

SURVIVAL GUIDE

**For New Graduate Students in the
Department of Biological Sciences
at Florida International University**

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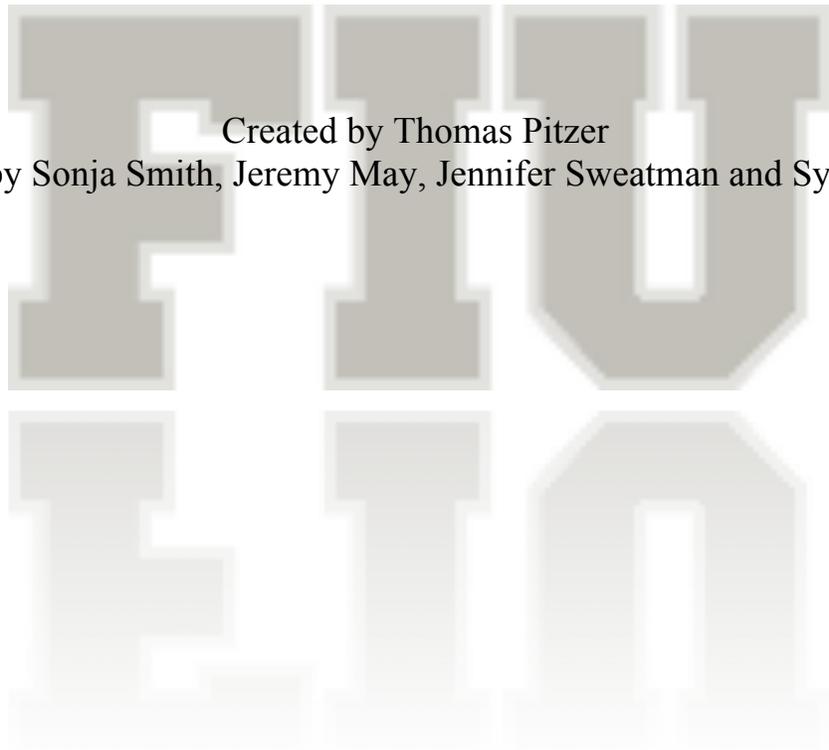


Table of Contents

GETTING STARTED	3
IMMUNIZATIONS	3
DRIVER’S LICENSE AND AUTO	5
1.) Get Florida Driver’s license	5
2.) Get Florida car insurance*	6
3.) Get Florida title and registration.....	6
a) Obtain form HSMV 82040	6
b) Proof of Florida Insurance	7
c) Original car title	7
d) Payment.....	7
OBTAINING FLORIDA RESIDENCY	8
REGISTRATION	9
1) Official Admission	9
2) Class Registration.....	10
OFFICIAL FIU PHOTO ID	12
PARKING.....	13
EMPLOYMENT	13
GRANTS AND FUNDING	13
OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION	14
1) Housing	14
2) Websites	14
2) Businesses near campus	15
SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS	15
1) Passport, VISA and I-20.....	15
2) Social Security Number.....	16
3) Driver’s License	16

GETTING STARTED

Welcome to the biology program at Florida International University! You are joining a growing and dynamic teaching and research program. This pamphlet was created to assist you in moving to the Miami area and beginning graduate studies in the Department of Biological Sciences at FIU. As in any new endeavor, the acclimation process can be cumbersome without some assistance. This manual should aid you in making a smooth transition into the program. Note: I assume you have spoken with a prospective "major professor" and have applied to the department and university at this point.

Before anything else, call the Graduate Program Secretary, **Ileana Lindsay** (OE-225; biograd@fiu.edu, 305-348-4130), and make sure you are on track with your employment contract and that your application for admittance has been processed. *Because email is the main line of communication between the Graduate Office and the Graduate Students, you must contact her if/when you update your email address.* Additionally, go to the Campus Life office (GC 2240) located in the Graham Center and get a "Student Handbook;" this is a valuable resource for phone numbers, schedules, policies and procedures, calendars, and general university information. A pdf version of the Student Handbook, as well as other useful information, is also available on the FIU website under the "current students" page. Be sure to contact the **University Graduate School** (<http://gradschool.fiu.edu/> or 305-348-7442) to obtain the necessary forms and timelines pertinent to your graduate program. Next, contact your major professor to discuss any questions, problems, or last minute details. She/he may have more information for you as well. It is a good idea to keep in touch, either by phone or email, with your major professor during the time leading up to your arrival and entrance into the program. If you are going to be awarded a Teaching Assistantship (TA), or think you are, you should confirm with **Steve Oberbauer** the Graduate Program Director (Office: HLS 218A, 305-348-2580, oberbaue@fiu.edu). Don't assume that you are going to receive a TA simply because you or your major professor has asked for it. Once confirmed, email or call **Thomas Pitzer** (pitzert@fiu.edu or 305-348-1224). He will have paperwork for you to fill out regarding what you will teach and teaching orientation. Also, make certain that you have your original (not a copy) Social Security Card in hand when you arrive - this is required for the hiring process.

