SEP Cheat Sheet USA
As shared by your seniors 2020

ACADEMICS
module & timetable planning

Seek out faculty advisors for international students in your host university for additional module information.

Prepare a list of backup modules; in some universities, international students have the lowest priority for module enrolment.

Look out for unofficial student websites similar to NUSMods documenting historical enrolment and grades for modules. For University of California, Berkeley try berkeleytime.com.

LIVING OVERSEAS
housing & accommodation

Airbnb listings might offer long-term leases even if the option is not stated; check directly with the landlord.

Do your due diligence; international students may not be given priority for on-campus housing.

On-campus housing is generally more secure than off-campus housing but might include a meal plan subscription which can be costly.

Depending on the location of your host university, off-campus housing options may be limited, e.g. in college towns.

PRE-TRIP
packing & planning

Pack only essential items; most clothing can be bought in the US where American brands are sold at a cheaper price.

The primary mode of payment is by card; having a debit or credit card which stores foreign currencies will offer convenience. Seniors recommended: YouTrip, Revolut.

Begin your visa application early; the J1 visa requires multiple documents and an appointment at the embassy.

Health insurance is mandatory; refer to your university/state requirement for the insurance coverage needed.

GENERAL TIPS
Make the most of your exchange

Secure your belongings; on-campus petty crime like snatch thieves and pickpockets are common in certain locations.

Avoid travelling alone at night; pepper spray can be bought by persons of 18 years and above.

Attend international student activities organised by the university to meet fellow exchangers.

Immerse yourself in your host university’s academic culture and take the opportunity to network with your professors.

*Pro tip: Download the International SOS app for the latest updates on safety and travel in your host country. For more useful tips, refer to the SEP General Cheat Sheet.