



SPRING HILL
COLLEGE

International Student Handbook

Student Advising Services

Table of Contents

About SEVIS	3
Obtaining F-1 Visa Status.....	4
How to Obtain F-1 Visa Status.....	4
After Receiving Your F-1 Visa	4
Maintaining F-1 Visa Status	4
8 Easy Steps to be “In Status”:	4
Consequences of being “Out of Status”	5
Reinstating your Student Status.....	5
Employment	6
Curricular Practical Training	6
CPT Eligibility	6
Optional Practical Training	6
OPT Eligibility.....	7
Social Security Number	7
Social Security Office	7
Traveling Abroad	7
Obtaining a Travel Signature	8
Transferring Schools	8
SEVIS Transfer from SHC.....	8
Frequently Asked Questions about Transferring	8
Academic Support	9
Academic Advising.....	9
Tutoring	9
Center for Academic Excellence (CAE)	9
Banking, Money, and Taxes.....	9
Opening a Bank Account	9
Money Matters.....	10
Taxes.....	10
Cell Phones	11
Cultural Adjustment	11
Culture Shock.....	11
Signs of Culture Shock	12
Returning Home	12
American Cultural Characteristics	12

Academic Culture	13
Food and Groceries	14
Meal Plans	14
Groceries	14
Ethnic Food Markets.....	15
Housing and Transportation.....	15
Housing.....	15
Transportation.....	15
Applying for a Driver’s License	15
Health Care	16
Aetna Student Health Insurance	16
Living in Mobile	16
Interesting Facts about Mobile	16
Attractions	17
Weather.....	17
Hurricanes	17
In Case of a Hurricane or other Emergency Evacuation.....	18

About SEVIS

Student Exchange Information System (SEVIS)

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is an internet-based system allowing universities and other academic programs to exchange data on the visa status of international F-1 students with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). SHC's compliance with SEVIS regulations is audited every two years. SEVIS benefits students and scholars by improving the speed and accuracy of their application processes. Your I-20 is housed and maintained through the SEVIS system. All updates to your academic program, employment, status, and attendance are made on a regular basis.

How does SEVIS work?

SHC uses SEVIS to notify USCIS when it admits a new international student. USCIS approves the College's request to issue form I-20 (for F-1 students) through SEVIS. The College sends the form to the student or scholar.

If you are a new F-1 student then you will pay a SEVIS fee of \$200 to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. For information on paying the SEVIS fee, please see the US government SEVIS I-901 fee website

A new F-1 student visits a US Consulate abroad, which uses SEVIS to confirm the validity of the student's or scholar's I-20. The consulate issues the student or scholar a visa. For a list of US Consulates in your home country, please see the US Embassies website.

At the airport, a USCIS officer reports the F-1 visa holder's entry into the U.S. to SEVIS.

Upon arrival at SHC, the student checks in with Student Advising Services, who confirms the student's arrival at Spring Hill through SEVIS.

The College provides regular reports to SEVIS throughout the student's academic career.

The student's departure from the U.S. is recorded in SEVIS.

What data does SHC report to SEVIS?

F-1 student enrollment or failure to enroll

Student's change of legal name or address

Early graduation of a student prior to end date on the I-20

Disciplinary action taken due to criminal conviction

Student's un-authorized drop below a full course of study

Student or scholar termination date and reason for termination

Student's failure to maintain status or complete program of study (please refer to page 5)

Other data such as program extensions, school transfers, changes in level of study, employment authorizations and reinstatement

SEVIS Information Resources

Visit the [SEVIS homepage](#) or [Citizenship and Immigration Services \(CIS\)](#) for more information. Also see the [SEVIS/I-901 fee website](#) and [US Embassies website](#).

CHECK IN EVERY SEMESTER in STUDENT ADVISING SERVICES

Every semester you must check in with Student Advising Services. Your International Advisor can then register you in SEVIS for the semester. It is YOUR responsibility to check in with the advisor during the first week of classes. If you are not registered each term, your I-20 will be terminated.

