



**INDIAN GRADUATE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION  
UIC**

*University of Illinois at Chicago*  
<http://igsa.pages.uic.edu/>

Hi! Everyone,

IGSA@UIC would like to welcome everyone to this list. Please print a copy of this document and go through it carefully. Keep it handy.

Most of you have been in touch with us. If you know other students who haven't yet contacted us or need help in checking up their status etc, please request them to email ([uic\\_incoming@yahoogroups.com](mailto:uic_incoming@yahoogroups.com)). We respond to emails within a day or so. If we don't get back to you, do mail us again.

This document has been written by previous board members and has been modified recently. Please go through it carefully. This document covers many important details and answers almost all the questions that a new incoming student is confronted with.

## **Airport Pickup**

### *Arrival*

We request you to plan your arrival in Chicago over a weekend (Sat/Sun). This is due to the fact that most of the current students are working full-time during summer and it will be tough for us to come to the airport during the weekdays, especially during working hours.

Another reason for the request is that we can group students together for pickup and thereby reduce the cost of pickup per person. Over the weekends the UIC alumni help IGSA for picking up new students. Typically, taxi cost from the airport is around \$35-\$40 for a single trip. If possible people coming from the same place plan ahead and try to arrive together. This will be mutually beneficial. In the worst case of you not being able to make it over the weekend, we will still arrange for pickup from airport. In case, your flight arrives earlier than scheduled or if we aren't able to make it to the airport on time, please wait there for us. If you have received a confirmation from us that someone would be coming to the airport, then we will make sure that one of the current students comes to the airport to receive you (usually we will have a IGSA placard for you to identify us). Please fill up the pickup and hosting form in the IGSA website well in advance, preferably 2-3 weeks ahead of your arrival. That will give us enough time to let us plan and inform about who will come over to pick you up.

Keep the name, address and telephone numbers given at the end of this document handy. These will be the people you will contact in case of emergency.

The cost of making a call from airport is \$0.80. Please have correct change so that you can call one of us in case you are not able to find anyone from IGSA at the airport.

Most of you will be arriving at the International Terminal at O'Hare (Airport name) in Chicago. This is Terminal 5. You would be exiting the terminal via Exit Gates A or B. As soon as you exit please come near the information desk located in between Exits A and B. The IGSA member will be waiting for you at this information desk. In case you are unable to find the person, please wait for 10-15 min. The person might be delayed in taking the train to the airport :-), especially during weekday.

As soon as your flights are confirmed please email the flight details and your final arrival date and time in Chicago. A remainder, be sure to fill up the pickup form on IGSA website. This will help us organize your pick up.

## Accommodation

If you have requested temporary accommodation, we will try and make necessary arrangements with the existing students at UIC. Typically the students host the new students for a week to two weeks.

Please try to find your own accommodation by grouping in other new students for roommates as quickly as possible (It's best to start looking for roommates now itself in India). This will lower the burden on the person hosting you as well as free up space for other incoming students in following weeks.

Generally the current students who accept to host new students do not collect money for rent for the period you stay. It's up to the current students to charge you for the food, utilities etc for the period you stay. Hence if the student requests you to pay, please be prepared to do so. It's good if you can volunteer to help in cooking, cleaning etc in the apartment you are being hosted. If you need any help urgently you can contact one of the IGSA board members. Also try to socialize with everyone you meet at UIC, especially other new students and your seniors.

## Immunization Form and Other Related Documents

- Each student is required to get the immunization form duly signed with the dates by a doctor in India. Please have this ready and bring it along with you. In the worst case you are not able to get this done in India due to lack of time, you can get the vaccinations in Chicago and get the form signed. Just make sure every single column in there is filled. And for the dates if you don't remember the exact dates think and fill up some date with relevance.
- Get a copy of your final marksheets attested by the registrar. You might want to have a few more official mark sheets in case you are applying for PhD.

As additional tips,

- Get your transcripts for all 8 semesters done; at least 2 copies in sealed and stamped envelopes.
- For your degree certificate, leave some empty sheets safely with your parents / guardians back home so that they facilitate as a letter of authority.
- Finally, most important copies of provisional degree certificate should also be sealed signed and stamped. Most people bring it open without envelopes.

## Initial Health Insurance

Your health insurance coverage in US begins only from the first day of classes at UIC. This year the coverage will begin from the first day of classes. Hence we recommend each student arriving before that (especially the students arriving in July) to get medical insurance from a company in India for the period up to first day of classes from your date of arrival. The cost for one month should probably be around Rs 1200/- or so. Mostly you will not fall sick, but it's always better to be safe.

## Amount to Bring

- **Tuition Fees**

If you do not have any kind of assistantship in UIC, please bring the first semester tuition fees as a draft drawn onto University of Illinois at Chicago. As a F1 student you are supposed to take a minimum of 12 credit hours and this falls into the Range 1 in the tuition fees listed on the UIC web page. As a quick point if you get aid (50% GA/RA/TA) it is enough to register for 8 credit hours but for the first semester it is advisable to take 12, (More on aid later).

