



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT GUIDE



COLLEGE OF GLOBAL AWARENESS

Cottey welcomed our first international student in 1899. Today, international students make up 13% of our student body, stimulating learning and growth for all members of the community.

This guide, together with the [Cottey College Catalog](#) and the Cottey College Student Handbook (found at the bottom of the [Student Life](#) page) cover most of what you will need to know. Please read both the handbook and this guide before you come to Cottey to be best prepared!

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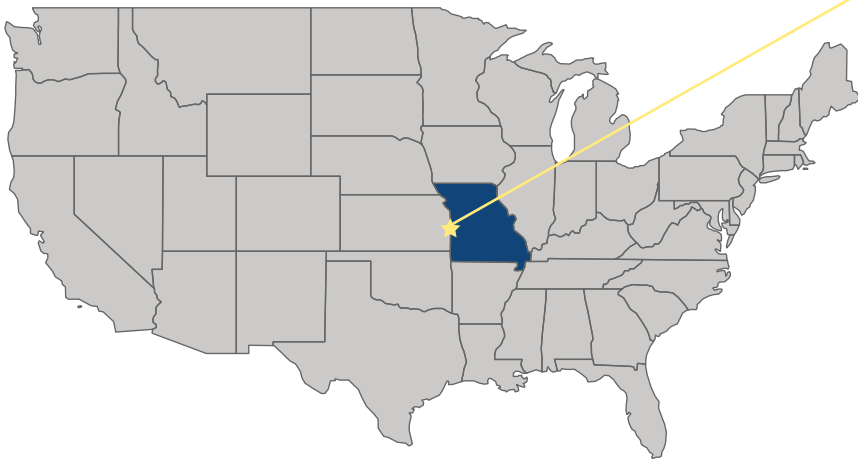
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Each fall, Cottey celebrates diversity with the Multicultural Festival, sharing and learning about different countries and cultures. International students wear and share traditional clothing, music, dance, customs, and items that represent their culture. Be sure to bring a few items to share and your traditional dress to wear for special events.



GETTING HERE



WHERE WE ARE:

Nevada, Missouri, is 93 miles (150 km) south of Kansas City. The Kansas City International Airport (airport code MCI) is 2.5 hours from Nevada by car. You will probably not find a direct international flight, so you will have to connect through another US airport. With an initial I-20 and an F-1 visa, you may enter the US no more than 30 days before orientation starts.

ARRIVAL:

Carry your documents with you. Do NOT put your I-20 or any other documents in your checked luggage. Have ready to show in case asked: passport, visa, I-20, letter of admission from Cottey, financial documentation including letter of financial aid from Cottey. If the Customs Officer feels you are missing something, you may be admitted but given a [Form I 515](#). If you ever get one of these, you must talk to the International Education Advisor so they can help you resolve it. If you bring more than \$10,000 cash it must be declared.

BUS FROM AIRPORT:

Please plan your travel for an arrival time to ride the [Cottey Chartered Bus](#). Tickets are \$75 each way if purchased in advance and the schedule for the academic year is also available at the above link. You should plan to arrive at the Kansas City airport at least one hour before the Cottey chartered bus departs to allow for flight delays.

Commercial bus service to Nevada is available through [Jefferson Lines](#); however, the schedule is limited (the currently scheduled daily bus arrives in Kansas City at midnight) and not at convenient travel times or safe locations.

An Orientation Leader will meet first-year students arriving in August who reserved a seat on the chartered bus, at Terminal C, Gate 90 or the last gate available at the airport. Be sure to complete the Travel and Registration Form on the MyCottey Portal so the international education coordinator and the student life staff have your travel arrangements.

WHO IS HERE TO HELP?

Cottery is a warm and caring place. From the President to the support staff and everywhere in between, you will find friendly and helpful faculty and staff who care about students and are here to help you be successful.

ACADEMIC ADVISOR

You will be assigned a faculty academic advisor based on your academic interests. Your advisor will assist you with academic/career planning and is a good source of information regarding academic policies.

KOLDERIE CENTER

The staff of the [Kolderie Center](#) are available to assist with:

- Selection of and changing academic advisors
- College major and career planning
- Volunteer and internship placement
- Individual and group instruction in learning skills
- Tutoring
- Study abroad
- Coordination of services for students with disabilities

The Center also has information regarding TOEFL, ACT, SAT, GRE, LSAT etc.



P.E.O. SISTERHOOD

Cottery College is owned and supported by the [P.E.O. Sisterhood](#). This organization has more than 200,000 members in the U.S. and Canada. They promote educational opportunities for women. Many of Cottery's institutional grants are funded through the generosity of the P.E.O. Sisterhood.

You may receive care packages from P.E.O. chapters. **Please practice good etiquette and send written thank-you notes** or letters promptly to P.E.O. chapters or individuals who send gifts. Please take your thank-you-note to the Office of Student Life or the Office of P.E.O. Relations for a chapter mailing address. Be sure to include the chapter letters and state and the envelope and include postage. Postage stamps are available for purchase in the Spirit Shop.

Please do not ask members of the P.E.O. Sisterhood for additional financial assistance to attend Cottery or for any other reason. As a student on an F-1 visa you have assured the US Embassy that you are able to meet the expense of an education in the US. If circumstances change, please speak to Cottery Financial Aid.



OFFICE OF ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

The Office of Enrollment Management is located in Main Hall. You have probably already communicated with them. The friendly staff is always available to assist students with information, support, and referral to areas of the College for more specific assistance.



Hannah Masters

The [Office of Financial Aid](#) is also located within the Office of Enrollment Management and is responsible for student campus employment. International students often work on campus as part of their financial aid package. **The Vice President of Enrollment Management, Hannah M, is a DSO who can sign your I-20s.**

STUDENT LIFE OFFICE

The student life department includes **Housing, Health Services, Campus Activities, Athletics, Spirit Shop, Dining Services and the student life office.** The student life staff welcomes your suggestions to enhance your educational experience.



RESIDENCE HALLS

Your **hall director** lives in an apartment in your hall and is available to assist you with information and support. Each hall also has three student **Resident Assistants (R.A.s)** who are dedicated to helping students. They can provide you with information about residence hall policies and are a great source of support for students. Each hall also has students who have been selected and trained as **Peer Listeners**. Their services are free and confidential.

STUDENT WELLNESS

Cottey students have access to many health care services on campus. Local health care providers are on campus in the [Student Wellness](#) for up to an hour Monday-Friday. The health care providers provide treatment for minor conditions, write prescriptions, make referrals, and provide health counseling.

