga.edu/FAMILY-GRADUATE>

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### **Temporary Housing**

The department sponsoring your program should assist visiting scholars with locating (at least) temporary housing.

<http://housing.uga.edu/CONFERENCES-VISITING-SCHOLARS/VISITING-SCHOLARS>

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### **Off-Campus Housing**

There are many apartment complexes in the Athens area with various price ranges. This housing website allows you to see how close available apartments are to campus.

[www.padmapper.com](http://www.padmapper.com)

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### **Other Housing Options**

Here is another website to help you find off-campus housing. Make sure you find out exactly how far away from UGA these are through Google Maps!

<http://athensga.craigslist.org/apa/>

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### **New to Campus**

[http://eits.uga.edu/support/new\\_to\\_campus](http://eits.uga.edu/support/new_to_campus)

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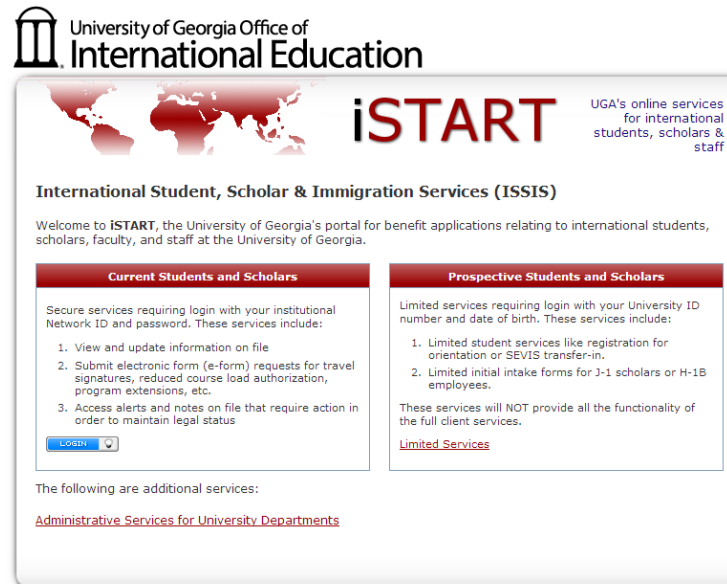
### Online Check-In

The UGA Office of International Education has transitioned into an online check-in system known as iStart. This system became permanent after July 7, 2014

Department users should use this system to request sponsorships for J-1 student-interns, and J-1 scholars,

The following link is to an instruction guide for the access and use of the new ISSIS visa sponsorship request portal, iStart:

[http://issis.uga.edu/docs/Fac\\_Scholar\\_Section/iStart\\_J\\_department\\_access\\_instructions.pdf](http://issis.uga.edu/docs/Fac_Scholar_Section/iStart_J_department_access_instructions.pdf)



**University of Georgia Office of International Education**

**iSTART** UGA's online services for international students, scholars & staff

**International Student, Scholar & Immigration Services (ISSIS)**

Welcome to **iSTART**, the University of Georgia's portal for benefit applications relating to international students, scholars, faculty, and staff at the University of Georgia.

Current Students and Scholars	Prospective Students and Scholars
Secure services requiring login with your institutional Network ID and password. These services include:	Limited services requiring login with your University ID number and date of birth. These services include:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. View and update information on file</li> <li>2. Submit electronic form (e-form) requests for travel signatures, reduced course load authorization, program extensions, etc.</li> <li>3. Access alerts and notes on file that require action in order to maintain legal status</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Limited student services like registration for orientation or SEVIS transfer-in.</li> <li>2. Limited initial intake forms for J-1 scholars or H-1B employees.</li> </ol>
<p>These services will NOT provide all the functionality of the full client services.</p> <p><a href="#">Limited Services</a></p>	

The following are additional services:

[Administrative Services for University Departments](#)

### **Driver's License**

Updated information about Georgia driving laws and procedures is available at The Georgia Department of Driver Services, where you can find detailed information about applying for a license, as well as the Driver's License Manual.



<http://www.dds.ga.gov/secureid/accepteddocs.aspx>

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### **Social Security Administration**

J-1 and J-2 visa holders can only obtain a Social Security Number (SSN). J-2's must have received a temporary work card from the U.S. government prior to applying for the SSN. More information on how to apply can be found on our website:

[http://issis.uga.edu/docs/Student\\_Section/Obtaining\\_a\\_Social\\_Security\\_Number.pdf](http://issis.uga.edu/docs/Student_Section/Obtaining_a_Social_Security_Number.pdf)

The Social Security office is located at 1650 Prince Avenue, 800-772-1213 or go to:

[www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)

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### Income Tax



All J visa holders must file a tax statement with the IRS by April 15 of each year, regardless of whether or not income was earned. Each employer you have had during a given calendar year should send you a Form W-2 sometime in the month of January listing the amount of your earnings and federal and state taxes withheld. For questions about federal tax, e-mail Susan Caldwell at [susanc@uga.edu](mailto:susanc@uga.edu).

