



Dear Students,

**Welcome to the English Institute (EI) at Howard Community College (HCC)!**

The Howard Community College English Institute is an excellent place to master English. We are proud to have excellent faculty and staff who are nationally recognized. They are often invited to give presentations on their innovative teaching methods and curricula. You will be learning from the best!

Over the years, the College and the Institute have received a number of awards. Some include:

- **Nation's Top Two-Year College, 2024** Niche online college selection and data resource
- **Best Community College for International Students, 2023**  
Study International
- **Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA), 2019**  
The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) of the U.S. Department of Commerce
- **Best Community College of Maryland, 2019**  
The Daily Record
- **Best Two-Year Colleges for Adult Learners, 2018, 2017, 2016**  
Washington Monthly
- **Digital Community Colleges National Survey Winner, 2017, 2016, 2015**  
Center for Digital Education
- **ACCT Northeast Region Equity Award, 2018**  
The Association of Community College Trustees
- **Safet Planning and Leadership Award of Excellence, 2016**  
American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)

The English Institute provides a complete program of study and gives you the chance to meet your goals, which might include a two-year degree at Howard Community College, a four-year undergraduate program, or even a Master's or PhD program. The EI is also a great option for those whose goal is simply to improve their English language skills for personal or professional reasons. We hope that you enjoy your experience, both at Howard Community College and in the USA.

This book provides useful information for your study at the EI and your life in Maryland. So, read this handbook carefully and use it first whenever you have a question.

Remember that the EI teachers and staff are here to help you. We all know how difficult it can be to start a new life in a different country, and we want you to feel as comfortable here as possible. Welcome to the EI and enjoy your time in the United States!

Sincerely,

The EI staff



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## Section 1: Important Phone Numbers

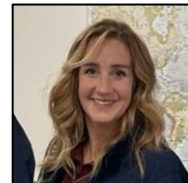
### EI Staff

English Institute (EI) Office  
Hickory Ridge Building, Room 200  
Front Desk Phone: 443-518-1681  
Web: [www.howardcc.edu/ei](http://www.howardcc.edu/ei)  
Email: [ei@howardcc.edu](mailto:ei@howardcc.edu)

Brad Knieriem                      Assistant Director of Intensive English/DSO



Kathie Martin                      EI & Special Programs Manager/DSO



Maia Owen                      EI International Enrollment Manager/DSO



Tamara Jones                      Academic Development Manager/EI Advisor



### Emergency

#### **HCC On-Campus Security (Office of Public Safety)**

(If you need to speak to an EI advisor during non-business hours, please tell Security and they will help you.)

443-518-5500

#### **Howard County Police**

410-313-2200

#### **Police, ambulance, or fire emergency**

(It must only be a BIG emergency!)

911

**How to Contact Teachers:** Check your course syllabus to find your teacher's contact information. Email is usually best, but you can also call 443-518-1681.

## Section 2: EI Policies and Procedures

All students are required to comply with the policies and procedures of the English Institute (referred to as EI). It is your responsibility to understand and follow these procedures. If you have questions about these policies, please contact an EI Advisor.

### Visa Status

EI students must maintain legal status. You must be a US citizen, a permanent US resident, or have a valid visa that permits you to engage in full-time study.

The EI staff will review your status & answer visa/status-related questions. However, it's your responsibility to maintain your student status and "stay legal," because YOU bear the consequences. If you have questions, please speak with an advisor.

See **Section 3: F1 Policies & Procedures for more information**. Also all Code of Conduct is located in the HCC UG student handbook apply: <https://www.howardcc.edu/student-life/student-handbook/code-of-conduct/#d.en.18123#>



#### As an F1 student, to "stay legal" means:

1. Study full time.
2. Do not work off-campus without authorization.
3. Keep your I-20 current.



### Attendance

Regular attendance is important for your performance in class and is expected by the EI program. Note summer start EI students must attend both summer 1 and summer 2 classes in their entirety to be considered full-time students.

#### If you must be absent because of illness or a family emergency:

1. Speak with your teachers *before* missing class.
2. Do ALL the class work and homework that you miss.

If you are absent from 25 classes in a fall/spring semester, you will be placed on attendance probation. If 35 classes are missed within the same semester, you will reach attendance suspension. Probationary status is carried over to the next semester. If you miss an additional 25 classes in the next fall or spring semester while on probation, you will be placed on attendance suspension. (5 classes missed in either summer 1 or summer 2 for new EI students in the summer session equals attendance probation and 10 classes missed in either summer 1 or 2 semesters = attendance suspension) Once you are placed on attendance suspension, you will not be allowed to return to your classes. If you are an F1 student, your I-20 will be terminated.

If you feel that you have a valid reason for your absences, you may appeal with a formal letter to the ELC's Director. If the appeal is approved, you will be asked to sign an appeal agreement. Failure to comply will result in suspension, and termination of your F1 status.

If you encounter severe hardship that will affect your attendance (for example, unexpected health problems), tell an EI advisor as soon as you become aware of the problem so that we can advise you

regarding your student status.

### Health Insurance Requirement

You **MUST** have health insurance while studying at the EI. You will not be allowed to register for classes until you meet this requirement.

### Illness or Medical Conditions

If you become seriously ill, you may be allowed to take a short break from full-time study or attend classes part-time. For F1 students, this is: Reduced Course Load Authorization (RCL).

You will be required to resume full-time study the following semester.



#### To apply for Reduced Course Load Authorization:

1. Speak with your advisor regarding your condition.
2. Obtain an RCL (Reduced Course Load) Form from the EI office.
3. Ask your doctors to fill out the RCL Recommendation Form.

### Placement

You will be placed into the appropriate level of study through careful evaluation of your English abilities. You will be given placement tests and will enroll according to your test results. If you feel that you are in the wrong level (if a class is too easy or too difficult for you), you should talk to your teacher and an EI Advisor during the first week of classes. The teacher and advisor will look at the teacher's recommendation and your pre-test score to make any decision. They may decide to move you to a different class or level depending on availability.

#### Placement:

1. Your placement test scores will determine your level.
2. **You can only add/drop classes during the first week.**
3. At semester end, students must earn a minimum of an **80% final grade in all classes** in order to qualify moving to the next consecutive level. Production skill-based classes must be mastered in order to be successful when continuing on to higher levels. All EI classes require at least a 70% final grade to pass.



## ASL Knowledge

Starting at level four, more EI course options exist, allowing international deaf students to maintain a required full-time schedule while concentrating on reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar classes. The objectives of these classes should allow for progress in learning English. A high proficiency of ASL (American Sign Language) is required in all English classes in order for a student to be successful at understanding the instruction. You may see an EI advisor for more information concerning appropriate course loads for international deaf students.

