

**PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION 2024-2025**  
**COLLEGE OF SAINT BENEDICT AND SAINT JOHN'S UNIVERSITY**

Welcome to the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University (CSB+SJU)! We hope your experience at CSB+SJU will be a rewarding and memorable. Below is information that will hopefully prepare you more for your time at CSB+SJU and answer some of your questions as you prepare to come to campus in August.

**Please read this information carefully before arriving in the U.S.**

**ARRIVAL, AIRPORT WELCOME AND TRANSPORTATION**

Please make arrangements to arrive to campus on Monday, August 19, 2024. Try to arrive during the day between the hours of 8:00AM to 7:00PM if possible. We will have Mentors from Multicultural Student Services available to greet you when you arrive to campus and to escort you to your room.

U.S. immigration law permits all students on F-1 visas to enter the U.S. up to 30 days prior to the program start date listed on the I-20 Form. Therefore, even though August 26 is listed as the "start date" on the I-20 (the day classes begin), you are able to enter the U.S. in time for our official "arrival day" of August 19 and orientation activities in the days before August 26.

The CSB+SJU campuses are approximately 80 miles (128 kilometers) away from the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport. It takes approximately 1.5 hours by car to go from the airport to the campuses, depending on traffic.

If you plan to arrive to Minnesota on your own (without family members) we can arrange for you to get from the airport to campus if needed. If you would like us to make arrangements, please choose that option on the International Student Arrival Form in the Forms Portal (**please submit this by July 15**). If your family will rent a car or make other arrangements on your own to arrive to campus, please choose one of those options on the International Student Arrival Form. **Note: We recommend that you do not take a taxi cab from the airport to CSB+SJU as the cost is very expensive.**

If your parents are coming with you, here is a site that lists hotels in this area: <https://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotels-g43493-Saint-Cloud-Minnesota-Hotels.html>. The Saint John's Abbey Guesthouse (<http://www.abbeyguesthouse.org/>) is another possibility.

If your flight is unexpectedly delayed and will arrive late at night, please contact Mr. Alex Schleper, the Director of International Admission at 320-250-3828. He will give you instructions on the best options for you to arrive to CSB+SJU. In an extreme emergency please seek overnight accommodations near the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport and call us for further instructions.

For planning purposes, the Fall Semester will end on Saturday, December 14, 2024. The Spring Semester begins on Tuesday, January 21, 2025 and ends on Thursday, May 15, 2025. Please go to <http://www.csbsju.edu/Registrar/Calendars.htm> for more detailed information about the academic calendar. **It is very important that students do not make plans to leave campus early or arrive back to campus late as this could interfere with exam schedules or the start of classes, resulting in significant academic repercussions.**

## **SEVIS FEE AND VISA INFORMATION**

As you know, non-U.S. citizens need to obtain a U.S. F-1 Student Visa to study at CSB+SJU. New F-1 visa applicants are required to pay a SEVIS fee of \$350USD. Please note that this fee payment is the student's responsibility to pay (this is a separate fee from the visa application fee). The fee must be paid **at least 3 business days prior** to applying for your visa, or applying for entry at a U.S. port-of-entry (Canadians only). For more information and to pay the fee online, visit: [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com). If your visa is denied, the SEVIS fee will not be refunded.

Students should present the following documents when applying for an F-1 visa at a U.S. Embassy/Consulate and when applying for entry at a U.S. port-of-entry (airport):

- I-20 form
- Passport
- Acceptance Letter from CSB+SJU
- A bank statement and/or letter of support to demonstrate the funding listed on your I-20 form
- A copy of your SEVIS fee receipt (form I-901 receipt)

Go to: <http://www.usembassy.gov/> for a link to the US Embassy in your country for additional helpful information for you as you prepare for your visa appointment. Also refer to the section titled "Points to Remember When Applying for a Non-Immigrant Visa" toward the end of this document for additional tips.

## **CSB+SJU FORMS PORTAL**

All students will need to login to the CSB+SJU Forms Portal to access and complete various forms. After you submitted your enrollment deposit, you should have received an email from us which instructed you on how to set up your CSB+SJU campus network account and password, which you need to enter the Forms Portal. If you do not have this information, please contact us as soon as possible. **Note: Various campus departments will communicate with you only through your campus email address. Make sure you check your campus email address regularly.**

As a review, to access the Forms Portal, go to <https://apps.csbsju.edu/enrolledstudents/Login.aspx> and enter your CSB+SJU campus network username and password.