If you change rooms on campus or move to a different apartment, you must inform your International Advisor as soon as possible. It is a rule that you must inform your advisor within 10 days of moving. Your advisor then is required to update your address within 20 days. Failure to update your address will put you out of status. [Click here to access the International Student Change of Address Form.](#)

Obtaining F-1 Visa Status

How to Obtain F-1 Visa Status

- [Apply and be accepted for admission to Spring Hill College](#)
- Provide documentation of sufficient financing for at least one year of study, including living expenses and tuition
- Spring Hill College will issue you an I-20 document
- Sign your I-20 and use it to apply for your F-1 visa at the US Consulate in your home country
 - [10 Points to Remember when Applying for a Nonimmigrant Visa](#)
- [Pay your I-901 Fee](#)
- [Visit the SEVP Website for further details](#)

After Receiving Your F-1 Visa

- Use your I-20 and F-1 visa to enter the US up to 30 days before the start of classes
- After arriving in Mobile you must check-in with Ms Denise Robb in Student Advising Services bringing your passport, I-94, and I-20 documents
- Attend the mandatory orientation called Badger Connection to learn more about adapting to life on the Hill and your F-1 legal obligations
- Be responsible for maintaining your status to ensure that you are able to complete your studies

Maintaining F-1 Visa Status

Maintaining status means that you are here in the U.S. legally and you are eligible for all the benefits available to the international student.

8 Easy Steps to be “In Status”:

1. Have a valid passport at all times
 - a. If there are less than 6 months remaining on your passport you may be denied entry to the USA.
2. Attend the school that you are authorized to attend. Your I-20 must accurately reflect the college you are attending.
3. Carry a full course load of study
 - a. 12 hours per semester undergraduate
 - b. 9 hours per semester graduate
4. You must notify your International Advisor if you are unable to complete your degree program by the completion date specified on the I-20

5. You must notify your International Advisor if you continue from one educational level to another (example: Bachelor's to Master's Degree).
6. You must notify your International Advisor if you intend to transfer to another school.
7. You are limited to 20 hours per week of on-campus employment while school is in session. During breaks and vacations you may work full-time.
8. DO NOT work off-campus without the proper authorization or you will fall out of status!

It is your responsibility to remain in status!

Full Course of Study

The quantity of academic work a student does at Spring Hill College is measured in "credits". The number of credits a course is worth usually depends on the number of hours per week that it meets. The standard Spring Hill College course is three credit hours. There are three terms at Spring Hill College; Fall, Spring, and Summer. You are required to complete two terms of full-time study before you can take a term off. So if you start school in the fall, you must carry a minimum of twelve hours in the fall and spring and then you are free to decide if you want to study full or part-time in the summer, or just take the whole summer off. If you fall below full-time in the fall, you cannot make up the hours in the spring. Once you go below full-time you are out of status.

Consequences of being "Out of Status"

If you are out of status you will LOSE the following privileges and benefits:

- Eligibility for employment, on and off-campus (including OPT and CPT).
- Eligibility to transfer to another institution.
- Eligibility to extend the program of study or move to another degree level (i.e. bachelor's to master's)
- Eligibility to continue studies at Spring Hill College can be lost if the student is terminated in SEVIS and has not requested reinstatement.

Reinstating your Student Status

Students must complete the I-539 form to request reinstatement from the BCIS. See the advisor about submitting the form, required documents and fee.

You MAY qualify for reinstatement if:

- You have been out of status less than 5 months.
- You are currently pursuing a full course of study.
- You do not have a history of repeated violations.
- The status violation was beyond your control.
- You have not engaged in unauthorized employment
- You are not deportable for any reason other than the current violation.

Employment

Working on Campus

A student in valid F-1 status is entitled to work 20 hours per week on-campus. On-campus employment is limited to positions that provide services to Spring Hill College. An additional benefit attached to on-campus employment is the ability to work 40 hours per week during breaks and annual vacation. Please consult your International Advisor before accepting a position in order to verify eligibility.

Economic Hardship

International students who can prove severe economic hardship may be permitted to work off-campus during their studies. Students who may qualify should contact their International Advisor for more information on how to apply.

