University of Chicago
SAMSU Singaporean Society
Student Handbook
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(i) Packing/ Things to bring

- Clothes: Don’t pack fat winter down jackets, they take up space and are cheaper and more fashionable in the US anyway. It does get warmer in spring, so bring some clothes for hot weather. Do remember to bring swimming trunks and goggles for your swim test.
- Spare spectacles and spectacles prescription.
- Stationery: More expensive in the US. Pencils can be used in class and in exams, so you might need more 2B pencils. Don’t bring paper from Singapore, 3-holed letter-sized paper is used there instead.
- Textbooks: International-edition textbooks are cheaper, so you can get them in Singapore first.
- Documents: ‘A’ Level/O’ Level certified copies, F-1 visa + (I-20 + financial cert), medical prescriptions/vaccination records, exit permit.
- Things to buy in Chicago:
  - Bedding (Trip to Target during international pre-orientation/orientation)
  - Toiletries
  - Laundry bag (rolling ones are more convenient)
  - Reading light/desk lamp
  - American stationery, e.g. writing paper, 3-ring files, 3-hole punchers (Office Depot at intersection of 55th Street & S. Lake Park)
  - Winter Clothing (SAMSU will organize a trip to an outlet mall to buy winter clothing)
  - Lip Balm (Can be bought using flex dollars)
  - Printer paper (Can be bought using flex dollars)

- Note: live plants and agricultural products are prohibited by US Customs law and will be confiscated.

(ii) Getting to the U of C

- Airline tickets: Book your air tickets early. Most people book a one-way ticket for their first trip to the US, to allow for more flexibility in future.
- The following are some of the airlines that fly into Chicago’s O’Hare Airport with 1 stopover (in Narita or Incheon International):
  - United Airlines
  - All Nippon Airways
  - Japan Airlines
  - Korean Air

- Arriving on the day of International Pre-Orientation or Orientation is fine, but you may want to be 1-2 days early to allow yourself to get over jet lag. If you’re not going for International Pre-Orientation, aim to arrive at least 1-2 days before Orientation starts. You may enter the US up to 30 days before the program start date stated on your I-20.
- International Pre-Orientation: Free transportation was provided in 2010 on the first day of Pre-O from O’Hare Airport to school.
- Taxi: A taxi from O’Hare to downtown Chicago will cost about US$40, while a taxi to school will cost US$60, before a tip of about 10%. This is by far the fastest option available, and we
recommend it especially if you come with your family or with a group of friends, as you can share the cost.

- **Airport shuttle:** This goes to the city, and not to the University. It should cost about US$20 per person.
- **Train:** You can take the CTA Blue Line Train downtown, which should cost only $2.25 per person, but is akin to taking the MRT from Changi to Boon Lay, with baggage in tow.
- **Check in immediately at the Office of International Affairs in International House (located at the intersection between Dorchester and 59th Street). This is an important SEVIS immigration requirement.**

(iii) **Medical issues**

- **University Student Health Insurance Plan (U-SHIP)**
  - All students must be covered by a comprehensive student health insurance plan.
  - Each year, all UChicago students are automatically enrolled in the University's Student Health Insurance Plan (U-SHIP). You can select the coverage of your choice, but the Basic plan is sufficient unless you require intensive healthcare.
  - Students have the opportunity to waive U-SHIP by providing proof of comparable insurance before the annual deadline (typically the second Friday in October).
  - All U-SHIP waiver requests must be submitted using the website:
    - [http://studentinsurance.uchicago.edu](http://studentinsurance.uchicago.edu)
  - Sign-up for a U-SHIP account:
    - [https://www.uhcslr.com/SelfServiceSupport/Students/myaccount/AccountLogin.aspx](https://www.uhcslr.com/SelfServiceSupport/Students/myaccount/AccountLogin.aspx)
- **Immunization Forms:** Remember to visit your doctor, follow the requirements in the form exactly, and take note of expiry dates for your existing immunization shots. If your shots are not updated, you will be required to take them during Orientation (and you'll have to pay).
- **Medication:** Bring medicine like Panadol, Po Chai pills etc., which can't be found in the US. Also pack any prescriptions you may require.
- **Bring a list of your current medication and spectacles prescription.**
- **Get all necessary medical procedures/operations done in Singapore as healthcare in the US is expensive, even with insurance coverage.**
- **UChicago offers free vaccinations for H1N1 and seasonal flu several times a year.**

(iv) **Finances**

- **Billing Dates and Payments**
  - The Bursar's Office is located on the first floor of the Administration Building, and is open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
  - All bills will be mailed to your alternate (home) address, unless otherwise specified. A special billing address option is available on the web. To verify or update a different address for tuition bills, you must logon to cMore at [https://cmore.uchicago.edu/](https://cmore.uchicago.edu/). The first Autumn bill scheduled to be mailed on August 22 is due on September 16, 2011. It is your responsibility to make certain that your address information is correct by August 14.
  - If payment for the first bill of each quarter is not received by the due date, a $50 late payment fee will be assessed. Approximately three weeks will be given to pay any balance due. Failure to pay an amount due will result in an additional $100 late fee.

- **Electronic Billing**
  - The University of Chicago offers students the option to receive and pay tuition bills
electronically. E-Bill allows you to view your bills 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from anywhere in the world and to make payments over a secure web site (U.S. bank accounts only).

- You will receive notification by e-mail of any new bill.
- There is no additional charge for E-Bill, and it just takes a few steps to sign up.
- For additional information or to signup, visit "What is Electronic Billing (E-Bill)?" here: http://bursar.uchicago.edu/faq-public.html.

- **Agency/Sponsor Billing (For scholars)**
  - If your bill will be paid by an outside agency or sponsor, you are responsible for providing the Bursar’s Office with the agency’s or sponsor’s authorization letter.
  - For additional information about setting up an Agency Account, contact the Agency Billing Representative at (773) 702-7086 or by email at agency@lists.uchicago.edu.

- **Fees and Tuition Rates (All figures in US dollars)**

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(v) **Administrative requirements**

- F-1 Student visa: Once you receive your I-20, apply for your F-1 visa. If you have not received your I-20, think about giving the Admissions Office a call, or drop them an email.
- Once you have scheduled your visa interview, make sure that you have all appropriate documents with you at the time of your appointment:
  - Your passport (valid for at least 6 months after your entry into the U.S.)
  - Your Form I-20 or DS-2019
  - Financial documents
  - Copies of your academic credentials
  - SEVIS fee receipt
  - Form DS-156, DS-157 and DS-158 (or DS-160) (found on the consulate’s web site)
  - Visa application fee (cashier’s order only, checks and cash not accepted)
Congratulations for completing the long and arduous cross-continental 24-hour journey to the United States of America! After getting past the initial wow factor of the cool climate, cars driving on the wrong side of the road and the awesome layout and architecture of the University, it’s time to settle in as quickly as possible. Here are some of the first few things that you should take note of within the first few days of landing in Chicago.

(i) Safety
Hyde Park is a relatively safe neighborhood even though it is located in the south-side of Chicago. This is in part due to the long-standing presence of the University and the efforts of the University of Chicago Police Department (UCPD) and the Chicago Police Department (CPD) to keep the area safe. However, you should still not let your guard down as there have been thefts even on campus and in dorms. Especially at night in less-populated areas, it is only wise to stay in groups or pairs.

You will surely spot the 300+ white emergency phone boxes that the UCPD has set up all around the campus and the Hyde Park neighborhood. If you run into trouble or need to contact the UCPD, press the red button and a UCPD officer will come to your location immediately, even if you do not speak to the dispatcher on the intercom. You can also dial 123 from a university phone or (773) 702-8181 to contact the UCPD. The UCPD also provides services like bicycle and laptop registration (so they can be returned if recovered), which can be obtained at their headquarters at 61st and S Drexel Ave.
One of the most useful services for getting around Hyde Park safely at night is the SafeRide program, which is a phone-in van-taxi service that picks you up and drops you off anywhere within the Hyde Park neighborhood. Another service, though much less popular, is the Umbrella Coverage by the UCPD. You can call the UCPD hotline and they will dispatch a patrol car to accompany you as you walk to your destination. These services will be covered in greater detail in the following Transport chapter.