DON'T ASSUME THAT EVERYTHING IS GOING ALONG FINE BECAUSE YOU DON'T HEAR OTHERWISE. You have to keep on top of everything because we probably will not due to the large number of new and current graduate students. It's easy to slip through the system without a contract or lab to teach. Once you are in Miami, don't rely on leaving a voice mail or email message to get what you need – always go in person.

What follows is a review of important information for moving to Miami and beginning the biology graduate program. It is not meant to be a full and complete list of everything you need to do. Good luck and welcome to the graduate program here at FIU!

IMMUNIZATIONS

Most new graduate students at FIU don't know there is an immunization policy until they get an "IM" hold on their registration attempt. Please plan to take care of your immunization

requirements at least four weeks before you register for classes. The current immunization requirement (for students matriculated from July 1, 2008 or later) is:

- 2 doses of MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella) vaccine,
- 3 doses of Hepatitis B vaccine or proof of immunity, and
- 1 dose of Meningococcal Meningitis vaccine.

Students may decline vaccination for meningitis and/or hepatitis B only if they sign a [Waiver of Liability](#). If you have these immunizations, provide the FIU Health Care & Wellness Center with a written document signed by a physician (M.D. or D.O.), a nurse practitioner, or a registered nurse via fax or in person on either campus four weeks prior to registration. If you have questions, call the **Health Care and Wellness Center Immunization Department**:

Modesto Maidique (South) Campus:
Immunization Department
University Health Services Complex
11200 SW 8th Street, Room 101
Miami, FL 33199
(305) 348-2401
(305) 348-3336 FAX
M-F 9:00am to 4:30pm

Biscayne Bay (North) Campus:
Immunization Department
3000 N.E. 151 Street
North Miami, FL 33181
(305) 919-5675
(305) 919-5312 FAX
M-TH 9:00am to 5:00pm
F 9:00am to 4:00pm

Web: <http://studenthealth.fiu.edu/immunization/Pages/default.aspx>

Email: immune@fiu.edu

If you do not have a copy of your immunization record, contact your physician or previous undergraduate or graduate school. They can make a copy for you.

The Health and Wellness Center provides immunization shots on an ongoing basis; please see contact information above. The cost for each vaccine, per dose, is as follows: MMR - \$65 (x 2 doses required), Hepatitis B - \$70 (x 3 doses required), Meningitis - \$130 (x 1 dose required). Payment can be made via check, credit card, or money order; cash is only accepted at the Modesto Maidique facility. Vaccinations can also be obtained from a private physician or a Public Health Office (listed on the HWC website linked above).

DRIVER'S LICENSE AND AUTO

If you are an International Student, this section does not apply to you. Please, check how to get your driver's license in the section made especially for you.

You need to get a Florida driver's license or state ID card in order to be considered a Florida resident. It is also good to have if you get pulled over or want to get into local bars.

1.) Get A Florida Driver's license

For information on required documents please visit <http://www.gathergoget.com/>. This is a user-friendly website that will list EXACTLY what documents will work for you. If you have an out-of-state driver's license you will not be required to take a driving test in order to obtain a Florida's driver's license. You will be given an eye exam and your picture will be taken for your new license. This costs approximately \$25. They keep your old license. If you can afford to wait 2 to 3 weeks for a new license, we recommend you make an [appointment](#) with them before you go. It is nearly impossible to get an appointment any earlier than that. If you decide to go in person, arrive at least 30 to 45 minutes before they are scheduled to open, as they are even busier in the afternoons. Locations near each campus are listed below. Additional locations are listed at the [Service Centers in Miami-Dade County website](#) or call 305-229-6333.

