



**Welcome from
McNeese State University's
Office of International
Programs**

McNeese State University's Welcome Guide

The Office of International Programs (OIP) at McNeese State University wants to congratulate you once more on your acceptance to McNeese!

McNeese is located in sunny Lake Charles, one of the fastest growing cities in Louisiana with a warm climate all year round. Founded in 1939, McNeese is a comprehensive institution that awards bachelors and masters degrees. Our approximately 7,000 students can choose from more than 70 degree programs offered by the Colleges of Business, Education Professions, Agricultural Sciences, Science, Engineering and Mathematics, Liberal Arts, Nursing and Health Professions. Popular programs include Engineering, Computer Science, Psychology, Medical Laboratory Sciences, Nursing, Chemical and Environmental Sciences, Health and Human Promotion, Biology, Agriculture, Art and Business, Finance and Management.

With over 400 international students from about 50 different countries, we pride ourselves in making excellence affordable, accessible and personalized. Making sure students are well prepared to enter the professional world is a guiding element of McNeese's educational mission. Excellent programs, affordable tuition, hands-on learning with faculty mentors and a warm, sunny environment is what makes McNeese the perfect choice!

This Welcome Guide has been created by the Office of International Programs (OIP) to help our new international students as they prepare for their studies at McNeese. You should have received a link to this guide with your Acceptance Notice Email.

The Office of International Programs is located in H.C. Drew Center. A campus map can be found at mcneese.edu/campusmaps, (we are in HC Drew Enrollment Center, #6 on the map). Our office is open year-round from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm Central Standard Time, Monday through Thursday and 7:30 am to 11:30 am on Friday. Our preferred method of communication is email, so be sure to email us any questions or concerns at internationaloffice@mcneese.edu.

The Office of International Programs is proud to work with you throughout your entire academic experience, from pre-arrival, during your program of studies, and post-graduation, if you continue on to employment through Optional Practical Training (OPT).

Some of our services include:

- International student admissions
- Orientation for all new McNeese international students
- Immigration advising
- OPT/CPT authorization and filing
- Student life integration activities (Friendship Families Program)
- Study Abroad opportunities

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I-20 and visa process

Mailing the I-20: The form I-20 is not automatically mailed. Students need to inform our office of their preferred mailing preferences as soon as possible after admission. **Please mention your full name and McNeese ID# in all emails sent to our office.** Below are the mailing options:

1. **U.S. Postal Service International Air Mail** - documents will be sent at our office's expense with an average delivery time of 4-6 weeks. This option is NOT reliable and tracking information is NOT available.
 - To request USPS International Air mail, please reply to your Acceptance Email with your preferred mailing address formatted exactly as it should be written on the envelope.
2. **Express Mail (DHL, UPS, FedEx)** - documents will be sent at the student's expense. This is the **most reliable** delivery option to have your I-20 delivered. We strongly encourage students to use express mailing.
 - To order express shipping, create an account at <https://study.eshipglobal.com>. Students can see options for prices and delivery times once an account has been created.
 - eShipGlobal/UEMS partners with McNeese to set up express shipping. Our office will be notified automatically and provided with a shipping label when you've made your payment, so there is no need to email us to inform our office that you've made payment.

SEVIS I-901 fee and Visa Process: Once you receive your I-20, you can schedule your visa appointment. Be sure to pay the SEVIS I-901 fee prior to your interview. The U.S. Department of State's website displays information about obtaining a foreign visa <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/student-visa.html>.