The Counseling office provides free confidential counseling services. Sometimes it just helps to talk to someone! Counselors can help with adjustment to campus life and American culture. They know culture shock is normal and can share coping strategies.



ACADEMIC ADVISING

You will have a faculty advisor. It is the responsibility of both the student and her academic advisor to participate in the advising process equally. The academic advisor serves as a resource for course/career planning and academic progress review. You will meet at least once a semester with your academic advisor prior to registration. After consultation with your academic advisor, it is ultimately your responsibility to choose and implement your academic program.

Tips on getting the most out of working with your advisor:

- Know what you want to major in before you arrive and let your advisor know. If you change your mind later, things can be adjusted, but start with a plan.
- Expect to take ownership for your education (Welcome to the USA, land of personal responsibility! More on this later...) – You tell your advisor your academic goals, then they guide you. Your advisor is not here to tell you what to do, though they may offer suggestions.
- If you plan to transfer in classes from other universities, especially international universities, get that process started early the summer before you arrive! It may enable you to skip repeating classes or even graduate early.
- Please don't feel like you are "bothering" your advisor when you have questions. They have office hours when they expect students to come by with questions. If you are not free during your advisors office hours, send a polite e-mail to make an appointment.
- If you don't feel like your academic advisor is the right fit for you, you can change advisors and no one's feelings will be hurt.

COTTEY'S ACADEMIC STRUCTURE

SEMESTERS:

Cottey is on a “semester” system. Each semester is 16 weeks long. In March, there are no classes during our two-week spring break. See the [Academic Calendar](#).

DROP/ADD PERIOD:

During the first week, you can change your classes, dropping and adding whatever makes sense, but talk this through with your academic advisor. After the first week and well into the semester you can drop a class if you think you might not pass and you remain in at least 12 credit hours.

CREDIT HOURS:

Classes are measured in terms of “credit hours.” These numbers represent the number of hours per week you spend in class. Lab classes are different, they are worth 1 or 2 credits, but you spend 2 to 4 hours in the lab per week. **Your F-1 visa status requires you to be in at least 12 credits hours every semester**, but many students take as many as 18 credit hours a semester. If you exceed 18 credit hours you will be charged an overload fee of \$550 per credit hour over 18. You may appeal for a waiver of the overload fee.

You will need 62 credit hours to graduate with your A.A. or A.S. degree, and 120 credit hours to graduate with a B.A. degree. Your academic advisor will keep you on track.

COURSE CATALOG:

The [Catalog](#) is your road map to your degree/diploma. It tells you what courses you are required to take to fulfill your degree requirements. It has descriptions for each course.

SYLLABUS:

You will receive a syllabus for every class you take. **The syllabus is your road map to success in the class.** The professor outlines every assignment, every deadline, every expectation in the syllabus. It's a good idea to re-write deadlines and test days from each syllabus into a personal planner calendar so you can stay on top of things in all your classes. It's also a good idea to re-read the syllabus after a few weeks of class to refresh your memory.

MAJOR:

Every four-year student at Cottey must declare a major. Some students double major. Once you decide on a major, you will use the Catalog to figure out which courses are required for a degree in that major. You may also choose a minor, or even two. You will take fewer classes to earn a minor, but minors are not available as independent degrees. Only students who have majors can have minors. Minors complement majors. For example, a student whose goal is to work in business in Latin America would be a more competitive job applicant with a major in International Business and a minor in Spanish.

GENERAL EDUCATION CORE:

These are classes that are required for every student and every degree. For example, every student must take the First Year Writing Seminar. These classes might not relate to your major.

DEGREES:

Cottey offers Associates Degrees (two years) and Bachelor's Degrees (four years). It is easier for graduates with Bachelor's degrees to find good jobs or continue on to grad school. You do not have to earn an Associate's degree first. Some students choose to just pursue a Bachelor's degree, which may exempt them from some courses required for an Associates degree. This is something your academic advisor can help you determine.

TUTORING CENTER:

If a class is hard, seek help early! Go to the tutoring center and visit the professor during office hours. If you continue to struggle in spite of assistance that you are receiving, consult with the professor and your academic advisor about the extreme option of dropping the course. You can drop a course either with no notation on your transcript or with an indication of W on your transcript (depending on the date) which will not affect your grade point average. **However, please consult with financial aid BEFORE you drop any class**, as being enrolled in fewer than 12 credit hours per semester can put your immigration status in jeopardy.

WRITING CENTER:

Do yourself a favor and finish a draft of your paper early enough to take it to the Writing Center. They can give you feedback that will help you improve the paper and improve your grade, but only if you plan ahead and don't leave things until the deadline.

COMPUTER LABS:

There are several computer labs all over campus, including in the residence halls. While it is convenient to have your own laptop, it is not essential. You will be able to complete all your assignments on the computers in the computer labs.

If you have not had a lot of experience on computers throughout high school, you will need to learn computer skills quickly. Students are expected to type almost all papers, and will often be required to make presentations in PowerPoint. Professors assume students are experienced with computers. There are websites where you can learn and practice typing.



CLASS EXPECTATIONS

ATTENDANCE:

In some countries, all that matters in university courses is passing the exams at the end of the semester and you may skip as many classes as you want. In the US, the process of learning is valued as highly as the outcomes, so some professors may consider your class attendance in your grade. Most professors will have an attendance policy outlined in their syllabus.

ASSIGNMENTS:

You will have homework. Some will be reading and preparing for discussion, some will be written assignments you turn in at certain deadlines. Expect homework!

TERM PAPERS:

If you are assigned a term paper, make an appointment with your instructor to clarify a number of points. Ask how long the paper should be, how many sources should be used, and **the style of citation** that should be used. Most instructors will give you a list of topics to choose from, but if they do not, ask for suggestions. You may also seek assistance from the Writing Center.

For the most part, all papers are expected to be typed.

STYLE OF CITATION AND PLAGIARISM:

Citations are a huge deal in the US. If you read a scholarly paper and summarize those findings and don't say where you found that information, you have plagiarized. Many ways to write a paper that are acceptable in other countries are considered plagiarism in the US. The University

of Maryland has put together a [useful tutorial](#) we recommend you watch so that you understand how plagiarism is defined in the US.

