



Frequently Asked Questions for Inbound Exchange Students

Q: How will I get from the airport to St. Mary's at my arrival and from St. Mary's to the airport at the end of my stay?

A: The International Education office will make arrangements for you to be met at the airport and brought to campus when you first arrive. We will also assist you with return to the airport at the end of your exchange.

Q: What are the living spaces like at St. Mary's?

A: There are four different types of living spaces:

- 1) dorm rooms: dual occupancy rooms with a common bathroom on the hall;
- 2) suites: 4 to 8 dual occupancy rooms with two shared bathrooms and a common room;
- 3) townhouses: two dual occupancy rooms with one shared bathroom, a kitchen, and a common room;
- 4) apartments: four-person and five-person apartments. Most residents will have a single bedroom in these units. In the five-person apartments, there will be one double bedroom and three single bedrooms. Students living in the apartments will share a bathroom, living room, and kitchen.

Furniture is provided in all housing; however, students will need to provide their own bedding. Rather than bringing bedding from abroad, students may purchase it online at www.rhl.org/smm and ask for it to be mailed to the college at:

Office of International Education
Attn: YOUR NAME
St. Mary's College of Maryland
18952 E. Fisher Rd.
St. Mary's City, MD 20686
240-895-4202

Q: How do I get placed into housing?

A: The International Education Office works with Residence Life to assign international students on-campus housing. You will receive housing forms which will assist both offices in placing you in the optimal living environment.

Q: Is it possible to live in a single room while at SMCM?

A: SMCM has very limited availability of single rooms in its on-campus housing, and they are the first selected by returning senior students. The Office of International Education will work with the Office of Residence Life to place international exchange students in housing. Students may work with Residence Life to change roommates at specific times during the course of the year.

Q: Should I bring my own computer?

A: Only if you want to. If you do choose to bring one, make sure it can handle 110 volts of electricity and that you have an adapter for your outlet plug. Individual Internet connections are provided in each room; however, students are required to have their computers inoculated against viruses through Information Technology Services at the college before their connections will be launched.

Should you choose not to bring a computer, there are several computer labs on campus with computers and printers that are available for student use.

Q: What is the One-Card?

A: It is an ID card that opens doors, checks out books, and pays for meals. Students may also put debit cash on the card to purchase items at the campus bookstore and operate the copy, vending, and laundry machines.

Q: What are the different options for meal plans, and how to I decide which one to buy? What do they mean when they refer to "blocks" and "flex dollars" when speaking of the different meal plans?

A: The College offers eight different meal plans to accommodate your needs. Meal plans are based on units called "blocks," and all but the A-1 meal plan offer flex dollars. Blocks and flex dollars are pre-purchased units of measure that may be redeemed for food and/or beverages in the dining venues. In the all-you-can-eat, buffet-style Great Room, blocks are redeemed for meals using the following scale:

Breakfast = 1 block
Lunch and Brunch = 2 blocks
Dinner = 3 blocks

A student who eats 19 meals per week should use 600 blocks per semester if he/she uses only blocks to acquire meals.

Flex dollars are included in all the plans with the exception of the A-1 plan. Flex dollars allow students to use their board plan not only to eat and drink in the Great Room, but also to use at the smaller retail dining venues: Upper Deck, Lewis Quad Grab & Go, the campus convenience store and the food vending machines. Flex dollars act as the equivalent of cash to be spent on food products.

Visit the dining services website at <http://www.smcm.edu/dining/index.html> to learn more.

Q: What is the Portal?

A: The Portal is an online site providing personal information as well as campus information to students. Information about classes, campus events, personal finances, campus directories, etc., may be accessed through Portal. Students will receive logon and password information prior to arrival or during orientation. Learn more at <https://seahawks.smcm.edu/ics>.

Q: How will my classes and my grades be documented?

A: All of this information is documented in your transcript. A transcript is a sheet of paper which lists the classes you took and the grade you received in each class.

Q: What is a GPA (grade-point average)?

A: GPA refers to the average of all the grades you have received. Your grade-point average is calculated by taking numerical representations of your grades for the semester, adding them together, and then dividing them by the number of total classes. Your grade-point average (GPA) is calculated on the basis of the following quality points: A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, B+ = 3.3, B = 3.0, B- = 2.7, C+ = 2.3, C = 2.0, C- = 1.7, D+ = 1.3, D = 1, F = 0.

Q: How do I register for classes?

A: In order to register for classes, students would examine classes offered through the "Schedule of Classes" link at <https://hp1.smcm.edu/cgi-bin/csched/crscat.cgi>. Course descriptions are available through the online catalog at <http://www.smcm.edu/academics/catalog.html>.

