Admitted to SAU Tech

Congratulations on being accepted to Southern Arkansas University Tech (SAU Tech). Now that you have been admitted, you need to start preparing for arriving at SAU Tech.

Please follow these steps to prepare for attending SAU Tech:

**Step 1 Pay SEVIS Fee**
Before you can schedule a visa interview, you will need to pay the [I-901 SEVIS fee](https://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/faq). You will use the information from your I-20 to pay the SEVIS fee. The current fee (2016 price) is approximately $200 for F-1 and M-1 students. Pricing information can be found at [https://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/faq](https://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/faq).

**Step 2 Fill out Visa Application**
To schedule your visa interview, you will need to fill out the visa application. Then contact the US embassy or consulate in your country to schedule an interview.

**Step 3 Prepare and go to Interview**
Make sure to check the embassy or consulate’s website to see what documents you need for the interview. Also, make sure you are natural, comfortable, and confident during your interview. [EducationUSA](https://www.edusa.gov) offers some great advice on how to prepare for your interview.

Being denied a visa is a possibility and the reason for your denial can be confusing sometimes. But it may not be the end or the road. Make sure you ask and understand why you were denied a visa.

**Step 4 Notify SAU Tech of Interview Results**
When you know your results from your interview, contact the Primary Designated School Official to let us know.
If you were approved, we can start processing your student data and make sure everything is ready for your arrival.
If you were denied, you may be able to schedule another interview and provide more proof to help support your visa request. Make sure you understand why you were denied.

**Step 5 Submit Immunization and Health Insurance Documents**
Immunization records showing proof of two MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella) shots are required for all students. Before leaving your country, try to get one or both MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella) immunizations. During your first semester at SAU Tech, you will be required to have two, so getting one or both before you arrive will make the process easier for you. Make sure to bring a copy of your immunization records in English with you or send them in advance to the DSO. Expect the costs to be approximately US$20-30 for all shots if you must have both here.

You will also be required to have a Tuberculosis (TB) skin test upon arrival. Depending on the results of the TB skin test, 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.
International students are required to have health insurance to help cover unexpected medical costs that might arise while you are in the U.S. SAU Tech’s international students will be required to purchase insurance through Lewermark for an affordable rate unless a waiver is granted. To apply for a waiver, contact the DSO.

Step 6 Submit Placement Scores
Provide placement exam or placement scores recognized by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ACT, SAT, Accuplacer, ASSET, or Compass) OR be prepared to take a placement test upon arrival. Scores may be faxed, mailed or scanned and emailed to the DSO.

Step 7 Submit Travel Information
Once you have your travel information, fill out the International Transportation Arrival Plans Form.

Step 8 Register for classes
Upon arrival, you will meet with your advisor and register for classes. You must comply with all immigration regulations and carry a program of at least twelve (12) on campus semester hours each semester of the regular academic year.

Step 9 Payment for tuition and fees, insurance, and housing balance (if applicable)
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 is not very safe, tuition and fees can be paid in full by wire transfer or credit card by contacting the Business office or by bank draft made payable to Southern Arkansas University Tech and mailed to the Business office. 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.

Planning and Arrival
The faculty and staff of SAU Tech are pleased with your decision! We look forward to meeting you soon.

Please read the following information in the International Student Pre-Arrival Handbook and the Parent’s Guide. This information will help you prepare for your arrival in the United States.
If you still have questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at the following address, fax and telephone numbers or by email.

**SAU Tech Contact Information**

**Mailing Addresses**

SAU Tech - Admissions  
PO Box 3499  
Camden, Arkansas 71711

SAU Tech – Business office  
PO Box 3499  
Camden, Arkansas 71711

**Courier shipping (UPS, FEDEX, DHL, etc)**

SAU Tech  
6415 Spellman Road  
Camden, Arkansas 71701

**Contact Information**

SAU Tech Admissions office Fax: 870-574-4734  
SAU Tech Business office Fax: 870-574-4489

Lisa Smith – Admissions  
Phone: 870-574-4558  
Email: lsmith@sautech.edu

Lisa Holland – Business office  
Phone: 870-574-4503  
Email: lholland@sautech.edu

David McLeane – Vice Chancellor of Student Services/Primary DSO  
Phone: 870-574-4504  
Email: dmcleane@sautech.edu  
Fax: 870-574-4478

Beverly Ellis – Advisor/DSO  
Phone: 870-574-4717  
Email: bellis@sautech.edu
Immigration Matters

Immigration Documents

F-1/F-2 or M-1/M-2 Visa

- Your visa is the document that allows you to enter the US. Your visa may expire while you are in the US, but as long as you have a current I-20 and are in status then you are still legal. If you leave the country after your visa expires, you will need to obtain a new one before reentering the US.