The roads in the Hyde Park neighborhood are mostly stop-sign intersections so cars must stop and check for traffic and pedestrians before moving off. Thus it is generally safe to cross as long as you keep a lookout and maintain eye-contact with the drivers. You should obey the traffic lights at the traffic light intersections along S Woodlawn Ave and along the Midway. Finally, some pedestrian crossings along 55th St (such as S University Ave and 55th) are not signaled but don’t have stop signs either. While the road marking may look like a zebra-crossing, it does not work like one! The onus is on the pedestrian to judge that the road is clear of traffic before crossing. Do not be mistaken that cars will stop for you! If you are uncomfortable with crossing at this intersection, head one block east or west to the signaled intersections at S Ellis Ave or S Woodlawn Ave.

(ii) Bank Account

Since many of you will be carrying wads of greenbacks or cashier’s checks, setting up the bank account should be your #1 priority to reduce the risk of losing your money. There should be bank information within your Orientation packages, but our recommendation is to go for a Citibank account since there is a Citibank branch right on campus at S Ellis Ave (next to the Barnes & Noble bookstore) and plenty of Citibank ATMs on campus. Bring your I-20 form, photo ID (passport) and money to the branch and the staff will help set up your bank accounts and debit card. Don’t deposit all your cash right at the start as there will be a delay of 1-2 days before the bank accounts are ready. The bank details (bank name, bank branch, bank address, bank account name, account number, swift code) are important for your parents or scholarship agencies to wire money to your account in the future.

Be sure to keep a healthy balance in your checking account, as the bank will charge you an overdraft fee if you spend past $0 balance in your checking account. If you need cash urgently but can’t find a Citibank ATM, you can withdraw cash from a non-Citibank ATM at a fee (roughly $2) or get a cashback when you buy things with your debit card at post offices and some larger stores.

You’ll eventually have:
- a checking account (linked to your debit card)
- a savings account (earns interest)
- a Citibank debit card (can be used to make purchases and apparently grants free entry into Zouk)
- an online account (allows you to make convenient online transfers)
- 2 checkbooks (filled out differently from Singapore, take note!)

(iii) Phone Line

There are many cell phone providers, with AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile being the most popular. While AT&T sometimes has poor reception and customer service, most of us sign up with the “FamilyTalk Nation 700 Rollover & Unlimited Night/Weekend & Unlimited Mobile-To-Mobile Minutes” plan because it’s the most value-for-money plan overall at about US$32/month. The smallest family size is 2 people but to get the lowest average price per person, you should try to form a complete family of 5 people. One person will have to be the “parent” who will have to pay the
monthly bill online and collect the payment from the rest of the family. The plan gives 700 anytime minutes to the whole family, and rolls over any unused minutes to the following month. Since night and weekend calls as well as calls between AT&T mobile subscribers are not charged so you will probably never run out of anytime minutes. We suggest you get the unlimited text (SMS) add-on as incoming text messages are chargeable, unlike in Singapore. You will not have a Social Security Number (SSN, more on that later) at this point, so you will have to put down a $500 deposit per person with AT&T, which will be eventually refunded to you. You can also use a Blackberry or iPhone but there will be additional charges involved.

(iv) Internet access
There are two ways to get online on campus: wired LAN and wireless. You should receive a LAN cable from the IT Services (formerly known as NSIT) which you can plug into the wall socket in your dorm room to get wired LAN connection. You can also use your CNet ID to log onto the “UChicago” wireless network. The wired LAN network is faster than the wireless connection and lets you access cTV, which is similar to cable TV. The school is reputedly quite strict on catching people who illegally download online content, with the first offence incurring a face-to-face warning from the Dean, and subsequent offences possibly leading to expulsion from dorm housing and suspension of your internet access. That said, the school internet is probably faster than any internet you will ever use.

(v) UChicago ID
During Orientation, you will at some point, line up outside the Regenstein Library to have your UChicago ID card (UCID) made. Make sure you look nice as you will have your photo taken, and this photo will stay with you till you leave UChicago or have your card replaced. The UCID is used to gain access to dining halls, school facilities (libraries, gyms, etc) and some of the newer dorms, and to pay for laundry (with laundry credits) and purchases at the 2 campus convenience stores and Hutch dining commons (with your $100 Flex dollars per quarter). If you lose your UCID, go to the Reg and have your replacement UCID made at a $25 fee. For dorms which require a UCID to enter the room, you can request for a temporary coded access card from the dorm front desk before you get your replacement UCID.

(vi) Being Understood
It might be hard for non-Singaporeans to understand what you are saying, especially in the first-year, where your peers might not be used to foreign accents. Also, Singaporeans tend to speak really fast which makes us even harder to understand. Some things you can do to make yourself more easily understood are speaking less quickly and articulating words more clearly. Those of you with non-English names that may be hard to introduce may want to spell your names out, anglicize your names, adopt a nickname or even pick an English name! Finally, some terms that are commonly used in Singapore are not so commonly used in America and could confuse people. Some examples are listed below followed by their American equivalents:

- Football – Soccer (duh)
- Lift – Elevator
- Queue – Line
- Pavement – Sidewalk
- Expressway – Highway/Freeway/Interstate
- Carpark lot (the actual white box you park in) – Parking space
- Carpark (the place where many cars are parked) – Parking lot
- Multi-storey carpark – Parking structure/garage
- Take-away (food) – Take-out
• High – Happy/excited/stoked/pumped (being “high” in the US involves illegal substance use)
• Stoned – Spaced out (again, being “stoned” here involves illegal substances)
• Shag – Tired/exhausted (refer to Austin Powers for the meaning of “shag”)
• Petrol – Gasoline/gas
• Junction – Intersection

That said, some of your friends might actually be very interested in Singlish and our very unique lingo so you could find opportunities to teach them some Singlish!

(vii) Shopping for necessities
There will be trips organized during Pre-Orientation and Orientation to head out to Target to buy necessities for your dorm. The most urgent items should be bedding (pillow, sheets, blankets, and comforters) and toiletries. Other items that are often bought on these trips are desk lamps (and the required bulbs), clocks, water filter jugs and stationery. Beds in the dorms are Twin XL size.

There is also a hairdresser salon called Japanese Spa Zen in Hyde Park at 53rd street and Dorchester. An alternative would be the barber at the basement of Reynolds Club.

(viii) Tipping
The typical rate for tipping is between 15-20%. However, you can get away with 10-15% since they know you are a poor college student. You can also tip more if the service is outstanding or less if the service is atrocious. Restaurants generally have a policy to automatically add 18% gratuity to the bill for large groups (usually 6 or more). You do not have to add a tip in this case. Taxi drivers and hairdressers should also be tipped at a similar rate, while coatroom attendants, valets and porters should be tipped $1-2.

(ix) Laundry
Laundry is done at the laundry rooms, which are usually in the basements of dorm buildings. You can choose to pay with quarters or using credits that you can add to your UCID card at laundry machines. The washing machines and dryers cost $1 each per cycle and you will need to supply your own laundry detergent and dryer sheets. The machines are also notorious for “eating” your money, but you can get a refund from the dorm front desk by filling out a form with details like the offending machine’s number and how much money you lost. If you are using quarters, bring more than necessary to avoid having to run back to your dorm in case you have your money eaten. Also, do clean the accumulated lint from the dryer filter which is located at the bottom edge of the dryer door opening. Laundry etiquette dictates that you judiciously keep track of the time left on your laundry cycle and remove your clothing promptly once the cycle has ended. You may have your clothes extracted and left somewhere in the laundry room if someone comes along and needs the machine. Conversely, you are permitted to do the same to someone else if they leave their clothes unattended in the machines, but do it quickly to avoid the awkward mutual-guilt situation of being caught red-handed by the clothing’s owner.

(x) Weather
Winter can be difficult to live with in Chicago because of the sub-zero temperatures, dense snowfall and strong wind. SAMSU organizes a group trip to the Aurora premium outlet stores in Fall quarter so that you can buy winter-wear (and designer clothing) at cheap prices. We commonly buy down jackets, gloves, beanie hats, scarves and waterproof boots in preparation for the winter. Dorms may get cold in winter, depending on how efficient your dorm’s heating system is.
However, the weather can be fairly warm in Spring (up to 30°C). If you are staying in a dorm without air-conditioning, you may want to purchase a fan as the heat can become unbearable.

You should also remember to moisturize often and apply lip balm to prevent chapped lips. The Burt’s Bees lip balm from the campus convenience stores is highly recommended.

(xi) Tax forms

We are required to file tax forms in the US, even if we have not gained any income/worked/received scholarships there. Most of us will not be counted as a "Resident (for tax purposes)" because F-visa students receive 5 years of exemption from the physical days counted in the Substantial Presence Test. We will hence be counted as a "Nonresident for tax purposes". Students are required to fill out Form 8843 if they have not received any taxable income in the US. Students are required to fill out Form 1040NR/1040NR-EZ if they have received taxable income during the year.

