



Welcome

There is a slight chill in the air as the fall semester comes to an end. We hope you have fun plans for Winter Break. Just in case, we have included a list of interesting things to do and places that are open for you to explore below!

December NEWS

Winter Break Closure

The university will be closed for Winter Break from Thursday, December 21, 2023 through Monday, January 1, 2024. *iStart eforms will NOT be processed during Winter Break. **Finalize and SUBMIT all eforms by Wednesday, December 13, 2023 at 11:59pm if you want it to be processed in 2023 (this year).***

Travel Signatures

Don't forget to check Page 2 of your I-20 for a valid travel signature if you plan to travel outside the U.S. for the Winter Break. If the travel signature is dated before November 20, 2022, it is time for a fresh signature. Log into iStart to access the Travel Signature eform. Be sure to give our staff at least 5 business days to process.

For information on traveling as an F-1 student, watch this helpful video https://youtu.be/Vhal_07WBM4 and explore our travel webpage <https://www.usf.edu/world/international-services/immigration/travel.aspx>

Get Ready for Tax Season

All F and J visa holders who were physically present in the United States, for any period of time in the year 2023, are required to file a tax form in 2024. This is regardless of whether you worked or received income or not for the duration of stay. Relax! Tax forms are usually filed between February 15 and the deadline of April 15.

OIS will send you a link to a special tax preparation tool *Sprintax* in mid-February. This link allows you to access and applies the USF discount to your account for the 2023 tax season, which covers the cost of your 1040-NR and 8843 forms.

We have many resources for you to learn about taxes in the United States in the tax section of our website at <https://www.usf.edu/world/international-services/immigration/taxes.aspx>. You can also register for webinars hosted by the Sprintax team. In January, OIS will host information sessions, and in February, OIS will begin hosting the software assistance sessions.

Holiday Scams

Don't get caught in a scam during the holidays. A scam can be a suspicious phone call or email. Here are a few things you can do to protect yourself:

- Do not give out your birth date, Social Security Number, or any other identifying information to someone over the phone or email.
- If you don't know the number, don't answer. If you do answer, and the individual is asking for personal information or payment, it's okay to hang up on them!
- Government officials will NEVER ask for payment over the phone or email. Especially not with gift cards! They will not use fear tactics or try to intimidate you. If a phone call or email threatens to arrest or deport you if you don't pay a fee, hang up!
- Regular paper mail is the most common way that government agencies contact individuals for immigration status issues or for tax purposes. Suspicious mail can be shown to our office for verification.
- Report a scam to the [Federal Trade Commission](#) and the organization/institution the scammer claims to be representing. Most government agencies have a section on their website about reporting fraudulent activity.
- **Contact OIS about suspicious phone calls, emails, or if you've fallen victim to a scam.** We can help you, and reporting scams helps us protect other international students from dangerous or expensive scams, too.

USF Academic Reminders

Fall Semester Grades

Fall grades will be visible in OASIS on December 15. If you had a reduced course load (RCL) for your final semester or you thought you would graduate and applied for post-completion OPT but can no longer graduate, contact our office during Virtual Drop-in hours, Walk-in hours, or email F1status@usf.edu. We need to take immediate action if your I-20 ends in December 2023 and you will not graduate. Also, contact us if you were put on final probation or academic dismissal this semester.

Remember, our office can provide you with options to move forward. However, the only way we can assist you is if you attend our Virtual Drop-in hours, Walk-in hours, or send us an email.

Spring 2024 Beginning of Semester Important Dates

- January 5 – Last day to register for Spring without a late registration fee
- January 8 – Classes officially begin
- January 12 – End of drop/add week; last day to add a major for Spring; and tuition payment deadline (GAs and financial aid deferments pay tuition by February 23)

Winter Session

The [Winter Session](#) occurs during Winter Break and consists of online courses. While F-1 students can take online courses during winter session, be aware that they count towards the Spring semester and appear on your transcript as Spring semester courses. This means that students who take a winter session online course will need to be mindful of how many face-to-face courses they need for Spring semester to maintain their F visa status.

Email Access for Graduating Students on OPT

OIS has made arrangements to extend NetID and email access for students who remain on OPT for over one year after graduation. This will allow students to continue using iStart, OASIS, and their USF email address after the standard one year account deactivation period that USF IT will be implementing.

Your NetID login and email will remain valid for one year after graduation or until the end of the 60-day grace period while you are on OPT or STEM OPT, whichever is later. For example, if your OPT or STEM OPT ends on July 31st, your email will be valid until September 30th.

Workshops

Feb 20: CPT Q&A Session

SAVE THE DATE. Details will be shared in the January newsletter.

Feb 9: OPT Q&A Session

SAVE THE DATE. Details will be shared in the January newsletter.