### Social Security Withholding

Individuals in J-1 status who have work permission may not be required to pay social security tax. This depends upon whether the individual files a “resident” or “non-resident” tax return. At the time of employment, notify your employer if you are exempt from social security tax, and present your work permission. Failure to take this initial precaution can result in great difficulty in obtaining a refund later. Remember to retain your tax records for at least five years.



### Glacier Tax Preparation Software

Glacier, a web-based federal tax return preparation software is available through the Payroll office for internationals who are non-residents for tax purposes. GTP will help you determine your tax filing status, and contains a comprehensive set of FAQs. Email [taxpass@uga.edu](mailto:taxpass@uga.edu) from your UGA email address to get the Glacier password.

Visit the following website to create your own User ID and type in the password you received from [taxpass@uga.edu](mailto:taxpass@uga.edu).



<https://www.glaciertax.com/>

### Retirement Account



If you are hired and paid a salary by the University of Georgia, a retirement account is another way to save part of your earnings. For an explanation on the retirement account programs offered by UGA, please visit the website below.

<http://www.hr.uga.edu/benefits/>

### Education

If you are interested in having your children attend school while you are here, there is a Parent Information Center at the Board of Education Office which has many excellent resources for parents. Staff at the Parent Information Center will be glad to answer your questions and address any concerns. You may call (706)546-7721, extension 18232, between the hours of 8:00am and 4:00pm. The main phone number for the Clarke County School System administrative offices is (706)546-7721.



<http://www.clarke.k12.ga.us/index.cfm>

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### Childcare



Athens provides many different types of daycare and childcare for your children.

This site tells you what to look for to best suit your needs and offers listings of licensed childcare providers in the Athens area.

<http://www.athensparent.com/articles/featuregen/childcare.html#centers>

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### **U.S. Health System**

The United States probably has one of the best health care systems, but it is by far the most expensive in the world. It's critical to have insurance before going to a health care provider. If not, any clinics or hospital may charge full price. Often payment is due at the time of services. Therefore, all international scholars must be covered by adequate health insurance. You must carry health insurance for yourself and your family members for the full duration of your

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#### **Hospitals**

There are two major hospitals and multiple clinics located directly in Athens:

<http://www.libs.uga.edu/athens/hospitals.html>

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#### **Health Insurance**

All J-1 and accompanying J-2 family members are required to obtain health, accident, medical evacuation and repatriation of remains insurance coverage while in the United States. More information can be found on our website:

[http://issis.uga.edu/docs/Fac\\_Scholar\\_Section/J1\\_Health\\_Insurance\\_Info\\_Sheet\\_.pdf](http://issis.uga.edu/docs/Fac_Scholar_Section/J1_Health_Insurance_Info_Sheet_.pdf)

Any insurance policy purchased must cover the exchange visitor and all accompanying dependents. This website provides information about companies and what to expect:

<http://health.usnews.com/health-insurance>

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#### **ASPIRE Clinic**

The ASPIRE Clinic is a unique resource that provides holistic counseling and education services to UGA and the Athens community.

<http://www.aspireclinic.org/>

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### **Human Resources**



The Human Resource office at UGA is responsible for the hiring process, completing employee orientation and filing all necessary paperwork to needed in the hiring process.

[www.hr.uga.edu](http://www.hr.uga.edu)

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### **Payroll Office**

Scholars providing a service may be paid as an Independent Contractor or employee depending on the circumstances of the services being provided. Please visit this website to find what category you fall under and for any other questions:

<http://www.busfin.uga.edu/PAYROLL/ITC/INDEX.HTML>

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### **Master Calendar**

For information on events, programs, activities, and special performances, please visit UGA's master calendar.



<http://calendar.uga.edu/>

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### **UGA MyID**



Creating a MyID necessary. It will be used for developing your UGA email account, as well as keeping track of your paystubs and W2 information. To apply, visit this

[http://eits.uga.edu/access\\_and\\_security/myid](http://eits.uga.edu/access_and_security/myid)

### **UGA Card**

Official visitors to the University campus whose stay is for an extended but defined period of time, generally one month to one year, and for a specific academic or administrative purpose, similar to work being performed by regular UGA faculty or staff, will be

[http://www.uga.edu/ugacard/forms/Visitor\\_request.pdf](http://www.uga.edu/ugacard/forms/Visitor_request.pdf)

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### **Disability Resource Center**

The Disability Resource Center assists the University in fulfilling its commitment to educate and serve students with disabilities who qualify for admission. The Disability Resource Center coordinates and provides a variety of academic and support services to students.