As for citations, different disciplines use different citation styles by tradition. Two of the most commonly used styles are APA and MLA, which may mean nothing to you at this point. That's okay. When it comes time, Purdue University's [Online Writing Laboratory](#) website and the professionals at Cottey's library and Writing Center can assist you with the details.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ME_109_Thief.png

TESTING:

Exams are much more frequent in the US than in many universities around the world. At Cottey, you may have classes which give an exam every week. Most of the tests you take (and virtually all the quizzes) are "objective." They measure your knowledge of a topic by asking questions which have specific answers. Many of you will also face "subjective" tests. These exams provide you a question (or choice of questions) to which you respond with a short answer or an essay. Some professors will ask you to write your essays in a "bluebook." A bluebook is a 12-page exam booklet that can be purchased at the Bookstore for \$0.50 each.

TEXTBOOKS:

When you arrive at Cottey and enroll in classes, you will need to get books for your classes. Your textbooks can be purchased online, but the advice of most international students is not to rush to buy textbooks. Talk to returning students who can give you strategies on how to find less expensive used textbooks, or rent books from Amazon or Chegg.

Some classes require Access Codes instead of textbooks. These are harder to save money on, because they often expire at the end of a semester, but it’s still worth talking to other students about strategies. Generally, you should plan on spending \$500 to \$600 each semester for books and supplies. If you choose to get your books at the Cottey bookstore, you have two options for payment; pay for them at the time you pick them up, or charge them and pay for them in full by the second month of the semester.

STUDY GROUPS

Interactive study and discussion is a good learning tool. The more you discuss and use information, the easier it becomes for you to remember it. Many professors use collaborative learning and group projects in their courses. If you have any questions about whether collaborating with other students is appropriate, consult the instructor. Faculty members vary in their expectations but generally:

COLLABORATION	GRAY AREA (ASK INSTRUCTOR)	CHEATING
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Studying together to prepare for a test,-Sharing class notes,-Working with a tutor at the Learning Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Working together on a take home or online test (May be considered unauthorized collaboration if the assignment was expected to be completed individually)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Copying someone else’s test or paper or part of any paper
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Brainstorming,-Getting feedback on your paper before you revise,-Getting help from the Writing Center		<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Turning in a paper you didn’t write,-Excessive Help – when another student rewrites any part of your paper.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Talking to students who took the class last year about course content,-Looking at their class notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Studying from quizzes and tests from students who took the course in past years	

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Your first semester may be challenging. You will have many adjustments – food, weather, language, etc. and these can affect your academic performance. To make this period of transition a bit easier, consider taking just 15 credit hours your first semester. You will consult with your academic advisor and choose what is best for you.

From your classes in other academic systems, you have assumptions and expectations about methods of education and about the way your field of interest should be taught and studied. For example, you may assume that it is important to be able to memorize large quantities of information, or that the best way to study your field is narrowly and in great depth.

At Cottey, you may find that memorizing is 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 in order for you to be academically successful, you will have to adjust your thinking. Whether or not you personally accept the values of the system, you will have to work in accordance with them to succeed in it.

STUDYING EFFECTIVELY

To maintain a high grade point average you must study effectively. This does not mean you must spend every waking moment bent over a desk; it means you must make the most of the time you set aside for study. Use the syllabus you receive from each professor to plan your study time. Most of your study will be reading assignments from the textbook for the next day's lecture. Do not wait until the last minute or fall behind!

TAKING NOTES

Most professors use the lecture form of instruction. You need to learn to take notes effectively. As the professor speaks on a topic, write down the important points he or she makes. If you have a professor who talks too fast, don't be afraid to ask for clarification! Professors want you to succeed in their courses.





TALKING TO YOUR PROFESSORS

In many educational systems around the world, the role of the student is simple: memorize the information given by the teacher. At Cottey, your professors will expect you to attend class, ask questions, and be an active participant inside and outside of the classroom.

Some international students come from educational systems where speaking to the professor during or after class is not acceptable. In the US, most professors **want** you to talk. There is more interaction in classrooms in the US than in most classrooms worldwide. Many instructors include class participation when determining grades and will reduce your grade if you do not participate in class. Ask questions and participate in class discussions. Professors often think silence from a student means that she is not interested or does not care about the course.

Professors at Cottey also have “office hours,” a regular time when they are available in their offices to talk with students. You should take advantage of these times to visit your professors even if you are doing well in class. Most teachers enjoy talking with students in a relaxed atmosphere, and they will know from your visit that you are interested in their course. If you are having trouble in a class, talk with the professor; most are willing to help you in any way they can.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT COTTEY AND IN NEVADA

IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS AND ID/KEYCARDS

MISSOURI ID:

The US does not have a national identity card. Instead, most American use their state issued driver's licenses as ID. You should carry some identification with you at all times, along with your health insurance card.

In general, when you are in Nevada you should keep your passport in a safe location and **carry a copy instead** unless you intend to do something official like open a bank account or apply for a drivers license. We recommend you get a Missouri state ID card for \$11, which you can use to prove your identification anywhere in Nevada or the US. This is the standard form of Identification in the US. We recommend you get a state ID card because:

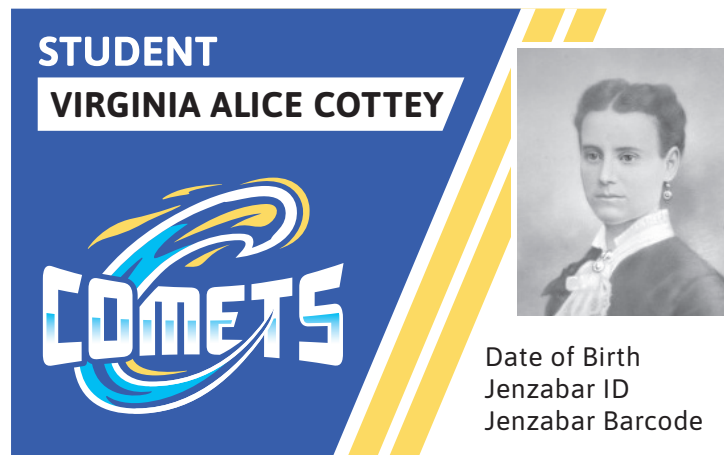
1. Some places won't accept your passport as proof of age if the clerks are not familiar with it.
2. It's better to carry and lose a state ID, which can be easily replaced, than a passport.
3. If you have to apply for a visa in the US (for example to participate in the sophomore international experience), the foreign embassy will keep your passport for a period of time, so it would be important to have another official ID
4. We have seen some consulates that require a second official ID in order to renew expiring passports.
5. State IDs give you the option to choose to blend in and not attract notice when you prefer.