Drivers License Service Centers near FIU

Modesto Maidique Campus:
1315-B Southwest 107 Avenue
Miami, FL 33174

Biscayne Bay Campus:
12601 Northwest 42 Avenue
Opa-locka, FL 33054

2.) Get Florida car insurance*

You have to have insurance that lists you as a Florida resident before you can register your car. Therefore you will have to pay Dade County insurance rates, among the highest in the U.S. When you file for insurance, keep in mind the incredible number of cars that get stolen and the number of accidents (often involving uninsured drivers) in Miami. Consider transferring your old policy to an agent with your company in Miami. Check with your insurance provider regarding coverage types and requirements.

Once you get your insurance voucher proceed to step three.

**Some students have opted to keep/change their car in their parents' name in order to avoid high insurance costs and getting a Florida title and registration. While this is a possibility, you will have to check on whether or not it is legal.*

3.) Get Florida title and registration

Obtaining registration is extremely expensive (~\$450). Before you visit one of the Florida Motor Vehicle Service Centers, you need the following items.

a) [Form HSMV 82040](#)

Fill out this form and have your VIN physically inspected by one of the following individuals. They will sign this form as well:

- A law enforcement officer from any state.
- A licensed Florida or out of state motor vehicle dealer. NOTE: If the VIN is verified by an out of state motor vehicle dealer, the verification must be submitted on their letterhead stationery.
- A Florida DMV Compliance Examiner/Inspector, DMV or tax collector employee.
- A notary public commissioned by the state of Florida.

- Provost Marshal (an officer who supervises the military police of a command) or a commissioned officer in active military service, with a rank of 2nd Lieutenant or higher or an LNC, "Legalman, Chief Petty Officer, E-7".

(Note: The Motor Vehicle office you visit SHOULD be able to inspect your VIN and sign this form so just bring the form with you).

b) Proof of Florida Insurance (step 2 above)

c) Original car title

1. If someone else's name is on your car title and they are unable to physically go with you to the DMV, you will need to obtain a copy of their driver's license and have them sign [form HSMV 82040](#) (same as above). That means you'll need a couple extra days to mail them the form to sign and have them mail it back with a copy of their driver's license.
2. If you are still paying off a car loan for your vehicle, call your lien holder and ask to have the ORIGINAL title mailed to one of the Motor Vehicle centers above. You will have to provide an address, so select the service center most convenient to you (locations listed below). You can also have the Motor Vehicle center contact your lien-holder on your behalf, but they will charge you around \$5 for this and you will still have to wait a few days for your title to arrive.

d) Payment

- 1) Many places do not accept credit cards so bring your checkbook AND a debit card. In fact, bring all three just to be sure.

You can find more information about registering your vehicle in Florida at

<http://www.flhsmv.gov/dhsmv/newflres.html>.

Once you have **ALL the above information**, you are now ready to visit a Motor Vehicle Center!

Motor Vehicle Centers near FIU

Modesto Maidique Campus:
South Dade Government Center
10710 SW 211 St

Biscayne Bay Campus:
313 NE 167 Street 33162
(305) 770-1900
12935 W. Dixie Highway 33161;
(305) 891-6424

Additional locations (be sure you are looking at the Motor Vehicle Centers and not the Drivers License offices): <http://www.flhsmv.gov/offices/miamidade.html>

OBTAINING FLORIDA RESIDENCY

Residency classification for tuition purposes is summed up in the Department of Biological Sciences Policy Manual, but we will also explain it here. This section only applies to U.S. citizens or legal aliens. If you are an international student this section does not apply to you. Please see the "Survival Guide for International Students" section below instead.

Always default to the **admissions website** (it says "Undergraduate Admissions" but applies to Grad students too): http://admissions.fiu.edu/costs/General_Overview.php

Having residency for tuition purposes lowers your tuition. If FIU is covering your tuition, for students who are *not* on a **GA** (TA or RA), they only cover in-state/resident tuition, and you may pay the difference. If you are a TA or RA with a tuition waiver from FIU, the waiver will cover either in-state or out-of-state/non-resident tuition. Therefore, if you qualify as a resident of Florida for tuition purposes, please apply for residency to save yourself and/or FIU money.

Initially establishing residency:

[Admissions website](#) scroll down to "Florida Residency for Tuition Purposes".

