PRE-DEPARTURE
Book your flight as early as possible to avoid expense. It is very important students are aware they need to be looking into Visa info AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

The main things I feel you the student’s wants and needs to know from point 1 is that:

They are most likely looking to get a J1 Visa (it is very nerve racking looking up all this information, even with all the help we get, a lot of it is on the student and often I assume as I was, these students have no idea where to start or what they are looking for. It takes time going through everything; it is a pain staking process BUT, IT IS WORTH IT!!)

My computer crashed in America so I don’t have the information booklet I got from CSU Global anymore with the Visa info site I recommend. But the site I found information from, I got from the CSU Global booklet. I found it very, very helpful, so I recommend reusing that. Of course updates never hurt but I found it quite helpful.

THE STUDENT SHOULD KNOW THEY NEED TO GET A PASSPORT AS SOOOON AS POSSIBLE!!! YOU CAN’T ORGANISE YOUR VISA AT ALL UNTILL YOU HAVE YOUR PASSPORT, SO THAT IS NUMBER 1 PRIORITY, THEN VISA THEN BOOK FLIGHTS. I THINK I CANT STRESS ENOUGH HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO DO IT AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.

It is only a matter of going into the Post Office, some students might not even know that, so I’d inform the students of every detail as much as possible. The more information you guys can provide the better © I had a lot of help from my exchange advisor so not to say you don’t already ©.

There is a F1 Visa. I think it is option that allows students to stay in the country for longer and be able to work, which I ended up wishing I got, as I ended up walking to Canada across the Peace Bridge to be able to stay in the country longer (but at the same time that was a great adventure, it got me started on traveling, showed me I could do it, one step at a time, so it wasn’t such a bad thing)

If a student’s visa is cutting it close, I would, as I did, email and call the visa people (contact information is where it always is on websites at the bottom of the page) and harass them. Do all you can to help your situation is as simples it is. Let them know of your situation, they add it to your record and it can help you out. The more you email and call the more chance you have of getting someone nice who will help you out and do all they can (which still isn’t much) to hurry your visa along.

FLIGHTS
BOOK AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE!!! IT ONLY GETS MORE AND MORE EXPENSIVE.
Everyone told me DO NOT BOOK YOUR FLIGHT WITHOUT VISA CONFIRMATION OF APPROVAL.

While this is great advice, I did book my flights before my Visa was confirmed. I did get lucky; my Visa was approved just the day before I left. I just think though, that if it can be helped a student should definitely not book before Visa confirmation, but if they are stuck that it is OK to go ahead and book flights because I sort of wish I booked my flights earlier just because of how expensive they ended up being. Definitely avoid this situation of course if it can be helped, by sorting out VISA even earlier than they think is early basically ha-ha. I just know that I felt it was almost like some sort of crime ha-ha, and know that as I said, I ended up wishing I just went ahead and booked earlier because of the expense.

I would definitely advice booking through an agent. Book with STA Travel. They are great for helping students. There is an office in Wollongong University if that helps anyone.
They offered me an international student card, it might be a good idea to get one, and however I didn’t end up using mine once. It wasn’t very feasible in America, nowhere accepted it, the few times I felt it might be useful. You get a UNCW card anyway once your there you have to pay for too, so I wouldn’t recommend the international student card.

CHECK BAG REQUIREMENTS FOR WEIGHT AND SIZE FOR YOUR INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT AND AMERICAN FLIGHTS, AS THEY DIFFER. YOU DON’T WANT TO GET STUCK WITH UNECESSARY FEES. AMERICAN PLANES GENERALLY CHARGE A FEE FOR BAGS ANYWAY, EVEN WITH ALL THE RIGHT PROPORTIONS, ITS JUST PART OF THEIR SYSTEM.

INSURANCE:
Insurance is not too hard to organise. I had a lot of help again from my exchange advisor. It is just a matter of researching the policies. If it is a student going from CSU to UNCW as I did, the CSU insurance offer I had covered everything, was easy and the best cost to go with, so I would definitely recommend it.

CAMPUS:
I lived in an international house, which gave me the opportunity to meet people from all over the world, which was fantastic.

Students going there from CSU campus’s might want to be prepared they have very pretty strict on campus drinking policies, which was a shock for many of the exchange students I noticed. The campus life, particularly in international house, is very different to CSU campus life.

- They don’t hold social events aside from the basketball games, however they are not as popular to go to as I expected.
- The RA’s are still very helpful, I really liked mine, and they were really sweet and helpful.

