

# International Student Guidebook



**SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE  
& NEW EARTH INSTITUTE**



CONSCIOUSNESS-CENTERED GRADUATE SCHOOL  
3960 San Felipe Road, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87507 [www.swc.edu](http://www.swc.edu)

## International Students at Southwestern College

### About SWC – What Makes Studying at SWC a Distinctive Experience?

Southwestern College/New Earth Institute is a unique graduate school for degrees in counseling and art therapy. Located in the international art/travel mecca of Santa Fe, New Mexico, we have been training consciousness-centered therapists and leaders in the mental health field since 1979.

Our holistic approach to personal and planetary wellness emphasizes developing our students' own inner strengths as a necessary precursor to helping others. Our students, as therapists, have an approach that includes a unique blend of compassion, collaboration, and exploration of client strengths along with the clinical awareness necessary for true healing work.

We are fully accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and the American Art Therapy Association. Our graduates are in therapist and leadership positions all over New Mexico and the United States (forty-seven states.) In addition, our international graduates are practicing in Asia, Europe and Central America. The goal here at Southwestern College is to facilitate a transformational process of self-reflection and increased awareness preparing our students for meaningful and sustainable careers.

### Degree Programs

There are currently three graduate programs available at Southwestern College. There is a M.A. in Counseling, a M.A. in Art Therapy/Counseling and finally, a M.A. in Art Therapy for Clinical Professionals (those who already have a clinical M.A. degree and are seeking art therapy training to add to their repertoire would select the latter degree to pursue). All three of these degrees can lead to licensure in the United States. This licensure is not portable to other countries; however, the training can be recognized in other countries. We would recommend that an international applicant research clinical mental health credentialing in the country they intend to practice in order to learn as much as possible about that process. Furthermore, the training can be particularly meaningful to enhance a coaching and consulting practice.

In addition to our graduate degree programs, we offer specialty certificates that can be taken concurrently with the degree coursework. The certificate programs are in:

- [\*Addictions, Abuse and Recovery\*](#)
- [\*Applied Interpersonal Neurobiology\*](#)
- [\*Children's Mental Health\*](#)
- [\*Ecotherapy\*](#)
- [\*Human Sexuality\*](#)
- [\*Trauma, Grief and Renewal\*](#)

## Learning in Santa Fe

There is not a better place for students of Counseling, Art Therapy, or alternative healing arts to combine academic study, unparalleled natural beauty and colorful cultural vibrancy.

Founded in 1610, Santa Fe is the oldest and highest (7,000 feet) capital in the United States. Demographically, it is a blend of European (especially Spanish), Mexican, Pueblo and Navajo Indian.

Wikipedia offers this on the Santa Fe art scene: "Santa Fe's art market is generally considered to be one of the three largest in the United States. The Canyon Road galleries showcase a wide array of contemporary, Southwestern, indigenous American, and experimental art, in addition to Russian, Taos Masters and Native American pieces."

A visit to Santa Fe is not complete without a hike up Canyon Road, even for the most casual art appreciator. For Artists and Art Therapists, it is absolutely essential. You will also see the beautiful, detailed architecture on private homes, in Plaza hotels, and just about everywhere you turn in Santa Fe.

At 7,000 feet, the skies here are often shockingly dramatic and ever-changing; the sun shines over 300 days a year. In one hour or less you can travel from the Downtown Plaza to:

- El Santuario de Chimayó Shrine (the Lourdes of America)
- eat lunch on the banks of the Rio Grande
- visit the ancient pueblos of Cochiti, Taos or Ohkay Owingeh
- luxuriate in natural hot springs at Ojo Caliente, Ten Thousand Waves or Sunrise Springs
- Ski Santa Fe

In the summer months, the Plaza explodes with art, color and music at the Fiesta, Spanish Market and Indian Markets. Downtown Santa Fe at "the Plaza" offers live music most nights. The Festival of Zozobra is long-celebrated local tradition in September, and in October of each year, Albuquerque hosts the acclaimed International Balloon Fiesta. Visually and musically stunning, the Deer, Corn and other special Dances are held at the nineteen northern New Mexico pueblos at various times of the year.