A useful resource would be a software procured by the University of Chicago to assist students with their tax forms: https://internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/php/cintax/authenticate.php

For more information, please check https://internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/practical/taxes/nonresident.shtml
**TRANSPORTATION IN CHICAGO**

(i) **Public buses**
- CTA Bus #2 (Hyde Park Express), CTA Bus #4 (Cottage Grove), CTA Bus #6 (Jackson Park Express) all head downtown.
- CTA Bus #55 heads to Garfield (Red line) and Garfield (Green line) train stations.
- CTA Full Fares (exact fare required): Cash fare: $2.25 full.
- Chicago Card: $2.00 (bus) or $2.25 (train) deducted on 1st ride, $0.25 deducted on 2nd use within 2 hours; free 3rd use within two hours.
- Chicago Plus Card: Automatic top-up from your bank account each time your card value drops below $10. Card is free for first-time users and $5 subsequently.

(ii) **Free college bus services**
- CTA #170: Service from 5:30am–10am; 3:30pm–7pm Monday to Friday.
- CTA #171: Service from 7am–6pm Monday to Friday; weekends from 8am-6pm.
- CTA #172: Service from 7am–6pm Monday to Friday; weekends from 8am-6pm.
- CTA #192: Service from 6:30am–9am; 3pm–7pm Monday to Friday.
- #170, #171, #172: Students, faculty, and staff of the University ride free upon displaying a University issued University of Chicago ID, University of Chicago medical Center ID, or University of Chicago Laboratory School.

(iii) **Free night shuttle services**
- During the academic year, the evening routes run as follows:
  - Monday–Thursday: every 10 minutes from 6pm–8pm, every 20 minutes from 8pm–2am (last run 1:40am).
  - Friday: every 10 minutes from 6pm–8pm, every 20 minutes from 8pm–3am (last run 2:40am).
  - Saturday: every 20 minutes from 6 pm–3am (last run 2:40am).
  - Sunday: every 20 minutes from 6pm–2am (last run 1:40am).
- During summer and academic breaks, the evening routes run every 20 minutes from 6pm – 1am (last run 12:40am).
- The evening routes are for only UChicago students, faculty, staff, and hospital employees with a valid UChicago ID card. No fare is charged.
- For details on the evening routes, visit [http://facilities.uchicago.edu/transpparking/transportation/bussched‐evening.shtml](http://facilities.uchicago.edu/transpparking/transportation/bussched‐evening.shtml)

(iv) **SafeRide**
- The SafeRide Program is a phone-in van-taxi service that picks you up and drops you off anywhere within the following area:
  - North to 39th Street, south to 64th Street
  - East to Lake Shore Drive, west to Cottage Grove Avenue
- The SafeRide Program hours of operation are:
  - Sunday through Wednesday, 5pm to 4am.
  - Thursday through Saturday, 5pm to 6am.
• The service operates on a "first-call, first-come" basis so be prepared to wait, usually no longer than 20 minutes, for your ride.
• Simply dial (773) 702-2022 and provide the dispatcher with your precise pick-up location and drop-off destination.
• All passengers should be prepared to display their University ID card when boarding the bus.

(v) Trains
• Refer to CTA map below

• Most commonly taken lines are the Red line and the Green line, both accessible by CTA Bus #55.

(vi) Driving
• International students, scholars and other temporary visitors are not required to have an Illinois driver's license or state identification card; they may drive with a valid driver's license from their home country.
• Students who have a social security number (SSN) are eligible for a “regular” driver’s license and/or state ID. If you have a SSN and wish to apply, please visit http://www.cyberdrivillinois.com/departments/drivers/drivers_license/acceptable_id.html
• You may obtain Rules of the Road from OIA to familiarize yourself with road rules in Illinois.
Chicago has much on offer to take up your free time, but if you have a longer break and would like to see more of the country that covers the width of a continent and spans six time zones, there are many opportunities to do it, safely and economically.

(I) Opportunities for travel
There are three long breaks for those not taking summer school at Chicago; Winter Break lasts for three weeks and is the break that covers Christmas and the New Year, Spring Break lasts for a week in March, and Summer Break covers the three month period between academic years.

- Winter Break
This is the time when Chicago (and most of the United States) is at its coldest, and transportation schedules for all types of transport may be disrupted sporadically. If staying in the Chicago area, there are nearby activities such as snowboarding and skiing in Wisconsin, or ice climbing at Starved Rock State Park just two hours west of Chicago. The Christmas and New Year celebrations make New York a great (albeit cold) place to visit, and with three weeks the rest of the Eastern Seaboard (Washington DC, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston, etc) can be visited with ease.
Alternatively, you can choose to escape the cold and head south; Southern California, Florida and Mexico are relatively much warmer, and if you have some spare cash you can take advantage of the Southern summer; this is the best time to visit the beaches of Rio de Janeiro and otherwise frigid Patagonia.

- **Spring Break**
  Chicago may still be a little chilly during Spring Break, but with the weather warming up there are more opportunities to explore the city. The University shares the week of Spring Break with only a handful of other schools, meaning air transportation, while still relatively expensive, is not prohibitively costly. The usual (and infamous) party destinations for Spring Break are the beaches of Florida and Cancun, Mexico.

  If you wish to avoid the air traffic crush, you can choose to take a road trip, with car rental companies often offering student discounts during the period. The Great Lakes offer an idyllic way to spend the week, with Niagara Falls being a popular destination. You can also head south to hit the music capitals of Nashville and Memphis in Tennessee, or west to see Mount Rushmore.

- **Summer Break**
  Most students will be heading home during this period, but with Chicago being almost halfway around the world from Singapore, there are plenty of options to break up the journey without breaking the bank. Many budget airlines ply the trans-Atlantic route to Europe, from which Air Asia X can bring you to Kuala Lumpur, where you can get a cheap flight back to Singapore. Note, however, that many budget airlines land in relatively smaller airports. For example, Air Asia X departs from Stanstead Airport rather than Heathrow in London. Alternatively, you can choose to fly across the Pacific to an intermediate destination in East or Southeast Asia, and then hop on a cheap flight back home.

  If staying mostly in Chicago, you can take the chance to see the national parks that make the United States famous. Yellowstone, Yosemite and Glacier National Parks are cold for much of the rest of the year, and while you’d have to jostle with a crowd of other vacationers the weather will be perfect. Chicago itself comes alive in summer with festivals and fairs, and it might not be a bad idea to stay for a week or two before flying out.

- **Shorter breaks**
  The holidays at the University of Chicago are few and far between, but they are almost always coupled with a weekend, allowing for a quick getaway. Thanksgiving weekend in November lasts for four days, while Martin Luther King Jr. Day in mid-January, College Break in mid-February and Memorial Day in May give three-day weekends. There are weekend deals for car rentals if you’d like to explore the Midwest, but like air travel during this period, it is best to book in advance; the rest of the country will be travelling as well. Nearby places to explore include Milwaukee and Madison in Wisconsin, Cedar Point in Ohio and the Michigan coast.

**(ii) Modes of transportation**

- **Car**
  Driving is the American way of life, and it would be very inconvenient, if not impossible, to visit many places (especially national parks and states off the East Coast) without private transportation. The good news is that cars do not necessarily cost a fortune. Rentals of five-seaters (including underage surcharge, insurance and gas) approximate $100 a day, split between all occupants. There is usually no need to book way in advance, except during major holidays when cars do get booked
out. Note that when you make a reservation and the class you selected is not available at the counter, you are entitled to a free upgrade to a larger car.

Rental companies often refuse rentals to those under 21, and charge $15-20 extra per day for those between 21 and 24. Enterprise has a lower surcharge than other companies, making it the first place to look for a deal. However, other companies, such as Hertz, periodically waive their underage surcharge in promotions, so it’s a good idea to check online for offers. Third-party insurance is highly recommended if you do not own your personal policy, with the United States being such a lawsuit-friendly land. Also note that it is illegal in Illinois to be driving without third-party insurance.

- **Bus**
  The main bus company in the United States is Greyhound, which honestly is neither cheap nor reliable. They do have the greatest coverage when it comes to public transportation, though, so they can be relied upon as a last resort when trying to get in between cities and towns. Book in advance online, usually before the three-week mark, to get the best rates. Take note that Greyhound always overbooks its seats. Get to the bus terminal and stand in line at least an hour early to avoid being bumped to the next bus, which could very well leave the next day.

