CAMPUS RESILIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

A CaRES Report
A community’s resilience is measured by its sustained ability to prepare for, respond to, and fully bounce back from a variety of crises. Resilience is the ability to anticipate risk, limit impact, and bounce back rapidly through survival, adaptability, evolution, and growth in the face of turbulent change. As one of the fastest growing populations on college and university campuses, international students are particularly vulnerable during emergency situations due to their non-immigrant status, general unfamiliarity with local geography, laws, and procedures, and lack of a permanent U.S.-based support system of family and friends. Because of the additional challenges that international students will face during emergencies, it is important that school officials and the international student communities work together to establish plans and processes more resilient and prepare for long-term recovery from a variety of emergency situations.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY CHECKLISTS

Preparedness
International students visiting the U.S. can increase their resilience by preparing themselves as early as possible for situations that may disrupt their everyday lives. The following checklist outlines some of the critical areas that international students should focus on as they begin their resilience planning upon their arrival to the U.S.

Build a Support Network
☐ Get to know your Resident Advisors (RA), neighbors, classmates, and professors. Talk to your RA about emergency planning and notify them of any special
circumstances that you feel they need to be made aware of (language barriers, special medications, etc.)

- If you have a host family, spend time getting to know them and setting up communication procedures in case of an emergency.
- Create a buddy system with classmates or neighbors and identify buddies who are people you trust to determine if you need assistance. Your support system should know your capabilities and needs and be able to help in a matter of minutes.

**Obtain Relevant Contact Information**

- Register with your nearest Embassy.
- Establish an emergency contact person in your home nation with whom you can keep updated on matters related to your wellbeing.
- Ensure you know the telephone numbers and contact details locally for all emergency services.
- Know the phone numbers for airlines and airports, as well as the routes to access the Embassy, ports, or airports.

**Secure Important Documentation**

- Make sure all your important documents, including previous academic records and transcripts; copies of immigration forms and visas; etc. are stored in safe and multiple locations.
- Inquire with your school Registrar’s/Student Accounts office to see if they can store these documents safely for you.
- Make sure you know where and how to access/and or retrieve these documents after a disaster.

**Learn Existing Emergency Procedures**

- If your campus is in an area with a high frequency of natural disasters, learn about the most common occurrences and the standard safety procedures to follow.
Know your location and evacuation routes, where fire extinguishers, emergency exits, emergency telephones, and pull alarms are for your area.

- Remain aware of the locations of emergency shelters closest to your residence and classrooms, and know the safest routes to get there.

- Review the emergency plans for your campus and (if applicable) your host family/student exchange program.

Make a Plan

- **Communication:** If applicable, register your existing contact information with your campus emergency website for emergency notification text and email alerts. Program your college or university’s emergency telephone number in your cell phone. Always keep your cell phone charged and purchase a backup battery.

- **Finances:** secure enough cash to support yourself in the case of an emergency in a safe place. If you do not have the funds to furnish cash, inquire with your school’s financial aid office about discretionary funds they might be able to mobilize to help you.

- **Supplies:** Make an emergency kit/bag/backpack and stock it with items such as water, nonperishable snacks, a first aid kit, a flashlight with extra batteries, special medications, cash, copies of your passport and official forms, and medical alert/emergency contact information. Detailed information to have handy includes:
  - Name of program;
  - Name and location of host institution;
  - On-site contact person(s): include phone number(s), email address, home address;
  - Home country contact person(s): include phone number(s), email address, home address (include the information for at least three emergency contacts), and
  - Embassy contact information: include phone number(s), address, directions.

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**BE READY**

Emergency kits are available from a variety of sources. Check with your institution’s emergency management office (or the emergency management organization in the community or county surrounding your school), the Red Cross chapter in your community, or your local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). You may also check [READY.gov](http://READY.gov) for a list of supplies to make up your own kit.
RESPONSE

During an emergency, international students should follow their pre-determined emergency plans that they have made with their neighbors, host families, and their campus international students office and remain in a safe place until they receive notification that it is safe to move elsewhere. If possible, students should immediately locate and contact members of their U.S.-based support network and should not be alone. If dorms are accessible, students should retrieve their emergency kits and monitor the situation closely via cell phone alerts, the campus public announcement system, social media, or local television and/or radio. As soon as possible, students should notify their embassies that they are safe and contact relatives. Students should then take inventory of any loss or damage to their belongings and dormitory/ apartment and immediately report any findings to campus emergency responders. If passports or other key documents have been lost or damaged during the emergency, students should notify embassy officials immediately.

RECOVERY

International students’ recovery efforts should be focused on the critical elements necessary to return to a normal college lifestyle. On-campus facilities such as the international education office will assist students in identifying temporary housing options for the length of the emergency and will coordinate travel back to home countries, if necessary.
If you need emergency funds to secure food, water, and/or clothing, ask your Designated School Officials/Financial Aid Office for information on how to receive assistance.

