Pre-departure

- Make sure you get all of your forms in well before their due. Just in case you missed something, there’ll still be time for you to get it all done.
- Ask questions. Even if you think it’s silly, it’s better to know than not.
- Getting a visa as soon as possible will relieve a great deal of stress. However due to circumstances beyond my control I couldn’t get my visa until two weeks before my departure and this was not an issue. Filling out the paperwork is the most time consuming aspect. However once it is done, going to the consulate is relatively easy.
- CSU Support – My paperwork from Kentucky was delayed and CSU was amazing. They were supportive and helpful during the stressful period.
- University of Kentucky Support – While still in Australia, more support is provided by CSU. The University of Kentucky became more supportive once I arrived in the U.S. and was able to meet with them face to face.
- Make sure you can access your money. Double check with your bank that you can access your money in Kentucky. If you are relying on credit or debit cards find out what you will be charged per transaction. Some banks charge as much as $5 each time you get money from the ATM. There are also opportunities to open bank accounts in the U.S. The international office can help you with this, as I was not earning any money, I didn’t think a U.S. bank account was necessary.

Travel

- STA Student Travel agents were able to provide me with the best flight prices. As well as an International Student Discount card, there is a branch located on campus at UK to help you out once you get over here and want to plan some weekends away.
- It is important to understand that you are not able to book and pay for flights until you have received a visa. The sooner you organize your visa the less you will pay for flights. The closer it gets to the departure date the more expensive the flights will be they can be double or even triple in price.
- Be aware of luggage restrictions. It’s not worth having to pay extra for the overweight kilos. I would also recommend having luggage that has wheels on it as this makes life easier when you are lugging your suitcase through a busy airport.
- Taking moisturizer, a toothbrush and toothpaste on the plane is a good idea and will help you feel refreshed.
Insurance

- Health insurance is a requirement for study at an American University as an International Student.
- The University of Kentucky has a policy that I was automatically enrolled in. If you already have insurance meeting the minimum requirements you can request a waiver. The University requires a TB test for all internationals, but this is a quick and easy test, information is provided at orientation about where and when you can get it.
- I chose to buy insurance from the travel agent. My policy included both travel and medical coverage and had no excess. This meant that I spent a little more money but that I was covered for more.

Campus - Accommodation & meals

- Kentucky has an International dorm, Smith Hall, most international students are put there and American students live there too. I however stayed in Blanding 2; I was the only international student which turned out to be a wonderful experience.
- The dorms are within walking distance to classroom building and food as well as some off campus shops and restaurants.
- Blanding 2 was less expensive than Smith Hall; I ended up making more American friends and having a true American College experience. I also became friends with other Australian and international students living at Smith Hall. Whatever you chose to do you will have the experience of a life time.
- Meals are provided as part of your accommodation payment, there are several different places to eat on campus and you can use your swipes at any time.

Course Information

- When selecting your classes before you leave CSU, make sure you have 5 or 6 potential subjects to take. You may get over here and discover that classes are full (they try to put you in all your chosen classes but it doesn’t always work) or you may be advised against taking a subject once you get to UK because your pre-requisites may have been slightly different. Be prepared to be flexible!
- I am a Theatre and media student at CSU so I looked for subjects mostly in the UK Theatre department as well as subjects not offered at CSU.
- Also, universities in the states are very different to Australia in that they have a lot of general education classes. There’s everything from cooking to ice skating to history of Kentucky. They’re a great way to meet people with similar interests.
- When I arrived at the university I was assigned a subject adviser from the theatre department to help with subject choices and timetabling, they helped me choose the following subjects.

While in Kentucky I took…
- TA 171 World Theatre 1 – an overview of Ancient Greek, Ancient Roman, Ancient Indian and Medieval theatre practices.
- TA 265 Costume Construction – Introduction to basics is costume construction, hand and machine sewing as well as an introduction to embroidery.
- GWS 300 Introduction to Queer Studies – 20th and 21st century thoughts relating to Homosexuality, Heterosexuality and Queer peoples and cultures.
- TEL 590 Media Studies: The U.S. Film Industry – How the U.S. film industry works, how to go about financing, marketing and distributing a film both through the studio system and the independent route.

- Studying abroad takes some getting used too. Teaching methods are very different, there is a heavier workload at UK; a lot of reading and more, lower weighted tests and papers (worth 5 – 10%) instead of one or too things worth the majority of your grade but the work was a lot easier. As long as you keep up with readings and topics in class you shouldn’t have any problems.

**Transport**

- When you first arrive getting around the city is difficult, public transport in Lexington is difficult and limited. Once you make a few American friends they’ll probably be more than happy to drive you around or let you borrow their car.
- The Universities campus is huge, most of my classes were a 10 or 15 minute walk. If you don’t want walk or it’s too cool there is a free UK bus which goes everywhere on campus during the day and runs a longer route on campus and to off campus housing.