Missouri Non-Driver License

COTTEY ID:

In addition, you should carry your Cottey ID/ keycard at all times, as it provides you access to campus buildings when they are locked. It is also necessary to show your ID/keycard for entrance into Raney Dining Room for meals. If you lose your ID/keycard, notify the student health office manager at ext. 2157 immediately to prevent unauthorized persons from using it to enter College buildings. A temporary ID can be issued for use at meals. If you must replace your ID/ keycard, there will be a \$10 fee.



I-94:

When you enter the U.S., an immigration inspector (CBP Officer) determines how long you may stay in the U.S. A paperless electronic Form I-94 is created by the CPB Officer when you are admitted by air or sea travel. Print out a paper copy at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/>, fold it and keep it in your passport. If you enter the U.S. by land from Canada, Mexico, etc, you will be issued a paper I-94 (DO NOT LOSE IT).

When you leave Nevada for more than a day trip, you should always take all your immigration documents – I-20, passport, visa, a printed out I-94, and your health insurance card.

MAIL

You can receive mail at Cottey, starting two weeks before your arrival. Your address will be:

Your Name

Your HALL Cottey College

1000 W Austin Blvd Nevada, MO 64772 USA

Some students like to order bedsheets or towels from Amazon to be waiting for them when they arrive.

Make sure to let the Cottey Service Center know where to forward your mail in the summer.

Otherwise they return all mail to sender. Some past international students never received their tax refunds because they failed to leave a forwarding address with the Service Center over the summer.

THINGS TO DO:

CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

International students will learn about job assignments during the campus employment check-in at Orientation. Students work an average of ten hours per week and receive paychecks twice a month.

The income from your campus job is meant to cover incidentals – notebooks, shampoo, winter coats. It will not be enough money for you to send any back to your family and your family should not expect you to be able to assist them financially until after you graduate.

Americans take work very seriously and it is important that you be on time and professional. If you are a reliable, dependable student worker throughout your four years, your Cottey coworkers will be able to give you strong recommendations when you apply for full time jobs after graduation.

Each year you will be allowed to apply for different jobs or continue in your same job. If you are unhappy with your job, you may check to see if there are any other departments hiring.



STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

There are dozens of [student organizations](#) you can be involved in including Student Government, Honor Societies and interest groups. Here are two that attract international students:

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

Dedicated to helping form the bonds of understanding among Cottey's international and American students. IFC helps coordinate the Multicultural Festival and also plans fun outings and get-togethers for members.

GLOBAL CITIZENS

Promote equal rights, global understanding, social responsibility, and leadership development through civic engagement and community volunteerism.



SPORTS, ARTS, DANCE AND MUSIC

Cottey has intramural sports and an exercise room so you can stay fit year round. We also have [eight athletics teams](#) that play other schools and would love for you to come and cheer for them at every home game.

[Cottey's music program](#) offers elective courses that are one- on-one lessons open to any student, as well as the chance to participate in ensembles and chamber choirs. Students take lessons in piano and voice, or learn to play woodwind, brass or percussion instruments. Cottey has some instruments students can borrow for the semester – flutes, clarinets, trumpets, etc. Music lessons are for one credit each. They will be included in your 18 credit maximum, so there are no additional fees. Details are in the Music Department Handbook in the program description section of our [music page](#).

[Cottey's theater program](#) puts on a play every semester that any student can try out for or can assist with the stage crew, set building, or costumes.

[Cottey's dance program](#) also has an extra-curricular dance group that you can audition to participate in. In short, there is no reason for you to be bored at Cottey.



STAYING HEALTHY AND SAFE:

“CULTURE SHOCK”

Nevada, Missouri is probably not like any place you have been before. The buildings look different, clothing is different, and trees and plants are different. People speak a different language, have different values, traditions, and religious practices, and eat different foods. It will take time to adjust.

To cope effectively with culture shock, first realize that you are not alone; it happens to everyone. Every international student experiences a range of emotions upon arrival in the US. Talk with other students about your feelings. If you experience feelings of despair and dislocation that last more than a few weeks, contact the Student Life Center to schedule an appointment with a counselor. The staff members are trained to help students cope with a variety of problems, and adjustment to Nevada is one of them. Their services are free and confidential. Do not hesitate to call them and please know that it doesn't mean you are “weird” or “failing,” it's normal and healthy to talk through challenges, just like it's normal to go to the Writing Center to get help on a paper or to a medical doctor for an ear infection!

We understand that in many cultures people only talk to mental health counselors when they face emergencies, but in the U.S. it's widely understood almost anyone can benefit from them.

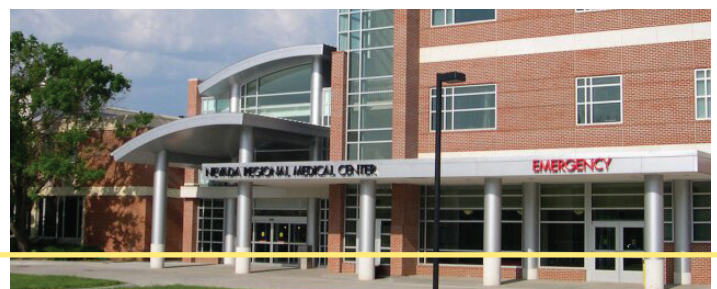
MEDICAL CARE AND INSURANCE OFF CAMPUS

The medical care system in the US is private and for-profit. Doctors, hospitals, and pharmacies charge the patient for the services performed. In many other countries, the government provides these services. In the US, the patient is responsible for paying all medical bills.

In order to help pay for medical care, most people in the US have private health insurance. Insurance spreads the risk of the cost of medical care among all subscribers, and as a result, individuals pay less than they would for health care if they were not insured.

Cottey requires all international students to have health insurance through a Cottey insurance provider and you should carry your insurance card at all times. Many health care providers will not treat you without proof of insurance coverage. Many will insist that you pay in cash when treated.

The [Nevada Regional Medical Center](#) provides 24-hour emergency care. Do not go to the emergency room for non-emergency care, even if that is common in your country. You will be billed hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars. For nonemergency medical care, there are options including the [Nevada Medical Clinic](#). During the week, the Student Health Office Manager will assist you in obtaining medical care during those times of day that it is not available on campus.



HEALTH PRODUCTS

Some medicines, like aspirin and decongestants, are available without a prescription.

Other medicines, like antibiotics, require a prescription. To obtain a prescription, you must first visit a doctor (available on Cottey's campus). Then you take your prescription to a pharmacy to get the medicine.

The closest pharmacy to Cottey is located within walking distance at Wood's Supermarket. Community Pharmacy, located in the Nevada Medical Center, delivers prescriptions free of charge. Wilkinson's Pharmacy, located near the Nevada square, delivers to Cottey students for a small fee. Call each one to check on prices before placing your order because different pharmacies charge differently.