## Evaluation

Your teachers will evaluate your progress in class through tests and assignments. At the beginning of each class, your teachers will explain how they will determine your grade. You will also be asked to evaluate each teacher and course at the end of the semester. We want to make sure our English Institute is the best it can be, so we ask you to be honest. The teacher/course evaluations are anonymous (you do not write your name on them).

## U.S. Classroom Behavior

In the U.S., it is expected that students will participate actively in class discussions and group activities. At the EI, pair work and group projects are frequently assigned in classes, and students must be willing to work together with any and all other ESL students in class.

We want our students to feel comfortable talking with their teachers. Good choices to address your teacher are: "Mrs./Mr. (last name)," or "Professor (last name)." Some teachers may prefer that you call them by their first name. In general, it is better to start out addressing teachers formally, and the teacher will let you know if they would prefer you address them another way. Unlike in many of your home countries, in the U.S., students do not address their teacher as "Teacher."

## Academic Standards

We expect you to make progress and work hard in each of your classes. At the end of each semester, your grades will be reviewed by the Director of the ELC.

### Academic Standards:

1. 1<sup>st</sup> unsuccessful\* semester – **Academic Probation**

You will need to pass *more than 50%* of your units the following semester in order for the probation to be lifted.

2. 2<sup>nd</sup> unsuccessful\* semester – **Academic Suspension**

You will be dismissed from the EI program. You may make an appeal.

\* **Unsuccessful** = not passing more than 50% of your units (7 or more units must be passed - based on a 12 unit schedule)

Academic probation creates a very serious situation for two reasons. First, it will be noted in your school file. If you apply to another school, and that school requests transcripts from the EI, we must tell the admissions officers about your problems here. Also, if you are on an I-20 issued by the EI, a school suspension will affect your F1 status. In other words, your I-20 will be terminated, and you will need to transfer out to another school or depart the U.S.

In the hope that such severe measures can be avoided, the EI staff and faculty try to give advance warning to students who are at risk of academic probation or suspension.

### Academic Honesty (Cheating)

The EI expects academic honesty from its students. Academic honesty means using your own thoughts and materials in writing, tests, and other classroom activities, including homework. If you intentionally help other students in any violation of the academic honesty policy, you are considered equally guilty.

#### **Cheating includes:**

1. Looking at other people's answers on quizzes and tests
2. Sharing your answers with others on quizzes and tests
3. Copying from books, the Internet, or other people's writing without saying where you got the words
4. Asking someone to do your work for you
5. Doing someone's work for him/her

#### **If you are caught cheating ONE time:**

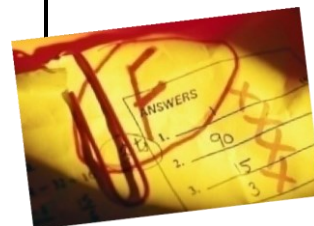
1. You will receive a "0" on the test, quiz, or assignment.
2. Your teacher will inform the EI office in writing.
3. A note will be made in your file.

#### **If you are caught cheating TWO times, whether in the same class or a different class:**

1. You will receive an "NP" (No Pass) in that class.
2. A note will be made in your file.

#### **If you are caught cheating THREE times, whether in the same class or different classes:**

1. You will receive an "NP" in that class.
2. A disciplinary note will be made in your SEVIS record.
3. You may be dropped from the class. This has serious consequences for F1 students because this means that you are in violation of your status.



Violation consequences are described in course syllabi.

### Withdrawals and Expulsions

If you must return home due to an emergency before the semester ends, you must tell an EI advisor immediately. If you are experiencing personal health problems or a family emergency, you must be prepared to provide EI Advisors with documentation.



In very serious situations, students who are guilty of violating certain EI policies may be expelled or asked to leave. The following are examples of cases which lead to expulsion:

1. Bad behavior, violation of HCC student codes, and criminal actions by a student are all grounds for automatic and immediate suspension. (See the previous section entitled “Academic Honesty”).
2. Students who have failed too many classes may be placed on academic suspension. (See the previous section entitled “Academic Standards.”)
3. Students who have failed to attend classes may be placed on attendance suspension. (See the previous section entitled “Attendance.”)

If you are an F1 status holder and you stop studying at the EI, you must transfer out, leave the U.S. immediately, or seek appropriate authorization from USCIS. Your failure to attend will be reported to USCIS as required, and you will have to leave the U.S. immediately.

### Academic, Teacher, and Program Complaints

The EI encourages you to talk directly to your teacher if you have any concerns or suggestions regarding your grades, class or teaching method. Your advisors can discuss the situation with you beforehand to help you talk to your teacher in an appropriate way to help resolve any problems. IF--after trying to address the issue with your teacher--you feel that it is still not resolved, you should visit the EI office for an Academic Complaint Form. Your comments will be sent to the EI administrative staff for review and someone will contact you, either to request more information, set up a meeting, or inform you of action that will be taken.

### Payment /Enroll Payment Plan/ Refund Policies

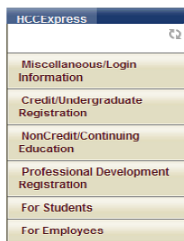
EI students are required to pay tuition or enroll in the tuition payment plan. EI students will not necessarily be barred from starting classes for reasons of non-payment. In the event that payment arrangements have not been made in a timely manner, the student will be warned and will have an opportunity to pay the balance. Students awaiting scholarship approval must either enroll into Tuition Payment Plan or pay tuition in full. The EI office will first issue a warning in writing. If the student does not heed the warning and makes payment arrangements within the required time frame, he or she will be de-registered (removed from the class roster). EI students are responsible for the cost of all classes for which they have registered into through any EI Advisor (via in-person or virtually). Should the de-registration occur after the class has already started, a student is then subject to the EI refund schedule (listed in the EI class schedule each semester online). If a student wishes to withdraw from a class or change his/her schedule, he/she must see an EI advisor.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENROLLING INTO TUITION PAYMENT PLAN

**\*\*\*TO COMPLETE THE APPLICATION YOU WILL NEED THE FOLLOWING\*\*\***

**Bank account number and Bank routing number  
Name, address, and telephone number of the bank  
OR  
Credit card number and expiration date**

- ❖ Go to [mvHCC](#)
- ❖ Your username is the first initial of your first name + the first seven letters of your last name + the last four digits of your student ID number. Your password is your birthdate in mmddyy format. If you need help logging in, contact the Help Desk at 443-518-4444.
- ❖ Under the HCC Express menu, click on the “For Students” option.