They separate girls from boys, which I found quite funny, going from sharing shower rooms with boys on south campus to not even being allowed to live next door to one.

I would recommend living on campus as it helps you get to know people, and since it’s likely they won’t have a car it make it much easier to get around. I would recommend living in ‘the suites’, if they are looking for a place that’s a little more laid back.

- International house has many benefits, but you do need to swipe to get in, and if you have a friend come to visit you need to sign them in even if there just walking up and down the stairs again (this is the sort of thing I mean about international house being a little up tight). International house really is a great environment though. There is a nice kitchen (though you will need to buy some cheap pots and pans and things as they aren’t provided if you plan on doing any cooking.) There are study rooms, everyone is really friendly, and in the same boat you are being in a whole new country on your own, so its really good to be surrounded by that sometimes. AND YOU GET TO MEET PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD, WHICH REALLY IS SUCH A PLUS!!! 😊

- FOOD is compulsory, you get the option of 9 or 12 swipes a week and food dollars. Food dollars you can use at all the shops or at Hawks Nest, which sells sandwiches, pizza, tacos, nutrition smoothies, and all sorts of things. And the swipes you use at Wag which is right next to International House. If you have dietary requirements as I did being vegan, you can see the school nutritionist for free and change your meal plan to nothing, and cook for yourself, or you can get 2-3 swipes a week with food dollars, and you get a cash refund, which I found to be perfect.

- The Wagoner hall, or “wag” as everyone calls it, really isn’t bad. I found food each day and I’m a vegan, so there are many options. They have many different options, a salad bar and desert bar out the front, and then in the main area, soups, noodle dishes, pizzas, chips and things, a sandwich bar etc.
Campus is easy to navigate; you get a tour in Orientation Week. People will help you out, it's just a matter if walking down Chancellors Walk really until you find what you're looking for. The library is really nice; it has a coffee shop and everything.

Students are given a bunch of passwords they need to remember. However, the main ones are just remembering your student ID. Then your student user name (which the Uni gives you (it's the 1st part of your email) and your password. You can access most everything from the myseaport page (which all comes later on once you're accepted).

Not to generalize but walking around the College definitely has a great Vibe especially as when it's warmer, everyone is skateboarding, and riding bikes, or sitting on the grass enjoying the sun and things, it's definitely lovely campus.

**COURSE INFO:**
The system is quite different. Students over their 1st off do 4 years generally not 3. Also they all study languages. Our 1st year level is more like their 2nd year though, and there 1st year is almost similar to high school. They don't have set course structures you just choose what classes your interested in within your course (although I did philosophy so it doesn't necessarily matter so long as the bulk are from Film or whatever you do and it matches with your home points and fits similarly too your home classes you would have done).


This is the link for course descriptions accessed through UNCW website > Academics (up the top) > Film Studies (or whatever they do) > Course Descriptions (on the left).

That is a list of all the classes. If the student is a 1st yr they want to look at the classes starting with FST101 for example, a 2nd yr course would be FST201, and 3rd yr would then of course be FST 301 etc.

The student won't be able to know which courses are available for their semester until they are accepted by the College abroad. Waiting for that acceptance can put the student into doubt. I think if the exchange advisor is confident they will be accepted they should boost the students confidence if they can as this will only encourage the student to delve into getting the passport/VISA organized early, if they have belief they'll actually be going.

That was one thing I struggled with was that before I was accepted I couldn't access much UNCW info, so I did feel quite unknowing which just added to the stress of it all a bit. At the same time there isn't much the exchange advisors of CSU Global can do, besides give the student confidence and the trust that everything comes together, moment by moment you get closer and closer, AND ITS ALL WORTH IT 😊, and the student just needs to keep at it knowing that.

Choosing UNCW for any production student interested in film is a GREAT choice. It is ok for TV production to (a.k.a. communication studies), however for example CSU's TV production is a lot better than theirs, I checked out there studio it's good but not quite as good as CSU Wagga anyway. I chose the school for the course so for film I highly recommend it but a student from Wagga wanting to do communications abroad might want to search for a better communications school, as UNCW is average on that behalf.

I recommend Andre Silva and Shannon Silva (film lecturers), Dave Monahan (script writing lecturer) and Candace Gauthier (philosophy, I can actually say she was the BEST teacher I have ever had and I've had some great teachers).