<http://drc.uga.edu/>

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### **International Student Life**

The International Student Life offers a number of exciting cultural events, programs, and services, students and community members alike can travel around the world without leaving Athens. ISL's mission focuses on serving the needs of UGA international students as well as creating opportunities for U.S. and international students to develop positive relationships.

<http://isl.uga.edu/>

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### **LGBT Resource Center**

As an area within Intercultural Affairs, the purpose of the LGBT Resource Center is to create a safe and inclusive environment for the LGBT, queer, and ally community and contributes to a culturally rich campus through community building, advocacy, social justice and diversity education, cultural competence,

<http://lgbtcenter.uga.edu/>



### **UGA Career Center**

If you need in-depth assistance with resumes, cover letters, job search strategies, or to conduct a mock interview, please contact the Career Center reception desk at 706-542-3375 to schedule an appointment with a Career Consultant. For more information visit:

<http://career.uga.edu/>

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### **UGA Schools and Colleges**

Find out about all the many different programs, schools, classes, majors, minors, and degrees UGA has to offer.



<http://uga.edu/a-z/schools/>

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### **Departments Liaison/International Contact**



If you are invited to UGA by a UGA department or school, there should be a UGA faculty or staff member who will serve as your sponsor and liaison with out office. This is usually the person with whom you have been in touch regarding your initial appointment of visit. Please make sure to be in contact with this person as you make your travel and arrival plans. He or she will be able to help you complete all required paperwork and check-in processes.

### Visitor Center

Be sure to start your visit to Athens at the Welcome Center located at 280 East Dougherty St on the north end of historic, downtown Athens. We have a wide selection of brochures on Athens and the entire state of Georgia. We'll be happy to answer any questions and help you get the most out of your visit.



<http://www.athenswelcomecenter.com>

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### Guide to Downtown Athens



A one stop resource for everything you need to know about Athens restaurants, shops, local hangouts, and events.

<http://athens.guide2s.com/>

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### Shopping in Athens

Athens has everything you could ask for in terms of shopping. From a mall, to smaller boutiques to specialty stores, you will be sure to find whatever you need.



<http://www.visitathensga.com/shopping/>

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### Restaurants in Athens



Athens has many famously good restaurants to choose from. Here is a compiled listing that you may choose to browse by food types from ethnic, vegetarian, or American:

<http://www.visitathensga.com/restaurants/dining-listings/>



### Guests in Athens



If you have guests coming to visit you and in need a place to stay there are a number of hotels and bed and breakfasts located in convenient places in Athens to fit every budget.

<http://www.visitathensga.com/places-to-stay/>

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### On Campus Involvement

Joining an extra curricular organization is a great way to make friends and really connect to the UGA community. Take the time to explore the options available and join a student organization which is relevant to your interests. This link provides information about some of the options which UGA has to offer.

<http://studentaffairs.uga.edu/student-involvement/>

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### UGA's Department of Recreational Sports



UGA's Department of Recreation is a huge entity on campus not only offering an indoor facility with fitness classes, pool, track, and workout equipment, but also numerous fields for members to use. Check out the facility here:

<http://www.recsports.uga.edu>

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### UGA's Tate Center

Located conveniently in the middle of campus, Tate provides UGA members numerous restaurants, campus life offices, a movie theatre, and large conference rooms that host many important events year round.



<http://tate.uga.edu/>

### **Columns: Faculty/Staff Newsletter**

Columns is published weekly during the academic year and biweekly during the summer for the faculty and staff of the University of Georgia by the UGA News Service. The print version is available to the community by subscription for an annual fee of \$30 (first class) or \$15 (second class).



<http://columns.uga.edu/>

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### **UGA in the News**



To stay up to date about all the happenings in and around UGA's campus, bookmark UGA's news page on your browser and check it regularly.

<http://news.uga.edu/>

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### **Athens Community Activities**

Athens offers many activities and events throughout the year—many times free and culturally related. Browse this site and visit your favorite category to find where to go to the zoo, visit an art museum, attend a concert, and more.