- ❖ From the student menu select “My Tuition Payment Plan” link.

My Tuition Payment Plan

- ❖ Choose the correct semester link to set up the payment plan.
- ❖ After reading the information on the first page, click on PROCEED.
- ❖ Follow the on screen instructions and make sure that all required fields are filled out.
- ❖ Please make sure you have the permission of the responsible party before entering his/her name in the application.
- ❖ If financial aid/scholarship funds are awarded to you, then the payment plan will only budget the remaining tuition and fees balance into the plan.
- ❖ Terms and Conditions of the payment plan are listed at the end of the application. Be sure to read these before you submit the application.
- ❖ **IMPORTANT**—Please make sure to check the box at the end to accept the Terms and Conditions before submitting the online application.

### **Refund Schedule\*:**

1. If you drop BEFORE classes begin, you will be refunded 100% of tuition & fees paid.
2. If you drop during the FIRST WEEK of classes, you will be refunded 100% of the tuition paid.
3. If you drop during the SECOND WEEK of classes, you will be refunded 50% of the tuition paid.
4. There will be NO REFUNDS after the second week of classes. \*Fall, Spring

## Transcripts, Final Grades, & Certificates

The EI transcript shows a complete record of your EI classes and grades. Transcripts will be released only with written permission from the student. Requests can be brought to the EI office. Students can request for the transcripts to be mailed to other post-secondary institutions or any recipient of their choice. There is no charge for this service. Students who pick up their transcript are required to show a photo ID. An official transcript is placed in a sealed envelope to be opened by the receiving institution. Unofficial transcripts are usually for personal use. Transcript Request Forms may be downloaded from our website at [www.howardcc.edu/ei](http://www.howardcc.edu/ei) and 'Student Services' on the left side of the page or picked up in the EI office.

Grades are viewable on your Canvas account and transcripts will show only P=Pass or NP=No Pass. Transcripts are available for students in good standing (For example: no unpaid tuition or fines).

Completion of Semester Certificates will only be given to those students who have passed all of their classes in a given semester. Students must request a certificate online.

Completion of Program Certificates will be issued to students who have completed their studies at the EI. You can only request this certificate online after your last semester in the EI.

### **Transcript:**

1. Shows complete list of classes taken at the EI and grades.
2. Please fill out a Transcript Request Form to receive a transcript.

### **Final Grade Report:**

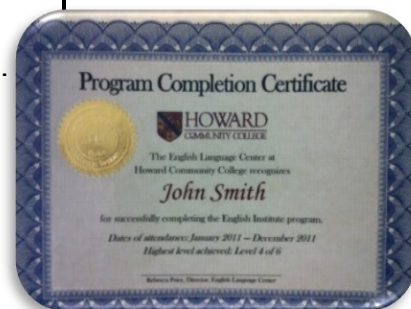
1. Shows the list of classes taken during that semester and final percentage grades.
2. You may request this online for delivery two + weeks after the semester ends unless you have a restriction on your account.

### **Completion of Semester Certificate:**

1. Shows that you have successfully completed an EI semester.
2. You can receive this only if you pass ALL your classes in a given semester.
3. You must fill out a Completion of Semester Certificate Request Form online to receive a certificate.

### **Completion of Program Certificate:**

1. Shows that you have completed your studies at the EI.
2. You may request this certificate after you finish your last semester at the EI.
3. Please fill out a Completion of Program Certificate Request Form online.



## Student Records

The EI keeps files on students containing applications for admission, registration forms, and other

important documents. The records are controlled by the EI Office as specified by the 1974 Family and Educational Rights and Privacy Act. This means that the EI will keep your records, but we will not show them to anyone who is not employed by HCC without your permission. If you would like for us to release your record to a particular person (e.g. your sponsor), you may sign a release form and hand it in to the EI office.

## Transfer Options

Our college motto is “You Can Get There From Here,” and that is very true at the EI. Once you gain the necessary language skills in our program, you have several options you can choose from based on your needs and goals. Here are some possibilities:

### Transfer to the HCC Degree Program

After you complete your program at the EI, you can transfer to the degree programs at HCC. Our college offers many AA degree (2 year) and certificate programs. All ENGL courses, and the Information Literacy course (if needed) that you have taken will fulfill prerequisite requirements toward your degree. Upon completion of an AA program, you will be eligible to transfer to a four-year college or university. Our college has “articulation agreements” established with many nearby four-year colleges and universities. If an articulation does exist, many courses that you have taken at HCC will apply toward a degree at the accepting institution.

### Apply to a four-year college/university

You may apply to a four-year college or university from the EI. Some students who want to major in special areas such as art or fashion have transferred directly to four-year colleges and universities. Requirements will vary depending on the school to which you are applying, but the English skills you gain, here, will serve as a foundation no matter where you go.

### Apply to graduate school

Many of our students have already obtained bachelor’s degrees in their home countries. If you have a BA or BS degree, you may apply to graduate school from the EI. Our students have been accepted into various graduate school programs around the country.

### Enrich Your Life!

Many students come to the EI to learn English and return to their countries with a certificate. This has helped them advance in their professions and in society. Students have come back to us to say how the experience has enriched their lives.

## EI Transfer Procedure for F1 Students

Procedures for transferring to a degree program at HCC or another institution:



**Change of Level from EI to HCC degree programs:**

1. Meet with an EI advisor and declare your intent to transfer.
2. Fill out a **Change of Level** form.
3. Fill out an online application form for the HCC degree program, presenting a new financial verification form.
4. Submit the online application before applicable deadlines.
  - Deadline for Fall semester: **November 15**
  - Deadline for Spring semester: **June 30**Contact HCC Admissions & Advising Office in RCF-242 with questions.
5. Receive a new I-20.

**Transfer from EI to a different institution:**

1. Meet with an EI advisor and declare your intent to transfer.
2. Fill out an application for the new school.
3. Obtain a **Transfer Approval Form** from the new school.
4. Give this form to an EI advisor/DSO who will complete, sign the form, and send it back to the new school.
5. Receive your acceptance letter from the new school and **give a copy to the EI office**. An EI advisor/DSO will release the student record in SEVIS (I-20) upon confirmed acceptance from the new school.
6. Contact the new school for your new I-20 and next steps.

**Program Completion**

At the end of each semester, EI students are required to report their intentions for the following term so that the student record and/or SEVIS record may be updated. You will receive an "Intent form" to report this. If your situation changes at any time, you should report this immediately. If you are an F1 student and do not report in a timely manner, you risk falling out of status. Please be aware of your responsibilities while in F1 status.

