About Dominican University

Dominican University is a private, Catholic, comprehensive, teaching university with an enrollment of about 4,000 students. Located in River Forest, it is only 10 miles west of Chicago's Loop, or business center, and eight miles from O'Hare Airport.

Mission Statement
As a Sinsinawa Dominican-sponsored institution, Dominican University prepares students to pursue truth, to give compassionate service and to participate in the creation of a more just and humane world.

Dominican offers Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees in over 50 majors as well as eleven professional and pre-professional programs and an accelerated program in organizational leadership. Graduate programs are offered in over 30 degree programs in Business, Education, Library and Information Science, Organizational Leadership, and Social Work.

About River Forest

Dominican University is located in River Forest, a suburban village, located in Illinois. The village is closely tied to the larger neighboring community of Oak Park, Illinois. There are significant architectural designs located in River Forest such as the Winslow House by Frank Lloyd Wright. River Forest has a railroad station with service to Chicago on Metra’s Union Pacific West line.

River Forest, IL, along with the rest of the Midwest region of the United States, has four distinct seasons, all of which require different types of clothing. You will be arriving at the end of summer, typically a pleasant time of year, although it can get as hot as 90°F (32°C) and humid. Fall (autumn) days are cool and often rainy. Winter temperatures can dip below 0°F or lower especially with the wind off of Lake Michigan. January is the coldest month.
in River Forest, which you will be able to avoid if you go home during winter break. Winter is very long and it is very important to have adequate clothing to keep warm. You should invest in a warm winter coat, hat, and gloves.

For information about River Forest’s resources and village ordinances, go to its government site at http://www.river-forest.us/.

For information about neighboring village Oak Park, go to http://www.oak-park.us/.

For listings of stores, restaurants, upcoming events and popular attractions in Oak Park, go to http://www.visitoakpark.com/.

For information on special events happening downtown Oak Park, go to http://www.downtownoakpark.net/.

### About Chicago

Dominican University is located 10 miles west of Chicago’s Loop area. Chicago is the third largest city in the United States. Despite its large size, you will find it very manageable: Chicago is a city of many diverse neighborhoods that have been built and developed according to their unique histories and ethnic backgrounds. To the east, Chicago stretches 29 miles along the coast of Lake Michigan, one of the five Great Lakes. In the summer, the beaches are filled with people and boats set sail. The heart of Chicago is called the “Loop”, due to the looped formation of the elevated metro system (“the El”). This part of the city contains its financial district and some of the world’s largest buildings, and famous cultural institutions such as the Chicago Art Institute. You will have many opportunities to explore Chicago's diversity in people, architecture, cuisine, and more. For more information, visit explorechicago.org.

For events around the city, go to the Chicago Reader at www.chireader.com.

For the latest on what’s going on around the city, go to Metro Mix at http://metromix.chicagotribune.com/.

For information about public transportation in Chicago, go to www.transitchicago.com.

### Finances

You will need to carefully plan your budget before arriving at Dominican University. As wire transfers can sometimes take weeks or even months you will need to bring sufficient funds to cover your initial school supplies and other expenses. However, you should not carry large amounts of cash. Traveler’s checks are a far more convenient and secure way to transport larger amounts of money. Once you arrive you can open a local bank account to facilitate day to day transactions. If you bring a bank draft from your country to open an account you may not withdraw funds from the account until the check has been approved for collection. Since this process usually takes about 10 to 15 days, do not rely on a bank draft for immediate cash. Chase, Bank of America, and Harris are some of the larger banks in the area that have many automatic teller machine (ATM) locations throughout the city. You can use these ATM’s to access your bank at home although there is usually an additional fee for each usage. You should research your bank’s policies before leaving so as not to be surprised by additional charges later. Be sure to keep an eye on your checking account balance as you will be charged an overdraft fee.

In order to open a bank account you do not need a social security number but you may need to go through a few extra steps as an international student. You will need to bring your
passport with your visa stamp, a second form of ID such as a credit card or student ID, verification of your address, and a letter from OIP verifying your status as an international student. You will also need to bring at least a portion of the funds you wish to deposit. You do not need to bring the entire amount but usually there is a minimum opening balance of around $100 USD.

Obtaining a credit card can often be difficult for international students. The U.S. uses a credit based system, and if you have no credit history, it can be difficult to get approved for a credit card. One option is to purchase a pre-paid credit card. Visa and MasterCard both offer a “Green Dot” card, which you can find it at Radio Shack, 7-Eleven, CVS or Walgreens stores. For more information or to search locations, go to [https://www.greendotonline.com/contents/login.aspx](https://www.greendotonline.com/contents/login.aspx).

While many landlords and utility companies provide an online payment option, there are still some companies that require you to use actual checks to pay for services. Below is a diagram of how to write a check if you have not had experience with it in the past.

**Health Care**

Health care in the United States can be very expensive if you do not carry adequate health insurance. The U.S. uses a privatized system, so individuals and families are responsible for making their own health insurance arrangements. All students are urged to maintain adequate health insurance coverage. If you have existing health insurance coverage or another plan for paying your medical expenses, you must complete the Waiver Form at [www.dominicaninsurance.com](http://www.dominicaninsurance.com). Please note: Existing coverage will be verified.

If you do not have existing coverage, Dominican University strongly encourages you to enroll for the Student Health Insurance Plan. The plan is customized to balance affordability with coverage that will help most students manage their health care needs while in college. Uninsured people risk extremely high medical bills that can have devastating financial consequences.