Curricular Practical Training

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is work authorization which allows an international student to gain practical experience off campus usually in the form of an internship, co-op education, or practicum that earns credit toward your degree completion prior to graduation. International students whose programs require PAID co-curricular work must get approved by a DSO. Students are required to provide proof of academic credit and proof of employment in order to be approved. Students anticipating CPT should meet with their International Advisor at least 2 weeks before starting work.

CPT Eligibility

To be eligible for CPT you must:

- Have been enrolled full time for 9 consecutive months (3 terms)
- Have F-1 visa status
- Be enrolled full-time if you have remaining coursework
- Obtain authorization from Student Advising Services
- You must receive credit for the work and it must be directly related to your program

Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is employment authorization in your field of study for up to 12 months following completion of your degree. Practical training provides international students with off-campus employment authorization in their major field of study. You become eligible for practical training if you have been enrolled full-time for at least 9 months and are in F-1 status at the time you apply for practical training.

If you are considering applying for OPT, know that it is a long (often several month) process. The OPT process can take up to 3 months and students can apply up to 90 days before they wish to work. The

OPT process is approved by USCIS but is started with the DSO. Please set up a meeting with Ms Robb in Student Academic Services as soon as possible.

OPT Eligibility

To be eligible for OPT you must:

- Have been enrolled full time for 9 consecutive months (2 terms)
- Have F-1 visa status
- Receive a recommendation from a DSO
- Be approved to work through USCIS

IMPORTANT

The Department of Homeland Security does not necessarily distinguish between paid employment and volunteer work. Always obtain authorization prior to working regardless of whether you will be paid. Remember that you will need to apply for a Social Security Number before beginning your employment.

Social Security Number

In order to work in the United States (on-campus or off) you will need to obtain a social security number. The local social security office is in downtown Mobile.

Documents to Bring to the Social Security Office:

1. Valid passport
2. I-94 card
3. I-20 ID
4. Employer's letter
5. Letter from DSO stating that you are eligible for employment
6. Employment Authorization Document (EAD) - if appropriate

Social Security Office

Suite 100 550 Government St Mobile, AL 36602	(800) 772-1213 (866) 593-1922 TTY: (800) 325-0778
Office Hours: MONDAY - FRIDAY: 08:30 AM - 03:30 PM	

Note: The Social Security office will not accept an employer's letter more than 30 days in advance of the beginning of the employment. SSN will not be issued if the F-1 period shown on the I-20 is expired or will expire by the time the student is to begin the job. You cannot obtain a SSN for any purpose other than employment.

Traveling Abroad

In order to travel outside of the US you need the following documents:

- I-20 Form
- Passport (valid at least 6 months into the future)

- I-94 Form
- A valid F-1 visa
- Registration for a full course load upon your return

In addition to the above documentation it is advisable to bring your evidence of financial support, such as a bank statement or scholarship letter.

Obtaining a Travel Signature

It is essential that you obtain a travel signature on your I-20 form from Ms Robb before traveling outside the US! Please first submit the [International Student Travel Form](#) then obtain a signature from Ms Robb BEFORE you leave.

Transferring Schools

SEVIS Transfer from SHC

To transfer your SEVIS record from SHC to your new school, you must follow these steps:

- Submit the [International Student Transfer Request Form](#)
- Supply a copy of your admission letter to your new school
- Supply proof that your government or embassy approves your transfer, if you receive support from them

In your new school's admission documents there may be a Transfer Clearance Form that verifies your F-1 status, Ms Robb will complete this form for you, but will not transfer your SEVIS record until all of the above steps have been completed

Frequently Asked Questions about Transferring

Q: When can my SEVIS record be transferred to a new school?

A: Your record can be transferred at any time, but you must maintain full time enrollment at SHC until your SEVIS record has been transferred.

Q: I plan to travel outside the US before classes start at my new school. Which I-20 do I need to come back into the US?

A: You will need the I-20 from your new school. Once your SEVIS record is transferred your I-20 from SHC is no longer valid.

Q: I have a job on campus. Can I work after my SEVIS record has been transferred? What about OPT or CPT?

A: No. All work authorization at SHC ends when your SEVIS record is transferred, including on-campus, OPT, CPT, and Economic Hardship.