Begin planning for the next emergency: familiarize yourself with your school’s evacuation and emergency plans and create detailed plans for your stability in areas such as finance, housing, transportation, education, food, health, and communication.

If you have a host family or local community that your school has put you in contact with, discuss how you will plan for future events and communicate and support each other during an emergency.

Create an informational backup plan in case your computer and/or hard drives are destroyed or are inaccessible for a long period of time. Make sure you have important term papers, draft theses, and other documents stored in safe and multiple locations, and are accessible online even without the campus’s network.

MAINTAINING IMMIGRATION STATUS

Students who are admitted to the United States for study in approved universities and colleges must follow certain rules and regulations in order to maintain legal immigration status. United States immigration law is subject to frequent change; information should always be verified by your international student adviser. Please be aware that the information below is not just meant for during or immediately before an emergency situation. International students should have the listed documents up to date at all times.

To maintain legal F-1 or J-1 status in the United States, international students must report to the international programs office at their college or university with their passport, school issued I-20 or DS-2019, and form I-94 upon first arrival on campus to verify their presence and ensure that these documents have been properly processed. Students should not wait until times of crisis to check their immigration status and instead should adhere to the following steps at all times:

- Register for and complete a full-time course load each semester.
- Obtain written authorization from ISS or the DHS as required before engaging in any employment on or off campus.

Maintain Resilience
- Obtain U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service approval before changing universities or degree programs. As an F-1 student, you must obtain a new I-20 each time you change your major, transfer to another university, or change academic level of study (i.e., Bachelor’s to Master’s).
- Keep passport valid at all times.
- Notify your campus office for international students and scholars immediately of a lost or stolen I-20, DS-2019, or passport.
- Report to your campus office for international students and scholars any change of address within ten days of the move.
- Fill a federal income tax for every year present in the United States. This includes students with no income and F-2 and J-2 dependents. The annual deadline to file is April 15.
- Contact your office of international students and scholars before transferring schools, taking a leave of absence, changing academic programs, traveling outside the U.S., or extending the period of stay.

**Definitions to know**

**Visa:** A visa is your permission to apply for entry into the United States. As long as a student remains in the United States, in legal immigration status, it does not matter if the visa has expired. There are several kinds of student visas.

**F-1 Visa:** Most students fall into this visa category. F-1 status is given to international students who wish to enter the U.S. solely for the purpose of study. The F-1 visa denotes non-immigrant status and is, therefore, considered a temporary visa.

**J-1 Visa:** The J-visa carries many of the same requirements and privileges as the F-1 with an important distinction: it is intended for the purpose of study and promotion of inter-cultural exchange. The J visa program is administered through the U.S. Department of State.
**KEEP CURRENT**

The most important preventative steps you can take:

- Keep your visa and immigration status current
- Know your important visa and immigration information (type of visa, duration of stay, admissions number, etc.)

**I-20, or "Certificate of Eligibility for F-1 Non-immigrant Student Status"**

The I-20 is issued to academic and language students who have qualified for admission to an approved U.S. university or college. Students must take the I-20 and apply for a visa at the United States Consulate serving their home country. Additional proof of financial support, significant ties to the home country, and proof of non-immigrant intent may be required at the time of the Consulate interview.

**DS-2019:** The equivalent Certificate of Eligibility for J-1 students and scholars. The process for application and entry to the United States is the same as for the F-1 student.

**I-94 Arrival / Departure Card:** The white Arrival/Departure Record is issued to international travelers who intend to enter the United States. It is usually a small, white card issued by the U.S. Customs and Immigration Service (CIS) Officer at the port of entry (or, POE). The I-94 form conveys your legal status during your stay in the United States. It must be surrendered each time you depart from the United States (a new one is issued upon your return). Staple the form I-94 directly into your passport, along the side edge of the photo visa page.

**Admission Number:** Upon your entry into the United States, the U.S. CIS office will issue you a unique 11-digit admission number. The number is intended to assist the Immigration service in tracking student arrivals, departures, field of study, employment authorization, and subsequent change in status. This number does not change during your time as a student; it should be entered on every new I-94 you are issued during travel to and from the United States.

**Duration of Status:** An international student’s permission to stay is defined as "Duration of Status." The status is usually noted as "D/S" on the student’s form I-94. It relates to the expected date of completion for your program of study.

**Designated School Official:** The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service authorizes universities and colleges to administer regulations related to the F-1 visa
program. Each university informs the U.S. CIS of employees who function as DSOs. Check with your college or university to identify your DSOs.