Even with insurance you should expect to pay a portion of your medical bills in the form of a “co-pay” or “deductible”. This can range from $5 to $100 or more depending on the type of procedure and your insurance coverage. In non emergency situations you can ask your insurance company about your coverage before your visit, as some medical procedures or doctors may not be covered. Go to [www.dominicaninsurance.com](http://www.dominicaninsurance.com) to enroll or to complete the waiver process.

The Wellness Center at Dominican University is your resource for health. A staff of medical, mental health and wellness professionals are committed to helping you maintain and enhance your health in order to support your academic success and personal development.

All visits to the Wellness Center, whether for sickness or counseling, are already covered by student tuition and fees. If additional exams, testing, lab work, immunizations or procedures are required, students may be charged a small fee.

**The Wellness Center is located at:**

Lower level of Coughlin Hall
Telephone: 708-524-6229
Website: [www.dom.edu/wellnesscenter](http://www.dom.edu/wellnesscenter)

**Wellness Center Hours:**

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (closed noon to 1 p.m.)
Wednesday
9 a.m. to noon; 3 to 5 p.m.

Alternate appointment times including evening appointments may be arranged as needed.

For care after hours, students should page the Wellness Center’s on-call physician. See the Wellness Center’s web page at www.dom.edu/wellnesscenter for contact information and complete information on accessing health services after-hours including emergency care.

Immunizations

The State of Illinois Public Act 85-1315 requires that any student entering a college or university must provide proof of immunity to certain diseases. Proof of immunity relative to Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Diphtheria and Tetanus are required, as is a Tuberculosis screening. If information is known about protection against Polio, that information should also be provided.

Students taking 6 or more credit hours at any of Dominican's campuses must submit the health forms prior to their first class. The Certificate of Immunity is a legal requirement of the State of Illinois. Fines will be incurred each semester for students whose records are missing, incomplete or not valid. The Certificate of Immunity form can be found on The Wellness Center’s myDU page under Immunization Information.

Immunization records can be found at your prior school, at your doctor or medical provider. Those records must be signed by a physician or equivalent. If these records are not in English, they must be accompanied by a certified translation.

If you need immunizations or blood tests to confirm immunity, these services are available for a low fee at the Wellness Center by appointment during the academic year.

Feel free to call or email the Wellness Center with any questions.
ksikic@dom.edu or eritzman@dom.edu

Phone: 708-524-6229

Driving in the United States

In Illinois you are allowed to drive as long as you have a valid driver’s license from your home country. Although it is not recommended, you can apply for an Illinois driver’s license. For detailed instructions on how to apply, please visit http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/drivers/drivers_license/tempvisitordl.html.

If you plan to purchase a vehicle you will need to obtain the proper insurance. Failure to have car insurance may result in a ticket or even a court hearing. Be sure to study the Illinois State rules of the road before driving. Ignorance of the law is not an excuse. If you are pulled over, move to the right side of the road as soon as it is safe to do so. In some countries it is proper to get out of the vehicle to speak with the officer, however in the United States this could be seen as an attempt to flee or as a danger to the officer. Do not get out of the car unless specifically instructed by the officer, but instead wait for them to come to your vehicle. You will generally have to show your license, registration, and proof of insurance. Whenever you speak with a police officer, be clear and honest and do not attempt to bribe or bargain, as this will often result in further negative consequences.

Student Organizations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Academic Organizations</strong></th>
<th><strong>Special Interest Organizations</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black World Studies Academic Club</td>
<td>Campus Activities Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biology Honors Society</td>
<td>Campus Climate Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Club</td>
<td>Campus Crusade for Christ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eco Club</td>
<td>Common Ground</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education Club</td>
<td>Commuter Student Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fashion Club</td>
<td>Computer Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate School of Social Work Student Association</td>
<td>Curtain Call (Theatre group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Club</td>
<td>Domestic Abuse Stops Here (DASH)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math Club</td>
<td>Dominican Star Newspaper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Impact (Business Group)</td>
<td>Dominican University Health Science Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nu Rho Psi (Neuroscience Club)</td>
<td>Noteworthy (Music Organization)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nutrition Club</td>
<td>Pro Vita</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philosophy Club</td>
<td>Resident Student Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychology Club</td>
<td>SERVE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science Club</td>
<td>STRIKE--Social Justice Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Society of American Archivists</td>
<td>Student Government Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theology Club</td>
<td>Students for Peace and Justice</td>
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<td><strong>Cultural and Ethnic Organizations</strong></td>
<td>Team KIVA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Student Union</td>
<td>Up Till Dawn</td>
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<td>CIAO (Italian Organization)</td>
<td>Video Game/Technology Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>International Club</td>
<td>Club Sports</td>
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<td>Organization of Latin American Students (OLA)</td>
<td>Dance Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish Club</td>
<td>DUFF-Ultimate Frisbee Club</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Grading System**

Dominican University uses a letter grading system in all undergraduate programs. Although other methods of grading such as points, percentages, or verbal evaluation may be used at the discretion of the individual professor throughout a course, the official grades of record are letters, and other systems are converted to letters based on the standards described. You may also be able to take a course on a pass/no-pass basis.

**Scale of Scholarship**

A (4 credit points) Excellent. Indicates the highest level of achievement in the subject and an outstanding level of intellectual initiative.