  Megabus is a budget bus company that serves Chicago, but its Midwest network (which extends to Cleveland, Ohio) doesn’t connect to the Eastern Seaboard network (which begins in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and stretches to Boston and Toronto). The prices can go as low as $1.50 if you book in advance, and even last-minute bookings are often cheaper than those offered by Greyhound. The buses often offer wireless connections, but there are no bus stations to wait in, meaning you could be dumped on the streets upon arrival at two in the morning. For both bus companies, factor in delay times for arrival, which may range from the negligible to several hours.

- **Train**
  Amtrak is the only major passenger service that you would encounter in the United States, and they have a very limited network, except for on the East Coast. Travel times are very long and delays are a guarantee, but seats are comfortable and are a tolerable way to spend the night if you want to skip an evening in the hotel. Cabins, on the other hand, are prohibitively expensive. It is often cheaper to take a flight. Amtrak offers student discounts for holders of the ISIC card, which slightly offsets the approximately 30% higher price Amtrak seats cost over Greyhound ones. Travel on Amtrak for trips lasting longer than 14 hours is not recommended, it is often cheaper to fly.

- **Plane**
  Domestic plane travel is roughly equivalent to flying on a budget airline within Southeast Asia. There are no meals, delays and cancellations do happen and it is often hard to gain recourse for problems. It is relatively affordable, however, and for certain routes they can even be cheaper than travel using ground transportation. It is also for this reason that distinctions between full-fledged airlines and budget airlines are often blurred; the only difference is mostly price.

  Southwest is consistently voted amongst the best American airlines, and with its low prices and relatively good service there’s no surprise why. Southwest leaves from Midway Airport in Chicago, which is a convenient direct one-hour bus ride away from campus instead of the much further away O’Hare. Book in advance to get the best rates, which, including taxes, can go as low as a $100 for a one-way flight to New York. JetBlue is slightly more expensive but last-minute rates are lower.
Spirit Airlines also serves a few select destinations (also the Caribbean and Latin America) for dirt-cheap rates, but service is unreliable and customer service is atrocious.

(iii) Places to stay

- Hostels
  Hostels are the cheapest way to spend a night if travelling alone, but quality varies from establishment to establishment, even under the Hostelling International network. Hostels are not found in every city, unlike in Southeast Asia or Europe, so plan and make reservations ahead. The single hostel in a town (even for big cities like Philadelphia) may be booked out for weeks during high travel seasons, such as over Christmas. For those planning to travel extensively on the East Coast, getting a Hostelling International student card is highly recommended; it shaves about $3 off each night, which range from about $25 in Madison, Wisconsin to $50 in New York City. Most hostels offer wireless connections, but some may charge for internet usage.

- Motels
  Motels offer surprisingly cheap and comfortable accommodation, and with the right amount of people (rooms can take in up to four occupants) can be much better value than hostels. They are often only feasible for trips involving car travel, however, as most of them are located outside of city centers and along major highways. A night at a decent motel can cost as low as $40 for a room with two double beds.

  Chain motels such as Super 8 and Rodeway Inn can be found everywhere along the major highways, and charge about $80 a night for two double-beds. These come with all the furnishings of a good hotel, with accoutrements such as hair dryers and ironing boards. The price can be offset by looking at online sites such as RoomSaver.com for discount coupons, which may sometimes not apply for weekend periods. These rooms always come with wireless access. For those hoping to save a little bit more, look for Yellow Pages listings for smaller, local motels that are often hidden away in small towns along old highways, and call to ask for their rates. A tip is to look up the establishment on Street View for a rough gauge of their standards.

(iv) Crime and dangers

Cities in the United States have good and bad parts of town; read up before you arrive and you should not encounter problems. Those who don’t look local (Caucasian or African-American) may face a few problems in the South, but this is more attributable to their rarity than to genuine racism. Ask around your schoolmates who live in the area to see if there are special precautions to take; there are no general problems prevalent throughout the entire United States.
(i) Academic Advisor

- Each student is assigned to an academic advisor when he or she matriculates. Your advisor will advise you on:
  - Completing major/graduation requirements.
  - University regulations and College academic procedures, (e.g. interpretation of placement test results and registration for courses).
  - Application procedures for fellowships, graduate and professional schools, and employment.
  - Any other resources you may require.
- You are required to meet with your advisor during Orientation to discuss the College curriculum and to assist with course registration.
- You then meet with him or her once a quarter for your first year, and once a year in subsequent years. In your first year, you will not be allowed to register for classes unless you have met with your advisor.

(ii) Requirements to Graduate

- **General Education/Core Curriculum**
  1. Humanities - at least 2 quarters
     Civilizations - at least 2 quarters
     Arts - at least 1 quarter
     1 additional course in Humanities, Civilization or Arts 6 credits
  2. Mathematical Sciences - at least 1 quarter
     a. Physical Sciences - at least 2 quarters
        Biological Sciences - at least 2 quarters OR
     b. Natural Sciences - 4 quarters
     1 additional course in Mathematical, Physical or Biological Science 6 credits
  3. Social Sciences - 3 quarters 3 credits

- **Major Requirements**
  9 - 19 credits

- **Electives**
  8 - 18 credits

Total: 42 credits

Courses in one category cannot be double counted for another category – e.g. a course taken for general education cannot be used to fulfill major requirements. However, courses can be double counted within the same category – e.g. courses for your first major can be used to fulfill major requirements for your second major. One the other hand, courses for minors are considered electives and cannot be (1) double counted with your major(s) or with other minors or (2) counted toward general education requirements. You can petition for credits for Higher-Level IB as well as 1
credit for 'A' Level Biology. You can petition for IB Higher level Economics, Biology, Physics and Chemistry credits. Refer to http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/pdf/exam-credit.pdf for more information.

- **Language Requirement**
  - All students are required to demonstrate reading, writing, and (where appropriate) listening and speaking skills equivalent to one year of college-level study.
  - Officially, “Students who are foreign nationals may meet the language competence requirement if their formal schooling experience in a country other than the United States enables them to demonstrate the criteria of cultural understanding and language competence described above.”
  - For most Singaporean students, this can be fulfilled through a petition submitted to Catherine Baumann (Cobb 502, 702.8008, ccbaum@uchicago.edu) based on good performance in placement tests, O' Level or 'AO' Level Chinese grades (include copies of your certificates).
  - If you take a 3rd or 4th year course in Chinese, you can petition to be granted credits. Up to 6 credits can be granted based on “compelling academic reasons”. For example, if your scholarship organization writes in a letter to explain that you need to graduate in 3 years. Non-Scholars may also petition on the grounds of financial circumstances. You are eligible to petition for 3 Chinese credits if you take a 3rd year Chinese course and 6 credits if you take a 4th year Chinese course. Include a copy of your transcript with your petition (Transcript can be ordered online with your Cmore account).

- **Physical Education**
  - All undergraduate students entering the University are required to complete three credits of Physical Education course work. At least one of these three credits must be in a designated Personal Fitness course.
o This coursework should be started in the Autumn Quarter of the first year and taken in consecutive quarters until the requirement is completed. All courses are graded on a pass/fail basis.

o All entering students are given the opportunity to place out of all or a portion of the requirement during Orientation Week. Classification is based on performance on a Physical Fitness Test and a Swimming Test. If you do not pass the two tests, you will be required to complete one to three quarters of Physical Education, depending on your performance.

o Physical Fitness Test:
  1. Step test – Step-ups at a constant rate for 5 minutes. Score given based on your heart rate before and after the test.
  2. Grip test – Score based on your grip strength.
  3. Upper body flexibility – Lie in prone/"superman" position and lift hands as high as possible, with arms straight and shoulder width apart. Score based on how high you lift your hands.
  4. Lower body flexibility – Sit-and-reach
  5. Upper body strength – Bench press
  6. Sit-ups

o A student may gain a maximum of one elective credit in Physical Education through membership on a University of Chicago varsity athletic team. The Personal Fitness requirement and Swimming requirement may not be satisfied through varsity participation.