**At the end of EVERY semester, you MUST report your plans for the next semester. They can be:**

1. Continuing to study in the EI
2. Transferring to a degree program at HCC
3. Transferring to a different school
4. Returning home





## HCC Email for EI Students

Every EI student is assigned an e-mail account from the college. You are required to maintain an email account and keep it active. The EI office regularly sends important information to students via email. You can find more information about this in Section 4.

## Emergency Closing Policy

If the weather is very bad, you can listen to the radio or watch the television to see whether HCC will be open or not. Local television stations: WBAL-TV (channel 11), WJLA-TV (channel 7), WJZ-TV (channel 13), WMAR-TV (channel 2), WNBC-TV (channel 4), and WUSA-TV (channel 9). You can also call 443-518-1000 or visit [www.howardcc.edu](http://www.howardcc.edu) to find out whether you should come to class or not. Finally, you can sign up to receive a text message alert on your phone at: <http://www.howardcc.edu/alert>. If HCC will be closed, enjoy your day off!

**VERY IMPORTANT:** Openings and closings for Howard Community College and Howard County Public Schools may be different.

## SECTION 3: F1 Policies & Procedures

EI students with questions about status or I-20s should make an appointment to see one of the EI advisors. You may want to talk to them if:

1. You lost your I-20, or your current I-20 is about to expire and you need to extend it;
2. You have a question about your eligibility for vacation from school;
3. You need your I-20 signed for travel; or
4. You have questions about transferring to another school.



## Visa / Status Questions

### 1. What is a visa?

A visa is a page in your passport that tells us why you are here in the United States. A visa tells us if you are a tourist, student, professional worker, diplomat, etc. It allows you to enter the U.S. If you have questions about your visa, please see one of the EI advisors.

### 2. What is an F1 visa?

An F1 visa is an international student visa. It allows you to enter the U.S. to study full-time.

### 3. What is an I-94?

Form I-94 is the DHS Arrival/Departure Record issued to aliens admitted to the U.S., adjusting status while in the U.S. or extending their stay, etc. Electronic I-94s are recently being used. F1 students no longer receive paper I-94s when entering the U.S. New EI students print out their electronic I-94s to carry a copy. Go to [www.cbp.gov/I94](http://www.cbp.gov/I94), enter the information, and print.

### 4. What if my F1 visa expires?

That's okay as long as your I-20 is current and valid. However, if you are leaving the USA, you must renew your F1 visa to re-enter the USA. You cannot renew your visa in the U.S. You must make an

appointment at a U.S. Embassy overseas.

5. What is an I-20?

This is a government document stating that you have permission to be in the United States as a full-time student. Your I-20 has information about where you are from, what you are studying, how long you may study, and how much money your studies are expected to cost.

6. What if my I-20 expires before I have finished studying?

If you will not be able to complete your studies before your I-20 expires, you must talk to an EI advisor well in advance of the I-20 expiration date about extending your program and we must review your academic standing and receive updated financial documentation from you. If your I-20 expires, you must file for reinstatement with USCIS. This is expensive and difficult, so you should try not to get into this situation! If you forget to extend your I-20, the USCIS assumes you are planning to go home or transfer to another school within 60 days of the date your I-20 expires.

7. What if I have finished my studies, but I don't leave the country or begin a new program of study within 60 days?

Your current studies will be considered completed. Unless you have filed an application for another immigration status, you will begin accumulating illegal overstay. There are serious consequences to overstaying your visa. You may not be eligible to return to the U.S. indefinitely or for a specific period of time.

8. What if I want to travel outside the country for a short vacation and then return to finish studying?

If your I-20, F1 visa, and/or passport have expired, you will need to renew that document. If your documents are valid, take your I-20 to an EI advisor for an official signature BEFORE you leave the U.S.! Upon re-entry to the U.S., you will need to show your I-20 with this signature. Your F1 visa must be valid for re-entry. If not, you must apply for a new F1 visa before re-entry. If you have changed status to F1 within the U.S., you will have to apply for an F1 visa in your home country before you are readmitted into the U.S.

9. When can I take a vacation?

The EI summer vacation is mid-May to mid-August. Winter break from mid-December to mid-January. However, there are classes available for students who are interested in furthering their education during summer and winter recesses. If you began full-time studies at EI during the summer session, you will need to take both fall and spring terms before you are eligible for a summer break. There will be a 3 week break in August between summer and fall semesters and a 6 week break in December between fall and spring semesters.

10. What if I get sick while I am an EI student?

You need to try to contact your teacher before you miss class. If you are not able to inform your teacher beforehand, contact your teacher and explain your situation promptly. If you get sick and miss more than two weeks of classes, you must get a letter from a doctor that explains your absence. You should submit this letter to an EI advisor. (see page 6 for RCL)





### Health Clinics close to HCC

<b>Columbia Righttime Medical Care</b> Call 888.808.6483 for appointment 6334 Cedar Lane Columbia MD 21044 (301) 596-6483	<b>Patient First</b> Hours 8am-10pm 365 Days of the year 5900 Cedar Lane Columbia MD 21044 (443) 718-4067

### 11. What if I become pregnant?

Pregnancy is NOT considered an “illness” and, except in cases that develop into serious medical conditions (i.e. complications arising from a pregnancy requiring special treatment), students who become pregnant are still expected to maintain full- time status until their due date nears. If a hospital stay becomes necessary prior to this date, the student may provide the appropriate medical documentation to request an RCL/Withdrawal from studies.



### 12. Can I work if I am on an F1 visa?

If you are in the United States on a student visa, it means that your main reason for being here is to study. Therefore, you cannot work. The only exception to this USCIS rule is that you may work on campus for up to 20 hours a week during the academic term and up to 40 hours a week during official college vacations. However, this work can be very difficult to find and you should not assume that you will be able to work to pay for school.

### 13. Will I need a new I-20 if I want to study in a degree program at HCC?

Yes, you need a new I-20 any time you begin a new program of study. First consult with an EI Advisor, declare your intent to transfer, and follow procedure. You need to be Level 5 or above before you transfer to an HCC degree program. Fill out an HCC degree program application.\*

\*Please refer to the transfer policy on page 13 for more information.

### 14. What if I want to transfer to a different college?

You must first contact an EI advisor with your intent to transfer, contact the school you wish to attend and fill out their application, and then request their transfer approval form for an EI Advisor to complete. In order for us to release this form to the school, we need either a copy of the completed application or an acceptance letter from your new school.\*

\*Please refer to the transfer policy on page 13 for more information.