I-20

- This is the document that contains information about your education and lists the regulations for F1 students. You must keep all the information on this document current.
- If you change your address, major, or personal information you need to submit the SEVIS Update form to our office within 10 days of any changes.
- You must make sure your I-20 doesn’t expire before you finish your program.

I-94

- You need to always keep your I-94 with your passport.
- You can obtain the I-94 by going to the DHS website and filling out the page with information from your passport. If you arrived in the US before May 2013, then you should have received an I-94 from customs when you arrived. If you lost it, then you will need to contact DHS for a replacement.

Passport

- Make sure your passport is valid and doesn’t expire while you are in the US. You should renew your passport 6 months before it expires. Contact your country’s embassy in the US to learn about what is required to renew your passport.

Maintaining F-1 or M-1 Status

F-1 or M-1 students are responsible for ensuring they are “in status”. It is their responsibility to read the regulations on the second page of the I-20. It is also the student’s responsibility to report any changes to their I-20 to their Primary Designated School Official (PDSO) or Designated School Official (DSO).

How to maintain F1 or M-1 Status?

- You must enroll in, and complete, 12 or more credits in fall and spring semesters.
- You need your DSO’s permission BEFORE you stop attending, withdraw, or drop below full-time.
- F-1 students can only work on campus and under 20 hours per week during the semester.
- M-1 students are not allowed to work.
- You need your DSO’s authorization BEFORE starting an internship.
- You must report any change to your local address within 10 days.
- Inform your DSO of changes to the information on your Form I-20.
- Before you travel outside the United States, be sure to obtain a travel endorsement (signature), and discuss your travel plans with your DSO.
- Complete your studies no later than the program end date on your Form I-20.
- F-1 students have a 60 day grace period and M-1 students have a 30 day grace period after completion of study, in which students need to either leave the country or find a new program.
- You need to obtain a SEVIS transfer BEFORE transferring to another US school.
• Ensure your passport is valid.
• You must have appropriate health insurance for the entire length of your program.
• You have to file a federal income tax form every year you are in the U.S., even if you did not work.

Updating SEVIS
Any changes to the information on your I-20 needs to be reported to your DSO. It is your responsibility to report personal or educational changes, and failure to report changes could lead to the loss of your F-1 or M-1 status.

What do you need to report?
• Change of address – if you move off campus or to a new location you must report the change within 10 days. If your address changes in your home country, you need to notify your DSO or DSO.
• Change of major (M-1 status students are not allowed to change their majors)
• Name changes
• Employer changes

To update your address, major, or name submit a SEVIS Update form to your DSO.
• Financial changes – if your financial support changes you need to fill out a new Affidavit of Support form and attach an updated bank statement or letter.

Travel
In the US
Regulations require you to keep your immigration documents with you at all times. This includes your passport, visa, I-20, and I-94. While in town, you should be fine carrying photo copies of your documents. If you leave town, you should carry your original documents with you. Remember, if you fly, never put your documents in your check-in luggage.

Traveling outside of the US
Before you leave, your DSO needs to sign page 3 of your I-20. This is important and without this signature you may not be allowed to reenter the US. If your visa has expired, then you will need to arrange a visa interview while you are in your home country. If this is the case, you should take a copy of your transcript along with the other required interview documents. Even if you have a valid visa, it may be a good idea to carry with you a copy of your unofficial transcript, financial support information, and your DSO’s contact information. You may not need any of this, but it is better to err on the side of caution.

Academic Policies
Full-time Enrollment and Exception
International F-1 students must enroll in and complete 12 or more credit hours.

Of the twelve (12) required hours, F-1 students can only enroll in one online class per semester. An online class is a class that does not require you to physically be at the university. Hybrid classes are a mix of online and in-class requirements, so you can take more than one hybrid class. Make sure your academic advisor understands this because it is ultimately your responsibility. If you have questions
about which courses are online, on campus or hybrid, contact your DSO. **If it is your last semester you cannot take an online class as your only course.**

Exceptions to the full-time enrollment rule:

- English Language Difficulty or Unfamiliarity with US Teaching methods
  - Students can only use this for their first academic semester.
- Improper Course Level
  - Students who are placed in a course that was too difficult for that education level and no other classes are available.
- Last Semester before Graduation
  - Students can take under 12 credit hours to complete the remaining credit hours they need to graduate.
- Medical Reasons
  - Students who are physically or mentally unable to complete a full course load.
  - Students need to submit an official letter from the doctor detailing the reason why they can’t complete 12 hours.