Communing with nature is one of the favorite cultural pastimes here. Hiking enjoys huge popularity, as do biking, rafting and a New Mexico specialty - sky-watching. The hoodoos at Tent Rocks, the cave dwellings at Bandelier National Monument and Aspen Ridge at peak color are only a few of many amazing experiences to be had in or near Santa Fe.

Colorful, wonderful, exciting, artistic, stunning. That is Santa Fe, New Mexico. It is an experience of a lifetime to attend graduate school here.

# General Information for International Students

## Introduction

SWC has been approved by the U.S. Government to offer international students graduate training and this is accomplished by first being accepted for admission into one of our master's degree programs, and then receiving an I-20 for a F-1 visa which permits you to study here in the United States.

We at SWC are here to provide information to you regarding studying as an international student, and to direct you to resources for detailed guidance on the process of studying in the United States. It will be your responsibility to maintain your status and meet all USCIS requirements. This entails being current with the latest information about processes and procedures for being here on the I-20 as an international student. We recommend that you abide by the guidance and direction on official websites that we direct you to, rather than receiving guidance or information that is out of date or from prior international students. When using such information as this guide, be aware that laws and regulations can change, and thus it is the international student's responsibility to verify and update any references or information obtained from this guide or from websites. SWC makes no claims and accepts no responsibility regarding an international student's ability to secure and maintain lawful status in the U.S.

These materials have been prepared to assist you in having the information you need to ensure that your program participation is as smooth as possible. Please take the time to read this guide in its entirety and use the guide and the website information pages as resources.

## The Application Process for Admittance to Southwestern College

The Admission Office has two officials for USCIS purposes, and they can help you apply as an international student. They are the Director of Enrollment Services (the Primary Designated School Official or PDSO) and the Admissions Associate (the Designated School Official or DSO). You can email [admissions@swc.edu](mailto:admissions@swc.edu) with your questions, and also make arrangements for an online video information session (via Skype or Zoom).

### ***Admission Requirements for International Students include the following:***

Completion of the online application where we are asking for a personal statement, résumé, two letters of reference and information regarding your undergraduate level coursework.

Note: Your undergraduate coursework will need to be assessed by an independent credentialing service. This service will evaluate your academic credential and verify that you have coursework equivalent to an undergraduate or bachelor's degree. The service usually charges a fee and can provide translation to English services for your transcript(s) to provide us with additional information, as we have undergraduate prerequisites that are required for entry into our degree programs. There are different credentialing services that you can find. WES.org has been used by some of our applicants, and IERF.org is another source used by some.

The undergraduate coursework that are the prerequisites we require include the following: at least a 3-credit course in each of these areas: Developmental Psychology, Abnormal Psychology and a psychology elective. These courses are the prerequisites for the M.A. in Counseling degree.

For those applying to the M.A. in Art Therapy/Counseling degree the above psychology courses are required. In addition, six studio art courses including: painting, three-dimensional art (i.e. ceramics, jewelry making, metal work) and four studio art courses.

The M.A. in Art Therapy for Clinical Professionals requires the above studio art coursework as well as a Master's degree in Counseling, Social Work or Psychology.

Information on tuition and living expenses can be found on our website at <https://www.swc.edu/student-right-to-know-act/cost-of-attendance/>. International students are not eligible for United States federal financial aid and must submit a financial statement from a bank or other financial institution verifying that you are able to pay for tuition and living expenses while living and studying in the United States prior to the I-20 being issued.

If you are accepted into a Master's degree program at Southwestern College you will be offered a special scholarship – the “**International Student SWC Scholarship**,” which may help to defray some of your costs. This scholarship is typically \$7,200 USD each year (approximately). Inquire with the Director of Enrollment Services about this scholarship at [info@swc.edu](mailto:info@swc.edu).