### 15. What if I will not be returning next term or I don't know yet?

In order for us to properly update your SEVIS I-20, you must inform an EI advisor of your intent before the end of each semester. Make your plans early so that you will be prepared to state your intent as accurately as possible. If your situation changes after you have reported your intent, please inform an EI advisor immediately.

## Visa / Status Violations

We know that immigration regulations can be very confusing and difficult to understand. However, it is



VERY important for you to know what you need to do to stay in status, or “legal.” This is a very challenging time for international visitors to the United States, and now, more than ever, you need to make sure that your status is secure.

It is your responsibility to make sure you are in status and aware of the important regulations that affect you. We are here to help and inform you. If you have any questions about studying full-time, stopping your studies, traveling outside of the USA, or transferring to or from a different school, please see an EI advisor.

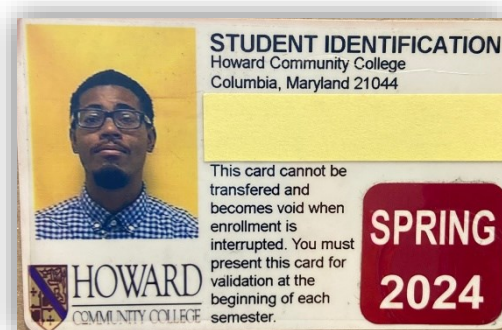
Please do NOT rely on what your friends or other students tell you! Always ask an EI advisor! Also, please make an appointment as soon as you have a question or problem. Do not wait until a problem becomes too big! Your advisors will send you emails regarding important regulation changes. Please check your email regularly!

## SECTION 4: How to...

### Get a Student ID

Where do you use Student ID Cards?

1. Library: to use materials and check out books
2. Athletic and Fitness Center: to use the gym and weight room
3. Computer labs: some will require you show your ID card
4. College events: to get student rates
5. Movie theaters: to get student discounts
6. And other places that give student discounts!



#### How can I get my Student ID Card?

1. Take your registration confirmation (schedule) AND tuition payment receipt to the Welcome Center in the entrance of the RCF Building.
2. New students will have their picture taken.
3. Continuing students will get a new sticker on their ID card.

### Get a Parking Pass

You may need a student parking pass to park in certain areas of the college. You can park in the visitor lots without a parking pass. You are not permitted to park in faculty/staff lots.

Students parked in these lots will be ticketed. Look at the map in Appendix 3 for more details.

#### How do I get a Parking Pass?

Go to the Welcome Center with:

1. A copy of your current class schedule.
2. A valid photo ID (driver's license, student ID, or other form of picture ID).
3. Your vehicle information, including license plate number and vehicle description.

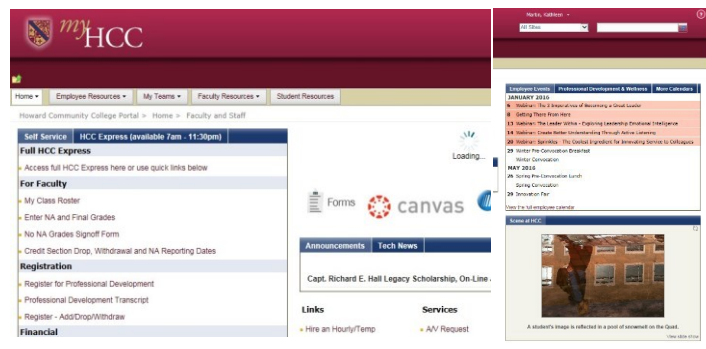
## myHCC

[myHCC](#) is the center of your digital world at HCC! Online services include:

- Registration and bill payment
- Confidential information, including grades and transcripts, class schedule, and financial aid information
- Course availability searches
- Credit schedule of classes
- Registration and refund dates and deadlines
- Payment due dates
- Tuition and fees
- Tuition payment plan
- Email
- Campus news and events
- Credit hour definition



To access myHCC, visit [portal.howardcc.edu](http://portal.howardcc.edu) or the HCC homepage ([www.howardcc.edu](http://www.howardcc.edu)), click on myHCC in the top right corner.



The diagram shows you the myHCC dashboard. If you have trouble accessing myHCC, contact the Help Desk [helpdesk@howardcc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@howardcc.edu) or 443-518-4444.

Your HCC Login ID is your first initial + the first 7 letters of your last name + the last four digits of your HCC student ID number. For example, Maria Gutierrez with student #0123456 would use login ID mgutierr3456.

My HCC Login ID is:

You need to set up your password before you can log in. Go to [login.howardcc.edu](http://login.howardcc.edu) and follow the steps.

## Use Your HCC Email Account

When you register for courses at Howard Community College, a personal HCC student email account is automatically created for you. Your HCC email address is the official email address for communication with the college. Make sure you check your email regularly. Students are expected to read all information received at their HCC email account. HCC encourages you to use this account to communicate with instructors, classmates, and to receive notification of college events and activities.



You can read/send email from any computer with Internet access. You can use your email credentials (HCC Student Login ID and password) to log into myHCC. If you need assistance with your HCC email account you can contact the Help Desk at 443-518-444.

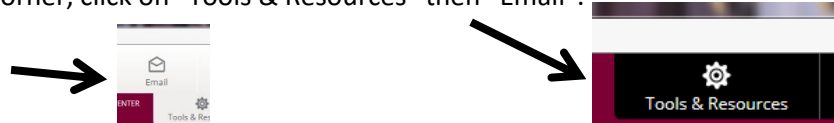
## Your HCC student email address

Your HCC email address is your [firstname.lastname@howardcc.edu](mailto:firstname.lastname@howardcc.edu). Example: Art Vandelay's HCC email address is [art.vandelay@howardcc.edu](mailto:art.vandelay@howardcc.edu).

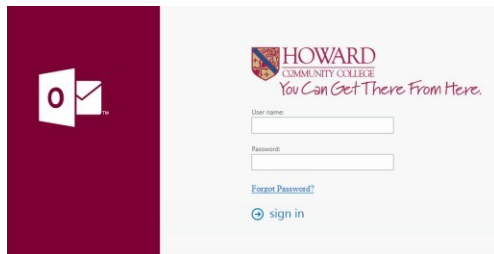
## Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How do I access my e-mail account?

1. Use any computer with Internet connection.
2. Connect to HCC homepage ([www.howardcc.edu](http://www.howardcc.edu))
3. In the top right corner, click on "Tools & Resources" then "Email".