SAFETY AND CAMPUS SECURITY

Major crimes are rare in Nevada, as can be seen in Cottey's annual safety report (found on [Campus Security](#) page), but vandalism and petty theft can occur. It is wise, therefore, to take several precautions. If you park a bicycle outside, chain and lock it to a bicycle rack. Lock your bedroom door when you leave your suite. Don't walk around town at night by yourself. If you have any problems on campus, please refer to the Student Handbook, found at the bottom of the [Student Life](#) page.

TRANSPORTATION

Nevada has no mass transit system. Students must depend on their feet, bicycles, and cars to get around town. A taxi service is available for a fee. Hitchhiking is not common in America. It is illegal in many states, and is a dangerous way to travel. Some students have cars. Some international students learn to drive and buy cars.

SUITE LIVING

/swēt/ noun - a connected series of rooms to be used together.

CLEANING

Standards of cleanliness vary from culture to culture. Housekeepers will clean the suite area and bathrooms each weekday, but you will be expected to clean your room regularly. Ask your housekeeper if you need cleaning supplies or a vacuum cleaner.

LAUNDRY

Americans often wash their clothes after one wearing, while in other countries this is not common. There are washing machines in each residence hall and you should expect to launder your clothes, sheets and towels regularly.



ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

You must be 21 years old to buy or consume alcoholic beverages in Missouri. Cottey's campus is a "dry campus." No alcohol is allowed on campus regardless of your age. Please refer to the Student Handbook at the bottom of the [Student Life](#) page for a complete list of rules, regulations, and penalties.

Even students over 21 are limited in the US as to where they can drink. Bars, restaurants, and private homes are generally fine, but in many states it is against the law to drink in cars (even if you are not driving) or public parks or on city streets. And while in some countries the alcohol laws apply only to hard liquor, in the US any beverage with any alcohol content is considered. Also, although you can purchase alcohol when you are 21, if you purchase it and give it to a minor, you have broken the law.

USUALLY ALCOHOLIC	USUALLY NON-ALCOHOLIC
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Anything "Hard" Hard Lemonade- Beer- Anything "Spiked"- Has federal warning label	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Anything Soft (Soft Drinks)- Root Beer is often a soft drink- Anything "Virgin"- No warning label

WHAT TO WEAR:

CLOTHING

Cottey does not have a school uniform or a dress code, except for Sunday brunch, when nice pants or dresses are appropriate. You may wear the clothes that make you feel comfortable on most occasions. You will want to have a dress or skirt and top for more formal occasions. Cottey hosts one formal dance at which a nice dress or traditional outfit from your country would be appropriate. On formal occasions, students who did not bring formal clothing often borrow clothing from other students.

When shopping for clothes in the U.S., fitting rooms are usually available for you try on the clothes before you purchase them to ensure that they fit and you like them.



COTTEY CUPBOARD AND CAREER CLOSET

The Cottey Cupboard is a donation-based resource open to all commuter and residential students. Housed in the Student Wellness Center, the Cottey Cupboard provides students the opportunity to find new and gently used clothing and shoes, a variety of personal hygiene items, as well as, a variety of food items including cold and frozen foods. All items in the Cottey Cupboard are free to students.

The Career Closet is located in the Women's Leadership Center and provides students with access to professional clothing. Cottey accepts donations of used professional clothes and shoes that students can borrow when they go to job fairs and to job interviews.

MISSOURI WEATHER

In Missouri summer temperatures can rise above 100° Fahrenheit (37° Celsius), with high humidity, and winter temperatures below 0° Fahrenheit (-18° Celsius) can occur. A day that begins sunny and warm may be cold and rainy by noon.

Tornadoes are powerful, twisting windstorms. These storms occur in the spring and early summer but are rare. When a tornado has been sighted and confirmed, a "tornado warning" is declared. Sirens will sound all over town, and most radio and television stations will announce the warning. You must seek shelter immediately. If you are in a building with a basement, go to the basement. For more information about tornadoes, refer to the Student Handbook, found at the bottom of the [Student Life](#) page. While there has been recent severe damage from tornadoes in neighboring towns, there has not been a tornado in Nevada since 1996.

WHAT TO EAT:

FOOD

While at Cottey, all your meals during a housing contract period will be provided in Raney Dining Room, except for Sunday evening meals. Food or groceries can be purchased nearby, but specialty ingredients like international spices are not available in Nevada. They can be ordered online and shipped to your residence hall, or, there are specialty stores in Kansas City that might have them available.

RESTAURANTS

The US is different from many countries in that **tipping is expected in restaurants**. Servers are paid very low wages (less than minimum wage) by restaurants, and therefore make the bulk of their income through tips. If you go out to eat, plan to leave 15-20% of the cost of your meal as a tip. For example, if your meal costs \$10, leave a tip of at least \$1.50 to \$2. This does not apply to fast food restaurants.

It's common for international students to think "we don't tip in my country and I'm poor" and not to leave a tip. If the service was good and you don't leave a tip you are being rude and culturally insensitive. If you don't have enough money to leave a tip, choose fast-food, like MacDonald's or Subway where no tips are expected. For more information on tipping in America, [read this short explanation](#).

Also, it is common practice when friends go out to dinner to pay by "going Dutch". This means that each person pays and tips according to what they ordered. To ease this process, it is not a bad idea to bring cash with you or ask the server to give you separate checks.

SHOPPING:

U.S. CURRENCY

The standard of American currency is the dollar, which is divided into 100 “cents.” The value of the dollar remains relatively stable here in the US.



Coins (also known as “change”) represent fractions of one dollar, and their value is defined in “cents.” There are six denominations of coins, but unfortunately, their sizes are not consistent to their value. Surprise!

All American paper currency is the same size and color, so be careful. The denominations used most often are \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20. There are larger bills; however, some businesses will not take large bills (\$50 or \$100).

It is not wise to keep large amounts of currency (or “cash”) in your wallet or purse, or to keep it in your room; the chances of losing it or having it stolen are too great. Instead, you should deposit excess money in a bank.

SALES TAX

Nearly every item you buy will have a sales tax added to its price that you won’t know about until you reach the cash register. Surprise!

In Nevada, that tax is approximately 8% on non-food items, 4% on food. If a bottle of shampoo has a price tag of \$1.00, the sales tax on it will be 8¢, equaling a total cost of \$1.08. If a laptop computer costs \$500, the tax on it will be \$40, equaling a total cost of \$540. This tax is added almost everywhere in the US, but the percentage varies from place to place. Sometimes things purchased online are not subject to sales tax.