(iii) Placement/Accreditation Tests

- Placement tests determine what courses you can/should start off taking. Accreditation tests grant you credit for courses.
- Besides Math, most placement tests can be taken online before you arrive at the University of Chicago. Of particular importance are the Language placement tests.
- Almost all Singaporeans place into 4th year Chinese. With this placement, you can petition to waive your foreign language requirement, meaning that you will not have to study a foreign language to graduate. However, this does not grant you any credit. For the petition you are required to have copies of your 'A' Level and/or 'O' Level certificates.
- It is not hard to get full credit (2 credits) in the Physical Sciences Accreditation Test. Even people who did not take science in Junior College have managed this with minor preparation. These credits can only be used if you are a non-science major.
- If there is any chance that you may be a Science major (including Math and Computer Science), take the other optional accreditation tests for Physics and Chemistry. 'A' level knowledge is usually enough to secure you two credits for the Chemistry test. The credit gained here can be used if you are a Science major.
- The math placement exam is offered in O-week, with the results out 2/3 days after.
  - The exam is 3-4 hours long, and the first section consists of 100 MCQ questions and covers basic computations, similar to the A-level H2/IB HL syllabus with some additional topics (Taylor polynomials, various convergence of sequences and series).
  - The second section consists of 5-6"open-ended" questions, ranging from definitions (e.g. define a differentiable function from the real numbers to the real numbers), to "rigorous computations" (e.g. prove that the limit of 1/x as x goes to infinity is 0), to "standard" problems in advanced calculus (prove that the rational numbers are dense in the reals, prove that the real numbers is Archimedean).
Success in the placement test determines the level of mathematics that one is allowed to take.

- Given an IB SL/A-level H1 background, one should easily place into the 150s sequence.
- Students with stronger preparation in mathematics will place into the 160s sequence, and few others 199s. A background in rigorous mathematics (i.e. students comfortable with "least upper bound" type proofs, and estimations with epsilons) or prior preparation in mathematical Olympiads may place into the infamous 207-208-209 Honors Analysis sequence.
- If you get placed into MATH 152 or 153, you can choose to start the 150s calculus sequence at whichever level you get placed into and receive credits for the earlier courses in the sequence. For example, if you begin with MATH 153, you will receive 1 credit for MATH 151 and 1 credit for MATH 152. If you choose to take MATH 161 (Honors Calculus), however, you forfeit those credits.

(iv) Choosing Classes

- **Lesson Format**
  - **Discussion**
    - Small group of students engaging in discussion facilitated by instructor.
    - Fruitfulness of the class depends greatly on quality of class (how active your classmates are in discussions, how good their comments and questions are) and instructor (how good he or she is at leading discussions and explaining concepts).
  - **Format for Humanities, Social Sciences.**
  - **Lecture**
    - Instructor teaching with minimal participation by students.
  - **Format for Math, Sciences.**
  - **Lab**
    - **Format for Sciences.**

- **Professors**
  - Professors are given significant autonomy in designing their courses, ranging from the content, teaching style and grading/evaluation criteria.
  - Before registering for a course, you should ask people who have taken courses under the professor, or refer to evaluations.uchicago.edu to find out more about the professor.
  - Things to take note include: difficulty/harshness of tests/papers/grading (note that a professor may set difficult tests and mark strictly but still give out a reasonable number of A's. Easy tests may mean that it is easy to drop down from an A to A- or from an A- to B+), ability to explain concepts/facilitate discussions, number of papers/exams per quarter, etc.

- **Miscellaneous**
  - Some courses are only offered in 1 or 2 quarters a year. Take this into account when planning your courses. Also take note that some courses are best done consecutively as a sequence.
  - The same course can differ greatly in difficulty not only depending on professor, but also on quarter. For example, ECON 200 is reputed to be harder in Spring quarter than Fall quarter.
  - Note that even if you remain in the same section and sequence, your professor may change from quarter to quarter. Be sure to check time schedules (timeschedules.uchicago.edu) during course registration.
  - For more course information, visit http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu
(v) Registering for Classes

- You will select your courses for your very first quarter when you meet with your academic adviser during Orientation Week. For subsequent quarters, course selection follows this process:
  - In week 7 of the previous quarter, information regarding the next quarter's courses will be uploaded to Time Schedules.
  - In Week 8, you will be able to bid for the next quarter's courses online. For courses such as Social Science or Mathematics, you will often be automatically registered for the next course in the sequence. You can, however, drop the course, and add a new one or change section.
  - In Week 10, the result of your bidding will be made known to you online.
  - In Week 11, the online add/drop system opens, in which you can drop any course you have, and/or add any course you want so long as there are still vacancies in the class. The system is real time so you can even if a course is full at the start of the week, you may be able to add it if someone drops it later in the week.
  - During Weeks 1 to 3 of the next quarter, you can drop any course you have, and/or “pink slip” into a new one. To “pink slip” into a course is to get the instructor in charge to sign a slip of paper admitting you into the class. It is completely up to his discretion to decide whether or not to admit you.

- You can also audit courses, i.e. take a course without being officially enrolled in it. Many instructors will allow you to do this as long as you ask them politely and there is still space in the class. Some may expect you to fulfill all the obligations of a registered student while others will allow you to just sit into classes.

- Some people choose to sit into additional courses for the first 3 weeks of the quarter before deciding which one to eventually register for.

- Typically in your first 1 or 2 quarters you will take one course each in the Humanities (compulsory), Mathematics, Social Science, and one other subject, depending on your major.

(vi) Core Curriculum

- Humanities
  - Readings in World Literature
    - Fall quarter: epics, books include Gilgamesh, Homer's The Odyssey,
    - Winter quarter: autobiographies, books include Augustine’s Confessions, Nabokov’s Speak, Memory.
    - Literature course that focuses on close reading of texts without reliance on background knowledge.
    - Mix of discussion of content and the use of language in the texts.
  - Philosophical Perspectives
    1. Philosophy course with non-philosophical texts integrated.
    2. Texts include: Homer’s Iliad, Plato’s Republic, Shakespeare’s Hamlet and Hume’s Treatise on Human Nature.
    3. Course seeks to answer questions such as: What is love? Do we have free will? What is the mind? Where do our morals come from? Is there always a right thing to do?
  - Greek Thought and Literature
    - Offers an introduction to Greek thought and culture.
• Texts include: Homer’s *Iliad*, Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*, Euripides’ *Helen*, and Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War*.
• Focus on discussion of broader themes rather than literary close-reading of texts.

  o Human Being and Citizen
  • Questions the difference between being a human being and a citizen.
  • Texts include: Plato’s *Apology* and *Symposium*, *Genesis*, Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*; Augustine’s *Confessions*, Dante’s *Inferno*, Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*, Kant’s *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* and Hardy, *The Return of the Native*.
  • Discussions focus on identifying and understanding major themes in the texts, while at the same time analyzing about rhetorical styles and allegories.

  o Introduction to the Humanities
  • Only offered to 12 students every other year.
  • Emphasis less on the content of the books, more on what language and word usage does, i.e. the effect it has on readers, and how to be more mindful of your audience.
  • Books change, but mainstays are The Peloponnesian Wars and Plato’s *Apology*.

  o Reading Cultures
  • Mix of classics (e.g. Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, *Arabian Nights*), movies (e.g. *Y Tu Mama Tambien*), graphic novels (e.g. *Sandman*), autobiographies, etc.
  • Not purely about reading about cultures in text.
  • More variety in texts but less time spent on each text (no more than two weeks).

  o Media Aesthetics
  • Less reading than other Humanities classes.
  • Fall quarter: Image – paintings, photographs, early films, etc and read related essays (concepts such as mimesis, simulacrum, aura of an artwork), books include *Portrait of Dorian Gray*.
  • Winter quarter: Text - writing, speech, poetry, etc, exploring translation, hierarchy of text, speech and image, signifier-signified relationship, text in modern art, books include *Hamlet*.
  • Spring quarter: Sound - noise, music, voice, singing, how sounds affect the individual and create a community, films including Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*, *The Conversation*, *Passage de l’Acte*; listening include recordings of poetry, Berio’s *Sequenza for Voice*.

  o Language and Human
  • Watered-down linguistics.
  • Papers involved Googling for linguistics research and not a lot of textual analysis.
  • Topics included the alleged degeneration of English, the Eskimos’ 47 words for snow, perfect languages, Ebonics.
  • Take this if you like internet research and don’t want to read any real books.

• **Social Sciences**
  o Power, Identity, and Resistance
    • Fall quarter: focus on how capitalism is good/bad for society. Readings include Marx, Smith and Durkheim.
• Winter quarter: understanding liberalism and its critics. Why do we need a political authority and what makes one legitimate? Readings include Hobbes, Rousseau and Locke.