To request a reduced course load, fill out the [Reduced Enrollment form](#) and submit it to your DSO. M-1 status students can only be authorized to reduce course load for a medical reasons.

**Withdraw or Transfer**

**Withdraw**

Students who wish to leave SAU Tech need to follow the correct withdrawal process to ensure they are not billed or penalized for leaving without notice. If an F-1 or M-1 student doesn’t officially withdraw from the university, then they are terminated as “unauthorized withdrawal” or “failure to enroll” and both of these are bad for your immigration record. Also, both of these options give you no grace period as you have to leave the country immediately.

So, if you know you will not return to SAU Tech, or need to take a leave of absence, make sure you follow the proper withdrawal procedures:

- First, talk to your DSO about your decision.
- You will need to complete a withdrawal form with your academic advisor.
- Once you have completed the process, fill out the [International Student Withdrawal Form](#)
- Upon withdrawing from the university, students have 15 days to leave the U.S.

**Leave of Absence**

F1 students are allowed to take a semester off from their education for personal reasons, but they **MUST** leave the country for that semester. You cannot remain in the U.S. while on a leave of absence. If there is a medical reason for taking the semester off, then the student needs to speak to their DSO.

To take a leave of absence:

- Follow the steps above to withdraw from the university.
- Get your I-20 signed before you leave the country.
- Submit your travel (departure and arrival) itinerary to the DSO
- Contact your DSO 30 days before you reenter the US.

**Transfer**

Students that wish to transfer to another American university or college need to start by following the steps listed above to withdraw from the university. Then:

- Complete the [SEVIS Release form](#)
Submit your acceptance letter for your new school to SAU Tech’s DSO. You will be transferred on the date you put on your release form.

Program Extension

F-1 students are allowed to extend their program if there is an academic or medical reason. The extension must be finalized before the program end date stated on your I-20. If you fail to update your program end date before that date then you will fall out of status and have to apply for reinstatement.

To qualify for a program extension, F-1 students must meet the following requirements:

1. The expiration date of the I-20 has not yet passed
2. The student has continuously maintained F-1 student status
3. The delay in completion of the program must be due to one of the following reasons:
   • Compelling academic reason (change of major)
   • Compelling medical reason (documentation is required from U.S. licensed medical physician)
4. The student must have sufficient funds to cover the additional time needed to complete program requirements.

Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are not acceptable reasons for a program extension.

To apply for a program extension:

1. Fill out the Program Extension Request form
   • Your academic advisor will have to fill out a section of the form.
2. Complete a new Affidavit of Support.
3. Bring a current bank statement or bank letter (scanned copy is acceptable).

Do this in a timely manner, and don’t wait until the end of the semester. M-1 status students are not allowed program extensions.
Employment & Internships

Employment & Internships for F1 Students

F1 students are only allowed to work on campus. Working off campus is illegal and grounds for termination. During the fall and spring semesters students can only work up to 20 hours a week, but during the summer students can work up to 40 hours a week.

To find work on campus, go around to the Human Resources office to see if any Institutional Work Study positions are open.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT/Internships)

Students with F-1 visa status may be eligible to participate in Curricular Practical Training (CPT), which “is defined to be alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school” (definition found on the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement site). Southern Arkansas University Tech defines Curricular Practical Training as a course that is listed in the course catalog with an assigned course number, has an established grading or evaluation component, and is offered at a cooperating employer.

Eligibility Requirements:

- The student must currently be in valid F-1 status.
- The student must have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year.
- The student must continue to be enrolled for a full course of study during the CPT in fall and spring semesters.
- Employment must be related to the student’s major field of study, and be a required part of the academic program. Work which is not required by the degree program may meet the requirements for curricular practical training if the student receives academic credit for the employment experience.

Regulations governing CPT:

- CPT is authorized one semester at a time.
- Students must be registered in a CPT course for each semester.
- CPT must be authorized on the I-20 prior to the start date of employment. To work without authorization is illegal.
- CPT may be for 20 hours per week (part time) or for more than 20 hours per week (full time). During the fall and spring semesters students can only work 20 hours.

Bring the following to your advising appointment:

- CPT Application Form, completed by you and your advisor
- Current I-20
- Unofficial Transcript
- Training offer letter printed on official business letterhead from your employer that includes the following information:
  - Job title and brief job description
  - Exact dates of employment
  - Number of hours of work per week
  - Physical place of employment (Street address, no PO Boxes)
American Documents
Social Security Cards
Social Security Number
A Social Security number’s primary purpose is to report your wages or earning to the government for tax purposes. If you work in the U.S. you need a Social Security Number in order to get paid. The Social Security card you receive will include your name and identification number. The number assigned is designated only for you and is highly confidential. It should be given only to authorized individuals such as your employer. You should keep in a safe place.