- You may pay online at <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html>.
 - Print your payment receipt and take it with you to the visa appointment.
- You will need to schedule a visa appointment with the U.S. Embassy/Consulate near you. You may go to <http://www.usembassy.gov> for more information.
- Complete the DS-160 and pay the applicable fees.
 - For an instruction video on how to complete the DS-160 click on this video: [youtube.com/watch?v=6k43FdCW5kc&feature=email](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6k43FdCW5kc&feature=email)

You will need to bring the following documents with you to the visa interview:

- Signed I-20
- Acceptance letter from McNeese State University
- Financial documentation
- Valid passport
- Photos (as specified by Embassy/Consulate)
- DS-160 Application payment receipt
- SEVIS I-901 fee payment receipt

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Tips for a U.S. visa: The following sites offer good tips to help you prepare for your visa interview:

- <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2015/06/five-ways-to-prepare-for-your-visa-interview>
- http://www.nafsa.org/Professional_Resources/Browse_by_Interest/International_Students_and_Scholars/Network_Resources/International_Student_and_Scholar_Services/10_Points_to_Remember_When_Applying_for_a_Student_Visa/

For the visa interview, the most important thing to remember is to be honest and answer fully all questions asked, but you do not need to volunteer additional information, especially since the interview is very short. Attend your interview with confidence and show your enthusiasm for your upcoming educational journey at McNeese.

It is not imperative that you memorize every detail about your course or school. Visa officers are not expecting you to be an expert about a school you haven't even attended, but they do expect to be able to discern a genuine interest and knowledge about McNeese. Do not memorize information just to be able to give random facts, as they are trained to detect this, and it does nothing to convey your genuine interest or educational objectives.

A few other tips:

- 1.) A student visa is, by its nature, a non-immigrant visa. Be sure to show how you will use your education when you return to your home country.
- 2.) Don't try to rehearse responses that you *think* people want to hear. Consular officers are looking for authenticity. Each interview, like each student, is individual.
- 3.) Make sure you know McNeese, your academic program and the local geography very well. Visa officers want to feel confident that you know where you are going and what you expect to achieve. Here is a little link on our surrounding community:
<https://www.visitlakecharles.org/>
- 4.) To view the requirements for your degree, choose your degree here:
<https://catalog.mcneese.edu/content.php?catoid=59&navoid=4939>
<http://catalog.mcneese.edu/content.php?catoid=19&navoid=1734>
- 5.) McNeese is a great school, click on this link to find out why students choose to attend here: https://www.mcneese.edu/about/why_choose_mcneese
- 6.) Make sure you can establish strong ties to your home country, which is one way the visa officer will be able to establish your non-immigrant intent.
- 7.) Be sure to be prepared to respond to questions about how you are financing your studies. Remember that on-campus employment will only provide pocket money and will not cover the cost of attendance, so be sure to have your financial information in order.



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- 8.) You may also consider seeking assistance from a local EducationUSA Advising Center. EducationUSA can help you with information about admissions, as well as provide valuable seminars and pre-departure orientations. Find out what your local center offers by entering your details here: <https://educationusa.state.gov/find-advising-center>

There are over 4500 different colleges and universities in the United States. In addition to our excellent programs, some of the things that make McNeese stand out in this crowded field are:

- our close-knit community,
- the personal service from the Office of International Programs,
- student-centered education, our welcoming and diverse community,
- our small town appeal and easy access to major U.S. cities like Houston and New Orleans,
- the unique exposure to American culture and tradition that is different in Louisiana (jazz, crawfish, bayous and Mardi Gras).

Think about why you chose McNeese and be able to articulate that to the visa officer.

Traveling to the U.S.

All F-1 students are required to report to the Office of International Programs (OIP) no later than the "Program Start Date" on your I-20 to check in. Arriving earlier is recommended, but not required.

F-1 students are allowed to begin entering the United States 30 days prior to their report date indicated on the I-20; you can view the "Earliest Admission Date" into the United States on your I-20.

Failure to arrive in Lake Charles by your "Program Start Date" will delay your ability to register. **THE OIP DOES NOT GRANT PERMISSION FOR STUDENTS TO ARRIVE LATE.**

All new international students to McNeese State University are required to check-in with our International Advisor in the OIP in person before they may register for classes, although early pre-registration may be offered to students who obtain their visas early.