A- (3.67) Excellent

B+ (3.33) Very good. Indicates a very good level of achievement and an intelligent fulfillment of course requirements in a manner that approaches the quality of the highest grade.

B (3) Good. Indicates a good level of achievement, intelligent understanding and application of subject matter.

B- (2.67) Good

C+ (2.33) Above satisfactory. Indicates a level of achievement and fulfillment of course requirements in a manner that exceeds the average requirements.

C (2) Satisfactory. Indicates academic work of an acceptable quality and an understanding of the subject matter.
C- (1.67) Satisfactory

D+ (1.33) Unsatisfactory. Indicates work done was less than satisfactory.

D (1) Poor. Minimum credit. Indicates the lowest passing grade, unsatisfactory work and only the minimum understanding of the subject matter.

F (0 points) Failure. Indicates a lack of even the minimum understanding and application.

Incomplete The grade of I: Incomplete may be given to a student who has done work of a passing grade in a course but who has not completed that work. Incompletes awarded at the end of the fall semester must be removed by the end of the subsequent spring semester; incompletes awarded at the end of the spring and summer semesters must be removed by the end of the subsequent fall semester. At that time, the professor may report a grade within the ordinary scale of scholarship or a grade of NC: No Credit. If the professor does not submit a grade by the end of the subsequent semester, the registrar will automatically record a grade of F. In an exceptional case, a professor may petition the dean of the appropriate school before the end of the last week of classes for permission to extend the incomplete for another semester.

Repeating Students may repeat at Dominican a course in which a D or F from a course taken at Dominican was previously received. Each grade is recorded on the permanent record but only the most recent grade is counted in calculating the cumulative grade point average. A student who repeats a course in which a D grade was previously earned is granted credit for the course only once.

Satisfactory/Fail Students may elect four academic courses on the satisfactory/fail basis during the four years of college, with no more than two in an academic year. Students who receive an S: Satisfactory grade will receive credit for the course, but the grade point average will not be affected. Satisfactory is defined as C- or above. However, a grade of F: Failure will be counted when computing the grade point average. Students who request to have a course graded on the satisfactory/fail basis may not alter this request once it is made, nor may students make this request after the first two weeks of the semester. The satisfactory/ fail option cannot be used for courses presented to fulfill requirements in the student’s major or minor field; for the core curriculum’s liberal arts and sciences seminar, area studies, or the writing foundation requirement; for study abroad courses; or for courses with the Education or Special Education prefix, with the exception of the clinical practice courses. Core curriculum foundation requirements other than the writing requirement may be taken satisfactory/fail.

No Credit The NC: No Credit grade is an option only for the removal of an incomplete grade.

In Progress The grade of IP: In Progress is given when a course spans more than one semester and a grade cannot be awarded until the course is completed.

Not Reported The grade of NR: Not Reported is a temporary grade assigned by the registrar in those cases where it is not possible to obtain a student’s grade from the instructor.

Withdrawal A grade of W: Withdrawal is recorded for a student who has officially withdrawn from a course. A student may withdraw from a course through the tenth week of the fall/spring semesters.

Administrative Withdrawal The grade of WX: Administrative Withdrawal is recorded for a student who has had to withdraw from college due to serious illness or other extraordinary circumstances. This grade requires the written approval of the dean of the appropriate school.
**Withdrawal for Non Attendance** The grade of WW: Withdrawal for Non Attendance is recorded for a student who either never attended a course for which the student registered or who ceased attending the course. The student failed to officially withdraw from the course.

**Unofficial Withdrawal** The grade of WU: Unofficial Withdrawal is recorded for a student who stopped attending all courses by the end of the sixth week of the semester but who failed to officially withdraw and failed to respond to inquiries from the Office of the Registrar.

*adapted from Dominican University’s Undergraduate Bulletin, 2010-2011

### American University System

The American university system is very different from the systems you may be used to in your home country. From your experience in other academic systems, you have developed certain assumptions about the purposes and methods of education and about the way your field of interest is studied. For example, you may think it is important to be able to memorize large quantities of information, or that the way to study your field is to concentrate on a very limited aspect of it in great depth. In the United States, you may find that memorizing material is considered less important than synthesizing ideas from a variety of sources, and that a field of study can be approached by contemplating the works of a variety of scholars from different disciplines. It is important for you to realize that differences of this kind exist between the educational systems of the U.S. and other countries, and that you may have to adjust your thinking. Whether or not you personally accept the values of the system here, you will have to work in accordance with them while you are here in order for you to be academically successful.

Most American students earn their undergraduate degree in four years although many students take longer and some finish in less time. In the first two years, students generally take a liberal arts foundation program that includes courses in a variety of disciplines. During the last two years, students tend to concentrate on their chosen field of study. Some professional fields, like medicine and law, are only offered at the graduate level. On average, students take five classes per semester which is anywhere between 12-18 credits depending on the classes you select. Students are required to carry a certain number of "credits" per semester in order to be considered full time.

The level of course difficulty in the United States is generally identified by the course number. Courses in the 100 – 200 level tend to be introductory classes, while 300-400 level courses have more advanced and in depth course material. When selecting courses you should ask the professor or other students to better gauge the content and difficulty level so you can find the right course level for you. Courses in the humanities often have a large amount of reading. You should keep up to date on the reading assignments throughout the semester in order to avoid a problem later.