Before you can apply for a Social Security card, our office has to register you in SEVIS. This is usually done about two weeks after classes start. After you are registered in SEVIS, it can take up to 10 days before your information is accessible by the Social Security Office.

How to apply

• First, you need to find employment on campus.
• Once you find a job, you can get a form from your DSO that will need to be completed by your employer. Once your employer has completed the form, return it to your DSO. It will be processed and then returned to you.
• After we get the form back we will create a work authorization letter for you.
• You now have two options:
  • Someone can drive you to the Social Security Office in El Dorado any time after your SEVIS record has been processed.
  • If you live in campus housing, you can request transportation on the Transportation Request Form.

Normally, it takes about three weeks for your Social Security card to be processed, but sometimes it may take longer.

State ID & Driver’s License
You will need a driver’s license to drive in the US. Some international driver’s licenses are accepted but may cause problems if you are pulled over. It is recommended that if you plan to drive, you should get an Arkansas license. To get a driver’s license, you will need to take a written exam and a driving test. If you already have a driver’s license from your home country you may be able to skip the written part.

If you just need to get a State ID, you may go directly to the Camden Revenue Office with your immigration documents.

Taking the Written Exam

• The written exam is offered every Thursday and Friday mornings at 8:00 am to 10:30 am at the Ouachita Partnership for Economic Development (OPED) at 625 Adams Ave SW in Camden.
• If you have questions, you can call their office at 870-836-1000.
• If you already have a license, you can ask them if you need to take the written part.
• To prepare for the exam read the Arkansas Driver’s Manual.
Taking the Driving Test

- The driving test is offered at the OPED building on Thursday and Friday afternoons at 1:00 pm sharp. **You must be in your car in line ready at 1 pm or you will not be able to test.**
- You will need to have a vehicle for this portion of the exam. That car must be properly tagged and auto insurance is required. Your car must be clean and in good working condition.

Once you pass both of these tests, you will receive a form you need to take to the Revenue Office to get your Arkansas Driver’s License. The Revenue Office is located downtown. They are open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Revenue office address:
Camden Revenue Office
135 Jackson Street
Camden, AR 71701

You will need the following documents to get your license or ID:
- I-20 – If you transferred from another university take your I-20 from your previous school as well as your current I-20.
- I-94 – Passport, visa
If you don’t have these documents you WILL NOT get a license.

**Remember, you MUST have car insurance to own a vehicle. It is against the law to drive without a license or insurance. You will have to go to court, pay a heavy fine, and possibly have your vehicle towed if you are pulled over without either of them.**

**Health Insurance for F1 Students**
SAU Tech wants to ensure that international students are fully covered by adequate health insurance while in the U.S. Therefore, the University requires all international students to be covered by our healthcare provider, Lewermark unless the student receives an insurance waiver (see below).

To review our policy, go to the [Lewermark SAU Tech policy page](#). From their site you can:
- Find a doctor or pharmacy
- Call their 24/7 nurse hotline
- Learn when to go to the hospital
- Print your insurance card:
  - Click on “Student Login for ID Card” in the center of the page
  - Put in your student ID (900-00-xxxx number), the password is your date of birth (mm/dd/yyyy). Click Continue.
  - On the next page confirm your password and enter the proper information.
Click on the “Start Here” tab on the upper left-hand corner, you will then see the “Online Card” option.

Once you let it load, you can print it out.

**Waiver**

If you have an existing insurance plan, you may be eligible to apply for a waiver of the insurance requirement. A waiver allows you to be excluded from the University’s insurance policy. Your existing insurance must have coverage that is **equal to or better** than the plan offered by the University.

The waiver requirements are as follows:

- A maximum benefit per person no less than $500,000 per academic year
- No Deductibles
- Must cover 100% of cost for in-network

*To receive a waiver you must present your plan’s policy to our office by the second week of school.* If you fail to bring your policy to our office by this time, you will not be able to receive a waiver and you will be charged for our insurance without refund.

**Forms**

**Forms for F1 Students**

Please note: All forms are PDFs.

- Affidavit of Support
- CPT Application
- Insurance Information Form
- International Student Withdrawal Form
- Program Extension Form
- Reduced Enrollment Form
- SEVIS Release Form
- SEVIS Update Form

[Health Insurance Application](#)

**Transportation Requests**

[Transportation Arrival and Final Departure Plans Form](#)
[Transportation request form for Housing Students](#)