**60 and 15 Day Grace Periods:** Preparation for departure. An F-1 student who has completed a course of study and any authorized practical training following completion of studies will be allowed an additional 60 day period to prepare for departure from the United States or to transfer. An F-1 student authorized by the DSO to withdraw from classes will be allowed a 15 day period for departure from the United States. However, an F-1 student who fails to maintain a full course of study without the approval of the DSO or otherwise fails to maintain status is not eligible for an additional period for departure.
TYPES OF RECOVERY ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO NON-IMMIGRANTS

Following any disaster, it is important to quickly re-establish “normalcy” in the lives of international students. Financial support is a very important factor in helping students with their transition to recovery. However, other non-financial support that allows international students to cope with their hardships is also just as important. This support helps ease the students’ transition into a new community; allows them to become more resilient, and makes the recovery from a disaster much smoother. International students need to be well aware of the resources and support mechanisms that are available to them. Included below is a list of resources (financial or otherwise) available on campus that can be useful in helping international students to recover and establish “normalcy” in their lives after a disaster.

The Financial Aid Office: Financial aid department in many universities often have discretionary or special funds that the department can mobilize to address the special needs of students. If international students are going through a financial hardship, or if they need financial support after a disaster, they should approach the financial aid office. Financial aid departments within many universities may be able to use such discretionary funds to support the transportation of international students to and from the airport, their academic supplies needs, health and insurance needs etc. Check with your financial aid office about this. If they cannot support you, make sure you pre-allocate sufficient amount (including enough cash) of funds for emergency situations.

The International Student Office: In most universities, the international student office is likely to have officials who know what international students are going through and can help with things like visa and immigration issues and can direct them to other on-campus resources for help in other areas.

Professors: In the U.S., professors may be able to help students on an individual basis, though this might come as a surprise to some international students. Professors are often assigned as advisors to students and may serve the first point of contact on many issues. It will be up to the international students to take advantage of this opportunity available to them. If a disaster affects the international students’ ability to fulfill academic requirements on time, they should approach their professor(s) and discuss alternatives.

Academic Advisers: College students (including international students) at U.S. universities are assigned academic advisers to help students choose the right classes and
make sure they graduate on time. Many international students may be paired up with professors who themselves were an immigrant or international student at some point. In such cases, academic advisers can provide valuable counseling to international students on all aspects of their affairs. If a crisis interrupts international student’s ability to fulfill certain academic requirements or to graduate on time, academic advisors may be able to offer resolutions. They may also be able to communicate the unique needs of international students with the school administration.

The Counseling Center: International students may experience cultural shock, feelings of isolation, and even frustration at not understanding American culture and slang. Disaster can impose additional shocks and stresses in the lives of international students. If they are feeling stressed, sad, or simply in need of someone to talk to, they should consider visiting the counseling center. Many colleges may provide counseling services within their health center.

The Writing Center: Writing is often a large component of the college education in the United States. If international students are not comfortable writing in English, they can seek out their school’s writing center for individual attention. Strong writing skills will help international students communicate themselves better, and become more involved with different clubs and organizations on campus, thus enriching their college experience and contributing to their overall resiliency. The writing center can also point international students to tools and resources that allow them to become more efficient and effective writers, and to store their written work securely in campus’s databases and shared networks so they do not lose them in the case of a disaster. This becomes important if disasters interrupt international student’s academic plan, and they need to develop or submit written materials promptly afterwards to fulfill deadlines for graduation, employment etc.

The Career Services Center: Though foreign students on visas will not have all of the same work opportunities as their domestic peers, school’s career services center may be able to help international students understand what options are
available while they are in the United States. Many universities have career counselors who are trained to address the special needs of international students and can provide help with internship searches or résumé tune-ups. This is important for international students who are going through financial hardships and need employment to support them.

**The Legal Services Center:** International students should consider dropping by their school’s legal services center if issues beyond immigration and visa questions arise. The campus legal services center is a good resource for international students who are undergoing hardships with legal implications; for example, having marital problems, and are considering the implications of divorce; or for students who have received an underage drinking citation or a speeding ticket.

**Embassy of the International Student’s Home Nation** is another important resource for international students to keep track of. Embassies may be able provide accommodations to international students during times of crises; help with visa and immigration questions, and other legal issues; offer passport renewal services; etc. If there is a threat or a disaster, embassies provide warnings about the conditions, how and where to seek help, and other useful advice. In more serious situations, they may recommend that international students leave the U.S., and, if commercial transportation is not available, they may be able to provide departure assistance.

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**Information obtained from:**


**Evacuation and Repatriation Information for International Students and Visitors**
Many universities require, or strongly encourage international students to obtain coverage for medical evacuation and repatriation when enrolled in U.S. universities. International students need to check with their respective universities to see if they have such requirements. Even when it is not required, international students are highly advised to obtain such insurance. When situations call for an evacuation or repatriation,
having insurance can relieve international students and their families of financial burden, thus allowing for an easier transition back to recovery.