You will get a bill from UIC and the tuition fee has to be paid some where around last week of September. You can pay the fees with late payment fee and finance charges that are calculated as an interest percentage on the remaining amount.

The whole fees amount for fall semester has to be paid before the beginning of spring next year. Otherwise you will not be eligible to register for courses for the next spring. Hence we recommend you to be prepared to pay the fees in whole.

If you have already been offered aid, you don't have to bring the tuition fees amount.

\*\*\* *Differential amount*

This is something very important. Most of the departments in UIC with an exception of a few Liberal arts departments charge a differential fee.

This fee includes:

*insurance + tuition differential + administrative charges + lab fee + U pass fee*

In a typical scene for an engineering student differential amount will be 1500-1600\$ a semester, MIS/MBA around \$4000/semester. The tuition differential amount varies greatly among different colleges. So please look at either the graduate college website or contact your respective department for more info. With regards to insurance a company called campus care provides it. However if you plan to take some other insurance you can opt out of it to save about \$350-\$400 from this differential amount, but insurance coverage is mandatory and you must prove to the college that you have some form of insurance.

- **Amount for Initial Expenses**

Each student must have an amount of around \$2000 - \$2500 for initial expenses.

Typically, the initial expenses would be to get basic things for your apartment yourself, deposit for your apartment (approx 1.5 times the rent). Most of the students might get their first pay only by Oct 1st. Hence this amount should be sufficient for your living till then. I recommend \$2500 to be on a safer side. Please have around \$100 as cash and remaining as traveler's check. This will help you keep the money safe. If you plan on buying laptops/cell phones in India please avoid so, for they are cheaper here. And it might be advisable to have an international credit card in hand though it is not necessary to meet any unforeseen expenses. To get a credit card as soon as you come to US is nearly impossible because you need a credit history (more on that later).

## **Transferring to UIC / From UIC to Another University**

If you are planning to transfer to UIC you first need to get the relieving order from the University for which you got your visa. Based on the rules of that University, you need to submit the relevant documents. Please consult the University for which you got your visa for the time for this formality.

If you want to transfer out of UIC, please provide the relevant information for UIC -- immunization form, final mark sheets etc. This process might take around 10 working days at UIC.

A lot of students try to enter US with an I-20 other than the one they got their visa. We do not recommend this (checked up the same with the Office of International Services at UIC). This might create problems when you go for your work visa / Green card. Please be aware of this. A lot of previous students have done this but when I checked with the official authority at UIC, they recommended not doing so.

## **Check List Before Coming to UIC**

1. Send us the flight details (flight number and the arrival date and time) to Chicago and get a confirmation mail from us that you are going to be picked up and please let us know your details well in advance.

2. Have Immunization form signed. Each student coming from India for a degree program in UIC has to submit proof of the following:

a. MMR (2 doses of Measles, 1 dose of Mumps and 1 dose of Rubella). 2 doses of Measles have to be taken after 1 year from birth. Hence in case you had taken this before your first birthday, please make sure you get your vaccination done.

b. Primary series of tetanus and diphtheria should also be taken.

Please make sure the above are verified by your doctor, signed, sealed and dated. In case you have not received your Immunization form, please do get the above on the Doctor's letterhead.

In the worst of you not able to take these shots in India, don't worry. You can take these in Chicago for \$10 each from the Board of Health Clinic, Chicago.

Student coming for College of Medicine/ Nursing have to provide the following vaccinations as well:

a. Polio and Tuberculosis vaccines

b. Hepatitis B doses.

3. Final Mark sheets attested by the registrar and also the provisional/degree certificate (which ever is applicable to you) to also be attested. Based on the previous experience we would recommend you to get a copy of your provisional certificate attested by the registrar or the principal of the college (usually this is helpful if your degree certificate comes late, especially students from university of madras)

4. Tuition fees amount if you do not have aid. Most of us pay our differential from the salary we get in the first two months. But just in case if you want to financially comfortable it is better to get the differential amount as a DD favoring "University of Illinois"

5. Passport and I-20 -- keep them carefully.

## **Academics at UIC**

Copying is a crime in USA. A lot of the Indian students have the tendency to copy assignments and programs. This has happened in the recent past and the students had been failed in these courses. Please make sure none of you do anything like this. You can even be debarred from the University for such a thing, depending on the professor's attitude.

Photocopying books is also not allowed. That's the main reason we encourage you to bring books that are cheaper in India.

## **Cooking**

Please learn cooking in India if you have time. We are sure a lot of you have been at home with your mom's cooking. Learn fast and easy cooking techniques from your mother. These will be of great help for you here. You might end up with roommates who are vegetarians and non-vegetarians. Please respect each one's background and be considerate. You get most of the Indian groceries in Chicago.

