Week 10: Campus Engagement & Activities

Getting Involved on Campus

One of the reasons you may have chosen to study in the U.S. is the vibrant campus life and opportunities a U.S. university presents to you. Getting involved on campus is a great way to make friends, build experience, and make you a more qualified applicant for future internships, jobs, or degree programs. U.S. students are encouraged to be "well-rounded," meaning that they are encouraged to have a range of experiences inside and outside the classroom. Let's explore some of the ways you can get involved!

Clubs & Organizations

Albany has over 350 clubs and organizations open to graduate and undergraduate students. Many groups are dedicated to supporting students from a particular area of the world or cultural heritage. You can search a database of our clubs and organizations.

Clubs and organizations might be very different in the U.S. than in your home country. Involvement in a club or organization is more than just a social experience. It can help you build your resume, learn more about yourself and provide you with personal and professional connections. Employers favor students who get involved on their campus. Take a moment to read more.

Student Governance

The University at Albany undergraduate Student Association is the recognized undergraduate student government on campus which was officially established in 1923, and has been operating in its current form since 1977. Student Association exists in order to provide and foster opportunities beyond those offered in the formal curriculum. Student Association is representative of, and responsible to, all student activity fee paying students.

The Graduate Student Association represents and supports students at the master’s and doctoral level. GSA is an active governing body with services, organizations, grants, and advocacy designed to meet the specific needs of graduate students. They also provide free printing services to graduate students.

ISSS Newsletter

Every Friday, ISSS emails students a newsletter. This newsletter is required reading because it will provide you immigration updates.

It is also very useful for getting involved. The newsletter features upcoming ISSS events and highlights UAlbany, and city of Albany events that might be of interest to international students!

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteering is a popular activity for university students. It brings so many benefits to you and to your community!
The Community & Public Service Program, or CPSP, can help get you connected with local volunteer activities. If you are an undergraduate student, you may even how the opportunity to earn academic credit for that service. CPSP experience helps students integrate classroom learning with future academic and career goals. CPSP staff are available to help students select appropriate placements.

Engage UAlbany provides a list of additional programs and organizations that are looking for student volunteers.

Volunteering vs. Unpaid Experience- When you need permission to "volunteer" as an international student visa holder:

It is common for international students to confuse volunteering with unpaid experience - practicum, internship, or field placement - and therefore conclude that no work authorization is necessary for engaging in an unpaid experience. However, there is a difference between volunteering and engaging in an unpaid off-campus internship or experience for maintaining F-1 and J-1 immigration status. Volunteering refers to donating time with an organization whose primary purpose is charitable, civic, or humanitarian in nature. In addition, the activity performed by the individual must meet the following criteria:

1. No expectation of compensation
2. The volunteer cannot displace a genuine employee
3. Is not a position that would be paid if the individual had work authorization
4. The services provided by the volunteer should not be the same services for which he or she was previously paid and/or expects to be hired and paid for in the future

For example, it would be acceptable to volunteer at a soup kitchen or donate time with the American Red Cross. The Department of Labor website contains resources on what constitutes legitimate volunteer activities. F-1 Students do not need work permission to volunteer their time in a charitable, civic, or humanitarian capacity.

It is advisable for students who are engaging in bona fide volunteer activity, to get documentation from the organization explaining the nature of their work. Students should keep the documentation with their other immigration records.

Research Opportunities

As a R1 rated research institution, research is a core component of the university.

The Division of Research supports faculty and student research and is a great place to find out more about the research happening at UAlbany and how you can be involved.

The University at Albany knows that many of our undergraduate students also want to be involved in research, so there are programs specifically designed to help students achieve their goals. These programs are coordinated through an office called "CURCE" (Center for Undergraduate Research and Creative Engagement).