Q: I've completed my transfer to my new school. Can I throw away my old I-20 from SHC?

A: No. Never throw away your old I-20s. They provide a record of your immigration history, which you may need for filing for new immigration statuses in the future.

Academic Support

Academic Advising

Students are assigned an academic advisor in their major or in Student Advising Services if they are undecided. Students can find their academic advisor information on BadgerWeb. It is the requirement of the student to meet each semester with their academic advisor. Students will not be cleared to register for classes until they have met with their advisor and gotten their schedule approved for the following term. International students should also meet with Denise Robb, Coordinator of Student Advising Services, each term to ensure they are maintaining status.

Tutoring

Students have the option of receiving free tutoring for a variety of classes. Students who want to meet with a Course Specific Tutor are responsible for contacting the tutor. All tutor sessions must take place in a public setting. There is no tutoring between 12 midnight and 7 am. Appointment Tutors are not available during Finals Week. If you need assistance for a subject that is not listed on the course specific tutoring list, contact the Academic Support Coordinator in Student Advising Services, 380-3470 or casa@shc.edu.

[A list of Course Specific Tutors can be found here.](#)

Center for Academic Excellence (CAE)

The Center for Academic Excellence offers students free tutors in math and writing across the curriculum.

[More information about the CAE can be found here.](#)

Banking, Money, and Taxes

Opening a Bank Account

To open a bank account you will need some money to put in the account. Banks have varying minimums to open an account, so be sure to double check you're able to deposit the minimum. You are not required to have a Social Security Number to open a bank account. Documentation required to open a Bank Account:

- Your unexpired passport
- Your I-94 card
- Your I-20
- Any secondary form of identification you may have (SHC ID Card)

If you encounter any issues or your bank requires a letter from the school, contact Ms Robb, 251-380-3467 or drobb@shc.edu, for assistance.

Local banks in Mobile:

Wells Fargo

Bay Bank

Hancock Bank

Trustmark Bank

Commonwealth National

Bank

PNC Bank

Regions Bank

Money Matters

For the most part, students do not need to carry cash. Most stores, hotels, restaurants, and businesses accept VISA and Mastercard. If a store doesn't accept cards, they will likely advertise this with signs that say "CASH ONLY". Sometimes, there is an additional charge or a minimum charge to use a card. On campus, students can use their student ID to buy food.

Taxes

While in the US you must follow all laws related to taxation that apply to you. The following general information is not intended to take the place of a qualified tax advisor. Please contact the Internal Revenue Service for more detailed information. Please be advised that taxes are due to the US Internal Revenue Service on April 15th of each year.

Agencies

- Federal tax-collecting agency: Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
- State tax-collecting agency: Alabama Department of Revenue (ADOR)

Income

- Income you have received while in the US may be taxable and may come from employment, stipends, or scholarships from US sources.
- Most employers withhold tax monies from your paycheck and send it to the federal and state governments. If you are not required to pay taxes, you will recover this money after filing a tax return.
- Income from non-US sources, such as your home government, is not taxable.

Taxes

- Most F-1 and J-1 visa holders are not required to pay taxes. However, everyone in the US is responsible for submitting an income statement to the IRS, known as a tax return.
- Non-residents of the US are not required to pay Social Security taxes.
- If you have not received any income, you must still complete form 8843 and submit it to the IRS.
- To file a return, obtain the correct form(s), complete them according to instructions and submit them to the IRS and DOR.

Forms

The following are tax-related forms you should be familiar with:

- **W-2** – Your employer will provide you this form by the 31st of January for the prior year's income. It shows how much you've earned and how much was withheld in taxes.
- **1099-INT** – Your bank will send you this form showing how much interest income you earned. Non-residents are not taxed on this interest; however you may need to include this form with your tax return.
- **1042-S** – If you receive scholarships, the giving organization will send you this form. Only scholarship money used for room and board is taxable. Scholarship money used for tuition, fees, and books is not taxable.
- **1040NR or 1040NR-EZ** – You will use one of these forms to file a federal tax return. The simplified form (1040NR-EZ) is sufficient for most students.
- **OR-40N** – You will use this form to file a state tax return.
- **8843** – This form **MUST** be filed by ALL international students, with or without income. It identifies you as a non-resident and prevents any of your income from abroad from being taxed.