THE STUDENT SHOULD KEEP AT THE CSU GLOBAL GUIDE AND ONCE THEY ARE ACCEPTED THE HOST UNI WILL GIVE THEM ONCE ALSO, THESE SHOULD BE LIKE BIBLES FOR EXCHANGE THE STUDENT SHOULD KNOW WHATS COMING UP NEXT WHAT DATES THEY NEED TO HAVE IN THEIR HEAD. IT'S NOT HARD TO GO THROUGH THE BOOKS AND THEY HELP SOOOO MUCH. 😊
**TRANSPORT:**
Public transport in Wilmington is pretty terrible. I wouldn’t even bother with the bus. Taxis in Wilmington are great, you make friends with them and they’re always out to help you out. However at the end of the day they’re still expensive (though generally cheaper than Australia, sometimes they just charge you a flat $10 or something for example). But you wouldn’t want to be getting in taxi’s for everything unless you plan on running out of money pretty quick, they’re better when your sharing with everyone to go somewhere.

Most of the time people will help you out with lifts, but at the same time you can’t rely on other people, you just have to make do with what you can. And if you hear of people making a trip to the shops etc, jump aboard when you can.

**EXPENSES**
The main worry issue is that you need to make payments for flights and accommodation and meal plan upfront and fairly early on, and maybe you can talk to your American advisor far ahead of time you might be able to sort something out but extensions are pretty hard to get. FOOD (these I believe increase or change but for 9 meals/week and $270 food dollars it cost $1440)

For 50 meals/ semester & $300 food dollars $775 (which was the one I got after I saw the nutritionist, so that normally isn’t available, although I think its available if you live in the suites, but most internationals have to have 9/week or 12/ week or unlimited.

- University ID card is $20
- Living in International House is $2324

I was told to have $8000 to 10,000 saved. I didn’t get that far, my flight ended up costing $3000 and then $550 to rebook my return flights all in all, which is pretty steep, you can definitely get away with cheaper if you plan it right.

I saved around $6000 in the end I believe which was enough to cover my flights accommodation food etc, upfront, and then I had a little left over. I also got a $600 cash refund from the Uni for switching my meal plan which meant I didn’t have to pay the ATM fees during my school time, the $600 lasted me quite a while. I organized it to center link would still pay me while I was abroad so I wasn’t spending much on shopping as I already had food supplies on campus for the majority, so during my stay on campus I saved enough to keep me going for a few months to travel and live off etc.

You want to get, as much money as you can together though, I would say aim for $8000, more of course if you can but if you aim for $8000 even if you get to $6000 like I did you’ll be ok. You make do with whatever you have the hardest part is getting the upfront payments together, and hoping you’ve still got money to survive off after that.

**HOLIDAYS/TRAVEL:**
Do it!!!!!!!!!!!!!! You’re in the country maybe only once; cease every opportunity, because you can. There are ways to do things cheap. There is pass you can get that allows you to go anywhere over America on the Amtrak train that cost around $400 for 3 months, which is such a great deal because generally a ticket cost around $120 return.

New York is fantastic but you’ll want to go there when you know someone (that you’ll probably meet from college for example) because it’s a crazy city, and you want to be with someone who knows the ins and outs. Don’t catch taxis they’ll rip you off, catch the subway, the 1 and 2 train goes up and down the main areas, to time square etc for example. To get to and from New York get a china bus, there cheap. They cost around $20 from DC and $30 from Raleigh (the capitol of NC about 1hr ½ - 2 hrs away from Wilmington). Don’t get the greyhound bus it’s stupidly expensive and ridiculously long.

Going to a festival with friends is usually a great fun thing to do, as you usually all go together in a car which is safer and easier to organise and more fun, but they can be expensive, but
very worth it!! I saw Stevie Wonder live for example, one of my greatest American experiences, or life experiences ha-ha 😊

**SOCIAL ACTIVITIES:**
UNCW doesn’t have a UNIBar. Personally, I didn’t like down town at all. Especially the under 21 clubs, they are quite full on, very similar to the film clips. There are a few cool bars for over 21 that have jam bands, and art houses with wine and things that are nice my friends went too. The Green Light Lounge for example, and the Whiskey is some cool arty sort of places. Downtown in the daytime is quite nice, especially along the boardwalk. People in Wilmington on a general scale do seem to have a very smiley friendly vibe. There are horses and carts that role down the old brick roads which I loved and things.

Of course there are all sorts of adventures each student will find with their friends separately that can’t be foreseen which is all part of the experience and something to definitely look forward to. The International group ISO host many great social activities also, like camping, water activities, beach house events etc.