Port of Entry: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has provided a video for information about what to expect at the Port of Entry. Click on this video: youtube.com/watch?v=vRGUaSKtEg8&feature=related.

Please see below for more information about navigating through the Port of Entry (customs) once you arrive in the U.S. Be sure to keep the following documents with you when you travel to the U.S. Do not put these documents in your checked luggage.

- **I-20**
- **Passport and visa**
- **Financial documents**
- **Acceptance letter**

I-94 Arrival/Departure record: Students entering the U.S. through an air or sea ports of entry will have an electronic record I-94 Arrival/Departure created. You should be able to access your electronic I-94 record within 2 days of entering the U.S. Students who enter the U.S. through a land port of entry (example: U.S./Mexico border) will be issued a paper copy I-94. You will also complete a CBP Customs Declaration form once you have arrived in the U.S.

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Your I-94 may be retrieved online at: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>

U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Interview: When you go through Customs and Border Control, you will be interviewed briefly by a Port of Entry Officer.

- Have all the documents listed above ready to present to the officer
- The officer will scan your fingerprints and take your picture.
- Once you have passed through the border control you may collect your luggage to pass through customs. Once through Customs, you will be able to proceed to your transportation to your final destination.

The following site outlines what to expect: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2013/04/here-to-help-what-to-expect-at-a-port-of-entry-with-a-us-customs-and-border-protection-officer>

Items Not to Bring:

- A large amount of cash. Students are strongly discouraged from carrying a large amount of cash due to safety concerns and limits set by U.S. Customs.
- Any prohibited or restricted items listed here: <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/know-before-you-go/prohibited-and-restricted-items>
- Students may visit or contact an EducationUSA Center (educationusa.state.gov) in their home country for questions about arrival.

Arriving in Louisiana and to McNeese

Please note that students will need to arrive in Lake Charles by the “**Program Start Date**” to complete check-in.

Shuttle/Transportation Options from Airport: We recommend that you fly into the Lake Charles Airport (<http://flylakecharles.com>) which is served by United Airlines and American Airlines. You can take a taxi from the Lake Charles Airport to McNeese. It is a 10-minute drive from the airport to the University.

If you fly into Houston (3 hours away) or New Orleans (3 hours away), you must be prepared to spend a significant amount of money getting to Lake Charles.

Lake Charles is serviced by Lyft as well, which is a transportation option for students from the airport. See the list of local (Lake Charles) taxi companies below for phone numbers or ask at the airport. If you take a taxi, be sure to verify the price and method of payment before accepting.

- Yellow Cab Co: 337-433-8282
- Fast Taxi: 337-853-2534
- \$10 Taxi Cab of Lake Charles: 337-990-5573
- LYFT (mobile phone app)



Orientation and Check In

All new international students are required to check-in with the International Advisor upon arrival. **Note:** Pre-arrival registration—which is available to students who receive their visas before the early registration deadline—does not exempt students from the check-in process.

- Check-in must *be in person* and students will schedule their check-in time in our office. Our office will make copies of documents and contact information. **Students will not be allowed to register for classes until they have checked in with an advisor in our office.**
- The OIP will conduct a **mandatory** International Student Orientation for all international students the same week as your “Program Start Date”, usually the Friday before classes begin. Be sure to be here no later than the “Program Start Date” to ensure you get all the details about the time and date of our International Student Orientation.

Bring the following items with you when you check-in:

- I-20 document
- Passport
- Information about local address (housing or hotel) and phone number
- Immunization documents (from your home country)

If you arrive without this information, you may be asked to schedule another appointment time.

How to Communicate with our Office

The preferred method of communication with our office via email.

When emailing, always mention your first and last name and MSU ID#.

- Email internationaloffice@mcneese.edu
- Phone: 337-475-5962
- The OIP is located in HC Drew Enrollment Center.

Our office hours are:

Monday - Thursday from 7:30 am – 5:00 pm and
Friday 7:30 am—11:30 am.