• Spring quarter: understanding how themes in first two quarters played out in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Readings include Freud, Nietzsche (human nature's violence), Malcolm X, Gandhi, Martin Luther King (racial violence) and Sontag (spectacle of violence).

  o Self, Culture, and Society
  • Fall quarter: focus on development of society through capitalism. Readings include Marx, Weber and Harvey.
  • Winter quarter: study culture, relationship between the individual and society. Readings include Durkheim, Levi-Strauss and Foucault.
  • Spring quarter: study how the individual is shaped by various social, cultural and historical factors including race, gender and sexuality. Readings include Freud, Fanon and Beauvoir. Less focus on Economics and more varied approach to problems, particularly from an Anthropological viewpoint.

  o Social Science Inquiry
  • Primarily on Statistics. The only Social Science course with problem sets.
  • Only books to be read are *Introduction to the Practice of Statistics* and *Slim’s Table*.
  • Course focuses on collecting data, conducting experiments and interpreting statistics.
  • Students expected to produce original research paper based on empirical research.

  o Mind
  • Primarily a Psychology course.
  • One lecture followed by one discussion each week.
  • Readings consist of Psychology papers.
  • Weekly response papers followed by 1-2 longer papers.

  o Classics of Social and Political Thought
  • Focus on formation of state/society and different forms of government (what is the role of government, etc). Third quarter concentrates on the ends of society and human flourishing.
  • Overlaps with Power, Identity and Resistance. Additional texts include Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics* in Fall quarter, as well as Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Mandeville and Rousseau.
  • Contextualizes writers’ motives instead of purely critiquing arguments.

• Mathematics
  o MATH 160s (Honors Calculus) differs from MATH 150s (Calculus) in that MATH 160s is almost completely proof-based.
  o Even though you do cover proofs in MATH 150s, the understanding expected is less deep than in MATH 160s. MATH 150s still requires substantial computational work.
  o You are also more likely to be taught by a graduate student if you take MATH 150s as compared to MATH 160s.
  o Detailed description of 160s Honors Calculus:
- The 160s is a proof-based mathematics course
- MATH 161 covers basic techniques of proofs, the definition of limits, and differentiation
- MATH 162 covers integration and taylor polynomials.
- MATH 163 covers sequences and series, and some linear algebra, similar to what is covered in MATH 199. It is a basic requirements for other higher-level math courses.
- Students with backgrounds in IB and A levels may find the proof-based concepts difficult during the beginning of this course because it is different from mathematics in high school.
- However, many students have found the course both highly enlightening, and useful. The technique of proofs enforces critical thinking and reasoning which translates into success in other academic disciplines requiring rigorous arguments (e.g. SOSC, Philosophy, Economics, Computer Science and the Sciences). One should expect to spend around 10-15 hours a week at the beginning of this course, but this number should drop significantly as one progresses through the course. Resources such as the instructor's office hours, and the help of upperclassmen are often indispensable for success.
- An analysis Sequence is highly recommended for those considering graduate school in Economics.
  - Mathematics is a popular major among Singaporeans at the University of Chicago. It paves the way for a myriad of careers from quantitative finance to academia. The Math major in University of Chicago takes the following path:
    - 1st Year: 161-162-163 Honors calculus sequence
    - 2nd Year: Analysis or Honors Analysis
    - 3rd Year: Algebra + electives
    - 4th Year: electives
  - Most math majors will agree that they have had an intellectually rewarding experience in the math program. The math program has also bolstered their academic and career prospects. Singaporean alums have gone on to jobs in consulting, trading, as well as placing into top graduate programs in computer science and mathematics.
(vii) Textbooks

- Textbooks in the US are expensive. Science textbooks can cost over US$100, texts for writing courses may not cost as much individually but add up to pretty hefty sums too.
- The University Barnes and Nobles Bookstore is the main place to purchase Science and Math books.
- The Seminary Co-op Bookstore is the main place to purchase books for reading courses such as Humanities or Social Science courses. You can become a member and receive a 10% discount on all purchases.
- Textbooks can also be loaned from include CBooks, a student-run textbook rental service. Price ranges from $13-$22/qtr. Website: http://www.cBooks.theilc.com
- University of Chicago Marketplace (marketplace.uchicago.edu) contains advertisements from many people selling used books (among other items).
- The international edition of some books can be purchased in Singapore for much cheaper than the US editions.
- SAMSU Amazon Prime offers free 2-day shipping on any books (or items) sold from Amazon.com. Books sold by 3rd parties on Amazon.com are not eligible. Many books can be found at discounts on Amazon.com. To utilize this service, simply e-mail your year's representative with the link to the book as well as your name and shipping address. The representative will then order the book for you and you can transfer the money for the book to him or her. It will be delivered within 2 working days.

(viii) Summer School

- Courses offered are three, five, six, or nine weeks in length. Each summer course, regardless of length, is the equivalent of a full quarter-long course.
- Even though courses tend to be more intensive, they are shorter and hence useful if you want to get over a course quickly. People also choose to do Summer School if they have trouble finding a timeslot for the course during regular term time. Summer school is a good option for students who require additional credits or who have difficulty finding a summer internship.
- Fees are US$2,800 per course, on top of a US$285 student life fee.
- For more information, visit https://summer.uchicago.edu/index.cfm

(ix) Study Abroad

- You can spend between one quarter to one year abroad in another university or in the University of Chicago’s Centers in Paris or Beijing.
- Application deadlines can be over a year before the program, so if you are interested, start planning early. Also ensure that the timing fits in with the rest of your academic schedule.
- Check for pre-requisites. Not all programs have language pre-requisites.
- Programs in places such as Barcelona, South Africa and Jerusalem are particularly competitive. It is not difficult to get a place to study in Paris.
- When applying, try to focus on your language skills.
- For more information, visit http://study-abroad.uchicago.edu/
(i) On-campus housing

By now, you would have already been allocated your residential halls by the university housing system. This allocation is based on your preferences and they usually try to accommodate all your needs. As such, most of the time, you would find that the dorm you have been allocated to suits you just fine.

That said, a number of us have met with a few unexpected, and sometimes unpleasant, surprises upon arrival at our dorms. This short section about on-campus housing will thus provide a rundown on what to potentially expect from the dorms that you will be staying in for your first year at UChicago. (Contributions from upperclassmen)

Blackstone
- Blackstone Hall is a small dorm with only one house, and houses an average of 79 student residents (as compared to Max P's 700). Not many first-years are allocated to this house, mainly because there are limited vacancies.

Brekinridge
- Brekinridge Hall is another small dorm that is similar to Blackstone, in terms of size and location. It is also one of the few dorms with single sex floors. Located to the southeast of the main campus, Brekinridge is a good 20 to 25 minutes on foot away from campus, and from any dining hall. Its inconvenient location is thus one of the main gripes of Brekinridge residents, who have to take a bus to get to classes, or dining halls.
- Brekinridge also has an infamous reputation for having a particularly unique house culture, in the sense that its residents make up an interesting community that will never fail to intrigue you.

Broadview
- In some sense, Broadview can be considered an enlarged version of Blackstone and Brekinridge. There are three houses in this dorm, each housing about 70 to 80 students.
- Upon arrival at Broadview, the first thing that might strike you about this dorm is its distance from campus. Broadview is the furthest hall away from campus, and it takes a good 20-25 minutes to get anywhere on campus. While this might not be a problem during autumn or spring, it gets unbearable during winter, as you would have to trek through snow and brave the strong winds to get to class (or just to eat). While taking a bus does alleviate the problem, travelling can be considerably time-consuming. As a result Broadview hall has a tradition of providing daily dinners for its residents during finals week.
- Despite being relatively far away from campus, Broadview is close to restaurants (which you will have to frequent when dining halls close), the bus stop that brings you downtown and to Chinatown, and to the supermarket (called “Treasure Island”).
- One thing you will have to keep in mind is that Broadview is an old building. As such, its facilities are mostly old and rundown. Depending on your luck, the rooms and toilets can be a little dirty, and the heating system may not always work. Our advice is thus to buy a good comforter to keep yourself warm during winter.
Burton-Judson Courts
- Burton-Judson, or BJ for short, is located south of the main campus, directly beside the South Campus Dining Hall. With 7 houses and an average of 300 residents, the houses in BJ are the smallest on campus. As one former resident put it, "BJ typically has small houses, which means that people really get to bond. So if the incoming freshman wants to experience and really mingle with Americans, BJ is one of the best houses to opt for." If you enjoy being part of a close-knit student community, this is it.
- Just like Broadview, BJ is one of the older dorms on campus. The rooms might smell musty on the first day, but opening the windows and airing the room should do the trick. There might also be instances when house centipedes or insects enter the room. In these cases you will have to get rid of these pests by yourself. The radiators also tend to make a lot of noise (e.g. clanging).
- Despite these shortcomings, BJ has its redeeming points. Residents point to BJ's unique gothic architecture as one of the things that they like most about the dorm, and the courtyard can be beautiful at night. Its location also means that you are never too far off from campus, and that you do not have to travel far for food. However, the walk across the Midway during winter (a trip you have to make to get to campus from BJ) can be a pain in the ass.