The rule is: You will be classified as "**Out-of-State**" (same as "**Non-Res**") if you provide Office of Admissions with documents with an out-of-state address OR don't file for residency. To file/qualify for Florida residency (to be classified as "**In-State**"/"**Res**") fill out this form <http://admissions.fiu.edu/how/forms/residency.pdf> called "Florida Residency Form/Affidavit". Attach the appropriate documents (the first page of the PDF tells you which ones), which must be dated AT LEAST 12 MONTHS BEFORE you started full-time enrollment at FIU. As of 2009ish, for in-state classification, the state of Florida requires proof that a student has not moved to FL just to attend classes. That's why the documents require tax returns (just federal, because there is no state income tax in FL) for the previous year/12 months BEFORE full-time enrollment at FIU began. Taking classes on & off, or part time, concurrent with working full-time NOT AT FIU and earning at least \$11,000 and providing a tax return as proof, is OK to be initially classified as in-state. The only rush to get your documents like FL drivers license, etc, as soon as you move is only if you are moving to FL exactly 12 months before you begin full-time enrollment at FIU. Once that 12 months is up, you can **apply for residency**. Once you qualify for residency, please provide the documents (make your own copies for FIU to keep but bring the originals with you to be safe) to the Office of Admissions. The **last day to apply for Florida residency** is generally the last day to pay for classes for the given semester. It is a good idea to turn your forms in ahead of time in case the Registrar's Office needs additional information.

Offices of Admissions:

Modesto Maidique Campus
Office of Undergraduate Admissions
Location: PC 140
[305-348-2363](tel:305-348-2363)

Biscayne Bay Campus
Enrollment Center
Location: AC1 Room 100
[305-919-5752](tel:305-919-5752)

Professionals to contact: <http://onestop.fiu.edu/contact.htm> or Ted Randall 305-348-2320.

***Residency Re-classification:**

[Admissions website](#) scroll down to "Residency Re-classification".

This basically exists to bail out students who didn't know to initially file to get classified as In-state/Res. To apply for Residency Re-classification, fill out this form http://registrar.fiu.edu/fileadmin/templates/Registration/images/Forms/Records/Residency_Reclassification_Application.pdf called "ResidencyReclassification Application" (although in the Residency Re-classification section of the website the link is incorrectly called "Florida Residency Form/Affidavit", which is the name of the initial classification form; see above for the link to that form). Attach the appropriate documents (the list is in the middle of the document), WHICH MUST BE DATED AT LEAST 12 MONTHS BEFORE STARTING FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT AT FIU. As of 2009, for in-state classification, the state of Florida requires proof that a student has not moved to FL just to attend classes. This applies even after you have been here for a year. So basically, if you move into FL less than 12 months before you start full-time enrollment at FIU, you will not be able to initially be classified as in-state, but also you will (probably) never be able to re-classify as In-state, unless you take a year off of school and get a job outside of FIU but still in FL.

Caveat: After filing for Re-classification, whether the woman in charge of re-classification (Acheline Augustave at BBC, MMC may have their own) approves or denies your application, she forwards your application to an Appeals board. They may override her denial of your reclassification, and their decision is final, so it never hurts to send in the application (after the appropriate 12 months, though). This appeal board also looks over any other status changes (single to married, dependent to independent, under 24 & dependent to over 24) so another status change happens to you, it can help your re-classification as Res or Non-res as well (her example was if your new husband is in-state and you are out-of-state you can use his documents, although this is not guaranteed). Acheline & the appeals board see the documents you submit with the application as well as your FIU transcript, so focus on using documents that show your employment/prove you aren't here just for school. The **last day to apply for Florida residency** is generally the last day to pay for classes for the given semester. It is a good idea to turn your forms in ahead of time in case the Registrar's Office needs additional information.

Documentation:

Required documents are listed on the "Florida Residency Form/Affidavit" <http://admissions.fiu.edu/how/forms/residency.pdf> or "ResidencyReclassification Application" as appropriate http://registrar.fiu.edu/fileadmin/templates/Registration/images/Forms/Records/Residency_Reclassification_Application.pdf, as stated above. Information on automobile registration and obtaining a driver's license is in the previous section. The Voter's Registration Office is located at 111 NW 1st Street, OR you can register to vote at the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) when you take care of registering your car (call 305-229-6333 for locations), OR you can get a voter registration form from the University Bookstore and mail it in.