The American style of teaching will likely be quite different from the style that you are used to in your home country. Although many American university classes are taught in a lecture style in which the professor talks and the students listen, the class discussion format is considered an equally, if not more, important aspect of U.S. college courses. Accordingly, professors may lecture for a time about a theory, a philosophic principle, or a work of literature; but then they might open that monologue to a discussion with and among the students in the class. Particularly in smaller classes, students are invited to share their opinions, to challenge the established thought, and in so doing to push themselves and the professors to expand their understanding of a given topic. This approach is believed to strengthen the student's ability to think, reason, and be creative. Additionally, American professors tend to expect more regular class attendance than professors might in other countries, and they may penalize those who repeatedly miss classes. Readings are usually...
specifically assigned and listed in the class syllabus and it is expected that the students do the reading on a regular basis in order to contribute to class discussion.*

*Cheating* is defined as copying someone else’s work or taking prohibited information or tools to an exam. *Plagiarism* is defined as copying the work of someone else and not naming them as your source. In the United States, this will be perceived as an attempt by you to utilize the ideas or words of another person as your own. Plagiarism is one of the most serious violations of academic conduct standards in the U.S. It can ruin your academic career. Of course, when you are writing a paper, you research many sources and then present or summarize other people’s ideas. But you must name your sources and identify them when you are using their words and ideas. This also applies to the work of other students. Discussing ideas for a paper with others is okay, but it is not acceptable to hand in papers that are the same as a friend’s or to let someone else write your paper for you, even though the ideas are yours.

Professors at U.S. universities and colleges are expected to be present on the campus and accessible to the students. Professors cannot teach and then leave, but instead must make themselves available to students for questions and discussion outside the classroom. Professors always hold "office hours," setting aside time each day or several days a week to talk with students who knock on their door about issues raised in class, to answer questions, or simply have a conversation. In this way, students and professors can have a more personal relationship based upon mutual respect and not limited by the formality of a lecture hall.*

The academic schedule of the majority of colleges and universities in the U.S. is effective from August through May and divided into two sessions, each called a 'semester.' Fall semester generally extends from August through mid-December, and Spring semester from mid-January through the end of May.*

The life of a student at an American college or university entails continuous work outside of the classroom. Especially during the first two years, students are assessed throughout the semester with numerous papers, presentations, group projects, and exams. Advanced courses often require major term-long research projects or papers. The number of papers and exams may be modified for courses taken during the Summer Session due to the shortened term and more intensive plan of study.*

*From IES Get Set, Copyright 2005

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**Culture Shock**

Entering a different culture is never easy. There can be many confusing and frustrating elements to your new life at Dominican and you should always feel free to talk about theses frustrations. The Wellness Center is a good resource as it has trained professionals who can help you with your transition. In this section we will discuss things to make the adjustment process easier. This will include the cultural adjustment process most international students experience overseas; hints which make adapting easier; and comparing American values with those of other cultures. The graph below shows some of the changes your emotions may experience while you attend Dominican. Some of you have gone through a few of these phases already, others may be going through them for a second time, and for many of you, this is all new.

**The International Student: A Graphic of Emotional Intensity**

**The Pre-departure Phase** describes the preparatory period before traveling. It is what you
go through in your home country before you leave for the United States. This includes your
decision to leave home, choosing Dominican, preparing for the sojourn, and, among other
things, worrying about your family, boyfriend or girlfriend. You will probably experience a
gradual increase in your emotional excitement level. This phase ends as you leave home.

The Orientation Phase begins with your early experiences at Dominican. Some call this
phase the Spectator or Honeymoon Phase because you often feel like a spectator in this
phase and it can be a lot of fun. You will experience a lot of changes in emotions.
Sometimes things will seem unbelievable. You may look at Americans as if you are
looking at aliens because of their different cultural patterns. Generally, you are very alert
through this phase, but also very passive - like a spectator.

The Getting Involved Phase begins when you no longer can be passive and must start
getting involved with everyday life. For most, it starts when school begins. You must make
friends in class, speak with professors, deal with roommates, wash your clothes and
understand American slang – just to name a few. At first, you may feel a sense of
frustration because you need to make a lot of adjustments. This phase is different from the
Orientation Phase because instead of avoiding unpleasant situations, you see them as
challenges to be overcome. The emotional intensity differs from person to person more in
this phase than in any other phase. During the Getting Involved Phase cultures first begin
to clash. The amount of value differences and the means for which one handles these cross-
cultural battles is very important in how easy or difficult the Getting Involved Phase is to
complete. Flexible people will only have small adjustments whereas others will feel as if
they are riding a roller coaster because of the highs and lows. Towards the end of this
phase, one may experience a personality or identity crisis; perhaps a feeling that you may
not belong in either your native culture or the American culture. People in this phase also
experience feelings that all of life is determined by culture. At this point, you move into the
next stage.

The Shock Phase strikes people who are both successful and unsuccessful in their initial
efforts to adapt. Very few people who pass through this phase actually recognize that they
are in it. Even people who have gotten along great with Americans and American culture
find themselves in short depressions without understanding the reason. Hopefully you
begin to adjust soon. Often this happens at the end of the quarter or beginning of the new
quarter.

The Adaptation Phase begins when you start to identify with others and you no longer
feel that the United States or Dominican is foreign to you. Identifying with others in the
International Club, friends in your major, or even people at a nearby coffee shop can be the
point of entry into this phase. You feel firmly adapted when you feel that American friends
accept you as an important member of the group. You feel as if you are part of the
Dominican community and not someone still trying to enter it. It is sometimes unknowingly
marked by changes in the way you dress, walk, and act around others. You will still
probably have short experiences in which you feel you are in the Shock Phase, but these
will most likely be short. The Adaptation Phase is long, and usually ends with your re-
entry into your home country.