HOW TO SHOP

The large volume of goods available in America amazes many international students. Prices in American stores are fixed. You do not bargain with store employees for a lower price. Most stores operate on a “self-service” basis. You select the goods you want and take them to a “check-out” stand where a cashier totals the amount and adds sales tax.

Wood’s Supermarket and the Dollar General store are located one block from campus and provide easy access to a variety of grocery and other items. Additional shopping can be found on the Nevada square, a nice walk from campus. The Wal-Mart Super Center is located on the east end of town, and a Cottey van offers weekly trips on the weekends. The Campus Activities Office offers occasional shopping trips to major malls located in Joplin, Kansas City, and the Lake of the Ozarks.

When buying anything other than food, keep the sales receipt as a record of your purchase. If the item is defective, you may return it to the store at which you bought it if you have the receipt.

MONEY:

BANKS AND BANKING SERVICES

You may (and should!) open a bank account in the US because cash can be easily stolen. In the US banks are all private, for-profit businesses that are financed by customer fees and interest. They are federally insured, but the US has no banks that are owned and operated by the federal government, even though the bank names, like “US Bank” and “Bank of America” might make you think so.

You should probably choose a bank that has branches in many states, since you don’t know where you may end up after graduation. Or, you could choose an online bank. Many banks have account options for students with lower or no monthly fees.

Two basic types of accounts students usually open are savings and/or checking accounts. Most Cottey students prefer a checking account because there are no limits on the number of withdrawals a month.

You will receive a **bank debit card** to make purchases and can put the bank’s app on your phone to keep track of your balance. Your Cottey paychecks can be direct deposited.

You can also receive wire transfers from overseas into your bank account.



INCOME TAXES

Unless you have been in the US long enough to be considered a US resident for tax purposes (generally the sixth year after arrival in F-1 status), in March of each year, you will need to file an income tax return, even if you earned no money in the US. All international students are required to file taxes and the International Education Coordinator can guide you through the process. Americans who earned no or little money are not required to file, so you may get wrong information if you talk to your American friends about taxes.

Since the 2018 tax reform, the US government requires international students to pay 10% of their income to the Federal Treasury. Most of the time, this will be withheld from your paychecks and you will never see it, but sometimes you may owe money at the end of the year. You will also owe taxes on any scholarship you receive that exceeds the cost of tuition, fees and books.

You will also need to file an income tax return in each state in which you earned income. The international education coordinator can assist with Missouri State tax returns only.

MISCELLANEOUS:

MASS COMMUNICATION

The [Nevada Daily Mail](#), the [Joplin Globe](#), and the [Kansas City Star](#) are the best sources of local and regional information. The Cottey Library subscribes to many different newspapers, and [USA Today](#) is available in each residence hall. Internet news sources are available 24 hours daily in the residence hall computer suites.

Each of the TV lounges receives “cable” TV. With cable, 20-plus channels are available for viewing. A news-dedicated television is also located in the parlor of each residence hall.

Although campus housing includes a telephone hookup, you will need to provide your own telephone. Most students purchase cell phones with a US number instead of a land line phone. They opt for the lowest data plan available because Wifi is available in all campus buildings.

HOUSING OVER BREAKS

Cottey College does not have a summer semester. While some summer online classes may be offered, the residence halls are closed over winter break (mid-December – early January), spring break (two weeks in March), and summer (mid-May to mid-August).

You will be expected to leave campus and either go home for breaks, or stay with a relative or friend. You will need to let the International Education Coordinator know where you will spend your break. If you have no support system in the US that can help you find a place to spend the breaks, speak to the Office of Student Life early in your first semester about the possibility of staying with a host family. Some local Nevada families are willing to host students, but they need advance notice. Once a host family has been identified for you, please do not offend the host family by making other plans at the last minute.

RELIGION AND POLITICS

Religion plays the same role in America it plays in many countries. There is no government-supported religion, and many religions coexist. The US government is based on the “separation of church and state,” and the vast majority of people in the US adhere to this doctrine. Also, in general, people in the US are private about their religious and political views. Typically, in conversation between strangers, religion and politics are issues that are avoided in order not to offend others who may not agree.

SEXUALITY

Like every college in the US, Cottey has some students who identify as members of the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) community. In recent years, American young people have become more willing to openly acknowledge their sexual orientation and public opinion has shifted towards acceptance. LGBTQ students are accepted and respected on campus. However, acceptance is not universal, and you may find members of both the Cottey community and the Nevada community who hold heterosexuality as a traditional core value.



CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND SOCIAL CUSTOMS

AMERICAN CULTURE

Because of its history, the US is a society with many different classes, groups, races, and lifestyles. Within each of these segments, individual members are also quite different from one another. No one behaves exactly like anyone else. There are, however, several general characteristics which most Americans have in common. Remember, these are general characteristics; many people you meet will not fit these patterns.

WHAT AMERICANS BELIEVE

ALL PEOPLE ARE EQUAL AND DESERVE AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN LIFE

They should all be treated fairly and with the same level of respect. This is one of the most basic principles of American philosophy. This can be seen in such common practices as “waiting in line.” When you go to the doctor’s office, to a store, or to another type of office, you will be asked to wait in line. This same equality can also be seen in the classroom. All students are the same in the eyes of the professors, and many professors view students (particularly graduate students) as their equals.

EVERYONE IS FREE TO BE AN INDIVIDUAL

Americans do not believe in conforming to a general ideology or behavior. Individuality and self-expression are encouraged. Most people in the US believe that the ideal individual is independent and self-reliant, and most perceive themselves this way.

Americans do not generally see themselves as representatives of their families or communities or social class. Rather, they see themselves as autonomous beings. This American characteristic can be seen in the classroom as well. Teachers will emphasize the development of independent, individualistic thought in students.



COMPETITION BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN PEOPLE AND IN BUSINESS

Some international students may see this attitude as “selfish” because it puts the individual’s interest ahead of the group interest, but that is an American mindset. Americans believe if every individual acts in their own best interest, the result will be actions that are in the best interest of society.

MATERIAL GOODS ARE A MEASURE OF A PERSON’S SUCCESS

Success in the US is often measured in monetary terms. Since this is so, people in the US are as conscious of money and material possessions as they are of time. As a result, some people may seem to ignore the more important things in life, like love and friendship. This is not, however, true of most people.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR OWN LIFE

You determine your own future. Americans do not believe in luck or fate. They are very proud of their individual achievements.

CHANGE IS GOOD AND NECESSARY

It brings about progress and improvement. Tradition is not as valued in America as it is in other cultures.