Tax Resources:

[Internal Revenue Service](#) – download federal forms.

[Alabama Department of Revenue](#) – download state forms.

[Taxweb.com](#) – Offers links to tax forms and additional tax information.

[Windstar Technologies](#) – Offers partial texts of tax treaties.

[TheTaxGuy.com](#) – Information and for-fee tax preparation.

NOTE: This tax information is intended for international students and scholars at SHC with typical income levels and sources. Seek professional tax advice if your circumstances are unusual in any way.

Cell Phones

Prepaid plans are easier for new international students to obtain because they do not require a Social Security number and/or a credit history check. These "pay-as-you-go" plans use the same cell phone networks and offer the same services as contract plans do though at higher rates. Advantages of these plans include no long-term contracts, security deposits, or penalties for cancellation.

CampusSIMs is also an option that allows International Students to purchase a prepaid plan and establish a US phone number without the need for a Social Security number and/or a credit history check. This also allows you to utilize your unlocked international cell phone and have an activated cell phone immediately upon entering the US.

Each company offers a variety of phones for purchase though the prices are much higher than phones purchased with a monthly contract. It may be possible to use a cell phone from your home country if it uses a SIM card and has been unlocked. However, ask a technician to confirm if the phone is compatible with that company's network.

T-Mobile
3662 Airport Blvd, Mobile, AL

AT&T
3293 Bel Air Mall, Mobile, AL

CSpire
3293 Bel Air Mall, Mobile, AL

If you are looking for a Pay-As-You-Go cell phone plan, large stores often carry a section on these types of plans and phones. These include Target, Wal-Mart, Best Buy, and Radioshack.

Cultural Adjustment

Culture Shock

One consequence of traveling to another country is culture shock. The stress of a new situation, confusion due to language difficulties, and a myriad of small cultural differences add up to culture shock. You might feel depressed, be homesick for your country and family, have difficulty sleeping or concentrating, and avoid contact with others.

If you experience these symptoms, try talking to someone. Talk to the international student advisor, a friend, the staff at the Wellness Center, or your roommate. It also helps to participate in activities you enjoy. Write a letter to your family back home. Take a walk in the park. Read a book. Watch a movie. Eat a good meal at a fancy restaurant. Visit the museum or an art gallery. Play a game with some friends

Signs of Culture Shock

- Feelings of helplessness and a dependence on compatriots
- Homesickness
- Greater irritation than appropriate when things go wrong
- A fear of being cheated, injured, or robbed
- Excessive concerns about health matters
- A strong desire to be at home with people who understand you
- Reluctance or refusal to better learn the language
- Insomnia and fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Loneliness
- Poor concentration
- Headaches
- Stomach problems
- Withdraw from the host culture
- Depression

Returning Home

After several years in the United States you may experience culture shock when returning to your home. There will likely have been changes with your family and your friends and perhaps even your home environment. Likewise your friends and family will expect you to return home the same as when you left. More likely you will have changed and grown in multiple ways. Give yourself time to re-acclimate yourself to home and for your family to get to know you. Adjusting to a new culture or environment is often just a matter of time.

American Cultural Characteristics

Individualism. Many American's, male and female, pride themselves on being independent. Some may not value their ties to family and community as much as others. Many Americans dislike being dependent on anyone or having others dependent on them. This can be viewed as "selfish" but for many Americans it is a sign of strength and character and can be a necessity for a highly mobile society.

Competitiveness. This is a central characteristic of American culture. Competition begins at a very early age as young children learn to compete in sports and academics. The principle behind the "American Dream" is that you can become whatever you wish if you are willing to work hard enough. Americans compete not only in such formal settings as sports and politics, but this culture of competition can also be found in relationships, the classroom, and on the job.