Many people have shared houses along the beach, which is great in the summertime to avoid having to find and pay for parking. There are many sports groups and international events separate from ISO like culture days, where you can share your culture and learn about others, which are always great fun, the internationals usually get pretty into those.

**CULTURAL INFORMATION:**
There can be a degree of culture shock, the first few months would be the hardest if any, you definitely hit a point where you settle in though and then you don’t want to leave. I didn’t expect to get it and I did, it’s nothing to get worked up about though, it’s all part of the experience.

Language barriers definitely pop up even from Aus to American, but also with the international students from Sweden, or Asia or Germany or France or Spain or anywhere that don’t speak English in their homeland. This can on occasion be a problem maybe, but I would say most of the time it is just funny. It’s good fun really, to learn and teach the different terminologies.

Don’t expect to not get culture shock though because whether it’s a little hard sometimes or a funny thing, you will get it! Best advice is too just take it as all being part of the wonderful experience.

**WEATHER:**
Wilmington weather is absolutely nuts is the only way to explain it. Pack for hot and cold weather. You may want to pick up some cheap Gum Boots because it will rain spontaneously.

It is very cold in Jan when you first arrive, and very hot by the end of the 6 months. It can hit the 40s in the summer and it can get as cols as below 0 in the winter. So be prepared for anything really.

There are some days in summer where it will rain for 30 minutes out of nowhere then clear up and be beautiful again all day. It rains more in the winter of course, but I just can’t stress how spontaneous the weather can be over there 😊

**WHAT TO BRING/ JUST BUY IT OVER THERE:**
Pack as light as you can, of course you don’t want your bag to be over the weight limit. So don’t bring all those pairs of high heels or something ridiculous.

**DO BRING**

- Clothes for all weather and shoe for each necessity, closed in shoes for example, ugg boots possible, gum boots are big you may want to buy them over their cheap. Maybe one pen and a calculator if you study math’s I suppose
• Your laptop (if you don’t have one or really don’t want to bring it, you can use the library or hire a laptop from the TAC service in the library)
• Any medicine you need that you can’t guarantee you can get over there. They do have the normal natural medicines like vitamin C, Echinacea for sickness etc to purchase over there.
• Just keep it simple, pack things you think you won’t need.

DON’T BRING

• Things to decorate with
• School books
• Pots and pans and cooking equipment
• Blankets and pillows
• Don’t bring food so or shells or anything so you don’t have to go through customs (check customs website before you go so you know what you can and can’t take overseas).
• Shampoos and everything you can buy over there.
• Just be smart about it, and remember you’ll be there for 6 months so there’s no worries buying things over there because you have plenty of time to get good use out of it all.
• All these sorts of things your better of buying for cheap over their or stumbling across things from friends which a lot of people did etc. You don’t want to pay plane bag fees for being over these things just take up unnecessary room.
• Go off the list the CSU Global (and maybe your host university) recommends that helped me out a lot.
• In addition, just buy your own sheets; don’t take the offer from UNCW to purchase their sheets because almost everybody had problems with them. They do have abnormal sized beds but people will help you buy the right size sheets, just ask. Everybody who purchased the UNCW sheets didn’t receive them for weeks, some got creative some gave in and when and bought sheets as well from the shops; wither way I wouldn’t recommend it.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Wow, well this is a hard one. I mean I’m confused about this a lot right now, but I am in a stage where I’ve only been back for a week so of course I’m in the peak of missing everyone. I almost question if it’s worth meeting people in another country because one day you do have to leave them. You spend a lot of time with people, hanging out with them, maybe even living with them, as I did couch surfing at friends houses because you have nowhere else to stay. It can be very hard to leave them, but it is worth it. I actually ended up with a boy over there I had to leave which was really hard, and I made best friends that I just wanted to put in my bag.

You just need to appreciate the time you have, appreciate that you now know people in a different country that may come visit you, which is something to look forward to. And if you ever go back you have somewhere to stay and people to know which is a good feeling also and you can keep in touch on skype. Skype is actually a fantastic thing; I did it with my best friends just the other day and it was just like being with them again.

It is definitely hard, but at the end of the day it’s all very exhilarating, and such an amazing experience, everything you see and do, I’ll say it again, IS JUST SO WORTH IT!!! 😊

Thank you for helping me get there, I definitely ceased every opportunity and lived life to the maximum. I loved school I loved every minute of it. So really thank you!! I hope this helps you guys out to help someone else. And I am more than happy for you to pass on my information for other exchange students going to UNCW or something to contact me for help! 😊 Peace be, from channy k-b…