The Re-entry Phase begins when you arrive back in your home country. Almost everyone
expects their re-entry to be easy, and are usually very excited. Unfortunately the changes
you have gone through are so great that the expectations of easily adapting to life in Saudi
Arabia, Kuala Lumpur, Accra, Nicosia, Bratislava, Kathmandu – where ever your home
may be - is very difficult and you will go through these phases again, generally much
quicker but also much more intensely.

*Adapted from The Handbook for International Students at Macalester College

American Culture

You have certainly heard stories, good or bad, about American people. You also probably
have preconceived ideas from Americans you’ve met before, or from seeing American films. However, American society is enormously diverse and cannot be reduced to only a few stories or stereotypes. Important differences exist between geographical regions, between rural and urban areas, and between social classes. In addition, the presence of millions of immigrants who came to the United States from all corners of the world with their own culture and values adds even more variety and flavor to American life.

The characteristics described below represent that image of U.S. society that is thought of as being "typically American." This information is an excerpt from the EducationUSA website at http://www.educationusa.state.gov/life/culture/americans.htm.

**Individuality**

Americans consider themselves individuals. There are strong family ties and strong loyalties to groups, but individuality and individual rights are most important. If this seems like a selfish attitude, it leads to respect for others and an insistence on human equality.

Related to this respect for individuality are American traits of independence and self-reliance. From an early age, children are taught to "stand on their own two feet," an idiom meaning to be independent. You may be surprised to learn that most U.S. students choose their own classes, select their own majors, follow their own careers, arrange their own marriages, and so on, instead of adhering to the wishes of their parents.

Honesty and frankness are two more aspects of American individuality, and they are more important to Americans than personal honor or "saving face." Americans may seem blunt at times, and in polite conversations they may bring up topics and issues that you find embarrassing, controversial, or even offensive. Americans are quick to get to the point and do not spend much time on social niceties. This directness encourages Americans to talk over disagreements and to try to patch up misunderstandings themselves, rather than ask a third party to mediate disputes.

**Competitiveness**

Americans place a high value on achievement and this leads them to constant competition. You will find friendly, and not-so-friendly, competition everywhere. The American style of friendly joking or banter, of "getting in the last word," and the quick and witty reply are subtle forms of competition. Although such behavior is natural to Americans, some international students might find it overbearing and disagreeable.

Americans can also be overly concerned with records of achievement in sports, business, or other more mundane things. Books and movies, for example, are sometimes judged not so much on quality but on how many copies are sold or on how much profit is made. In the university as well, emphasis is placed on achievement, grades and one's grade point average (GPA). But while Americans can be competitive, they also have a good sense of teamwork and cooperation with others to achieve a specific goal.

**Measuring Success**

Americans are often accused of being materialistic and driven to succeed. How much money a person has, how much profit a business deal makes, or how many material goods an individual accumulates is often their definition of success. This goes back to American competitiveness. Many Americans, however, do not agree with this definition of success; they enjoy life's simple pleasures and are neither overly ambitious nor aggressive. Many Americans are materially successful and still have time to appreciate the cultural, spiritual, and human aspects of life.

**Religion and Religious Freedom**

The Bill of Rights in the United States begins with the words, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” The First Amendment guarantees the free exercise of religion on American soil and prohibits the
United States government from infringing upon the freedom of religion.

America is one of, if not the, most religiously diverse country in the world. A wide variety of religious traditions can be found in any large American city as well as in smaller towns that host a college or university. The citizens of the United States take religious freedom very seriously. Americans also take the religious freedom of other people very seriously. As visitors to the United States, the right of international students to practice their home religions cannot be revoked.

Clothing
At Dominican, and on most U.S. campuses, students dress very informally. The most common attire (for both men and women) is a pair of blue jeans, a shirt, a sweater, and a small backpack. Students also dress informally off-campus, even when they attend social events such as athletics events and movies. In spite of this informality, however, a great many U.S. students enjoying dressing up, especially if they are going out to a restaurant or a club. While you will certainly bring some clothing from home, you should also reserve some money to purchase clothing when you arrive; especially bulky winter clothing that can take up a lot of space. Some items you might need would be a warm winter coat ($50-200), sturdy boots ($25-75), mittens ($10), sweaters ($20-100), turtlenecks ($10-$20) and long underwear ($15) for winter, and T-shirts ($10-20) for summer. All prices in U.S. dollars are approximate.

Conversation
Casual conversation between U.S. Americans can sometimes be confusing. For example, “How are you?” does not necessarily mean that the person asking wants to know how you are feeling. Most likely, what the person means is Good morning or Hello. In response, you may simply smile, nod, and say, “Fine, thank you. How are you?” Phrases said when departing can be equally confusing. For instance, “See you later”, “Drop by sometime”, or “Let’s get together sometime” are often meant as a friendly goodbye, rather than an actual invitation. When in doubt, do not be too shy to clarify whether it is an invitation or not.

Social Space
Some cultures tend to have a much closer conversational distance than does U.S. culture. As a result, an international person may literally back a North American across the room, each just unconsciously trying to maintain a comfortable distance. These subtle but important means of nonverbal communication can lead to the stereotype of particular foreign nationalities as forward and abrasive and North Americans as cold and distant. Conversely, the opposite may be perceived by students from a culture having a greater conversational distance than that of North Americans.