Maclean Hall
- Situated to the north of campus, Maclean is one of the few dorms with single-rooms only (there’s only one double). Its house culture is generally quite quiet, although this does not mean you will not have a fun time there!
- A 10-minute walk away from campus, Maclean is just next to a dining hall (Pierce) and the school gym (Ratner). It is also near the bus stop that brings you to the Garfield Red line and Green line train stations. The rooms are generally quite comfortable, and we have not heard any complaints from previous residents yet!

Max Palevsky Residential Commons
- Max P is one of the largest dorms on campus, and possibly one of the loudest: its orange-blue exterior will surely catch your eye the moment you step on campus. With 8 houses and an average of 700 residents, Max P also houses the largest houses on campus.
- Living in Max P means that you will be staying in a suite with an attached bathroom and toilet. You will have to clean your own toilets and provide your own toilet paper, unlike students staying in dorms with common bathrooms (e.g. BJ).
- Max P has arguably the best location amongst all the dorms, being close to main campus and a dining hall at the same time. Its house culture can also be said to be the friendliest and most boisterous, with housemates knocking on your doors or popping in randomly to chat. While this might sound great for some of you, others have complained about the lack of privacy and of quiet. You might also be pressurized to join in the house activities, but these can be really fun, depending on your interests.
- Another plus point: air-conditioning, which can be a lifesaver when the weather gets unbearably hot (e.g. in spring).
Pierce Tower

- Pierce is the only dorm on campus where you don’t even need to leave the building to get to the dining hall. This will be welcome news when it’s -20 degrees outside. In addition, there is a late-night snack bar known as TANSTAAFL (“there ain’t no such thing as a free lunch”).
- The rooms in Pierce are known to be smaller than those in other dorms.

Snell-Hitchcock Hall

- Snell-Hitchcock Hall, also known as Snitchcock, houses, well, two houses: Snell and Hitchcock. Located directly on campus, this dorm is the closest you will get to “rolling-out-of-bed-and-into-class”. It is also a 5-minute walk away from the Bartlett dining hall, which means you are never too far away from food.
- As is the case with Broadview and Bf, Snitchcock is one of the older dorms on campus, which means that its facilities are not as new as some of the other dorms (e.g. Max P), and its rooms are a little rundown.
- One of the things that residents tend to appreciate about Snitchcock is its quirky house culture. As one upperclassman put it, “you’ll never fail to fit in because everyone’s just so friendly and accepting of everyone else (unless you happen to be some jock, you’ll definitely appreciate and grow to love the culture)”. Snitchcock is also THE most enthusiastic dorm about Scavenger Hunt, an annual school event that is exactly what it sounds like. Taking part in this event would truly be one of the most unforgettable things about staying in Snitchcock.

South Campus Residence Hall

- The newest and largest dorm on campus, South already has a reputation for housing a community that loves to party. Located just south of the Midway, it is directly opposite the South Campus Dining Hall and just a 5-minute walk away from the main quads.
- As South opened just a year ago, its facilities are almost completely brand-new, and the heating and air-conditioning systems are in good condition. In contrast to most of the other dorms, which are much older, this is a welcome change (for all) indeed. Apart from this, the house culture is also another aspect of South that residents appreciate. In particular, one upperclassman liked “the sense of community that the House system fostered whereby [students] were encouraged to participate in occasional outings and study breaks.”
- South Campus residents also know how to have fun. You will have to get used to the partying that goes on almost every weekend. This means that, after a night of revelry, drunk residents might come knocking on your door, or might simply make a lot of noise tumbling down the corridor at 2am. You will also have to get used to the smell of weed (which changes frequently) that fills up the hallways.
- If you have ever worried about the cleanliness of the common toilets, don’t bother. Toilets are cleaned often, and even though each toilet only has 3 showering cubicles you will rarely have to wait. One word of caution though: the showering cubicles have shower curtains for “doors”.
• The biggest plus point about South Campus is that you can stay in this dorm over breaks! This is the only dorm on campus that will open for students over winter and spring breaks, which means you will not have to move from your room when terms ends, unlike the majority of your friends.

**Stony Island Hall**

• Generally Singaporeans don't tend to stay a second year in housing, but if you do, Stony Island would be one extra option. Open to upperclassmen, this dorm houses an average of 80 residents and constitutes a single house.

• Stony is one of the few dorms on campus to offer apartment-style rooms. The living room that you share with your roommates would be spacious and well lit, which means you have plenty of space for friends to stay over. The toilets are also shared between just two people, which is another plus point. However, Stony is some distance away from the main campus, and you will have to walk about 20 minutes to get to class.

**(ii) General advice about room and housemates**

• Be forthright when dealing with your roommates. If you've legitimately tried to sort it out and it's just not working, there's no shame in asking to switch rooms - and the earlier the better.

• Socialize with your dormmates! Everyone is trying to make friends, especially at the start of freshman year - you'll be amused by the junk they'll do.

• If you are unhappy with your dorm for whatever reason, go ahead and apply for a transfer. Just do it as soon as possible.

• Ultimately, take these comments with a pinch of salt. While some upperclassmen have indeed experienced the above, the same things may not happen for you. Your housing experience can be a great one, but only if you take the effort to make it so!

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While the University of Chicago is known as the place where “fun comes to die” or where “the only thing that goes down on you is your GPA”, students in the UofC are passionate about both working and playing hard. Chicago, the largest city in the American mid-West, and the third largest city in America, certainly has many avenues for students at the University to do so. Besides the city itself, there are also many activities to do within school as well, with numerous student organizations to join and many random events held throughout the school year.

(i) Recognized Student Organizations
There are literally hundreds of student organizations (called RSOs, or Recognized Student Organizations) at the University, ranging from community service groups, to sports clubs, religious groups and Greek organizations (fraternities and sororities). A full list can be found online (studentactivities.uchicago.edu/involved/search.shtml) and there would definitely be an RSO that caters to any of your interests. Students are also free to start their own organizations.

As Singaporean students, you would be registered as members of SAMSU Singaporean Society (samsu.uchicago.edu). However, most Singaporeans are members of other RSOs as well. Generally, students are active members in 1 or 2 RSOs but could also be members of a few others. For instance, some students are active members of Blue Chips (a business club) and SAMSU but are also part of the mailing list of CUSA (Chinese Undergraduate Student Association) and the Zombie Readiness Task Force (for real), turning up only for some of their activities.

Different RSOs have different time commitments and students are advised to check what the time commitments are before signing up. For example, many sports RSOs have practice and games, which can mean having to commit at least 2 hours a day, 3 days of the week. Another example is the Chicago Maroon, where photographers and writers are sent on various assignments throughout the week. On the other hand, cultural RSOs like SAMSU do not have regular meetings and there is no major time commitment.

To help you decide which RSO to join, the Student Government also organizes two RSO fairs during the year. One would be held at the start of the academic year and the other would be held sometime in February. During these fairs, RSOs would set up stalls and booths to showcase their activities. This would be the best time to ask members of the RSO questions about their organization such as time commitments and what exactly they do.

(ii) Student Events
There are always activities in school that would interest you, no matter what your interests might be. Some such events are planned by RSOs and are open to the entire school population. On the other hand, some events are planned by student groups that are specially created to plan and execute such events.

Many cultural RSOs, such as CUSA, KSO and SAMSU organize annual events to showcase their culture (often in the form of plays). These plays are put up by students in these organizations and a ticket to these plays entitles the audience to a free meal (especially useful on Saturday evenings
when the dining halls are closed). RSOs also hold study breaks to showcase their activities and gain publicity. For instance, the tennis club organized a study break, where they provided cookies and milk and screened the Australian Open. Also, with around 50 RSOs dedicated to the arts, there are often theater, dance or music performances around school.

Student groups that specialize in planning mass school events include the Major Activities Board, the Council on University Programming and the Student Government. These groups plan events that cater to the entire school population, usually offering free food and entertainment and are often very well attended. Such events include Summer Breeze which is a carnival on the Main Quad with free food, games and a large concert featuring performers such as Nas and Damian Marley.