Punctuality. American culture is very time-driven. Most Americans complain about not having enough time in a day. Because they view time as a precious commodity, they take it very seriously. When one person sets a time to meet another it is considered rude not to be there at or very near the designated time. It is expected that students will be in their seats by the time class is to begin. For Americans, being late gives the impression of laziness or lack of respect.

Friendships. Americans will have many friends but they are often informal relationships. You may have an American friend who says "see you later", "call me sometime", or "lets get together", but then you won't hear from that person for a long time. This is normal. Americans are very casual in their relationships and seldom issue formal invitations. College students often get together in groups and go out to places like the mall or to a movie. Americans tend to compartmentalize their friendships into groups such as "friends at school", "teammates", etc. While other cultures may view this style of friendship as superficial, it works in a society that is highly mobile.

Materialism. Material goods, income or social status usually measures success in the United States. The marketing of material goods, much of which is non-essential, constantly bombards Americans. Social status is determined by income rather than birth. Americans believe a person should be rewarded for their contributions rather than their accident of birth.

Work Ethic. The United States is one of the most highly productive nations in the world. Americans pride themselves on working hard because that is what it takes to get ahead in society. Americans take fewer holidays and vacations than some other cultures.

Your first impressions of academic life in the United States may be confusing. International students often comment that US students are competitive but don't seem to study very hard and that in spite of the informality of the classroom, the professors are very demanding. Some of these apparent contradictions can be explained by the values that underpin them. Creativity, tolerance, and flexibility are, in general, valued above tradition and respect for authority in the United States. Teaching styles and classroom attitudes vary widely and are influenced by many different factors. Even where tradition does dictate professorial or student behavior, the patterns may not be evident to someone coming from a different tradition.

Academic Culture

There may be significant changes in how you learned at home and how you will need to learn at Spring Hill College in order to be successful. Some things will be difficult to adjust to; other things will be quite easy.

Classroom Etiquette

Dress is casual. Hats should not be worn in class and never during tests. Eating is not appropriate in class and is not allowed in most rooms. Seating is usually unassigned, though American students tend to return to the same seat every class or one nearby. Few students like to sit in the front of the classroom, but advisors encourage it. The closer you sit to the front, the more engaging the class will be. Cell phones should be turned off while in class. Professors expect students to pay attention during their lectures. You are encouraged to take notes while the professor is talking but it is not acceptable to speak to others, sleep, or do homework for another class.

Be on time to every class!

Syllabus

Each professor will pass out a course syllabus the first day of class. The syllabus is your contract with the professor. It outlines what is expected of you throughout the semester, such as readings, papers, and tests. And it outlines what the professor will teach you. A syllabus will explain how the course is graded and the attendance policy (going to class). A syllabus will list by class date what you have to do so you can look over the entire semester and plan accordingly with your other classes.

Class Participation

American classrooms can seem quiet compared to some other cultures where students are expected to debate with the professor. Or it may seem less quiet than your classroom at home. Classrooms vary from culture to culture.

Your grade will be affected by how prepared you are for class. Be sure to read what will be covered in class before going, so that you are prepared to ask questions and participate in discussions. Questions

and comments are often encouraged by faculty. They expect students to play an active roll in their education. But for some international students, American student interaction is still quite limited. American students do little talking or interaction during high school and come to college with this mentality. So the lower division courses will tend to have less interaction than the higher division courses.

Attendance

Attendance in class at Spring Hill College is extremely important. Some professors will drop a student from their course if that student misses too many classes. For F-1 students this is quite serious. Falling below full-time for non-attendance will cause a student to lose status and it would be difficult if not impossible to get back in status without going home.

Tutors

A schedule of appointment tutors can be found in the Student Advising Services Office. Students who want to meet with an appointment tutor are responsible for contacting the tutor. Please allow appropriate notice. All tutor sessions must take place in a public setting. There is no tutoring between 12:00 midnight and 7 a.m. The Center for Academic Excellence is located in the library. This center has tutors for writing and math. It is an excellent resource for those students who struggle with those subjects and for students who want to improve their current good grade to an excellent one. Tutors are a free service to SHC students.