Just as with conversational distance, personal space may differ across cultures. When North Americans are not acquainted with each other or when they are in public settings, they tend to stand or sit apart. For example, in an elevator, Americans will keep their distance unless crowding forces them together. The same is true in a bus where people sit one per seat until additional passengers force them to double up. In both of these examples, North Americans hold themselves in, having been taught from early child-hood to avoid bodily contact with strangers.

Hygiene
Caring for one’s body is based on deeply held personal and cultural ideas. People in the U.S. generally believe it important to control the odors a body naturally produces. Americans usually consider that the odors that the human body naturally produces — the odors of perspiration or breath, for example — are unpleasant. Americans usually wash with soap at least once a day to control body odors and brush their teeth with toothpaste at least in the morning and evening. In addition, they use underarm deodorant/antiperspirant to control perspiration odors, and they wash their hair as often as necessary to keep it from becoming oily.

While the practice is not universal, many people use perfume, cologne, mouthwash, and
other scented products. However, Americans generally do not like others to use "too much" of a scented product. Too much means that the smell is discernible from more than a meter or two away. Additionally, Americans are uncomfortable talking about issues of hygiene, though they may believe that their perceptions of appropriate hygiene are understood. It is important, whether you are interacting with Americans, or with other international students, to consider how you react and are being reacted to with regard to differing perspectives on hygiene. *This is only a generalization*

(adapted from *American Ways* by Gary Althen, Intercultural Press, 1988)

**Telephoning**

Except in emergencies, it is best not to call anyone off-campus (i.e. a professor, host family, or employment supervisor) before 9:00 a.m. and after 9:30 p.m. On-campus, the rules are more relaxed since students tend to stay up late. You will be better able to predict your fellow students schedule after the first few months of acquaintance. As always, it is a good idea to ask if you know you cannot call someone until later at night.

**Friendship**

Friendship between U.S. and international students may be confusing since definitions and expectations of friendships may differ from one culture to another. When in the United States, do not be surprised if somebody you do not know says "Hi!" to you for no reason. However, there is a difference between friendliness and friendships. As in any culture, it takes time for friendships and close relationships to form. Americans' friendships tend to be shorter and more casual than friendships among people from some other cultures. It is not uncommon for Americans to have only one close friendship during their lifetime and to consider other friends to be merely social acquaintances. They tend to compartmentalize friendships, having "friends at work," "friends on the basketball team," and "family friends," for example.

In the U.S., for example, friendships may seem to develop more quickly and be more casual than in many other cultures. You may be struck by how warm and friendly people seem from the start. You may soon observe, however, that while Americans seem warm at a first meeting, they may later seem remote or superficial. It often appears to some international students that U.S. students are too busy to take the time to get to know other people well. Upon closer examination, visitors may notice that North Americans tend to be private, keeping their personal thoughts and feelings to themselves. One explanation for this behavior may be that Americans have been taught to idealize independence and avoid becoming too dependent on other people and allowing others to become dependent on them.

It is important to remember, however, that these are generalizations and there are many exceptions to them. Some Americans are eager to devote the time and energy necessary to develop close friendships and will talk openly with their friends about personal matters. (adapted from *American Ways* by Gary Althen, Intercultural Press, 1988)

**Romantic and Non-Romantic Relationships**

At Dominican, relationships between male and female students are so complex that they are difficult to describe in a few paragraphs. Nonetheless, a few general comments might help since international students sometimes find that U.S. dating customs differ from the ones to which they are accustomed.

At Dominican, much of the social life centers on campus life and events. Students study and eat meals together, go to special lectures, movies, or attend sports events together, and non-romantic friendships between men and women are common. Since few students have much money, many split the costs of dates equally. Men still tend to initiate invitations to dances, films or other evening events, but such invitations are also suggested by women. Though it is common for men and women to do things together in non-dating relationships, it can sometimes be difficult to determine what constitutes a dating relationship. Terminology and extent of physical contact vary greatly. Terms such as going out can mean
with or without romantic intent; hooking up often indicates some degree of sexual activity, generally without serious romantic intent, dating or being together signify romantic intent, in various degrees of seriousness.

The amount of physical contact between men and women varies as well. In U.S. culture, the greatest amount of public touching occurs between men and women. There is less between heterosexual female friends and practically none among heterosexual men. It is not uncommon to see students of the opposite sex, who do not have an intimate relationship, hugging or holding hands.

In the U.S. and at Dominican, people’s attitudes towards sexual relationships have become more permissive. The decision whether or not to establish a sexual relationship rests with the individuals involved. Students often feel free to talk about sex-related subjects and engage in sexual relationships. Homosexuals, usually referred to as gay if they are male and lesbian if they are female, have become much more willing than in the past to openly acknowledge their sexual orientation. Gay, lesbian and bisexual students are accepted and respected on campus. Yet, despite permissiveness regarding types of relationships and sexual behaviors, not everything has changed. International students will still find individuals and communities where traditional ideas about male-female relationships are prevalent. It can be difficult and confusing to make assumptions about relationships and dating. Generally, it is a good idea to observe carefully and ask questions of your mentors, R.A.’s and other students and advisors if you are unsure.