IT IS BEST TO BE HONEST AND DIRECT

In many cultures, it is considered impolite to speak too frankly or directly about a subject. Americans prefer to speak openly, even when giving a negative opinion or delivering bad news.

Having said that – Americans can use a frustratingly indirect sentence structure when they give advice, because it is not considered proper in the US to tell another individual what to do. So, if your professor says, “You might want to add a title page to your paper,” she means, “Add a title page!” If your professor says, “I would probably expand paragraph two,” she means [If I were you I would] “Expand paragraph 2!” Be careful of this tendency to give advice and feedback in a way that makes it sound optional. Ask for clarification.

BEING PUNCTUAL IS IMPORTANT AND RESPECTFUL OF OTHERS

People in the US tend to organize their activities around schedules, and many people place a great deal of emphasis on punctuality. In the US, it is important to be on time; being late is considered rude. If you cannot be on time to an appointment, let the person(s) involved know in advance.

Classes at Cottey begin at exactly the time they are listed on the schedule.

RATIONALITY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EMOTION WHEN MAKING A DECISION

Americans are often most interested in “the bottom line.” In other words, the best decision is the one that has the most productive outcome, usually measured in dollars and cents.

INDIVIDUALS SHOULD GIVE BACK TO OTHERS THROUGH COMMUNITY SERVICE

Serving one’s community is a value embraced by many. It not only provides assistance to those in need but can also be an important source of personal satisfaction through acts of goodness. People are often involved in community service through their church, schools, or community government, or through service agencies like Habitat for Humanity, the American Red Cross, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, the YMCA, and the United Way.



WHAT AMERICANS LOVE

Their country. Americans are very patriotic. They are very proud of their country and their way of life. They also have great respect for those who serve or have served in the armed forces.

Their free time. Americans may not have more or less free time compared to people in some countries, but they value what they have. They will spend that time doing something for themselves, their family, or their community. Weekends and vacations are always full of activities.

The outdoors. The US government protects large sections of land from development and preserves them for the enjoyment of all. Americans enjoy outdoor activities all year round. Depending on the region, popular activities include sailing, hiking, cycling, camping, and fishing.

Sports. The US probably has more professional athletes participating in a greater number of professional sports than any other country. Americans love to watch sports, either live or on television. They also love to participate in sports, and there are countless leagues for players of all ages and skill levels.

SOCIAL CUSTOMS

While Americans will vary in their customs, here are some common social customs you can expect.

MEETING SOMEONE

When meeting someone for the first time, it is customary to shake hands, both for men and for women. Hugs are only exchanged between close friends. Kissing on the cheek is not a common greeting.

Americans will usually introduce themselves by their first name and last name (such as “Hello, I’m John Smith”), or, if the setting is very casual, by their first name only (“Hi, I’m John”). The common response when someone is introduced to you is “Pleased to meet you.” Unless someone is introduced to you with their title and last name (such as Mister Smith or Miss Johnson), you may address them by their first name.

Americans normally address everyone they meet in a social or business setting by their first name. However, you should always address your college professors by their title and last name (such as Dr. Adams or Professor Jones), unless they ask you to do otherwise.

STRUCTURE OF CONVERSATION

People in the US have very few “ritualistic” exchanges in conversations, but you need to be aware of a few. “How are you?” and “How’s it going?” are usually greetings, not questions about your life. “See you later,” or “See you soon,” are ways of saying good-bye, not appointments.

STYLE OF CONVERSATION

Most people in the US like their conversations to be moderate in volume with few and restrained hand gestures. Do not speak too loudly or too quietly, and keep your hands under control.

DEPTH OF CONVERSATION

Most people in the US prefer not to become too involved with the personal lives of their conversation partners. This emotional distance does not mean people dislike one another; it is simply the way things are done here. Personal lives are generally discussed only with close friends and family.

PREFERRED TOPICS

In casual conversation, people in the US prefer “small talk”—topics such as sports, weather, jobs, people they both know, or past experiences. These topics offer common ground, because everyone experiences the weather. Most Americans feel uncomfortable talking about religion, politics, or personal feelings with people they do not know well.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

When people talk about communication difficulties for international students, they are usually referring to spoken and written language. However, many of the most significant communication differences between people from the US and international students are in nonverbal communication, or body language.

EYE CONTACT

During a conversation, an American speaker often looks briefly into the listener's eyes, then briefly away, and then back at the listener's eyes again. An American listener looks at the speaker's eyes constantly. If you do not look into the eyes of your conversation partner, you will give the impression you are not listening. If you lower your eyes when a professor makes eye contact with you in class, the professor will think you did not prepare your assignment.

TOUCHING

American women who are good friends may be seen walking arm in arm or holding hands, but only rarely. More commonly, this is the sign of a romantic relationship. People in the US expect others to stand or sit at least an arm's length away from them. If you get closer than this, you may notice people from the US moving away from you. They do not necessarily dislike you; you are just in "their space." In addition, you will frequently hear people say, "Excuse me," though they have not actually touched anyone. No matter where you are, give people from the US plenty of space.