Campus Housing Information

Students will often choose to live on-campus because of the easy accessibility to on-campus services, classes, library, professors, other students, and recreational activities.

- Meal plans are required for all students who live on-campus. There are no exceptions. For students who prefer cooking their own meals, some dormitories will have kitchens, but you will still be required to purchase the minimum meal plan.
- You may indicate a preference of where you would like to live on-campus (a specific dormitory or a room style), and give preference for a desired roommate (please note, all rooms are single gender). While there is no guarantee that those preferences can be granted, all efforts will be made to give you the most accommodating selection.

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- Students who live on-campus are required to sign a binding, one-year lease agreement (fall/spring).

Students interested in learning more about on-campus housing may contact the Housing Office by visiting their website: <http://mcneesereslife.com>. You may also contact Jeremiah Johnson at the Housing Office by emailing <mailto:jeremiah.johnson@risere.com>.

Initial housing costs will include a security deposit of \$150 (non-refundable), and application fee of \$45 (non-refundable) and a reservation fee of \$150 (refundable at the end of lease, if no damages/loss are found), for a total of \$345.

The \$8,000 listed for "living costs" on the form I-20 is the approximate cost of the sum of the lowest rate housing accommodation option and the meal plan for two semesters. Meal plan information can be found at: <https://www.dineoncampus.com/mcneese>. Your actual cost will depend on your housing selection and any added amenities, which are communicated in your lease agreement.

Please be aware that on-campus accommodations fill quickly. It is strongly recommended that you submit a complete housing application and pay the deposit on or before the following dates in order to have the best chance of placement in your selected dormitory preference.

- Fall: March 1st
- Spring: October 1st

The application and deposit will hold your reservation, but please note that both are non-refundable. If you do not receive your F-1 visa, you will not have any obligation, beyond the deposit and application fee. If you need to defer to a future semester, your deposit will be carried over and your reservation will be pushed to the following term in keeping with your admission (upon written request).

Living on-campus has many advantages including:

- Proximity
- Safety (the campus has a 24 hour police unit)
- On-site computer labs
- Recreation areas
- All utilities are included
- Internet is included
- Washer/Dryer areas are included
- Dormitories remain open year-round for enrolled students

Miscellaneous Costs: Costs that you may incur (e.g. living expenses) while in U.S. can vary greatly from person to person, depending on your needs, tastes and habits. In general, the southern region, where McNeese is located, is considered to have an affordable cost of living.

Students who live modestly are typically able to live within the estimated cost of living of \$8,000 per year. Additional costs may include travel, unexpected medical expenses (i.e. co-pays or deductibles not covered by insurance) or personal expenses including cell phones, laptops, etc. If you live on-campus, you benefit by having all of your utilities and internet included.

Off-campus Housing Information

McNeese does not require on-campus accommodation for any students. There are a number of different rental options for new international students in Lake Charles. They are independently owned and operated. You may find information by searching “apartments in Lake Charles, LA”.

While McNeese neither endorses nor is affiliated with any of these housing operations, the following are frequented by other international students and are within walking distance of the campus:

Off-campus housing complex	Website	Phone
Flats on Walters	https://flatsonwalters.net/	+1 337 477 2951
The Commons at McNeese	https://www.apartments.com/the-commons-at-mcneese-lake-charles-la/wfhqw4k/	+1 337-480-1234
University Villas	https://www.facebook.com/universityvillasapartments/	+1 337 474 3333



Vaccination and Health Insurance Requirements

Bacterial Meningitis Vaccination Requirement: McNeese requires all new students to either receive a Bacterial Meningitis vaccination and submit corresponding vaccination documentation or sign our Proof of Immunization Compliance Form. Students who have not submitted either of those documents prior to admission will receive assistance upon check in with the OIP in completing the form. Please bring any immunization records, not previously submitted, to your check in appointment.