Remember, if you are financially **dependent** (cannot file your taxes as an independent, such as relying on parents for $\geq 50\%$ of your income and expenses, or are under 24), then the documents

must be your parents', not yours; you cannot be considered a legal resident of Florida unless your parents apply and are considered legal Florida residents. For **independent** students, the documents must be in your name. You should not need to establish residency if you are active duty military or a full-time faculty member (check the Admissions website).

REGISTRATION

1) Official Admission

You should have received word from FIU and the Biological Sciences Department as to your acceptance. This signifies that the Biological Sciences Department received your forms, transcripts and test scores, and that you are accepted into the Department. Check with the Biological Sciences Department's Graduate Program secretary, **Ileana Lindsay**, at 305-348-4130 (room OE 225) to make sure that your information is up-to-date and on-track. Be sure to ask for the current Department's Policies and Procedures Manual which has a lot of useful information. The Policies and Procedures Manual can also be found on the Biological Sciences Graduate Program website at <http://biology.fiu.edu/academics/graduate-programs/policies-forms/policies-procedures.pdf>.

To register for classes, you must make certain that the FIU Admissions Office has all your necessary documentation. A visit to the receptionist at the Office of Graduate Admissions (room PC 140) will be necessary. Just ask if you are missing any documents and they will let you know. If you're not on campus yet, you can call them at 305-348-2363.

You will also need to get a Panther ID (PID) number. One was assigned to you so if you don't know it, you can [look it up here](#). You should memorize your Panther ID number because all of your records are now linked to this number.

The following are the location and hours for the Office of Admissions:

Modesto A. Maidique (South) Campus
Charles E. Perry Building - room PC140
Monday, Thursday, Friday 8am-5pm
Tuesday, Wednesday 8am-7pm
First Saturday every month 9am-1pm
Phone: 305-348-2363

Biscayne Bay (North) Campus
Academic Unit I - room ACI 100
Monday, Thursday, Friday 8am-5pm
Tuesday, Wednesday 8am-7pm
Phone: 305-919-5760

Modesto Maidique (South) Campus
Office of Graduate Admissions
Charles E. Perry Building – room PC231
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 8:30am-5pm
Tuesday 8:30am-7pm
Phone: 305-348-7442

2) Class Registration

The minimum number of credits required for maintaining your TA status is ten (10) for the first semester, and nine (9) for Fall and Spring semesters thereafter and six (6) for the Summer semester. In your first semester, you must register for the 1 credit of pedagogy (Teaching Biology). PhD students register for a second unit of this course *again* during another semester if you would go over 10 credits this Fall; Masters students only ever need it to count for 1 unit. The college will provide funds for the extra credit during the first term. Your major professor and committee will suggest the appropriate courses you must take, and the remainder of the credits will be filled with student research credits. The Biological Sciences Department issues a *graduate tuition waiver* for each semester. This pays for part of the tuition and you are responsible for the remainder. You are also responsible for paying all University fees (parking, health center, athletic, etc.). The Graduate Program secretary, **Ileana Lindsay**, will send an email before payment is due detailing the exact amount for which you are responsible. Registration is not open until early August, but you can add the courses you want to your 'shopping cart' for enrollment during open registration dates.

To register for classes, follow these steps:

- i. Get your Panther ID number ([look it up here](#)).
- ii. Meet with your major professor and decided on courses to be taken.
- iii. Log into PantherSoft at <https://my.fiu.edu/>. Your initial password is your birthdate in the form MMDDYYYY. For example, if you were born on May 12th, 1981 your password would be 05121981. Once you log into the system you should change your password.
- iv. If you need to find classes in which to enroll, search the list of classes being offered using the links Self Service/Class Search-Browse Catalog/Class Search. Choose a term of enrollment and search available classes by subject, catalog number or course ID. This can be tricky, but try starting with Biological Sciences Department as the subject group and use subjects such as BSC (Biological Science) MCB (Microbiology) PCB (Process Biology).
- v. Once you have identified the class numbers, check to see if an "override number" is required. If so, email the professor listed for that class to obtain the number. Once you have all the necessary override numbers, simply click on the Self Service link and under Enrollment you can find a link for Enrollment: Add Classes. Choose the appropriate term of enrollment and add your classes. If you are having trouble registering or need assistance with Panthersoft visit the Biology office located in OE 161 and ask for Helen Forlong.
- vi. PAY YOUR BILL
 - a. Once you've registered you will be able to view and pay your semester bill in Panthersoft. This will show the tuition amount. You can calculate the total due by subtracting the tuition waiver. Check with the Biology Department (the Graduate Program Secretary, **Ileana Lindsay**) for the exact amount of your tuition reduction,