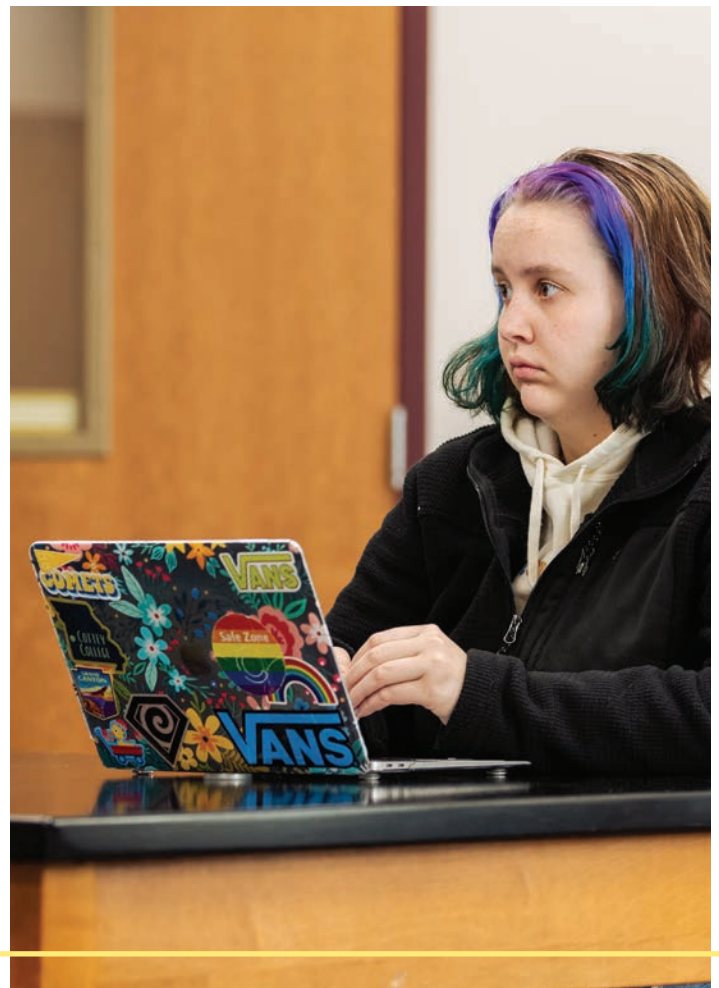
EMAIL

Email is the official form of communication at Cottey. It is crucial that you check your Cottey email at least once a day. It is considered extremely rude to ignore or not reply to email messages that ask for your reply, and you may miss critical information about scholarships or academics if you do not check it.

SPEAKING ON THE TELEPHONE

Americans normally answer the telephone by simply saying "Hello." If you are calling a business, the person answering the phone will give the name of the business and usually their own name as well. If the person you would like to speak to has answered the phone, you should say hello and state your name. If not, you should ask for that person politely: "May I please speak with Andrew Brown?"

The majority of Americans have voice mail on their phones. Also, the majority of businesses have voice mail accounts for their employees. When leaving a message, state your name clearly, and leave a telephone number where you can be reached. Telephone messages should be brief and to the point.





OTHER GUIDELINES

- Americans have no taboo associated with the left hand; they are as likely to touch you or to hand you objects with the left hand as with the right hand.
- Americans have no negative association with the soles of the feet or the bottom of the shoes.
- A common way to greet children is to pat them on their heads.
- People often point with their index finger to make a point during conversation.
- Americans show respect for someone by looking him or her in the face, not by looking down.
- Relaxed postures, whether sitting or standing are very common in America.
- Americans are often uncomfortable with silence.
- In the US, the doors of rooms are usually left open unless there is a specific reason to close them.

HYGIENE

Compared to some of the world, the US may seem obsessed with cleanliness. Television commercials for soap, perfume, cologne, deodorant, antiperspirant, toothpaste, mouthwash, breath mints, etc., are shown very frequently, and this is an accurate indication of what individuals are expected to do with and to their bodies. People in the US believe it is important to control the smells a body naturally produces.

Bad breath and natural body odor are considered quite offensive in the US, but the topic of these odors is so offensive that most people from the US will not tell another person he or she has bad breath or body odor. You do not have to cover yourself with perfumes and chew gum constantly; a shower and deodorant each day and good dental care is acceptable hygiene.

SMOKING AND VAPING

Smoking and vaping are not as common in America as in many other countries. Generally, Americans smoke less than Europeans and Asians. It is a practice that is becoming less and less socially acceptable.

Smoking and vaping is prohibited in many places, including the Cottey campus. It is not allowed in any public buildings, on any public transportation, in shops, movie theaters, schools, office buildings, and most bars and restaurants. The general rule is: if you are indoors, then you probably are not allowed to smoke. If a restaurant does allow smoking, it will only be in an area that is designated for smokers. If you are with someone, even outdoors, it is polite to ask if they mind before you start smoking.

The minimum legal age to purchase tobacco products in America is 21. If you are buying cigarettes (or another tobacco product) and you look young, the store clerk is required by law to ask you for proof of legal age. You should be prepared to provide identification.



CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Here are some suggestions to make your experience a happier one.

Listen and observe. Since there are new rules, norms, and cues that may be unfamiliar, you need to listen to words and to observe nonverbal communication carefully, trying to put them into proper context.

Ask questions. You cannot assume that you always know what is going on, or that you always understand a particular communication. Most Americans will be very helpful if you need an explanation of something. You may need to rephrase a question, check the meaning of something, or repeat what you have said in order to be clearly understood.

Try not to judge. You will see many things that are different from your own culture. Do not label anything as “good” or “bad” in comparison to your own culture. Most customs, habits, and ideas are simply different from the ones you are familiar with. You may also misunderstand some things; do not make judgments until you have more complete information.

Try to empathize. Try to put yourself in the other person’s place, and look at the situation from his or her perspective. Cultural perspectives can cause very different interpretations of the same situation.

Be open and curious. Try new things, and try to find out how and why certain things are done. The more you explore, the more you will learn.

Do not be afraid to laugh at yourself. It is likely that you will make mistakes as you explore a new culture. Laughing at your mistakes will encourage others to respond to you in a friendly manner and help you learn from them.

Try to accept frustration. Learning to function in a new culture is not easy, and it is natural to feel anxious and frustrated at times. These feelings are a normal part of the experience.

Get involved. The more you put into the experience, the more you will learn from it. Make an effort to meet people, form friendships, get involved in activities, and learn about the people and their culture.

BEING ASKED QUESTIONS

Cottey students are curious people. They may ask a lot of questions.

Some of their questions may appear ridiculous, uninformed and elementary, but try to be patient in answering them. You may be the first foreign national of a particular country whom they have met, and they will probably have very little understanding of life in your culture.

Most Cottey students are sincerely interested in learning more about you and your culture and, in return, will welcome any questions you might ask them about the U.S. or their home country.

(Excerpted and adapted from - Social Relations in the United States, Margaret D. Pusch, University of Pittsburgh, The Asian Student Orientation Handbook, 1977-78).

WHAT TO BRING TO COTTEY:

Curiosity, Positive Regard for Others, Open Mindedness, Realistic Expectations, Sense of Humor, Flexibility/Adaptability, Enthusiasm for Differences

WHAT NOT TO BRING:

Judgement, Perfectionism, Rigid expectations about the way things ought to be

CONCLUSION

What you are about to do is not always going to be easy. If it were, everyone would do it, and they don't. You are going to set yourself apart by undertaking study in another culture. You will learn from books and professors, but you will also learn from roommates and work supervisors and bank tellers and cashiers – nearly every interaction in a new culture has educational value.

At the same time – you will be educating professors, roommates, and everyone else you interact with. We all do this, every day, though in our own culture it's less noticeable. Cottey's stated goal is to prepare students for leadership roles as responsible, engaged citizens of a complex global society. As an international student, you are both a beneficiary of that preparation and a contributor. Thank you for choosing and trusting Cottey. We truly welcome you.