

Southern Arkansas University Tech

International Student
Pre-Arrival Handbook

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Moving to a new country is a big step and we would like to make the transition as easy as possible for you. This guide will help answer many of the uncertainties, concerns, and common questions new students usually have when they arrive at Southern Arkansas University Tech.

Southern Arkansas University Tech

Southern Arkansas University Tech was founded in 1968 and is part of the Southern Arkansas University System. SAU Tech is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission North Central Association and authorized under Federal Law to enroll non-immigrant students.

SAU Tech is a two-year public college located inside the Highland Industrial Park in East Camden, Arkansas. East Camden has convenience stores, banks, restaurants, and a golf course where SAU Tech students can play. SAU Tech is about 8 miles or 12.8 kilometers from Camden, Arkansas, a city with a population of about 12,000 that offers a variety of restaurants and shopping centers for the convenience of our students.

SAU Tech is an affordable two-year university. Our tuition and housing costs are typically about half of the cost of a 4 year university. SAU Tech offers housing both on and off-campus. The school year consists of two semesters and two summer sessions. SAU Tech has a low student/teacher ratio that assures more individual attention for students. Student success is the key element at SAU Tech. Free tutoring and personal counseling services are available for all students.

American Education System

In the US, undergraduate associate's and bachelor's programs take two to four years. The first two years of transfer programs consist of general classes such as math, science, and history. Some technical programs consist mostly of hands-on courses, but also include some general education courses like English, math, and social sciences. These programs are not designed to transfer, but are intended to train students and put them to work quickly.

It is not uncommon for students to find another subject interesting and change their major. (M-1 status students cannot change their major of study.) Students normally start working on their upper level classes during the second or third year. This may sound strange but the American Education system tries to create a well-rounded education where students finish with basic knowledge in several fields.

SAU Tech is on the semester system which means we have two academic semesters a year. The fall semester is from late August to early December and the spring semester is from early January to early May. We also offer two summer sessions if students choose to take classes. The summer sessions are optional for students.

What should you bring?

- Single (Twin) Size bed sheets and towels (dorm rooms do not have sheets on the beds)
 - Pillows and blankets can be bought once you arrive.
- Assorted clothing for all seasons
 - Southern Arkansas has four seasons which vary from 30°F to 60°F, or 0°C to 15°C, in winter to 85°F to 100°F, or 29°C to 37°C, in summer. You should pack clothes for all year long. You can always buy more clothes after you arrive, but make sure you have clothes for the season you arrive.
- Personal grooming products
 - Pack toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, razor, makeup, etc. Items can also be purchased once you arrive.
- Documents
 - Be sure to pack all your important immigration, immunization, and educational documentation in your carry-on luggage.
- Money
 - You probably should not travel with large sums of money. You can transfer your money over to pay for school or carry a check. You should either have a credit/debit card or a small amount of money to pay for food, emergencies, and to buy things you will need once you arrive.
 - When you arrive you will have the opportunity to open a bank account in town. Please see the Finance section.

How to get to SAU Tech?

Remember Immigration regulations state that you can only arrive in the USA up to 30 days before the program start date listed on your I-20. Make sure you don't arrive too early or you will be denied entry. If living in campus housing, you will need to observe housing move-in dates. See the Housing section for more information.

Camden does not have an airport. We can arrange pickup for students that fly into the Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport in Little Rock, Arkansas (LIT). If you fly into another location, we are unable to pick you up, so you will have to make your own arrangements to arrive at SAU Tech.

Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport, Little Rock, Arkansas (LIT)

- LIT is Arkansas' largest commercial airport. LIT does not have direct international flights, but international flights can be connected to Little Rock from international airports like Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas (DFW), Houston-Intercontinental, Texas (IAH), Chicago-O'Hare, Illinois (ORD), and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International, Georgia (ATL).