Once you are logged in, complete the forms titled:

- CSB+SJU Facebook Group
- CSB+SJU Advising and Registration Form
- Housing Application
- CSB+SJU Health Form
- CSB+SJU Collegebound Pre-orientation Wilderness Trip Information
- CSB+SJU International Student Arrival Form
- CSB+SJU ID Photo Form
- CSB+SJU Public Information Release Form
- CSB+SJU Payment Agreement
- CSB+SJU Verification of Health Insurance
- FERPA Disclosure Form
- CSB+SJU Confirmation of Registration and Data Collection Form
- CSB+SJU Student Parking Permit Registration

## **MULTICULTURAL STUDENT SERVICES**

Multicultural Student Services is a campus resource that will plan the New International Student Orientation, arrange Mentors for each new international student, provide valuable on-going orientation and information sessions throughout the first semester and help with the overall transition and adjustment to life at CSB+SJU. This department also organizes many events and activities to help students share and learn about different cultures, including US culture. You will receive emails from Multicultural Student Services this summer through your campus email address. Here is the link to their website: <https://www.csbsju.edu/multicultural-student-services> for more information about their services.

## **ACADEMIC INFORMATION**

International students have a specific Academic Advisor assigned to help, guide and support their academic pathway at CSB+SJU. You will hear from the Academic Advising Office in June about your courses for the Fall semester. After you arrive to campus, you will have the opportunity to consult with the Academic Advisor if you have questions about your course schedule.

## **RESIDENTIAL LIFE**

Housing will be provided on campus through our Residential Life Offices (one at SJU and one at CSB). Please be sure to fill out the Housing Form in the Forms Portal. You will have the chance to go shopping during the International Student Orientation so you will have the opportunity to buy items for your room and school supplies. School supplies are also sold in the campus bookstores. A bed linen/towel set (sheets, pillow cases, a pillow, towel and washcloth) will be available for purchase upon your arrival needed.

In June you will learn about your room assignment and roommate. We recommend contacting your roommate in advance to introduce yourself. More information about Residential Life is available at <https://www.csbsju.edu/CSB-Residential-Life.htm> for CSB students and at <https://www.csbsju.edu/SJU-Residential-Life-and-Housing.htm> for SJU students.

## **PAYMENT**

When you fill out the payment agreement in the Forms Portal, you will see two options: The Standard Payment Plan and The Deferred Payment Plan. You may choose whether to pay your balance all at once on August 10th in the Fall and January 10th in the Spring, or you may choose to pay in four installments on August 10th, September 10th, October 10th, and November 7th in the Fall and January 10th, February 10th, March 10th and April 7th for the Spring. See this website for details: <https://www.csbsju.edu/student-accounts>.

## **HEALTH / MEDICAL INSURANCE**

All students are required to have a health insurance plan in order to attend CSB+SJU. It is extremely important that your health insurance plan is strong because health care costs in the U.S. are very expensive. CSB+SJU will enroll international students in a school-endorsed insurance plan unless students explicitly waive our insurance plan and indicate they have an alternative school-approved insurance plan through the Verification of Health Insurance form in the Forms Portal.

## **STUDENT EMPLOYMENT**

If you have been awarded a student employment award, you will receive information through your campus email regarding the steps to take to explore possible campus jobs. During the New International Student Orientation, you will receive additional information and will have the opportunity to ask specific questions. More information is available at <https://www.csbsju.edu/Student-Employment.htm>.

## **BANKING**

Many students will open up a bank account after they arrive to CSB+SJU. If you have student employment on campus, you will need to open up a bank account to receive payment. You will have the opportunity to open up an account during the International Student Orientation and in the days and weeks after the semester begins.

## **CELL PHONES**

You can bring your cell phone from home and buy a SIM card here and a pay-as-you-go plan. If you do not bring your cell phone, you can buy a cell phone and the pay-as-you-go plan. You will have access to cell phone companies in the U.S. when you arrive here, either on campus or near campus at their stores.

## **LOCAL AREA**

CSB is located in the town of St. Joseph, Minnesota, which has stores, coffee shops, a health clinic, restaurants, and other services within walking distance of the campus. The campus is located approximately 10 minutes from the city of St. Cloud (<http://ci.stcloud.mn.us/>) which has a larger number of shopping centers, restaurants, movie theaters, and a large regional hospital. Collegeville (SJU) is located approximately 6 miles (9.7 km) from CSB. The free campus Link shuttle bus system transports students between campuses regularly for free. The Link also transports students between CSB and St. Cloud on weekends. The campuses are located approximately 80 miles (128 km) from the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport and it takes about 1.5 hours by car to go from the campuses to the airport. Here is more

information about Minneapolis and St. Paul (the “Twin Cities”) and the state of Minnesota:  
<http://www.exploreminnesota.com/index.aspx>.