**Expenses**

- When you first get to UK, be prepared to spend a bit of money. You need to pay things like accommodation reasonably soon after arriving otherwise they’ll put a block on your account and you’ll lose access to things like your meal plan.
- You should also be prepared to spend a bit of money setting yourself up in your room – things like linen, washing baskets, food staples can add up quickly but once you have them you’re set for the semester.
- My expenses where similar to what I would spend in Australia. However with the before mentioned heavier reading requirements textbooks will cost you quite a bit. There are places on campus and off campus where you can buy second hand textbooks, I would defiantly recommend this. At the end of the semester, you can sell them back to get a little bit of extra cash.
- Americans tend to eat out a lot which is fine – but remember that you have already paid for meals on your meal plan so you’re essentially doubling up.
• There is a compulsory health fee which covers you for things like doctors appointments.
• The exchange rate is really good at the moment so it’s quite easy to manage spending.
• Most things you need are the same price or less than they are in Australia. The best place to buy your groceries and toiletries is Wall-Mart. But if people are going somewhere else go with them, that way you have a lift and may be able to buy in bulk and share.
• Traveling on weekends can be expensive but there are ways of cutting down your costs, and if you’re worried set a budget and stick to it. Save some money and use that on the weekend trip.

Holiday Travel

• Try to have an idea of places you might like to visit before you start classes. It’s cheaper to book flights and hotels or hostels in advance and that way you can plan your schoolwork around travel.
• Staying in hostels is a great way to meet different people from all over the world and its cheap booking hostels and flights online is simple and safe. If you aren’t interested in flying then there are still plenty of awesome cities within a 1-3 hour drive such as Louisville (KY), Cincinnati (OH), and Nashville (TN).
• I spent Spring Break in Miami and I would defiantly recommend that as a great destination.
• New York was also one of the best weeks of my life, so much to see and do.
• If you get the chance to go home with friends and stay with there family you should. It’s nice to be with a family even if it’s just for a weekend.

Social Activities

• Orientation Week (K-Week), International Student week, and as many clubs as your schedule allows. The International Office runs activities on weekly or fortnightly bases which are heaps of fun and you meet people from all over America and all over the world. There are food tasting and Indian dancing classes which really give you a taste for other cultures and the way different people live.
• Sorority and fraternity events are also lots of fun. Almost every week there’ll be at least one event you can go to. They’re a really good way to get the true American college experience.
• Americans love there sport: football, basketball, rugby, hockey, baseball and literally hundreds more. Going to a game and supporting UK is really exciting; there is so much school pride unlike anything I have experienced in Australia.
• There are also may bars for anyone over 21. They’re heaps of fun with a completely different atmosphere to anywhere in Australia. For example Main Street Live has a Volleyball court inside to bar!
Cultural Information

- American culture is similar to Australian culture in many ways. Most Americans are really excited and interested to hear about the Australian way of life, however you should be patient with them as there are always a lot of questions that may seem absolutely ridiculous to you but are genuine from their perspective.
- Kentucky is part of what’s referred to as the ‘Bible Belt’; you are likely to encounter a lot of very religious individuals. But as long as you have respect for the opinions and beliefs of others they will respect you and yours.

Weather

- Kentucky winters are cold and wet and the summers are hot and humid around 30-35 degrees Celsius. During my stay it was cold until roughly mid April, and then it seemed to warm up over night. During the winter it got down to 0 - 5 degrees each day. By the end of January ad February it got colder with max temperatures of in the minuses. When the weather warmed up we had beautiful sunny days of 20 – 25 degrees Celsius, sometimes however the humidity was difficult to deal with.
- Go prepared with the basics for both seasons as you can always buy other pieces to supplement your wardrobe, I do however suggest you wait till you arrive to buy a winter coat, it will be cheaper and there are more choices in styles and colours once you arrive. All buildings are heated so you only really need heavy coats to wear when walking outside. If you don’t want to buy a proper winter coat once you get to Kentucky, then the International Office has some on hand which you can borrow for the time you are at the university.

What to bring from home

- Pack lightly. I really can’t stress this enough. Stick to the basics – clothes are much cheaper in America and you’ll buy so much stuff you’ll never fit it all in to take home.
- Be sure to pack plenty of photos from home, they’re good for decorating bare walls and Americans love hearing about your family and way of life. It’s also a good idea to have an Australian flag and map, if you’re not from Sydney or Melbourne there’s a fair chance people won’t know where your home town is.
- Taking your own laptop is handy but not essential. I found it convenient to have mine, it meant I did not need to go the library every time I need to check my emails or type an assignment.
- The library is 24/7 and has literally hundreds of computers, so there is always one free. You can also do all your printing in the library for a small fee so don’t bother taking anything like that.
• I brought vegemite from home and found it to be one of the best mementos of Australian culture.

What you may need to buy when you get there

• Like I said earlier, you’ll need to buy things like towels and linen once you get to Lexington.
• You need only bring the basic necessities to tide you over until you get here and can buy everything here. It’s surprising how cheap things are in the U.S. so don’t fret too much about the expense.
• One thing that’s a must to buy once you get to UK is a mobile phone. You could take your phone from home if it is tri-band, but calls and messages will be much more expensive. It’s cheaper to buy a prepaid phone and credit once you’re here and that way you can take advantage of things like free calls from Phone Company to phone company.

Relationships

• Make as many friends as you can during your time at UK, but don’t neglect your friends back home either. Take advantage of programs online like Skype which allow you to call home for next to nothing or free if your parents/friends use Skype also as well as keeping in touch with friends via emails and facebook.
• Keep yourself busy during your stay so that you don’t have time to get homesick. This is where your American friends come in handy. Getting out and about and having fun will keep your mind off of the things you’re missing at home.
• Make the most of every opportunity because your time at UK will be over before you know it.
• But most importantly have fun.
Photos

[Two people smiling in front of steps]

[Statue of Liberty and Times Square]