- because the Cashier's Office will not know. If you have supplemental financial aid, the amount you owe is usually subtracted from your financial aid check so you don't have to pay anything out of pocket. BUT, you should definitely check with the financial aid office to make sure everything is on track.
- a. Note: If you receive financial aid it will be credited to your account before your tuition bill. The university will automatically deduct your entire bill from the financial aid credit in your account. You should be reimbursed for the tuition credit within a month.
 - b. You can also pay tuition at the Cashier's Office in the Charles E. Perry Building (PC) at MMC or in Academic I (ACI) at BBC. If you don't have the necessary amount available, you can get a short-term tuition loan from the financial aid office. FIU also allows you to pay the fees in installments (there is small price for it). If you do not feel like waiting in the line to pay, you can simply drop payment in a special drop box in the main hallway located on the first floor of the PC building if you are at south campus.
 - c. YOU MUST PAY BY THE DEADLINE TO AVOID CANCELLATION OF ALL YOUR CLASSES, which will happen on the last day to pay for classes. If your classes get dropped, you have to do everything again. It is your responsibility to check the academic calendars (<http://gradschool.fiu.edu>; <http://www.fiu.edu/~register/calendars.htm>) to be sure you are in accordance with FIU deadlines. Please be sure to check the calendars at both offices to make sure dates are in agreement.
 - a. Note: Sometimes the tuition waiver doesn't get posted to your account before the payment deadline, **but you are still required to pay the fees before the deadline**. In this case you won't be dropped from your courses nor will you be charged the late fee.
 - d. FIU now imposes a \$100 fee for late registration. Sometimes it's difficult to get all your override numbers and register before the deadline. In order to avoid paying the fee, you can register on the web for ANY graduate level biology classes that are open, just make sure that your total credits are correct (9 for TA's for fall and spring). You can then CHANGE your schedule during the add/drop period without being penalized. This may sound a bit backwards, but it is much easier to avoid the late fee altogether than try to fight it after the fact. **It is really important to keep documentation of everything**. So if you register online, print out the panthersoft web page that shows you are registered. Also keep printouts of what you owe and what you have paid. Panthersoft information tends to change, sometimes unfavorably.

OFFICIAL FIU PHOTO ID

You will need an official FIU identification card. This card allows you access to University functions and sporting events, and acts as a library card. You can receive an advance loan for books and supplies that will be credited to your card and can be used at the FIU Bookstore (check with Financial Aid about this). You can also add money to your card to spend at several food vendors at the University and your card is required for taking the shuttle between the north and south campuses. The ID is also required for many transactions on campus including future registration for courses. You need to be at the photo ID office as early as possible to avoid the

long lines. The office requires a picture ID and your receipt of registration for classes. The initial ID is “free” (the cost is included in your Tuitions and Fees). Replacements cost \$15.

The photo ID office locations and hours are as follows:

University Park (South) Campus Graham Center (GC) 104E Monday - Thursday 9:30am-6pm (Closed Friday) Phone – 305-348-3910 or 305-348-2297	Biscayne Bay (North) Campus Wolfe Center (WC) 143 Monday & Wednesday: 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Tuesday & Thursday: 8:30-10:30am & 12-6pm (Closed Friday) Phone: 305-919-5406
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PARKING

Once you register for classes you will need to pick up your parking decal at PG5-Market Station on MMC campus, or at Wolfe University Center (rm 353) on BBC campus. You can find information on parking at <http://parking.fiu.edu/>. Should you get a different car than the one you originally registered with the parking office, you will have to register your new car and get a new tag for \$15.