It's not a problem. You can still bring certain important items such as spices, curry powder, sambar powder etc. in little quantities as these too are available here.

## **Books**

We have contacted some of the current students in UIC and have a list of books that you can buy from India. Please have a look at our web page so that you can bring some of the books from India. Books are typically quite expensive and range from \$50 to \$150. If you do not find information regarding your department, which means that we are unable to find someone studying in that department or your departmental books are not available for lower price in India. It is advisable to bring books based on your fundamentals such as mathematics for engineers (if you are an engineer), for using books that you used before really helps. For a list of course that will be offered every semester [click here](#).

## Important Extras that You Could Bring

1. You can get good Indian gift items for your advisors / people in department.
2. If you are good in certain things -- music / instruments / dance etc, please bring necessary things so that you can perform in IGSA activities.
3. Good songs (cassettes / CDs) and any games you play well, cricket essentials / badminton / table tennis / carom / chess etc.
4. Perhaps what you should not be bringing any 220v appliances, most of you know about this.

Please visit our [Things to Carry](#) page on the [IGSA website](#) for a full list of things that we suggest you bring along.

## Travel Instructions

You are allowed to check-in 2 pieces of baggage with each a maximum of 32 kgs totaling up to 64 kgs. You are also allowed to carry one cabin baggage that can vary from 6 kgs to 12 kgs based on the airlines regulations.

Please consult your airlines to get exact details. Some airlines might allow extra weight if you are an early bird for the flight. Last year there was a scheme in which Lufthansa/AirIndia allowed students on F1 visas to take an extra third check-in baggage of 32 Kgs. Keep an eye out for these deals.

Check your baggage to Chicago. You can use one of the addresses listed in the IGSA website for the final destination. Please make sure each of your checked-in baggage has this on both sides and well tagged / attached to the bag.

Please be aware of the following travel details.

- a. If your baggage is damaged, you are entitled for compensation of the bag and the items damaged. Please read through the regulations of the airlines carefully.
- b. Most airlines do over booking -- In case you have a confirmed ticket and you are at the airport by the specified time and still you are not given a boarding pass, then you are entitled for compensation. Ask the airline representative for details.
- c. Be careful with your carry on baggage and especially your passport and travel documents during transit. Strangers at the transit locations could try to steal things / you might forget and leave things. Be careful of your belongings.
- d. Meals -- Vegetarians -- Please request for Asian Vegetarian Meal when you book your tickets. Most likely you should be ok with it. For people who don't eat beef/pork etc, please check with your travel agents and make sure you book appropriate meal. Usually airlines have a policy that your meals have to be confirmed within 24 hours of take off. Otherwise you may not get the meal of your choice.
- e. Get used to tissue papers in toilets :-)  
You will be asked to fill out the custom and immigration forms during your flight into Chicago (if you are traveling international).

In this case please read through the questions carefully and answer them correctly. You will need the following for immigration. You can keep them handy before hand.

First Name

Last Name

Date of Birth

Flight Number

Passport Number

Issue of Passport (Date and Place)

Visa Number

Issue of Visa (Date)

Destination address in US: Use the contact information of [OIS](#) or the department you are going to.

Reason for entering US: Graduate Study.

**NOTE:** Please leave copies of your passport, visa, admission letter etc with your parents.

The time difference between Chicago and India is 10.5 hours. You can typically expect to take around 3-4 hours from your arrival time to get to UIC (passing immigration, customs, meeting IGSA contact person and travel to UIC).

Do take a minute to look at the IGSA webpage for a list of common [things to bring](#). You get almost everything you get in India except that some of them might be costly. So prepare accordingly.

Also check out [this page](#).

## **Stuff to be Done ASAP, Once in US**

You must have received a letter from OIS regarding things to be done after you come to Chicago.

1. Go over to OIS and register as a student. This is the first thing to be done. In UIC most departments have control over students by putting holds on respective students. This means that you will have to meet the required department to clear the hold. You have to fill up a few forms telling them your address, date of arrival and other similar information. OIS makes a copy of your passport, visa, I20 & I-94 (this is a small card that is give to you by the immigration officials when you land in US, keep this safe).
2. Go over to the bank and open a account. Most of the students have an account with Credit Union 1. They have 3 branches on campus and 3 ATMs. So it is advisable to have an account there.
3. Go over to your respective department and fill up any forms that you might need.
4. Generally these documents should be good enough for you to clear most holds and register for classes.
5. UIC has a complete online system called banner using, which you register for classes and maintain your student account. To access this system you need a UIC net id and an

enterprise id. The way to get one is usually mentioned in the documents that come with your I20. You will all be issued a TCN (temporary control number), which enables you to get yourself a ID. It is enough if you come here and do it, but just for those over zealous students refer to <http://www.uic.edu/depts/accc> - for more details about computing in UIC.