(adapted from American Ways, by Gary Althen, Intercultural Press, 1988)

Informality among Americans
The emphasis on individual identity, responsibility and tolerance produces a considerable degree of informality in dress, relationships, between people, and methods of communications. In some cases, Americans’ informal conduct can give the impression that they are promiscuous. Indeed, American culture does not perceive scanty costumes and public displays of affection as an indication of loose morals, although, in some situations, they may be viewed as exhibiting poor taste. A great deal of flexibility to express oneself is permitted as long as it does not infringe on the rights and comforts of others. *This is only a generalization

Invitations
Invitations are usually informal and most often verbal, but specify a time and place. For example: “Will you come over Tuesday evening at 8:00?” If you say yes, it is important that you keep the appointment. A casual verbal invitation such as “come and see me sometime” or “drop in” is usually given with the understanding that you will call and make more specific plans before coming over. If you receive a written invitation that says RSVP, you should respond by letter or phone, telling your host whether or not you plan to attend.

Use of names
A few tips of name usage follow:

- First names are more readily used in the U.S. than in other countries. It is all right to use the first name of someone approximately your same age and status, or someone younger. It is appropriate to inquire if the person prefers to be called by his or her first name if you are unsure.

- A woman or man older than yourself, including a professor, is often addressed as Dr., Ms., Miss, Mrs., or Mr. until the individual requests that you use his or her first name or until you get to know the individual better.

- Men and women will be confused if you use Dr., Ms., Miss, Mrs., or Mr. with a first name, as is the custom in some other countries. Ordinarily, Dr., Ms., Miss, Mrs., and Mr. are used only with a person’s family name.

- Some U.S. women prefer the form of address “Ms.” (pronounced as Miz). Ms. is used for both single and married women and replaces Miss and Mrs. Ms. is also an acceptable form of address if you do not know whether a woman is single or
• Nicknames are also a common form of address especially between students. These are often a sign of acceptance and affection if in good taste. These can sometimes be just shortened versions of their full names, Jim for James or Liz for Elizabeth. It is always acceptable to ask how they would like to be addressed.

Greetings
Men usually shake hands at the time of their first meeting. Men and women also often shake hands. Women often do not shake hands with each other. These customs are relaxed between students and there may be only a verbal greeting.

Good friends, family, or those in a romantic relationship may give each other a hug or a kiss when meeting. This kind of greeting is reserved for people who have a closer relationship, in general let the American student initiate these greetings if you are unsure.

Concept of Time
The commonly used concept of time at Dominican, and indeed in much of the Western world, is that of time as linear, meaning that there is eternal progress towards an infinitely distant end of time. North Americans are usually time-conscious, and being on time is very important. When an appointment is made, you are expected to arrive within five minutes of the appointed time. If you have an appointment with your advisor at 10:30 a.m., for example, you should arrive at 10:30 a.m. or a little before. If a bus is scheduled to stop at 10:20 a.m., be at the bus stop five minutes early because the bus may arrive a few minutes early or late. Life in the U.S. may seem rushed at first to the international student.

Electricity
The standard U.S. current is 110 volts, 60 cycles alternating current (A.C.). Appliances running on 220-240 volts will not work in the U.S. Most appliance or hardware stores in metropolitan areas carry current-conversion kits that will work on appliances. You may want to bring such voltage converters from home since they are generally much more expensive here. For small household appliances like hair dryers or curling irons you may want to just purchase them here to avoid damaging them.

Measurement Conversions

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1 centimeter (cm) = 10 mm = 0.3937 inch
1 meter (m) = 100 cm = 1.0936 yard
1 kilometer (km) = 1000 m = 0.6214 mile
1 inch (in) = 25.4 mm
1 foot (ft) = 12 in = 0.3048 m
1 yard (yd) = 3 ft = 0.9144 m

Glossary of useful College Terms

*Academic Advisor:* A faculty member who guides a student in his/her course selection.

*Academic Year:* The period of time during which formal instruction is offered, lasting from September to May. The period from June through August is not generally considered part of the academic year, even if summer sessions are held.

*Alumni:* Those who have graduated from an institution.

*Audio-Visual (AV):* Equipment like tape recorders and film or slide projectors can be borrowed from this department.

*Audit:* To attend a course for purposes of attaining information only and not to receive a grade. No credit is given for an audit. Consult the college catalog for the procedures to follow to register for an audit.

*Bachelors Degree:* A degree awarded by a four year college or university.

*Bursar:* The person to whom a student pays tuition and fees.

*(Academic) Calendar:* The formal schedule of academic year events which includes examination periods, registration periods, and school holidays.

*Call Number:* The code on each library book that separates the books by field.

*Campus:* The physical grounds and buildings of the institution.

*Career Development:* Career Development, part of the Academic Enrichment Center, helps students and alumni find employment and graduate schools. Actively assists students of all majors with career-related issues, educating them about the career planning process, internships, job search strategies and the graduate/professional school application process as they transition from college to career.

*Bulletin:* A book describing an institution’s courses, regulations, fees, tuition, faculty, location, entrance and other academic requirements, scholarship and financial aid information.

*Class:* This word has several definitions. It can refer to a course of instruction (i.e. English class); it can refer to a group of students taking a particular course together (i.e. a class of English students); or it can mean all the students who are in the same year of study (i.e. the first year class).

*Commencement:* The ceremonies held upon completion of a student’s studies. Also called graduation.

*Conditional Admission:* Colleges might accept some students who do not meet admission standards on the condition that they meet those standards soon after they enroll (for example, students may be told they need to attain a higher level of English proficiency).