Certain universities recognize that the majority of insurance carriers do not provide medical evacuation and repatriation coverage, so they offer supplemental coverage specifically for medical evacuation and repatriation through their student accounts office. Students may be eligible for discounted rates when they enroll in such insurance programs through their universities. International students may also be able to receive financial assistance to cover insurance costs and are encouraged to check with their financial aid office about it.

After obtaining medical evacuation and repatriation insurance, international students should make sure that the insurance information is available to the university so that they can readily access it when necessary. At the least, they should make sure the following university departments have this information:

- Registrar/ Students Accounts Office
- Health Center
- International Students Office
- Financial Aid Department

International students should also make sure they are tuned to the announcements from their native embassies in the US. If there is a threat or a disaster, embassies may provide warnings about the conditions, how and where to seek help, and other useful advice. In more serious situations, they may recommend that international students leave the US, and, if commercial transportation is not available, they may be able to provide departure assistance. International students can access this information through their embassy’s website, or by directly calling their embassy.

Information obtained from:

University of Texas – Houston: http://www.uthouston.edu/auxiliary-enterprises/insurance/
UNDERSTAND PROCEDURES FOR EXTREME HEALTH EMERGENCIES:

Isolation (separation of the ill) and quarantine (restricted movements of the well) are used to protect the public by preventing exposure to infected people or to people who may be infected. It is a precautionary measure to prevent further crises. Due to their non-immigrant status, general unfamiliarity with local laws and procedures, and lack of a permanent U.S.-based support system of family and friends, isolation and quarantine can pose special difficulty for international students. Included below are definitions of isolation and quarantine, list of diseases that can warrant them, and the federal procedure for carrying out quarantine or isolation, followed by suggestions on what international students can do to prepare for such situations.

Isolation

Isolation is used to separate ill individuals who have a communicable disease from those who are healthy. Isolation restricts the movement of such individuals to help stop the spread of certain diseases. For example, hospitals use isolation for patients with infectious tuberculosis.

Quarantine

Quarantine is used to separate and restrict the movement of well individuals who may have been exposed to a communicable disease to see if they become ill. These people may have been exposed to a disease and do not know it, or they may have the disease but do not show symptoms. Quarantine can also help limit the spread of communicable disease.

SITUATIONS INVOLVING QUARANTINE AND ISOLATION

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U.S. Bureau of Consular Affairs:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html

Shelter Offshore: http://www.shelteroffshore.com/index.php/living/more/expats-living-abroad-prepare-for-emergency-evacuation-10992
Isolation and quarantine are authorized for the following communicable diseases in the U.S.:

- Cholera
- Diphtheria
- Infectious tuberculosis
- Plague
- Smallpox
- Yellow fever
- Viral hemorrhagic fevers
- Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)
- Flu that can cause a pandemic

If a quarantinable disease is suspected or identified, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) may issue a Federal isolation or quarantine order. Public health authorities at the federal, state, local, and tribal levels may sometimes seek help from police or other law enforcement officers to enforce a public health order.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Coast Guard officers are also authorized to help enforce federal quarantine orders. Breaking a federal quarantine order is punishable by fines and imprisonment. Federal law allows the conditional release of persons from quarantine if they comply with medical monitoring and surveillance.

International students are strongly encouraged to cooperate with the quarantine officers. If they believe they have a reason that warrants a quarantine or isolation, they should immediately contact their university health center and then get in touch with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) officers. If they are quarantined or isolated, international students should always be able to deliver the following contact information to the CDC officers:

Contact numbers or email addresses of their designated school officials (DSOs) or the officials from the International Students Office – International students should review the school’s website or talk to a DSO or the International Students Office to find out how they should contact if they are quarantined/isolated, or if they must evacuate.

Contact numbers and email addresses of their family – International students need to make sure they have appropriate country and area codes necessary to reach
their family. If they have a host family in the U.S., make sure their information is also provided.

**Contact numbers and email addresses of their school’s health center** – International students should make sure they have the contact information for their school’s health center. Likewise, they should ensure that the health center has their health insurance information, as well as their evacuation and repatriation insurance information, in case the quarantine/isolation leads to evacuation or repatriation.

**Contact numbers and email addresses of their home country’s embassy nearest to them** – Embassies may be able to manage evacuation or repartition, should that become necessary following a quarantine/isolation.

**Contact information of the insurance company that provides their evacuation and repatriation insurance** – If they have evacuation and repatriation insurance, they should make sure the CDC officers have this information. This will make it easier if an evacuation or repatriation becomes necessary.

**Information obtained from:**