Health Insurance Requirement for All International Students: All international students are required to carry valid health insurance. McNeese will **auto-enroll students into a Group Health Insurance Plan** which meets minimum health insurance standards for F-1/J-1 students at an affordable price (~\$180/semester, subject to change). The current insurance policy is serviced through ISO Insurance: <https://www.isoa.org/>

Once the semester begins, you will receive your insurance card electronically directly from ISO. It will be delivered to your McNeese student email.

While this required policy may not be waived, you may independently purchase a supplement, if you wish. The mandatory policy is basic and does not cover pre-existing conditions. More information will be provided during your International Student Orientation.

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Additional Healthcare Information: Students who are enrolled (and have been issued a student ID) are eligible to use the Health Services Center (<http://www.mcneese.edu/healthservices>) on campus, which is open Monday-Friday, 7:00 am to 3:00 pm. The Student Health Services Center provides acute care medical services to all enrolled McNeese students. Student Health Services Center staff includes registered nurses, and doctors maintain daily clinic hours on the premises.

Emergencies and after-hour care must be sought at local Urgent Care Centers or hospital emergency rooms (see list below). Please be aware that emergency room visits in the United States are very expensive and the Student Health Services Center or Urgent Care facilities should be used when possible.

Students in need of counseling are also eligible to seek out the services of the McNeese Counseling Center (<http://www.mcneese.edu/counseling>), which provides individual mental health counseling sessions, learning assessments, career assessments, and access to a medical psychologist for medication management (screening with a counselor required first).

Urgent Care Centers near McNeese State University:

- Lake Charles Urgent Care
2400 Ryan St., (337) 990-8001
- Urgent Care Center of the Clinic
4201 Nelson Rd., (337) 310-2273
- Moss Memorial Urgent Care
1000 Walters St., (337) 480-8100
- Calcasieu Urgent Care
2640 Country Club Rd #400, (337) 426-0919

Hospitals/Emergency Rooms near McNeese State University:

In the case of a true emergency please call 9-1-1

- Lake Charles Memorial Hospital
1701 Oak Park Blvd, (337) 494-3000
- CHRISTUS St. Patrick Hospital
524 Dr. Michael Debakey Dr., (337) 436-2511

SEVIS Transfer Students

A transfer student is a student who is currently in the U.S. as an F-1 student and is either studying at another Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) approved school or is on approved Optional Practical Training (OPT) on another school's I-20.

Transfer students who wish to study at McNeese State University will need to have their SEVIS record transferred to McNeese (School Code **NOL214F00101000**). To transfer your SEVIS record:

- Communicate your intent to transfer to your current school's international advisor, who will likely ask to see your letter of admission from McNeese.
- Clarify the release date for your SEVIS record. We cannot issue a transfer I-20 before the release date set by your current school.

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- ALL transfer students must submit the Transfer Release Form *prior to any* registration holds being lifted

Issues regarding transfer credit are addressed in the following Academic Advising section.

Academic Advising

Pre-arrival Advising/Registration is generally available for students who have already been issued an F-1 visa prior to the program start date listed on the Form I-20. In the case of delayed visa issuance, students will be advised and register after arriving and checking in with the OIP.

Freshman Student Academic Advising: Freshman students are advised by Freshman Advising. You can become familiar what they have to offer here:
<https://www.mcneese.edu/academics/freshman-advising/>

Freshman international students who possess an F-1 visa may opt for pre-arrival advising/registration, otherwise advising will occur after arriving and checking in with the OIP, either before or during Freshman Orientation. Note, you will be alerted via email when pre-arrival advising is available. All students must attend Freshman Orientation!

Transfer Student Academic Advising: Transfer students are encouraged to reach out to their Department Head soon after acceptance in order to determine how your credits will impact your McNeese degree plan.

Degreeworks is a valuable tool designed to help all students assess degree progress and is made available to newly admitted students. Please be advised that the Degreework Reports are contingent upon the Registrar Office finalizing transfer credit and departmental review of courses.