Greyhound

- Greyhound is a national busing system that has a terminal in Camden at 313 Jefferson SW. Students can fly into an international airport and then ride a Greyhound bus to Camden if they choose. Costs will depend on the date and time of the ticket and the distance of the origin city from Camden. For example, a ticket from Dallas, Texas to Camden, Arkansas can vary from around US\$55-\$75, while a ticket from Houston can vary from US\$100-\$130.

When you make your travel plans make sure to let us know in advance (at least 7 days) when and how you will arrive. Even if you are driving to SAU Tech yourself, please let us know this information as well. You will need to fill out the Transportation Arrival Plans form on our website.

Once You Arrive

Arrival

When you arrive, we will check you into Housing if you are staying on campus (see section below) and depending on when you arrive, you will need to visit:

- County Health Departments- You will get a TB (Tuberculosis) skin test and we will need to review your immunization records with you. See the Immunization section below.
- Learning Resource Center (LRC) to get your student ID card. Your student ID card is used to check out books at the LRC, get into facilities like the computer commons and student activity center, and get student discounts at the café.
- Testing Center to take a placement test if you haven't already done that.
- Academic Advisor to get registered for classes.

Placement scores

If you have not taken the ACT or SAT before you arrive, then you will need to take a placement test when you arrive. The exam is used to determine your math and English skills. If your scores are low, then you will be placed in remedial classes your first semester.

Registration and paying for classes

If you are not already registered for classes when you arrive, you will meet with your advisor and get registered for classes. After you are registered, you can then pay your tuition and fees to the Business office. You have to wait and pay after you are registered because the total cost is based on the number of credit hours you take.

Housing

SAU Tech Campus Housing

Campus housing is available for students planning to study at SAU Tech. Once a student has secured a visa, then a housing application (with a \$100 application damage fee) must be submitted to the Housing office if you wish to live on campus. Your housing application is not complete until you have paid your application damage fee. Payments can be made by calling our Business Office at 870-574-4503 or emailing Lisa Holland at lholland@sautech.edu.

There are on and off campus housing options available to students. Please visit the Housing website to learn more about your options.

Non-SAU Tech Campus Housing Options

If students decide not to live in SAU Tech Campus Housing, there are apartment or rent housing options in East Camden and Camden, but without a vehicle getting to campus could be a problem since we do not have public transportation. Students are responsible for finding and maintaining their own private housing should they decide not to live in SAU Tech campus housing.

It is customary in the U.S. to pay a deposit and sign a lease (contract) when you rent a house or an apartment. Normally leases are for 12 months. Also, you will have to pay utilities along with your rent. Living in private housing can be burdensome and expensive if you don't find roommates. Students are advised to live on campus because studies show that students that live on campus are far more involved in school activities and have better grades.

Getting Around East Camden and Camden

Camden does not offer public transportation, but the Housing office does offer free limited transportation around town for students living in housing. Every Wednesday evening, SAU Tech Housing provides shuttle service to that takes students around town so they can go shopping, to the bank, or whatever else they need to do. Because the town is spread out walking may not be the best option for students, but cycling is an option if student do not need to go too far.

SAU Tech offers transportation to Little Rock Airport at the beginning and completion of the student's program of study for international students at no cost. For transportation during your stay other than the initial arrival and final departure, contact the PDSO or DSO.

Immunizations

Certain immunizations are required for students in the state of Arkansas. Before leaving your country, try to get a MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella) immunization and bring copies of your immunization records (in English). During your first semester at SAU Tech, you will be required to have two MMR injections, so getting one before you arrive will make the process easier for you.

You can expect to get a TB (Tuberculosis) skin test upon arrival. Depending on the test results, a second test might be given or a chest x-ray may be scheduled. Any subsequent treatment will be handled by the local health department.

Safety and Laws

The safety of our students is a primary concern. The SAU Tech campus is safe, and we have a well-trained police department here on campus. This is common for most American campuses. If for any reason you need the campus police, you can call 870-574-4517 (office) or 870-818-6353 (cell).