<http://www.groupon.com/local/athens/things-to-do>

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### **UGA Busline**



It is free to ride a UGA bus. Buses can take you from downtown to Family Housing, the gym, and of course academic buildings. To find out departure times and what route is best for you visit:

<http://www.transit.uga.edu/>

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### **Athens Bus System**

Athens has a city bus that may be free to ride for *some* campus visitors and students. For bus schedules and routes please visit:



<http://www.athenstransit.com/>

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### **Airport Shuttles**

For public transportation to and from the Atlanta airport, as of now there is only one shuttle company:



<http://www.groometransportation.com/athens.php>

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### **Athens Airport**

Although it's not the cheapest option for transportation to the Atlanta airport, there is a small Athens airport that has connecting flights from Athens to Atlanta.



<http://athensclarkecounty.com/index.aspx?NID=203>

### **Banks in Athens**

For a list of banks in Athens, please consult the web page of the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce:

[http://www.athensga.com/abt\\_members\\_section.php?ctg1=Banking%20&%20Finance&ctg2=Banks+%26+Banking+Associations](http://www.athensga.com/abt_members_section.php?ctg1=Banking%20&%20Finance&ctg2=Banks+%26+Banking+Associations)

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### **Checking Account**

#### *What are Checking Accounts?*

A checking account is set up usually with a local bank. If you use a checking account, you can easily buy things without carrying around cash. Whether you have a debit card linked to your checking account or you write paper checks, these accounts come in handy.

#### *Why Use a Checking Account?*

A checking account is a payment account. You have easy access to cash via checks, debit card, or online bill pay. Your checking account should only hold money that you intend to spend quickly so look for a checking account that best meets your needs.

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### **Phone Service**

In addition to your UGA email address, you will probably want your own phone while in Athens. Although you can set up a land-line in your apartment, a cell phone may be more convenient. If you will be staying in Athens one year or less, a pre-paid phone is the best option because there is no contract to sign, and you can pay the bill online each month using your debit card. Many different plans are available depending on how much want to spend. To buy a pre-paid phone, visit the electronics section of a major retail store such as Wal-Mart or Best Buy. If your stay in Athens will be longer, you can also sign a contract with a company such as Verizon, AT&T, Sprint, or T-Mobile.

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**Responsibilities of Exchange Visitors**

**To Maintain Your Legal Immigration Status:**

1. Your passport and DS-2019 must be valid at all times.
2. Do not stay in the United States beyond your DS-2019 end date, + 30 day grace period. If you need an extension, apply in timely manner.
3. Notify ISSIS in advance if you terminate your employment or your affiliation with UGA earlier than the indicated on your DS-2019.
4. Consult with ISSIS before you travel to make sure your DS-2019 form is signed.
5. Do not work at other institutions or off- campus unless authorized by ISSIS.

**Check in with ISSIS upon arrival, so your SEVIS record can be validated no later than 30 days after the program start date.**

Scholars are expected to

- Have valid DS-2019 form, passport and I-94 marked J-1 D/S.
- Engage only in activities as listed on DS-2019 form.
- Be employed only with authorization. Unauthorized employment is a violation of program status and the program is subject to termination if the scholar engages in unauthorized employment.
- Maintain medical insurance for themselves and any dependents in J-visa status for the duration of their program.
- Report changes of address within 10 days to ISSIS.

## Notice of Departure

Internationals who have completed their J-1 program must fill out a departure notice and submit it to ISSIS. ISSIS is required to report your program's end date to the federal government. The end date is date listed on your DS-2019, or it could be a prior date if you complete your program early. Once the notice of departure is filled out, it can be returned to ISSIS in person, by mail, fax or email. The notice of departure form can be found at:



[http://fs21.formsite.com/issisuga/  
ScholarDepartureForm/index.html](http://fs21.formsite.com/issisuga/ScholarDepartureForm/index.html)

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## Exit Interview

Scholars are strongly encouraged to participate in an exit interview. An exit interview is typically a meeting between the scholar and either his or her immigration advisor, or the Director of ISSIS. The purpose of the exit interview is to gather data to improve working conditions, services, and retain highly qualified scholars, and get feedback on the scholars exchange experience at the University of Georgia.

### *Must I Submit to an Exit Interview?*

No. It is your right to decline an exit interview. Naturally, the decision of whether or not to participate in an exit interview is ultimately up to you; however, to better improve the quality of services, ISSIS would like to receive your feedback.

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OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

International Student, Scholar and Immigration Services  
1324 South Lumpkin St.  
Athens, GA 30605  
(706) 542-2900  
[issis@uga.edu](mailto:issis@uga.edu)  
<http://international.uga.edu/issis/>