4. You will need to enter your HCC Login ID Name and Password to start using your e-mail. Visit HCC's Password Services available at <http://www.howardcc.edu/passwordservices> if you have not created your first password. At this site, you will set up your password as well as reset your password if you ever forget it. Then you are ready to sign in here:



Q: How do I properly log off?

A: The Logout icon is located in the drop-down by your name.

Q: How large is my mailbox?

A: Mailbox limits are 5 megabytes. You will get a warning message if you reach 90% capacity. If you exceed the mailbox limit, you will no longer be able to send/receive mail until you clean out your mailbox. Remember to empty your Deleted and Sent Item folders.

Q: How long will my email account and mailbox remain active?

A: Your HCC email account and mailbox will remain active as long as you are a registered student through the fall or spring semester. Please forward any messages and documents that you do not want to lose to an alternate email mailbox, before your account is deleted.

## Look for On-campus Employment

As an international student, the primary purpose of your stay in the United States is to study. You should not count on finding a job to finance your study or stay in the United States. While on an F1 Visa, you can only work on campus due to USCIS regulations. You may work up to 20 hours per week during the semester, and up to 40 hours per week during the official college breaks.

There are 3 types of on-campus jobs:

1. **Work-study:** school-funded student jobs (approximately 5 are available for 300 international students at HCC);
2. **Part-time jobs through Human Resources:** college/department-funded jobs. Some positions may require a resume to apply;
3. **Cafeteria:** contract jobs through a third-party company.



Here are the ways to inquire about jobs at HCC:

1. **Work study:** visit Handshake for the list of jobs. Use: [ei@howardcc.edu](mailto:ei@howardcc.edu) for ??s.
2. **Human Resources:** visit <http://www.howardcc.edu/about-us/offices-departments/human-resources/> and click "Employment Opportunities" to search for appropriate jobs. Fill out an application. (It will remain active for one year)
3. **Cafeteria:** go there and ask for an application.

For more information, ask for a brochure at the EI office or download it from the EI website.

## SECTION 5: HCC Services and Facilities

### Student Services

#### *Student Assistance*

Students at the EI face many new challenges that can become overwhelming. Problems with culture shock or health can interfere with progress in class and adjustment to life in the USA. Whether you have questions about classes or life in America, your teachers and the staff in the EI office can help.

#### *Academic Assistance*

Academic advising is a very valuable service to students at the EI. There is also tutoring help for students. If you want to talk with someone about your plans, you can see any of the EI advisors. If you have a question about classes or your level, you can talk to your teacher or someone in the EI office. The Learning Assistance Center (RCF 340, 443-518-1320), the Composition and Literature Center (DH 210) and the ESL Testing/ Tutorial Center (HR-210) can provide tutoring and academic support services for some classes.





### *ESL Language/Open Labs*

There are three computer labs in the Hickory Ridge building, HR 254, 332 and 334; open lab hours (when the labs are open to all ESL students) are available from your teacher and are posted outside each lab.

During open lab hours, use the computers to practice English, do homework, search the Internet, or email your friends and family. Lab assistants are available during open lab times to answer your questions or help you with computer problems. As an EI student, you may also use any of the computer labs on campus. In the DH building, non-ESL labs are DH 110 and DH 210, where there is a walk-in English lab with tutoring services. Although DH computer labs might not have ESL-specific assistance, you may use them for the Internet and other programs. In the James Clark Jr. Library Building, CL 129 is another student computer lab area. Lab times for DH and CL are listed on the HCC website. Please observe HCC rules for proper computer use.

### *Welcome and Information Center (RCF-114 / 443-518-1000)*

The Welcome Center offers information for students about HCC programs, services, and scheduled events. It issues parking permits and validates student ID cards.



### *Student Life (SA-201 / 443-518-1420)*

HCC's Student Life offers something for everyone. Resources for local events and fairs are great ways to learn about American culture and practice your English. The Student Life office also has many special services, such as discounts for the Maryland Renaissance Festival, King's Dominion, and Six Flags. This office provides students with information regarding available housing and ride-sharing in the area.

### *Café on the Quad (RCF-120 / 443-518-4960)*

The Café on the Quad is the HCC cafeteria. It offers a daily entrée station, soup and salad bar, deli sandwiches and grilled items made to order, pizza, assorted beverages, desserts, ice cream and frozen yogurt. Check your email at the computer stations while you eat your lunch!

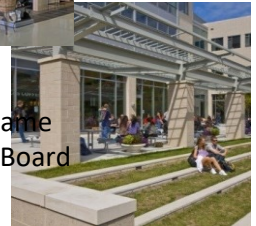


Starbucks Coffee is also a mainstay in the RCF building. Check the college website for hours of operation.



#### *Game Room (SA-101 / 443-518-4936)*

The Game Room has a wide-screen TV, a pool table, table tennis, foosball, and free [arcade](#) game machines. There are many sponsored tournaments each semester with prizes and trophies. Board games and playing cards available.



#### *Cashier's Office (RCF-212 / 443-518-1862)*

The Cashier's Office is where you go to pay tuition and fees for your EI classes. It is open from 8:45am to 7:30pm Monday to Thursday and from 8:45am to 5:00pm on Friday. Please go online to find different methods of payment.

#### *Department of Public Safety (RCF-117 / 443-518-5555)*

Security officers are on duty 24 hours a day at HCC. If you have any security problems, don't hesitate to talk to them. If you cannot find a security guard when you need one, pick up a red security telephone and stay on the line until an officer answers. Contact the Department of Public Safety if you lose your student ID card. If you lose something in the Hickory Ridge (HR) building, first go to the Welcome Desk at the entrance of HR to find out if the item has been turned in. After 30 days, the Welcome Desk turns lost items over to the Department of Public Safety.

#### *Personal Counseling (RCF-302 / 443-518-1340)*

College can sometimes be very difficult and stressful. Counseling provides an opportunity for you to talk with an objective professional about your concerns. What is discussed with a personal counselor will remain confidential and will not be shared with others. There is short-term individual and couple's counseling available to students who are struggling with a variety of issues, including anxiety, depression, interpersonal relationships, substance abuse, stress-management, adjustment to college, test anxiety, and self-esteem issues. These services are available from 8:30am to 8:00pm on Monday to Wednesday and 8:45am to 5:00pm on Thursday and Friday.





### *Children's Learning Center (443-518-1360)*

The Children's Learning Center provides childcare services for the children of students, faculty, and staff. Part-time and full-time child care services are available for children ages two to four years. Rates vary depending on the age of the child.

### *Intramural Sports*

The college schedules a variety of sports activities. Activities vary from year to year based on student interest. Flag football, indoor volleyball, basketball and soccer have been scheduled during open time. Contact the Office of Student Life at 443-518-1420.