## **CLIMATE**

The climate in Minnesota is typical of a continental climate, with cold winters and hot summers. Minnesota’s location in the Upper Midwest allows it to experience some of the widest variety of weather in the US with each of the four seasons having its own distinct characteristics. Students should be prepared to bring or purchase clothing for the different seasons (especially winter). Students will have the opportunity to shop locally for cold weather items such as coats, gloves/mittens, hats/caps, etc. New students’ Mentors, the Multicultural Student Services department and new friends can offer good advice on where and what to purchase to be prepared for the different Minnesota seasons and climates.

## **WHAT TO WEAR**

You should pack what you would normally wear in a University setting. Students at CSB+SJU dress according to their own personal styles and some dress up more than others. Although the academic setting is very casual, the students do tend to get more dressed up for nights out and weekends. For some special occasions and events, such as our annual Thanksgiving Dinner, we recommend that you have at least one semi-formal or formal outfit available.

## **LONG WEEKENDS/HOLIDAY BREAKS**

**It is very important that students do not make plans to leave campus early or arrive back late from holiday or semester breaks in a way that you would miss classes or exams.** During breaks, students are able to stay in the resident halls or apartments. Some international students will choose to stay on campus, other students choose to travel throughout the US or travel home, and other students who have made good connections with US friends might get invited to their homes to spend all or part of the breaks.

Our campuses are located in rural and small town settings. Off campus dining and entertainment options, while available, are relatively limited. During some breaks campus services such as dining, library and transportation are reduced or even closed completely.

During Semester break (the approximately 3 weeks between the Fall and Spring semesters), Minnesota can be cold, snowy and the daylight hours are shorter. Because of this, we encourage students, if possible, to make plans to travel off campus or go home. For CSB students, the college is completely closed December 24 to January 3. This means that there will be no CSB campus food service, open offices, library hours, athletic facilities, etc. available. At SJU, the on-campus dining options are more available during the breaks but other campus services are reduced as well.

In the Spring semester we will have a week-long Spring Break. As with other breaks, the campus resident halls will be available for students but some students choose to travel, go home or stay with friends during this longer break.

## **POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN APPLYING FOR A NONIMMIGRANT VISA**

### **1. TIES TO YOUR HOME COUNTRY**

Under U.S. law, all applicants for nonimmigrant visas, such as exchange visitor visas, are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not. You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. "Ties" to your home country are the things that bind you to your hometown, homeland, or current place of residence: family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, job etc. The interviewing officer may ask about your specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other relationships, educational objectives, grades, long-range plans and career prospects in your home country. Each person's situation is different, of course, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter that can guarantee visa issuance. If you overstayed your authorized stay in the U.S. previously, be prepared to explain what happened clearly and concisely, with documentation if available.

### **2. ENGLISH**

Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview, but do NOT prepare speeches!

### **3. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF**

Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.

### **4. BE PREPARED FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT CSB/SJU**

The officer might ask basic questions about CSB/SJU such as location, type of school (4-year, liberal arts, Bachelor's degree granting institution), your intended major, etc. to check on your basic understanding of the school you plan to attend. Remember that the major listed on your I-20 is what you indicated on your application for admission. You are not "locked in" to that major and it is normal for a student to change his/her mind before committing to a major at the end of the second year of college/university. However, it is good to be able to explain what you are thinking about majoring in at this time and that the school offers that type of major. You might also be asked how attending CSB/SJU fits into your overall educational and career goals.

### **5. BE BRIEF**

Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impressions they form during the first minute of the interview. Consequently, what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers to the officer's questions short and to the point.

### **6. ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

It should be immediately clear to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. Remember that you will only have 2-3 minutes of interview time.

### **7. NOT ALL COUNTRIES ARE EQUAL**

Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students and other individuals have remained in the US as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after completing their education in the U.S.

### **8. MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE**

Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied a visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and try to get the reason you were denied in writing.

Credits: Gerald A. Wunsch, Esq., 1997, former member of the NAFSA Consular Issues Working Group, and a former U.S. Consular Officer in Mexico, Suriname, and the Netherlands; Martha Wailes, Indiana University; and the US Department of State.

### **NOTE REGARDING POTENTIAL VISA ISSUANCE DELAYS**

All applicants for a US visa are subject to security checks before a visa can be issued. Visa delays for some applicants can range from days to several months. A visa will not be issued until the application clears all security checks. In addition, the Department of State must be able to verify SEVIS information in its system, which does not contain "real-time" SEVIS information. Rather, SEVIS information must be uploaded periodically from a separate immigration SEVIS system used by schools.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Individuals applying for nonimmigrant visas to the US may also benefit by visiting the Destination USA visa information website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).