EMPLOYMENT

Now it is time to submit your paperwork for FIU employment. It is important that you take these steps as soon as you arrive in Miami, because you won't get paid until several weeks after you complete this process. Contract processing has changed to make it far more likely that you will get paid within your first month, but be prepared in the event that you are not. You must submit paperwork for Human Resources, and then sign a contract. The paperwork for Human Resources includes an I-9 as well as a sign-on packet (11 forms total). Both the I-9 and the sign-on packet can be found at: http://hr.fiu.edu/index.php?name=sign-on_package. Obtain or download and fill in the forms, then turn it in to **Payroll in PC 224 (MMC)**. When you turn in your paperwork, be sure to have your social security card, passport, and drivers license or voter registration card with you as **Ileana Lindsay** must make copies of those before she can process your paperwork. Your contract, which you also need to sign, should be located with the Graduate Program Secretary. Because you won't get paid until this process is complete (and until each of those 13 forms is processed), it is generally a good idea to check up on this process to make sure that no one has encountered problems with it along the way. Check with **Human Resources (305) 348-2181** or with **Payroll (305-348-2191)** and if you applied for direct-deposit you may check with these offices for its status. Even if you have applied for direct-deposit, this will take some time to go through. You will most likely receive your first payments in the form of a check that you will have to pick up at the payroll window by presenting your Panther ID card.

GRANTS AND FUNDING

It is important for you to seek funding for your research as soon as you have a proposal. If you are a masters student, remember most funding will only be available your first semester. Links

to grants and other sources of funding can be found at:

<http://gradschool.fiu.edu/Fellowships.html>; <http://scholarships.fiu.edu/otherscholarship.html>

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

1) Housing

If you do not have a car, find a place to live that is very close to campus because the bus system is unreliable. You can walk or bike to school, but remember the roads are not bike friendly and the heat is intense for many months of the year. An apartment complex near school would probably be your best bet.

FIU Modesto Maidique Campus is ideally located in that if you live anywhere east of the main campus, then when you come to school in the morning and leave in the afternoon, you will be driving against traffic. If you live southwest of MMC (i.e., Kendall), 117th ave is usually the fastest way to get to school. Some of the more popular places to live are: the area around school (Sweetwater and Westchester), Coral Gables, Kendall, and Miami Beach.

Students spending most of their time at FIU Biscayne Bay Campus may prefer to live in North Miami Beach, Bal Harbor, Sunny Isles, Hollywood, Pembroke Pines, and the surrounding areas. There are apartment complexes along Biscayne Blvd (US 1) which make for a quick bike ride into campus. Or, if you live on 135th St., east of Biscayne Blvd, there is a bike/walking path through a wooded area that leads you directly into campus.

No matter where you decide to live, or if you have a car or not, remember that Miami is bisected by canals that can only be crossed in specific places. Be sure to check the map and make sure there is a bridge near where you live. It is a good idea to ask your future labmates for advice - they will give you a better idea of how things work. Also, at the beginning of semesters, there are several people moving in and out, so they might know about rooms or apartments being offered by other students. Make sure you are subscribed to the department email listservs (BIOANNOUNCE, GRADBIOSTUDENTS) to get emails about available rooms for rent or furniture for sale (or sometimes free!).

2) Websites with useful information on housing in Miami

<http://www.miamiherald.com>

<http://www.theflyer.com>

<http://www.miaminewtimes.com/>

<http://www.craigslist.com/>

<http://www.rent.com>

3) Businesses near campus

Modesto Maidique Campus

- Winn-Dixie (supermarket) - 9565 W Flagler Street.; 12254 SW 8th Street; 8855 Coral Way, 10505 NW 41st Street
- Publix (supermarket) - 1525 SW 107th Avenue; 8341 W Flagler Street; 8680 SW 24th Street; 9755 NW 41st Street
- Wal-Mart - 8651 NW 13th Terrace (off NW 87th Street - just past the entrance to the Dolphin Expressway (826))
- Target - 7795 SW 40th Street
- Home Depot - 7899 W Flagler Street (in the Mall of the Americas)
- USPS - 1700 NW 97th Avenue; 3801 SW 117th Avenue

Biscayne Bay Campus

- Publix – 14641 Biscayne Boulevard; 12850 Biscayne Boulevard
- Winn-Dixie - 3805 NE 163rd Street
- Walmart - 1425 NE 163rd Street
- Home Depot - 1245 NE 163rd Street; 12055 Biscayne Boulevard
- Target - 14075 Biscayne Boulevard
- FedEx - 15601 West Dixie Highway
- USPS - 14311 Biscayne Boulevard
- Total Wine - 14750 Biscayne Boulevard

SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

As an international student, a couple of things are very different for you. Be aware that there are a lot of things that you should do as soon as you get here, so you won't have problems in the future (i.e. not getting paid). Here is a list of things that work different for us. You might need to do something that I didn't do (rules can change), but take this list as a beginning for your life in the U.S.A. and welcome!