6. Apply for SSN (Social Security Number). This is a little long process and takes about 2 weeks. OIS will give you the proper instructions.

7. After you get your SSN, get a Illinois state ID (or still better a driving license) at the earliest. This will be the only form of identification unless you want to carry your passport around.

8. If you have aid, its time to party around else its time for the GA-Hunt.

## Aid in UIC

The big question, will I get aid in UIC ? This is a question that everyone asks, of course other than those who already have been offered aid in one form or other. Please goto the page on [Financial Aid](#) on the IGSA website.

## A Few Miscellaneous Tips

1. *A note on credit hours* - Credit hour usually means the number of hours you get for attending a particular class. In UIC grad students take 400 and 500 level courses only, for only these are counted towards your degree. Suppose if your department says you need 36 credit hours to graduate it means that you have to do  $36/4 = 9$  courses to achieve this. In UIC both 400 and 500 level courses carry 4 credit hours. People don't take 100/200/300 level courses at grad level because they are not counted towards your degree, unless you have been asked to take that as a prerequisite. Refer to your particular department about this.

2. *Credit history and credit cards* - In America most of the financial related things depend on your credit history. A credit report is a record of an individual's open and fully repaid debts. A credit history helps a lender to determine whether a potential borrower has a history of repaying debts in a timely manner. No one has a record of credit when they first come to America. So be advised you cannot buy a cellular phone or get a credit card in the first week you come to America. You have to develop your credit history before you get it.

This is matter of concern in the long run and does not affect you the day you come in. General steps to improve credit history include paying your monthly bills and rent on time, it helps to have one of the utility bills of your house on your name, get a credit card from credit union 1 by paying a deposit. They give a minimum limit of 500\$ against a deposit but that is good to start of with. Avoid using cash and debit cards and instead use this credit card to develop your credit history. After you use this card for about 4 or 5 months apply for better cards like AMEX Blue for students and once you get them you should be just fine. With regards to cell phones it is advisable to get a phone on your

name (instead of someone else getting in their name for you) because this again helps you to build your credit history.

## Final Statement

Please take some time to explore the UIC main homepage about various facilities available to you as a student. And Understanding the departments gives you an idea of where to look for GAs.

Most of you who are coming without aid -- you will need to go through a big phase of preparing resume, giving it out in different departments, attending interviews etc. Hence please be prepared for this. This is not to scare you but you should be aware of this. This is a transition phase that each student will get used to once he/she is here.

Always there are students who get aid within hours of starting their search, and then there are those who don't get aid even in the second semester. Last year the situation was good and hence many students (approx 60 of the 70) here got aid and those that were let out have managed to get it in the subsequent months.

We can't predict what the case will be this year. We hope the best for you but it's better to be prepared for the worst. When it comes to looking for an assistantship, things here aren't too different then the way they were in India. Having contacts and being at the right place at the right time always helps.

Each of you should be prepared to pay your tuition fees, in the worst-case scenario. We sincerely hope everyone gets an assistantship in the first semester.

IGSA tries to make the transition phase for all the students coming to UIC as smooth as possible. In case you have questions/concerns please don't hesitate to write to us. We will try our best to help you out.

Do refer to the [FAQ](#) on IGSA webpage for more information and write to us for any additional information.

You just have few months or so in India. Enjoy this time well in India with your parents, relatives and friends so that you can start off a new phase in US. Each one of you will be a more mature and independent person after you stay during your graduate program. :-)  
We are sure each one will perform well and join great jobs.

Last but not the least, we wish each one of you to have a bon voyage to Chicago. Some of you on this list might opt to go to other universities. I wish you good luck in your future studies.

See you all soon here in Chicago.

Regards,  
Indian Graduate Students Association Board (IGSA)  
University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC)

## Contact Information

### IGSA Office bearers ([link](#))

Nikhil Jalgaonkar	(President)	3124790503
Prem Swaroop Mohanty	(Vice-President)	3122822162
Shruti Karbhari	(General Sec)	3124798244
Akshay Nadkarni	(Cultural sec)	5083534819
Ninad Kulkarni	(Cultural sec)	3125434134
Monil Shah	(Event coordinator)	3123638832
Ramya Chitrakar	(Event coordinator)	3125451070
Nisha Raj Paryani	(Treasurer)	3125459593
Nalin Makar	(Webmaster)	3124798390
Madhu Venkatesan	(Webmaster)	3124047110

For **Emergency** please keep these addresses handy

1. *Madhu Venkatesan*  
901 S Ashland Ave #310A,  
Chicago, IL 60607

2. *Nalin Makar*  
726 S Oakley Blvd, Garden Apt  
Chicago IL 60612

3. *Nikhil Jalgaonkar*  
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