A full-time student is required to take 12 credit-hours (three 4-credit classes) and the average course load is 16 credit-hours. Students should make a list of classes they wish to take, including three or four preferred classes and one to two alternate classes. Classes may be listed as "closed" in the online schedule but may be added later during the formal "Add\Drop" period, which takes place during the first two weeks of each semester.

Choosing and approving with your home institution both desired and alternative classes is advisable. Students are asked to submit their list of classes to the International Education Office at ie@smcm.edu when they receive their acceptance letter.

Q: How do I receive academic and personal advising?

A: Advisers in the International Education office and Academic Services help students with pre-arrival advising and follow-up throughout the semester. In addition, international students are assigned a faculty academic adviser by program or country.

International students are also paired with "International Ambassadors", and "Faculty Ambassadors". Ambassadors are students and faculty members from SMCM who are interested in helping exchange students adjust to life at St. Mary's. Exchange students may also come to the International Education office for any kind of assistance throughout their stay at SMCM.

Q: What do I do in the event of an emergency? Who can I call?

A: You may dial 911 from any phone throughout the United States (even from pay phones without charge) to reach emergency services. For emergencies on campus, you may wish to call Public Safety (campus security) at extension 4911. Other services of public safety include the following:

- Personal Safety
- Building Security
- Emergency and Non-Emergency Response to Crimes
- Follow-up Investigations of Crimes
- Enforcement of College Regulations
- Parking Enforcement
- Traffic Direction and Crowd Control
- Crime Prevention Workshops
- Assistance with Vehicle Problems
- Building Access
- Escort Service
- After-hours Directory Assistance
- Driver Certification Training
- CPR/First Aid Certification

Q: What do I do if I'm sick or need to speak to a counselor?

A: The health center on campus provides the following services: ambulatory medical care, self-care clinic, treatment of acute minor illness or injury, immunization and allergy shots, lab tests, prescription and over-the-counter medications, first aid supplies, and referral assistance and health education. The health center is open from 8 am to 5 pm, Monday – Friday.

Q: How do I get mail?

A: Students will receive a Campus Center Box Number from the International Education Office. Packages may also be sent to this address. If the mail does not fit into the box, students will receive a pink card notifying them of package arrival. They may then pick the package up at the Information Desk in the Campus Center, after presenting their student ID. Mail should be addressed to:

Campus Center Box #[your assigned number]
16800 Point Lookout Rd.
St. Mary's City, MD 20686

Q: What is the climate like? What type of clothing should I pack?

A: SMCM is a fairly temperate climate zone. Each semester includes both warm and cold seasons. Therefore, summer wear (such as shorts, t-shirts, bathing suits, and sandals) is appropriate as well as winter wear (hats, coats, boots, jeans, and sweaters).

Q: Is there public transportation I can take to get off campus?

A: Unfortunately, no, there is no public transportation, but it is common for students without vehicles to get a ride with students who do have cars should they need to go into town.

Q: What conveniences and stores are available?

A: The town of Lexington Park is a 10-15 minute drive from campus and has grocery stores, Wal-Mart, Target, restaurants, and fast-food locations. Students may also buy food, books, and school supplies from the campus bookstore or Daily Grind coffee shop.

Q: How do I meet people on campus?

A: St. Mary's is a small school, so meeting people is really easy. Upon arrival, introduce yourself to those who live near you. Residence Halls, Townhouses, and Suites are wonderful places to make friends. Also, involvement in campus activities provides a way to meet people with similar interests. SMCM has a wide range of clubs, organizations, and teams, most of which offer many campus-wide events throughout the year. Provided is an abbreviated list of organizations offered at St. Mary's:

- Breakaway: Habitat for Humanity
- Circle K
- Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance
- For Goodness' Sake (Service and Social Change)
- Gospel Choir
- Intersivity Christian Fellowship
- Hillel (Jewish Student Club)
- Nightingale *a cappellas*
- SMC Men
- SOAP (Students Organizing Alternative Programs)
- STARS (St. Mary's Triangle and Rainbow Society)
- Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC)
- Cheerleading
- Crew
- Equestrian
- Fencing
- Mountain Bike
- Rugby
- St. Mary's Ultimate Team (Ultimate Frisbee)

For a more detailed list, visit: http://www.smcm.edu/studentaffairs/template-stuaffairs.cfm?doc_id=465.

Q: Will I be able to open a bank account? How do I access money?

A: You may open a local bank account. You are not required to open an account; however, it is recommended that you not keep large sums of money in your room. Credit cards are commonly accepted for purchases throughout the U.S., but checks and cash are also common. The campus provides a 24 hr. Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) to access cash with an ATM card.

Q: May I work while on exchange at SMCM?

A: International students on F-1 visas may work on campus up to 20 hours per week. On-campus jobs currently pay \$7.25/hour. At the beginning of each semester, the Career Development Center publishes a list of jobs around the campus community, so that students may apply for jobs they prefer.