Transfer courses that do not have direct matches at McNeese will appear as XX credit in Degreeworks; these courses can be substituted for degree requirements and/or electives. Students should correspond directly with their Department Head to assess XX credit.

Foreign Transfer Credit: Students seeking foreign transfer credit (from a university outside of the U.S.) must notify the Office of International Programs of their intentions to transfer credit. The OIP will alert the Registrar Office to begin processing the credit. All credit is entered as XX (general credit) with the exception of A-Levels/IB credits. XX credit allows departments to substitute as needed on a student's degree plan.

Students should provide course descriptions to their Department Head after the credit has been processed by the Registrar and the student has alerted the department of intentions to transfer international credit. Course descriptions must match the courses on the official transcript submitted for admission as well as the professional credential evaluation that was also submitted at the time of admission. (Please note that transfer credit will NOT be awarded for English classes taken in non-English speaking countries.)



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The foreign transfer credit evaluation process takes approximately one month, as academic departments must assess how to substitute the credit on a student degree plan and complete the electronic approval process in Degreeworks. If your transfer credit is not completed before you register for classes, we highly suggest that you try not to register for classes for which you think you may receive transfer credit.

Graduate Student Academic Advising: McNeese's graduate level programs generally advise students as they arrive on campus. Once students arrive on our campus and check in with the OIP, our office will instruct you on how to see your advisor. Graduate students that have been granted an F-1 Visa may be advised prior to arriving, per departmental approval.

Note: If you are a graduate Mathematical Sciences student (Computer Science, Statistics, Mathematics concentrations) are required to complete pre-registration testing. You will be emailed this information separately.

Enrollment Requirements for International Students

F-1 international students are required by the Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) to enroll in a full course of study each fall and spring semester. All new international students are required to enroll in a full course of study for the fall and spring semester.

A full course of study is:

- Minimum of **12 hours** for *undergraduate students*
- Minimum of **9 hours** for *graduate students*
- For F-1 students no more than the equivalent of one class, or three credits per semester, of **WEB-BASED INSTRUCTION** may be counted towards the full course of study requirement.
 - For undergraduate students this means 9 hours face-to-face courses and the remaining 3+ hours may be face-to-face OR online "W" course. (12 hours total)
 - For graduate students this means 6 hours face-to-face and the remaining 3+ hours may be face-to-face OR online "W" course. (9 hours total)
- Students are not required to enroll in courses during the summer, except when the summer is their first semester at McNeese.

Please note that there are extremely limited exceptions to the full course of study requirements for international students. New international students need to be prepared to enroll in the minimum course load. **A typical class is normally considered 3 credit hours.** (For example, 9 credit hours would be 3 classes.)

In order to ensure a smooth and successful first semester, we recommend that you consider taking less intensive classes, add a recreational or class for personal growth and make use of the free support services during the first semester including the Writing Center, departmental tutoring, the Counseling Center and professors' office hours.

Funding Your Education

On-campus Employment: Permission from the OIP or SEVP is not required before you may begin your employment on-campus.

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Below are the different types of on-campus employment positions:

- Student workers may be employed up to 20 hours a week while classes are in session. Students are most typically paid Louisiana minimum wage.
- Graduate Assistants (GA's) may be employed up to 20 hours a week while classes are in session. Graduate assistants are typically paid a higher wage than student workers, and full time graduate students receive a non-resident fee waiver. A very limited number of GA positions are available.
- The International Programs Office does not assist students with acquiring positions.

Please note that while on-campus student employment is an F-1 benefit, it should not be viewed as a reliable source of income to meet your basic needs and educational expenses.

Scholarships: The Scholarship Office awards scholarships to students. For specific questions about scholarships, please email scholarships@mcneese.edu. If you were awarded a scholarship, you need to be sure to carefully review your scholarship letter.

In general, scholarships are based on academic achievement in terms of GPA. Please be aware of the terms of your scholarship, the minimum GPA and the credit hours required to meet the maintenance criteria. This information is on your award letter. Contact the Scholarship Office, for questions regarding continuation requirements.