1) Passport, VISA and I-20

I would suggest you go to the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) at GC 355 (305-348-2421) as soon as you arrive to check if all your documents are correct and especially when you need to renew your I-20 form, VISA and, passport. Each time you re-enter the country you must go to this office so they can make a copy of your I-94 (they need to have all your documentation up to date, this is very important). In order to be allowed re-entry into the country you **MUST** have a valid signature on your I-20; your I-20 form is given to you with a signature that is valid for one year. Each time you will leave the country make sure you check this signature to see it is still valid, if it isn't, go to the ISSS office to get it signed. **MAKE SURE YOU MAKE THESE VISITS WITH TIME FOR THEM TO PROCESS IT BEFORE YOU HAVE TO LEAVE!** If your VISA and/or passport expired when you are inside the U.S. but your I-20 is valid, you are fine. The only thing to be aware of (especially if you are planning to go to meetings out of the U.S.) is that you cannot go to any other country and come back to the U.S.

before renewing your VISA and/or passport in your own country. So, be careful when planning trips!

2) Social Security Number

You **HAVE** to have a social security number to get paid. While your SS# is not ready, FIU will provide you a temporary student number, but they can take a couple of weeks to give this number to you, so be aware that you may not be paid in the first pay check (but when you are paid, you receive a retroactive amount, don't worry!).

Talk with the biology graduate program secretary **Ileana Lindsay** (305-348-4130) to make sure that you sign your contract and all the information that they need are completed. To get a SS# you will first need to ask **Ileana Lindsay** for a Certificate of employment that you will then have to take to the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) for them to sign (this will take them a couple of days).

You should prepare all the documents necessary to get your SS# and go to one of the Social Security Offices as soon as possible. Your Social Security number can take months to be ready! Keep in mind that they do not care about you at all, so don't be ashamed of going to the office every week and asking about your situation.

To find an office close to you, conduct a Google search online (<http://www.ssa.gov>). There is an office very close to MMC as well.

SOCIAL SECURITY
11401 W FLAGLER ST
MIAMI, FL 33174

Having a SS# will be very helpful for you in many other aspects like getting a credit card, buying a cell phone, etc.

3) Driver's License

Even if you do not drive, it is good to have a driver's license or a state ID card in Miami. You will need it for general identification, to get into bars, and plus it is not a good idea to walk around with your passport and VISA every day. The ID card costs \$25 and requires you to have your passport, I20 and two documents for address verification (ex: Lease documents, electricity bill, etc.).

You can drive legally in the U.S. using your passport until one month after you arrived. After this period, you are an illegal driver!!! So, get your driver's license as soon as possible. As an international student you are considered a new driver and it does not matter how many years you already have your driver's license in your country. So, you will have to take all the exams (eye exam, laws exam and driver exam). All exams will cost you US \$20-27 together. You will need your passport, I-20, an FIU letter saying that you are a graduate student (i.e., your RA/TA contract), and a couple of other papers. For more information: <http://www.flhsmv.gov>. You can download the book to study for the driver's license exam in pdf form online or you can pick one

up at an office; also online you will find a list of the required documents, fees and you can schedule appointment for taking the exams. Schedule your appointment well in advance because available slots might be months away. You can try walk-ins but this can result in hours of waiting or you need to get there early in the morning. If you prefer, you can call 305-229-6333 for most of the locations. There is one across from MMC on 107th Ave near Publix. Remember you will need a car to take the exam.

After you pass the exams, you will receive a provisory driver's license and the original will be sent to you by mail within around 10 days.

Be aware that if you buy a car, your car insurance will be more expensive than American citizens. This happens because you are considered brand new drivers (as 16 years old kids). As I said before, it does not matter how many years you were driving in your country before you got here... I know, it is horrible, but there is nothing you can do.

The car insurance is mandatory here! Don't drive without it! Traffic in Miami is dangerous! When looking for car insurance get quotes from different companies because they vary a lot in price (sometimes, more than US \$200 in a six month period).

If you are not planning to buy a car, you have to know the bus schedule (<http://www.miamidade.gov/transit/>)!!! Depending on where you live, it can take more than 2 hours by bus (and/or metro) to get to school. So, when registration comes, you should pay attention to what time your classes will start and if they are on the same campus or not.

WELCOME AND GOOD LUCK!