### *Tuition Payment Plan*

Tuition payment plans are available for students to make monthly payments toward tuition and fees each semester. Please contact the EI office or see "Tuition Payment Plan" on our website.

## Facilities

### *HR (The Hickory Ridge) Building:*

Most of the classrooms for the EI are located in the Hickory Ridge Building. There is also a Student Lounge with vending machines and a microwave in this building, and the main Language Lab is located in room 254. A lactation room for mothers is located on the first floor.



### *DH (Duncan Hall):*

The EI Office in DH is located in room 140. Level 3 students and above may have courses in DH. You can find computer labs, the multi-cultural office, and areas for conversations or group study.



### *RCF (Student Services Hall):*

The Student Services Hall houses the Welcome and Information Center, Cashier's Office, Department of Public Safety, a cafeteria (with Starbucks Coffee), and the bookstore. This building is where students go to pay their bills, obtain student IDs, and find out general school information. You can purchase discounted AMC movie tickets at the Cashier window on the second floor as well as free monthly bus transit passes.

*Bookstore (RCF-113 / 443-518-1400):*

The HCC Bookstore provides students with a selection of books, HCC clothing, and souvenirs. If you want a book that is not at the Bookstore, you can order it by talking to a cashier and paying 50% of the book's price in advance.

*Athletics & Fitness (Athletics & Fitness Center / 443-518-1380):*

You may use HCC exercise facilities after showing your student ID to the attendant. The College also has different men's and women's sports teams, which you may be able to participate in, including soccer, cross-country running, volleyball, basketball, track, lacrosse, and softball. Please make use of the track, certain athletic fields, and gym!

*Library (CL-200 / 443-518-1460):*

The Clark Library is open to all EI students. It has 7 group study rooms that may be reserved online anytime. Bring your HCC student ID to check out library materials. If you do not bring books back on time, you will be charged at least 50 cents a day. Please turn off cell phones and be quiet in the library.



*Parking:*

A good place to park is the West Garage next to the Hickory Ridge Building. ONLY park in designated student parking areas. If you park in areas labeled 'staff', you will get a parking ticket and have to pay a \$50 fine or more. Do not park in the blue handicapped parking spots unless you have a special handicap permit.

## SECTION 6: Special EI Programs



Some programs are exclusively for EI students! See how to make the most of your HCC experience!



## El Bridge Class Option

The El Bridge Class Option offers advanced English students (level 5) the opportunity to experience American college-level courses. This option is the non-credit way to take courses listed in the credit class schedule. Eligible EI students receive the same instruction as HCC degree students but receive EI units. These classes will not transfer to other institutions. To be eligible for a bridge class, you must pass 12 units the previous semester and be in good academic standing.

## Field Trips / Activities

There are many exciting field trips planned throughout the year. For example, we have gone to New York City, Niagara Falls, Amish Country Pennsylvania, Ocean City, Hershey Park, camping, high ropes courses, boating, bowling, and much more. Look for e-mails with field trip information and take advantage of them! You can check the EI website for current activity information.



## ESL Testing Center (HR-200)

You can go to the center to make up tests. Ask your advisor or teacher for more information.

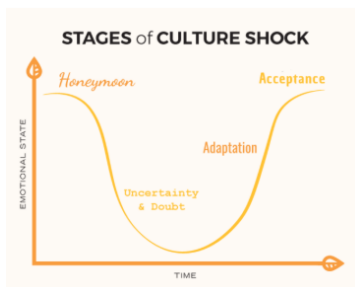
## The Write Room (RCF-340 / 443-518-4822)

EI students enrolled in any of the 'ENGL' series courses can go to this center as often as needed for free help with any kind of written assignment. A trained tutor will work with you.

## SECTION 7: General Information – Living in the USA.

### Adjusting to Life in the USA

Living in a new country with a different language and culture is very exciting, but it can also be challenging. International students often go through culture shock. Culture shock is a series of feelings that many people experience when they begin to live in a new country.



## 5 Stages of Culture Shock

### Stage 0: Pre-Departure

- In this stage, you may feel **nervous** or **excited** about your upcoming trip.

### Stage 1: Honeymoon

- In the beginning, you may feel **happy** to be in the USA. You are **excited** to experience everything that the U.S. has to offer.

### Stage 2: Irritability

- You may start to notice the differences between your culture and the culture of the USA. You may feel **homesick** or **upset**.

### Stage 3: Gradual Adjustment

- As you are dealing with the frustrations of Stage 2, you will begin to feel **more comfortable** in your new cultural environment.

### Stage 4: Adaptation / Biculturalism

- Finally, you will start to feel **accustomed** to the new culture.

Stage 2 is the most difficult stage for many people. During this time, you may feel upset, or even depressed. There are many different ways to deal with these feelings. Most importantly, you should keep busy! Try new activities and make new friends. Join and enjoy the new culture.



Participating in EI events and trips is a great way to do this! If you are feeling very homesick, try calling or e-mailing your friends and family back home, enjoying a food from your country, or watching a TV show or movie in your native language. Also, remember to take care of your health: exercise and get enough sleep! Finally, if you have feelings of depression that won't go away, please talk to a friend or EI advisor. There are many counseling options available to you on-campus. (See p. 22: Personal Counseling)

## About Columbia and Howard County

We think you chose a great place to live while in the United States! Columbia has all the beauty of a small city and the convenience of being located between two major, metropolitan areas.

Columbia has an interesting, but brief history. In 1963, Mr. Jim Rouse announced that his company would build an entire city in Howard County. As a result, Columbia is a

planned community. That means that the founder of the city planned how he wanted the city to look. For example, Mr. Rouse believed that "people should be able to feel the space of nature as part of their everyday life." So, he planned many large, open spaces, including parks, woods, and natural open areas. His company even built many of the lakes! The People Tree is the symbol of this city. No wonder it is so green here!



Columbia is also interesting because it is an ethnically diverse city. In the 1960s there was much racial tension in the United States. Mr. Rouse, however, was determined to create a "place for all people." In other words, Columbia was open to all races and colors at a time when many cities weren't. Mr. Rouse required realtors to be "color-blind" long before federal laws did. As a result, when you walk down the street in Columbia today, you can see many different kinds of people.