If English is your second language you are required to submit your test scores demonstrating English literacy. Guidelines are here:

## TOEFL Scores

*We require “High” and “Good” scores as shown below*

Skill	Score Range	Level
<b>Reading</b>	0–30	<b>High (22–30)</b>
Intermediate	(15–21)	
<b>Listening</b>	0–30	<b>High (22–30)</b>
Intermediate	(15–21)	
<b>Speaking</b>	0–30 score scale	<b>Good (26–30)</b>
Fair	(18–25)	
Limited	(10–17)	
<b>Writing</b>	0–30 score scale	<b>Good (24–30)</b>
Fair	(17–23)	

## **International Student Resources and Documents**

The first step in your pursuit of becoming an international student is to visit the website: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students> and read the relevant pages. We recommend you read two sections: “LEARN how to study in the States” and “PREPARE for my arrival.” These sections review the international student life cycle, obtaining a form I-20, understanding the forms, applying for a student visa and gathering documents. The more information you gather in the beginning, the better prepared you are to make a successful entry into the country and to Southwestern College.

The above link is an excellent resource and it will give you the most current and up-to-date information on processes, documentation, and regulations.

## **When Do You Arrive for Your Studies and Documentation**

An F-1 student may be admitted for a period of up to 30 days prior to the start date of the academic year (the program start date that is listed on the I-20). Upon arrival at the U.S. port of entry, you must present to immigration officials:

- Passport valid for at least six months
- F-1 visa – Unless exempt from visa requirement (i.e. Canadian citizens) for initial entry, the name of the school on the F-1 visa stamp must match the name of the school on the Form I-20.
- Evidence of financial support, including the same financial support information used to obtain the F-1 visa.
- For I-20, properly signed by the student and either the PDSO or a DSO.
- In certain cases, proof of having paid the SEVIS fee (I-901) may also need to be provided.

## **Maintaining Status**

After obtaining a visa to enter the U.S., and entering the country in F-1 status, you must maintain that status in order to continue to stay in the country legally. The need to follow the F-1 regulations begins immediately upon entry and continues until final departure.

Please note that it is your responsibility to know the following information and to communicate appropriately with the PDSO in order to retain your F-1 status and remain in the U.S. Any violation of these conditions could result in a serious situation including investigations, hearings, and even arrest and deportation.

- Report to the PDSO or DSO for SEVIS Registration upon arriving at the school.
- Attend the authorized school – which is the school listed on the visa and on the I-20.
- Pursue a full course of study and make normal academic progress towards completion of the degree program.
- Keep I-20 valid by following proper procedures for extension of stay / changes in educational levels or programs of study.

- Report a change of address to the PDSO or DSO within 10 days of the change so your SEVIS record can be updated.
- Refrain from unauthorized work – all F-1 employment must be approved by the PDSO or the USCIS. Any work outside these parameters is unauthorized work and is a violation of student status. This will make the student ineligible for any of the normal benefits of F-1 status, including reinstatement.
- When traveling abroad, always return in proper F-1 status.
- Abide by rules requiring disclosure of information and prohibition on criminal activity.
- Abide by any special requirements, such as Special Registration requirements.
- Upon completion of studies, depart from the U.S. within 60 days.
- Maintain a valid U.S. address while you reside in the United States during the full duration of the Program.

## **Employment**

Employment for international students is restricted. Please inquire with the Director of Enrollment Services/the PDSO on circumstances that would allow for employment in the United States. If employment is possible and approved, you will need to obtain a social security number and the PDSO or DSO will provide you with information on how to accomplish this.