*Counselor:* Professional psychologist trained to serve persons experiencing academic,
interpersonal or psychological problems. Free and confidential, consultations are available at the Wellness Center.

**Credit:** A unit (generally numerical) given to students who have successfully completed a course.

**Curriculum:** The course of study offered.

**Dean of Students:** The Dean, Trudi Goggin, is responsible for student affairs at the university.

**Dormitory (Dorm) or Residence Hall:** A building on campus used to house students.

**Drop/Add:** Dropping a class or changing classes during the term. See the Registrar’s MyDU website for specific information regarding drop/add procedures.

**Elective:** A course students may choose to take which is not part of the required curriculum.

**Faculty:** The group of professors and instructors who make up the teaching staff of an institution.

**Freshman or First Year Student:** An undergraduate student in his/her first full academic year. May also be used to classify a student in the first year of high school.

**Full Course Load:** The minimum number of courses a student must take to be considered a full-time student.

**Grade:** Grade refers to the letter given to evaluate a student’s performance on an assignment, examination, or the entire course.

**Grade-Point Average:** An average grade (numerical) which is derived from a formula which takes into account grades received and the number of credit hours for each course taken.

**Graduate:** Graduate can refer to the level of study beyond the baccalaureate. Graduate can also refer to a person who has successfully completed high school or college. Finally, graduate may be used as a verb to describe the act of receiving a high school or college diploma.

**MY.Dom.edu:** YourName@MY.dom.edu is the email address for students. This is an email site for Dominican hosted by Microsoft. All University correspondence will be sent to your my.Dom.edu address, but you can have that mail forwarded to your personal e-mail if you wish.

**Wellness Center:** Medical assistance and a variety of wellness resources are available at the Wellness Center at Dominican University.

**Humanities:** The branch of learning which constitutes the backbone of the liberal arts education. The Humanities include languages, history, literature, and philosophy.

**Junior:** An undergraduate student in his/her third full year of college. May also be used to classify a student in the third year of high school.

**Loan(s):** Money borrowed but required to be repaid within a specific time period.

**myDU:** Online system to help Dominican students manage their academic and financial information. This is where you can search for classes, enroll, view your grades, order transcripts, and apply for graduation.
**Student Government:** represents the student body when the administration makes decisions.

**Major:** The field or subject which a student has chosen as his or her principal area of study, i.e. mathematics, economics, anthropology, biology, art, French. Students may have more than one major.

**Minor:** A subject or field which a student has chosen as an area of study secondary to his/her major.

**Orientation:** A period in which students are introduced to the college, its programs, and its facilities.

**“PC” (Politically Correct):** a term for popular social, political or educational thought; often used to characterize terms deemed culturally appropriate to describe a group of people.

**Prerequisite:** A course which a student must complete before being permitted to enroll in another course.

**Provost:** The person in charge of academic affairs.

**Quiz:** Short test, sometimes given without advance notice.

**Registrar:** The person at the college or university who is responsible for student enrollment (and academic) records.

**Registration:** The process of choosing a program of courses for the semester and having it approved that occurs each term.

**Requirements:** Courses that must be taken in order to graduate with a particular major or degree.

**Reserve:** When a book is on reserve, it means that the book cannot be removed from the Library, and generally can only be borrowed for a short period of time. This is usually done when the library has only a few copies of a book that is required reading for a particular course.

**Resident Assistant:** A student who lives in the residence hall and is available to help residents (R.A.) with living arrangements and other school-related questions.

**RSVP:** This term, meaning please respond, is often listed on invitations. Tell the host/hostess if you can or cannot attend the event, so they can prepare for it adequately.

**Scholarship:** Also called a grant; this money does not have to be repaid (loans must be repaid). Scholarships for international students are generally based on financial need as well as academic merit.

**Semester:** One of the two terms (grading periods) in an academic year. A semester usually lasts from thirteen to fifteen weeks.

**Senior:** An undergraduate student is his/her fourth full year of college. Can also be used to designate a student in the last year of high school.

**Social Security Number (SSN):** A number assigned by the United States government to U.S. citizens. This number is also required for all international students who wish to work in the U.S. Many application forms request that students list their SSN or SS card, which may then become a form of student identification number.
*Sophomore:* An undergraduate student in his/her second full academic year. Can also be used to designate a student in the second year of high school.

*Syllabus:* A course outline prepared for students by the professor.

*Take-Home Exam:* These are like homework; students are given a question or a number of questions to answer within a specific number of days. To justify the length of time afforded, a high quality of work is expected. As with term papers, all non-original sources and material used or referred to should be acknowledged in footnotes/citations and a bibliography.

*TOEFL:* Acronym for Test of English as a Foreign Language. Grades from this test are very often used to determine the admissibility of international students or the level at which the students should be placed in English-language courses.

*Transcript:* The official record of a student’s courses and grades. Students may request copies from the Registrar’s Office.

*Tuition:* The cost of the academic program undertaken. Tuition must be paid before each term or for a full academic year.

*Tutor:* A private teacher who assists students outside normal classroom periods.

*Undergraduate:* The general definition is that of a college student aiming to complete a bachelor’s degree.

*Withdrawal:* Exiting a class before the end of the term.

*Zip Code:* A five- or nine-digit number used in an address when sending mail to or within the U.S. This number aids the post office in delivering mail.

*Handbook adapted from Loyola University Chicago’s International Student Handbook*