Furthermore, Columbia and Howard County have received many awards at both the state and national levels, including:

- **Nation's Top Two-Year College, 2024** Niche online college selection and data resource
- **Best Community College for International Students, 2023**  
Study International
- **Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA), 2019**  
The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) of the U.S. Department of Commerce
- **Best Community College of Maryland, 2019**  
The Daily Record
- **Best Two-Year Colleges for Adult Learners, 2018, 2017, 2016**  
Washington Monthly

## Banking

There are many different banks in Columbia. You can call or visit a few banks to check out how much their checking accounts cost and if they are having any special deals right now.

### Take these with you when you open a new account:

1. Passport and copy of I-94 document
2. Form I-20
3. Maryland Driver's License and/or HCC ID card
4. Proof of your local address
5. Support letter from the EI office



## Health Insurance and Health Care

If you are studying at the EI on an F1 (student) visa, you **MUST** have health insurance. If you bought health insurance in your country, you must show the insurance policy to an EI advisor. If you did not buy health insurance before you came to the USA, you must buy it before you can register for classes.

Health care in the USA is very expensive. A simple visit to the doctor can cost over \$100 and a trip to the emergency room or a stay in the hospital can cost thousands of dollars. For this reason, even if you are not an F1 student, we recommend that you buy health insurance.

### Things to know about US healthcare:

1. Check your insurance policy to see which doctors are covered.
2. Do not go to the **hospital emergency room** unless your health problem is a big emergency because it can be very expensive, even with health insurance.
3. Call to make an appointment to visit a doctor's office or health clinic before going to see a medical specialist.
4. Healthcare in the U.S. is very expensive without health insurance.

**Be ready to answer these questions when you call the doctor:**

1. Have you ever visited this doctor before?
2. What is your name?
3. What is your address?
4. What is your phone number?
5. What is your social security number? (do you have one?)
6. What is your insurance policy name and number?
7. Why do you want to see the doctor? Or is a nurse ok?
8. When can you see the doctor?

When you go to the doctor's office for your appointment, you should go early because you will have to fill out a lot of forms. When you see the doctor, don't be afraid to ask a lot of questions until you understand exactly what the problem is. If you don't understand, you can ask for an interpreter (some of the big health centers offer this service).

If the doctor gives you a prescription, you can take it to a pharmacy and give the prescription slip and your health insurance card to the pharmacist.

### Housing

Howard Community College does not have on-campus housing available. Many students stay with relatives or friends. Students can find an apartment or a shared room to rent. If you need help, you can ask an EI advisor for help.

For more information visit ([www.howardcc.edu/ei](http://www.howardcc.edu/ei)) and click on "Location & Housing".

**Housing options:**

- Go to the Student Life Office (SA-201) for information about available local housing.
- Look in the EI Office at the student bulletin board with roommate requests or check our website's 'Housing' section.
- Search the Internet: [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org) (click Maryland, Baltimore, and under "Housing," click "apts/housing" or "rooms/shared"), or [www.apartments.com](http://www.apartments.com).

### Safety and Security

The USA's emergency telephone number is 911. You can call 911 from anywhere and anytime there is a big emergency. The call is always free!

Although Columbia is not very dangerous, you should still be careful. It is not free from crime. Of course, you should be even more careful when you visit bigger cities in the area, such as Baltimore and Washington, DC. By following these basic rules from the National Crime Prevention Council Pamphlet, you can protect yourself from a dangerous situation.



### How to protect yourself:

1. DO stay alert. Be aware of your surroundings and know who is behind and in front of you when you are walking outside.
2. DO look like you know where you are going. Walk confidently and with purpose.
3. Do trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in a situation, you should leave.
4. You should always be very careful with your bags, purses and wallets. Keep them close to you at all times and do not leave them unattended.
5. Try to avoid using the ATM bank machines at night. Try to use them in well-lit, public places.
6. If you are out at night, be sure to walk on well-lit, busy streets.
7. Don't show off any expensive clothing or jewelry or flash big amounts of money.

If you feel unsafe on the Howard Community College Campus, you can ask for an escort from the building to your car. Security guards are available 24 hours a day to help you. Just call 443-518-5500.

### Social Security Number

F1 visa holders (international students) are eligible to get a social security number (SSN) ONLY if they already have a job on campus. You may also be eligible with certain other types of visas or residency status. If you are an F1 student, you will need a support letter from the EI, your passport, I-94 electronic print-out, I-20 document, student ID card, and a job offer letter from the Human Resources Office to take with you to the Social Security Administration office.



You are also required to apply for a SSN if you wish to obtain a Maryland Driver's License. If you are not eligible for a SSN, the Social Security Administration will issue you a "Letter of Ineligibility," which you must present to the MVA (Motor Vehicle Administration). See the next section on "Getting a Driver's License" for more information.

The nearest SSA office is located at the Lakeside Building, Suite 110, 8865 Stanford Boulevard, Columbia, Maryland. You can call 1-800-772-1213 or go online to <http://www.ssa.gov>. For more information, speak with your advisor.

### Transportation

#### Getting a Driver's License as an F-1 Student

You will find the most convenient way to get around Columbia is by car. In order to drive in the United States, you must have either an international driver's license from your home country or a Maryland Driver's License. If you have a driver's license from your home country, you may use it in Maryland for up to one year. However, if you plan to purchase your own car/car insurance, you will need a Maryland license.



In order to obtain a Maryland Driver's License, you must complete a multi-step process, including applying for a social security number (see above). Because getting a Maryland Driver's License can be quite complicated, there are step-by-step instructions available from the EI office. Get started by getting an MVA packet from the EI office and reading the information on the MVA's website.



## Getting Around by Bus

You can get to many places around Columbia and Ellicott City if you take the Howard Transit System. The green line will bring you to Howard Community College, but you may need to transfer from another line closer to your house. The bus system also connects with the MARC train station in some places. For more information about the Howard Transit System, call 410- 313-1919 or you can go online and get the schedule and map. Monthly passes are available at the HCC Cashier window in the RCF building for free. Bring your HCC student ID to show at the window.

## Traveling Around Maryland

If you want to visit different Maryland cities, you have a few choices.



Airport Shuttle	1-800-776-0323
Dillon's Bus Service	1-410-647-2321
Greyhound Bus	1-800-231-2222
AMTRAK	1-800-872-7245
MARC	1-800-325-7245
Washington METRO	1-202-637-7000

[www.theairportshuttle.com](http://www.theairportshuttle.com)  
[www.dillonbus.com](http://www.dillonbus.com)  
[www.greyhound.com](http://www.greyhound.com)  
[www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com)  
[www.mtmaryland.com](http://www.mtmaryland.com)  
[www.wmata.com](http://www.wmata.com)

Meet some of our recent English Institute students!

We look forward to meeting with you and learning more about your country!