Academic Advisors

Your academic advisor will help you select courses, can advise you on program options or areas of concentration and can assist you with other academic issues. Advisors are faculty who teach you as well as advise you. They are a valuable source of information in your chosen field of study. Courses are sometimes only offered every other year so it is important to consult an academic advisor when selecting classes for the next term. Your advisor must give you clearance in Badger Web before you are allowed to register for classes.

Career Services

The director of career services helps students who are undecided about a major or area of concentration. The director later assists students when they are looking for internship opportunities and jobs. Services include a course on career decision-making, electronic résumé, online and other resources, and alumni connections. It is never too early to take advantage of career services at Spring Hill College.

Food and Groceries

Meal Plans

The college offers numerous meal plan options allowing you to eat at the various places on campus. [For more information about the various on campus dining options click here.](#) There are meal plans for both resident students (those living on campus) and commuter students (those living off campus). [For more information about meal plans click here.](#)

Groceries

There are two types of stores for groceries, small convenience stores (CVS, Walgreens, small locally owned stores) and larger grocery stores (Winn-Dixie, Walmart). Small convenience stores generally do not have fresh foods and have higher prices. When possible, shop at larger grocery stores to save money. The nearest grocery store to campus is Rouses Market, 4350 Old Shell Road.

Ethnic Food Markets

There are several local food markets that carry or specialize in ethnic cuisine. If you are searching for ingredients for a meal and having difficulty finding them at one of our local groceries, you might want to try some of our local food markets such as Food Pak, Seven Spice, My Hoa Oriental Food Market, and others.

Housing and Transportation

Housing

Spring Hill College has [eight residence halls](#), and 85 percent of our students live on campus. In fact, Spring Hill guarantees you housing for four years.*

Each room has Internet access and a full cable package. Residential living at Spring Hill ranges from traditional residence halls to “pod living” configurations to apartments. All of our residence halls are fun, comfortable and convenient to the rest of the campus.

Residents are automatically part of a close-knit, active community marked by mutual respect and learning that is consistent with the mission and character of Spring Hill. From late-night pizza parties to study groups to floor socials, you’ll form lasting bonds with fellow students and enjoy an experience like nowhere else.

*All full-time, undergraduate, traditional students not residing locally with parents or legal guardians are required to live in the College residence halls for four years. Exceptions are made for extenuating circumstances.

[For more information about living on campus click here.](#)

Transportation

Students living on campus can walk to everything they need, however navigating Mobile can be challenging without a vehicle. Many students find it useful to have a bike on campus. Mobile has a limited bus system called [The Wave](#), but routes and availability are minimal.

Applying for a Driver’s License

International students can apply for an Alabama driver's license. For more information about obtaining a driver's license as an international student, visit [ICE's FAQ on Driver's Licensing](#).

To apply for an Alabama's driver's license, students first need to go the Social Security Office to apply for a Social Security Number. Let the office know you need a **Certificate of Ineligibility** in order to obtain a driving license.

Once you've gone to the Social Security Office, go to the DMV with the following items:

- Certificate of Ineligibility from Social Security OR Social Security Number Card
- Passport
- I-20
- Printed I-94
- Spring Hill College ID Card
- Previous Driver's License (foreign or from a different state)

There is a fee associated with getting your driver's license, additional fees if you need to take a driving test, and you can spend a long time waiting in the lobby of the DMV for your turn. For more information visit the [Mobile County License Commissioner](#).

Health Care

Aetna Student Health Insurance

All full-time undergraduate students must have medical insurance that provides coverage in the state of Alabama. Spring Hill College offers the Aetna Student Health Insurance Plan if you do not currently have insurance coverage, students are automatically enrolled in the Aetna Plan and must waive out if they have comparable insurance. Most international insurance policies will not cover the student at a comparable rate, however students are welcome to contact the Wellness Center if they need more information (251) 380-2271.