Winter Break Closures and Things to Do

Grocery Stores/Food

Publix at USF

Closed on December 25th
7:00am - 10:00pm

Walmart

Closed on December 25th
6:00am - 11:00pm

Leisure

Tampa Riverwalk Events

<https://thetampariverwalk.com/events-news/event-calendar.html/calendar/2023/12>

No cost

Holiday Lighted Boat Parade (Tampa Riverwalk):

Dec 23, 2023 6:30 PM

<https://thetampariverwalk.com/events-news/events/holiday-lighted-boat-parade.html>

No cost

Tampa Bay's Festival of Lights & Santa's Village Drive-Thru Lights

<https://hillsboroughcountyfair.com/tickets-lights/>

\$25 per car (up to 8 people)

Tampa City Ballet's *The Nutcracker* at USF Theater 1

Tickets from \$25

Tampa Bay Lightning games at Amalie Arena

Tickets from \$40

Transportation

HART bus is free for students (50¢ for visiting scholars) with USF ID

Target

Closed on December 25th
8:00am - 10:00pm

IHOP: Temple Terrace

Open 24/7 On December 24th/25th & New Year's!

Tampa Bay Buccaneers games at Raymond James Stadium

Tickets from \$40

Winter Village at Curtis Hixon Park (Downtown Tampa)

<https://wintervillagetampa.com/>

Ice skating for \$17

The Florida Aquarium (Downtown Tampa)

<https://www.flaquarium.org/visit/>

Adult General Admission from \$29.95

Look Dine-in Cinema

Tickets from \$5 with USF ID

Glazer Children's Museum

Tickets from \$18

Free on Tuesdays

Tampa Museum

Free with USF ID

NINE HART BUS ROUTES THAT SERVE THE UNIVERSITY AREA



- A University Area Transit Center**
Connection with Rts. MetroRapid, 1, 5, 6, 9, 12, 33, 42, 48, 275LX, USF Bull Runner
- B Wiregrass Park-n-Ride**
Connection with Rts. 275LX, 54 (PCPT)
- C Lowe's Park-n-Ride**
Connection with Rt. 275LX
- D Fletcher Ave. @ Dale Mabry Hwy.**
Connection with Rts. 33, 36, HARTFlex Northdale
- E Hidden River Regional Park-n-Ride**
Connection with Rt. 33
- F University Mall**
Serving Rt. 12
- G Yukon Transfer Center**
Connection with Rts. 14, 42, 45
- H Busch Gardens**
Serving Rts. 5, 9, 39
- I netp@rk Transfer Center**
Connection with Rts. 6, 15, 32, 34, 37, 38, 48
- J Tampa Intl. Airport**
Connection with Rts. 30, 32, 35, 60LX, 275LX, 300X (PSTA)
- K Marion Transit Center**
Connection with Rts. MetroRapid, 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 19, 30, 20X, 60LX, 275LX, 360LX, 100X (PSTA), 300X (PSTA), Downtowner, MegaBus, RedCoach

CHECK OUT THE LATE NIGHT SERVICE!

ROUTE COLOR AND NAME OF ROUTE	WEEKDAY SERVICE *		SATURDAY & SUNDAY SERVICE *	
	LAST TRIP TO UATC	LAST TRIP FROM UATC	LAST TRIP TO UATC	LAST TRIP FROM UATC
MetroRapid North-South	12:00 midnight	12:05 a.m.	12:00 midnight	12:00 midnight
Route 1 - Florida Ave.	12:05 a.m.	12:00 midnight	10:05 p.m.	10:00 p.m.
Route 5 - 40th St.	11:00 p.m.	11:00 p.m.	10:00 p.m.	10:00 p.m.
Route 6 - 56th St.	12:00 midnight	12:15 a.m.	11:00 p.m.	11:15 p.m.
Route 9 - 15th St.	10:00 p.m.	10:00 p.m.	10:00 p.m.	10:00 p.m.
Route 12 - 22nd St.	12:00 midnight	12:00 midnight	10:00 p.m.	10:00 p.m.
Route 33 - Fletcher Ave. (Carrollwood)	10:30 p.m.	10:20 p.m.	9:55 p.m.	10:30 p.m.
Route 33 - Fletcher Ave. (Hidden River)	8:00 p.m.	7:40 p.m.	No Service	No Service
Route 42 - University Area Connector	10:10 p.m.	10:30 p.m.	9:40 p.m.	10:30 p.m.
Route 48 - Temple Terrace	9:30 p.m.	9:30 p.m.	9:30 p.m.	9:30 p.m.
Route 275LX - New Tampa/Passco	9:00 p.m.	9:00 p.m.	9:00 p.m.	9:00 p.m.

* Visit www.gohART.org or use OneBusAway Tampa on your smart phone for more detailed information and weekend hours. All routes except MetroRapid provide weekend service. 08.2718



Join our BullsConnect Group - <https://bullsconnect.usf.edu/INTLSVCS/clu>





Office of International Services

4202 E Fowler Ave BEH 255 - Tampa, FL 33620

<https://www.usf.edu/world/international-services/>

Virtual Drop-In via Teams (E-Form in iStart) - Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri 11am-1pm & Thurs 1pm-2pm

Walk-in Hours Tampa Campus (BEH Map) - Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri 1pm-2pm & Thurs 2pm-4pm

Visit Schedule to USF St Pete & Sarasota- <https://www.usf.edu/world/international-services/about-us/contact-us.aspx>