Social Security Number: International students are eligible for a Social Security Number (SSN) once an offer of employment has been secured. Students are eligible for on-campus employment any time during their full-time enrollment, provided they are in legal, active F-1 Status.

Off-campus employment is restricted due to the F visa regulations. You are not permitted to work off-campus for any reason during your course of study unless permission is granted by the OIP in accordance with F-1 regulations.

Tuition and Fee Payment

McNeese does not require any deposit/fee to "hold" admissions. Payment for tuition and fees is handled through the Cashier's Office located in Smith Hall.

The exact amount of tuition and fees a student will pay for the first semester is not calculated until after registered for classes is completed. Students may find the schedule for tuition and fees (one course is usually 3 credit hours) here: <https://www.mcneese.edu/admissions/estimated-costs/>

Arriving in a timely manner and registering before the late registration period, as outlined in the University calendar, which can be found online here: mcneese.edu/calendar, will increase course availability and scheduling options.

Campus Safety

McNeese State University has a safe campus surrounded by a residential community within the town of Lake Charles in southwest Louisiana. We understand many parents and students are

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concerned about safety on university campuses. **The University Police Department (UPD)** is responsible for law enforcement on the McNeese campus and provides continuous patrols across campus to ensure the safety of the university community.

University police offers a number of services to the university community that will be discussed at International Orientation. If you ever have any concerns, even regarding an off-campus issue, you are encouraged to contact McNeese UPD at 337-475-5711. They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Other Information about your educational destination:

Tourism: Your stay in the United States, specifically in the Lake Charles area, should be educational as well as enjoyable and adventurous. Most cities have organized offices to assist visitors in becoming acquainted with the surrounding areas and promote tourism. To learn more about living and exploring the Lake Charles area, as well as to view a calendar of local events, please visit the following web site for the Convention and Visitors Bureau for Southwest Louisiana: <http://www.visitlakecharles.org>

Weather/Local Climate: With a warm and sunny climate, Lake Charles is an ideal place to live and learn all year round, boasting average winter temperatures in the mid to upper 60's. Summers can be hot and humid, but the surrounding inter-coastal waterways that encompass Lake Charles help to provide a cooling breeze. Students should prepare to dress lightly for majority of the year. A light jacket will suffice the infrequent, "chilly" winter and early spring days. At times, freezing temperatures do arise in the event of a cold front; a heavy jacket may be needed for a few days.

Parks & Recreation: The city of Lake Charles and surrounding areas of Southwest Louisiana offer public access to several parks and recreational areas where residents and visitors can congregate to enjoy a variety of activities and connect with nature. Many local parks and recreation zones are not just great sites for relaxing, playing sports, camping, exercising and having a picnic, but provide access to unique activities such as fishing, crabbing, kayaking, boating and bird and alligator watching. Public beaches along the Gulf of Mexico are also just a short drive away. A variety of public athletic complexes are also available for the sports enthusiast and are where community members and visitors can join in city teams such as adult softball and soccer. See the list below of some of the most frequented outdoor parks and recreational areas.

- Creole Nature Trail
- Sam Houston Jones State Park
- Prien Lake Park
- Calcasieu Point Landing
- Lakefront Promenade



Public Transportation: Lake Charles currently offers five fixed public transport routes. Bus service is provided Monday through Friday from 5:45 A.M. through 5:45 P.M. (except on City

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holidays). All routes depart the Transit Customer Service Center located at 1155 Ryan Street, every 45 minutes after the hour.

Public transportation is still developing in Lake Charles and can be very limited. Please visit the following webpage for information on public transit routes and stops:

<http://www.cityoflakecharles.com/departments/division.php?structureid=194>

We hope that you find this information helpful. Best of luck with your travel preparations. Safe travels, and we hope to see you very soon! ☺



Photo credit: LindseyJanies.com