In the U.S., the legal drinking age is 21 years old. It is illegal for anyone under that age to buy or drink alcohol. Students are not allowed to have alcohol on the SAU Tech campus and it is a serious offence if you are caught with alcohol or drinking.

The legal age to smoke is 18, and like drinking, it is illegal to buy or smoke under that age. The SAU Tech campus is smoke and tobacco free which means all tobacco products are not permitted on campus grounds.

Staying in Contact

Internet

The SAU Tech campus is completely covered with free wireless access. If you don't have your own computer, there are free access computer labs in the LRC, Tutoring Center, Computer Commons, and Enrollment Services. If you live off campus, you can still come to the campus to access the wireless network or computer labs. If you want internet in your private residence, you will need to find a private provider.

Mobile "Cell" Phones

Your best option is to get a pre-paid plan. These plans are the most affordable compared to getting a contract.

Campus Employment

As an F1 student, you can only work on campus and for no more than 20 hours a week during the semester. Finding employment on campus is the student's responsibility. To find work on campus, you will need to see the Human Resources office to see which departments have positions available. At this time, there are very few positions on campus for employment.

M-1 students are not allowed to work at all.

Social Security Card

Getting a social security card takes time and is a complicated process. Since this is usually a major concern for new students, the process is outlined below:

First, to apply for a social security card, you must find employment on campus (see above). Our PDSO and DSO do not control the hiring process, so they cannot help you with finding employment. After you find employment, give your form to your employer to fill out and bring the form back to your PDSO or DSO. Once you return the form to the PDSO or DSO, it will need to be processed. This can take a few days to complete, but once it is done it can be picked up from the PDSO or DSO.

Due to immigration processing time, you cannot submit a social security application until 20 days after the semester starts. So even if you find employment immediately, you cannot go for an interview during this time.

Because the Social Security Office is in a nearby town we can, with prior notice, offer transportation to the office. If you have transportation, you can go at any time after the first 20 days of the semester.

Finances

Full payment for tuition and fees must be made by the due date published in PDF form of the Class Schedule. SAU Tech offers payment options through eCashier in MyCollege on the SAU Tech website. Payment in full OR a payment plan set up through eCashier is required by the payment due date or you will be dropped from classes.

Because traveling with large amounts of money isn't very safe, tuition and fees can be paid in full by wire transfer or credit card by calling Lisa Holland at 870-574-4503 or emailing Lisa at lholland@sautech.edu. Tuition and fees can also be paid in full by bank draft made payable to Southern Arkansas University Tech and mailed to:

SAU Tech Business Office
PO Box 3499
Camden, Arkansas 71711

It is very important to make sure your name and school issued student identification number is listed on the information wired to us, so that the business office knows whose student account to deposit the money.

There are several banks in the Camden and East Camden areas. Some banks require a social security number to open an account while others do not. You will need to check with the local banks to see which bank will offer the services that will fit your needs.

The Campus

Cafeteria

The Cafeteria on campus provides meals throughout the school year while classes are in session. The Cafeteria is only open Monday through Thursday and only serves lunch. Students can choose from a variety of foods including entrees, salad bar, desserts, and beverages. Prepaid meal cards can be purchased. SAU Tech campus housing rooms are equipped with full kitchenettes for your other meal needs.

Learning Resource Center

The Learning Resource Center has an extensive collection and an even larger online database. It also offers individual as well as group study areas and multiple computers for student use.

Student Activity Center

The Student Activity Center has a gym, workout area, and game room open to all students. It has an indoor basketball court with a full workout area for students who want to keep off the added weight that most freshman gain called the "freshman fifteen." The game room has pool and ping pong tables, air hockey, video games and a television.

SAU Tech Logo

For more information, contact:
David McLeane, PDSO
Vice Chancellor of Student Services
870-574-4503
dmcleane@sautech.edu

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