[*NAFSA Health Care Guide for International Students*](#)

Living in Mobile

Interesting Facts about Mobile

- Mobile is known as the Azalea City, thanks to Fifise Langlois who first brought the bright pink blossoms here from his father's garden in Toulouse, France in 1754.
- Mobile is home to the original Mardi Gras in this country, instituted in 1704, sixty-two years before New Orleans adopted the celebration.
- Mobile Bay was the first body of water in the New World to be accurately charted. Pineda did this in 1519.
- Modern Mobile derives more than half its annual wealth from industries dependent upon and directly allied with water-borne commerce.
- The correct pronunciation of the city is [mo-beel](#), given the soft emphasis on the second syllable by its French founders.
- Mobile Bay holds the second largest natural gas reserve in the world.

- Mobile is the Azalea Capital of the World, displaying more than 50 varieties in colors from paperwhite to pink, red and translucent lavender.
- Mobile is the home of notables Jimmy Buffett (entertainer), Hank Aaron (baseball Hall of Fame) and Winston Groom (author of Forrest Gump).

Attractions

Local Events/Attractions	Nearby Events/Attractions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bellingrath Gardens and Home • Bragg-Mitchell Mansion • Dauphin Island Beach and Sea Lab • Mobile Welcome Center • Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center • Mobile International Festival • Mobile Museum of Art • Mobile Carnival Museum • Museum of Mobile • National African-American Archives Museum • USS ALABAMA Battleship Memorial Park • BayFest Music Festival • Mobile Bay Activity Finder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biloxi and Gulfport beaches, amusement parks, and casinos • Destin Beach in Florida • New Orleans Audubon Aquarium and Zoo • New Orleans French Quarter • New Orleans Garden District • New Orleans Riverwalk Market Place • Orange Beach and Gulf Shores • Pensacola Beach • Fairhope Arts Festival • Alabama Civil Rights Museum Trail

Weather

Mobile's weather is influenced to a considerable extent by the Gulf of Mexico. Summers are consistently warm, but maximum temperatures are seldom high because of breezes from Gulf waters. Winters are usually very mild. The city enjoys an annual average temperature of 67.5 degrees.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Average high °F (°C)	60.8 (16)	64.4 (18)	71.2 (21.8)	77.5 (25.3)	84.6 (29.2)	89.3 (31.8)	91.0 (32.8)	90.7 (32.6)	87.0 (30.6)	79.2 (26.2)	70.7 (21.5)	62.7 (17.1)	77.4 (25.2)
Average low °F (°C)	40.0 (4.4)	43.3 (6.3)	49.2 (9.6)	55.4 (13)	63.7 (17.6)	70.4 (21.3)	72.7 (22.6)	72.6 (22.6)	68.0 (20)	57.6 (14.2)	48.6 (9.2)	42.2 (5.7)	57.0 (13.9)

Hurricanes

Mobile is prone to hurricanes and tropical storms, so it is important to be prepared in the case of a storm. Spring Hill has plans in place to protect students during storms, so look to trained faculty and staff for information about how to stay safe. The National Weather Service offers information about storms as well as how to prepare for them.

CONTACTS:

Denise Robb
International Advisor and
Primary DSO
E-Mail: drobb@shc.edu
Office Phone: 251-380-3467

Rosalie Carpenter
Vice President for Student
Affairs
E-Mail: rcarpenter@shc.edu
Office Phone: 251-380-3023

Todd Warren
Director of Public Safety &
Security
E-Mail: twarren@shc.edu
Office Phone: 251-3095

In Case of a Hurricane or other Emergency Evacuation

Residential Students:

Make a decision as soon as possible whether to stay on campus, if allowed, or to evacuate off-campus. Talk to the Dean, housing director or Denise Robb about your options. Let Denise Robb know your final decision and where you are going.

You must stay on campus once the storm is 5 hours from landfall.

Students who choose to remain on campus will be relocated to a designated residential hall for the duration of the storm. If you decide to leave campus after the storm, let Denise Robb know where you are headed.

You will need to keep informed of ongoing information. Spring Hill College will announce when classes resume. Check the SHC web page for updates or contact Denise Robb if other means of communication are out.

Commuter/Graduate Students:

Contact Denise Robb and inform her of your plans – whether you intend to stay in Mobile or evacuate. Let her know where you are going and your contact information.

You will need to keep informed of ongoing information. Spring Hill College will announce when classes resume. Check the SHC web page for updates or contact Denise Robb if other means of communication are out.