## **Travel – Leaving the U.S. and Returning**

Since SWC classes occur each week during the quarter International Students may not leave the country during the quarter while classes are taking place. Only students from Canada and Mexico are allowed to commute to and from their home country between quarters. Other International Students may leave and return during the winter break or the summer. In order to make this a graceful process, it is important to properly maintain all travel documents.

- Passport – must be valid for at least six months
- Visa – must be valid beyond the date of return
- I-20 – has been properly endorsed and is valid beyond the date of return\*\*
- Financial support documentation, as submitted for your I-20. (This information is not always requested, but you should have it available).

Students are required to carry original documents with them when traveling. Failure to do so may cause delays upon re-entry to the U.S. or may even lead to your not being allowed into the country. You must have the PDSO or DSO endorse your I-20 prior to any departure. Please be sure to obtain this travel signature during SWC's regular office hours (Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.).

## **Practical Clinical Training**

While enrolled in your program of study you will complete both Practicum I and II at Tierra Neuva Counseling Center of Southwestern College. Following Practicum, you will complete Internship I and II within the Santa Fe community. The Internship is not typically a paid position; however, in the event that you are able to secure a paid internship you are required to obtain a U.S. Social Security number.

## **Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Regulations Affecting F-1 Students**

<https://www.irs.gov/individuals/international-taxpayers/foreign-students-and-scholars>

The above link contains information on whether you need to file taxes in the United States during your time here. The tax laws change from year to year and this is an excellent resource to double check what is required of you. The International Student SWC Scholarship is taxable; however, your research on this link may indicate that the amount is not large enough to require submission of a tax form.

## **Departure Upon Completion of the Program**

At the conclusion of studies, a student has a 60-day grace period in which to prepare for leaving the U.S. Please be aware that if you linger beyond this 60-day period you jeopardize your future relationship with visiting or spending time in the United States. In addition, you are at risk for deportation.

## **Class Registration**

Registration occurs online through our website and the student portal called "Populi." You will receive instructions from our registrar and our I.T. Administrator to guide you through the process of logging into the student portal and how to register for courses. When you register, you will also want to email the PDSO to indicate that you did so as there is one more step for registration for international students that takes place through the SEVIS website and is accomplished by the PDSO or DSO.

## **Health Insurance**

Due to the high costs of medical care in the U.S. it is strongly recommended that you obtain personal medical insurance for the duration of your stay. For information, see Internet Resources for International Students.

## **Relocating to Santa Fe**

Many SWC students opt for shared housing to cut down on monthly costs while in school. This can potentially save you around \$200-\$300 USD per month. Shared housing opportunities can be found in the local papers and posted on bulletin boards around town, and on Craigslist.com. For extra security, we caution you to use discernment when you share your personal information during this process (i.e. credit card/bank information, birth dates, etc.)

At your request, we can also send you an email of housing postings we receive at the school. We have also seen networking for housemates occur on our Southwestern College Facebook page for Students and Alum.

We have created the [Southwestern College Relocation Guide](#) to address some of your questions about the rental market and neighborhoods of Santa Fe. To get a sense of the neighborhoods in Santa Fe, this link from [City Different Realty](#) may also be helpful.

**Additional Links that may be helpful for you to review on our website are:**

***Program Information and Admissions details***

<https://www.swc.edu/degree-program-intro/ma-in-counseling/>

<https://www.swc.edu/overview/applying-to-counseling-program/> <https://www.swc.edu/degree-program-intro/ma-in-art-therapycounseling/> <https://www.swc.edu/overview/applying-to-art-therapycounseling-program/> <https://www.swc.edu/m-art-therapy-clinical-professionals/>

*Application for the M.A. in Art Therapy for Clinical Professionals (those who already have a M.A. in Social Work, Counseling or Psychology) is provided upon request to [admissions@swc.edu](mailto:admissions@swc.edu).*

***Quarterly Schedule that includes Courses and Days and Times; The Academic Yearly Calendar; Book lists; Academic Calendar***

<https://www.swc.edu/schedules-and-catalogs/>