With such a wide range of events on campus, it is often hard to keep track of them. Many events are well publicized, with banners, flyers and posters. Often, these events would have Facebook pages to remind you of the event and update those attending of any changes. However, the most reliable resource is the UofC events page (event.uchicago.edu) which lists all the events happening on campus.
(iii) Parties
Yes, there are parties at the University of Chicago. In fact, there are parties really often. Generally, there are 2 types of parties that can be found in school, apartment parties and frat (fraternity) parties.

Apartment parties are often private events between friends in private apartments. Some parties are also held in college dormitories.

There are frat parties held in fraternity houses almost every weekend. These events are open to all students in the college and there is often a cover charge to attend these events. As these parties are open to anyone in the University, they are good places to meet new people and interact with others in a non-academic environment. Often, to draw people to such events, many of these parties have themes, such as 7 Deadly Sins and Beach Party. Since such parties are only open to students of the University, there you need to bring your UCID along. The standard cover charge for these events is $5.

(iv) Religion
The College and Hyde Park is home to numerous religious groups and places of worship. Within the College, there are numerous religious RSOs representing most major religions. These offer a great chance to meet people with the same religious interests. There are also many religious institutions within Hyde Park, including churches, synagogues and mosques.

Chicago contains some mega-churches such as Willow Creek Community Church and is the center for other religious organizations such as the Nation of Islam. For those interested in religious architecture, the Baha’i Temple in Wilmette is not something that should be missed.
(v) UChicago Arts Pass
The University, in collaboration with numerous organizations in Chicago, has made it possible for your UCID to be used to get discounts or free entry at various arts establishments in Chicago. For example, it provides students free admission to the Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Contemporary Art. Also, students can get discounts at theaters such as Steppenwolf Theater. More information can be found online at artspass.uchicago.edu.

(vi) Theater
University Theater (ut.uchicago.edu) is an organization where students direct, design and act in all of its productions. It produces more than 30 shows annually and its shows are open to the University community at $6 for admission. It is advised by Theater Studies instructors in the College who have extensive theater experience.

Within Hyde Park, there is Court Theater (courtheater.org), which is the professional theater on campus at the University. It has won numerous accolades and won rave reviews from theater critics and has been named “the most consistently excellent theater company in America” by the Wall Street Journal.

Chicago is also home to well known theater companies such as Steppenwolf Theater (steppenwolf.org) and the Goodman Theater (goodmantheatre.org). Famous actors can often be seen returning to their stage roots in these Chicago theaters. For instance, William Peterson (he played Gil Grissom from the original CSI) acted in a production of Endgame at Steppenwolf Theater.

There are also numerous improvisational comedy acts that can be found in Chicago, such as the famous IO (previously, ImprovOlympic, ioinimprov.com) and Second City (secondcity.com). Of course there are also more prestigious (and expensive) theaters located downtown, such as the Chicago Theater (www.chicagotheater.com).

(vii) Museums
Chicago is home to some of the best museums in the world, however, unlike London, entry to these museums is not free. Therefore, many students choose to visit these museums on days where they have free admission or visit only the museums that are covered under the UChicago Arts Pass.

Three of the museums are located in an area known as the Museum Campus. There you can find the Alder Planetarium (adlerplanetarium.org), the Field Museum (fieldmuseum.org) and the Shedd Aquarium (sheddaquarium.org). Closer to Hyde Park, there is the Museum of Science and Industry (msichicago.org), which is the largest science museum in the Western Hemisphere and definitely worth a visit. There are also other museums in Chicago such as the Museum of Contemporary Art (mcachicago.org) and the Art Institute of Chicago (artic.edu).

(viii) Music
Chicago has a vibrant music scene and it is reflected in the wide variety of musical performances available in the city. As the home of the distinctive Chicago blues, there are numerous famous blues bars all around the city, most notable the original House of Blues (houseofblues.com). If blues is not your cup of tea, there are many other venues where you can see live acts all over the city.

Being one of America's largest cities, Chicago is a common stop for touring bands. Acts that have visited Chicago within the last year include U2 and John Mayer. For larger acts, their concerts are
usually held at Soldier Field or United Center, while smaller acts can be found at venues all around Chicago. Lists of concerts can be found online.

If you are a fan of classical music, there are many options as well. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra (cso.org) is one of the five American orchestras commonly referred to as the “Big Five”. There are often concerts where students can get discounted tickets. The Lyric Opera of Chicago (http://www.lyricopera.org) is one of the leading opera companies in the United States. With the UChicago Arts Pass, students can get discounted tickets there.

(ix) Film
Catching a movie in Chicago is more expensive than compared to Singapore. However, if there is a huge blockbuster that you want to catch, watching it in a cinema (since downloading is illegal, of course) provides an unparalleled viewing experience. One of the downtown cinemas frequented by UofC students is AMC River East (amcentertainment.com). Pricing structure is different compared to Singapore, where tickets on the same day can vary in cost, depending on the time of the show. Expect to pay $11 for an evening show and an additional $3-4 if the movie is in 3D.

For people who do not wish to travel downtown, the College has its own in-house theater. Doc Films (docfilms.org) screens movies everyday during academic quarters and from Wednesdays to Saturdays over summer. Tickets are $5 for each movie screening. A quarterly pass, which cost $30, will enable you to gain entry into any Doc Films movie screening for that quarter. During academic quarters, more recent releases will be screened on Friday and Saturday nights and older movies will be screened during the rest of the week, usually following a theme (for example, young American directors).

In October, Chicago hosts of the Chicago International Film Festival (chicagofilmfestival.com), North America's oldest competitive film festival. There is often a huge range of entries from all countries around the world.

(x) Professional Sports
Chicago is home to sports teams playing in the four large American leagues. Currently the pride of Chicago, the Chicago Blackhawks (chicagoblackhawks.com) are the current National Hockey League champions. The regular season runs from October to April and the play at the United Center. Sharing the United Center with the Blackhawks is arguably Chicago's most internationally well-known sports franchise, the Chicago Bulls (bulls.com) from the National Basketball Association. With a young team capable of making the play-offs, there are high expectations for the team to do well in the coming years. The regular season lasts from Fall to Spring.

There are two Major League baseball teams from Chicago. Allegiance amongst Chicagoans is split along North-South lines, with those from the South supporting the White Sox (whitesox.com) who play at the US Cellular Field and those in the North supporting the Cubs (cubs.com) who play at Wrigley Field. The baseball regular season runs from April to September. Finally, the Chicago Bears (chicagobears.com) play in the National Football League. They are the second most successful team in NFL history with 9 titles and play at Soldier Field.
Tickets are professional sporting events are usually pretty pricey, especially if they are obtained on the open market. However, the College and individual Houses in the housing system often organize outings to games where tickets can be obtained at much lower prices.

**xi) Shopping**

Magnificent Mile in downtown Chicago is the main shopping area in Chicago, with numerous stores lining the street. There, you can find many big brands, department stores, designer boutiques and restaurants. Most of the shops are along the Mile itself, which is actually North Michigan Avenue, with restaurants mostly a block or two off the Mile. Nearby, there are also many shops along State Street in the Loop, making downtown Chicago a one-stop shopping destination for fans of big name brands.

For a more interesting shopping experience with individual shops and less big names, you can visit some of the many of the neighborhoods in Chicago. There are many small boutiques around the North Side, giving the area more of a bohemian vibe. Naturally, for ethnic goods, it is best to head to the various ethnic enclaves around Chicago, such as Chinatown.

Further afield, Chicago Premium Outlets (premiumoutlets.com/chicago) is an outlet mall in Aurora with more than a hundred shops, selling branded goods at reasonable prices. A little closer, Ford City, near Midway Airport, has a range of discount chains such as Walmart. Head there for a quintessential American shopping experience.

Chicago has a 10.25% sales tax on most purchases and it is not reflected on the listed price so remember to factor that into your price calculations.

**xii) Food**

Chicago has one of the greatest number of restaurants per capita in America, and it shows. Great food is available everywhere and if you are willing to make an effort to look, you can get food at great prices as well. Chicago boasts some unique dishes, including the Chicago pizza and the Chicago hot dog. The Chicago pizza is also referred to as a deep-dish pizza, which is essentially a pizza pie. Everyone has their own favorites but famous locations to have a Chicago pizza include Uno Chicago Grill (unos.com) and Giordano's (giordanos.com). The Chicago hot dog is a hot dog served with a variety of vegetables on it and famously, strictly without ketchup. For an interesting Chicago hot dog experience, head down to the Wieners Circle (it does not have a website, but go Wikipedia or YouTube it).

On the high end, Chicago has numerous world-class restaurants. Most famously, there is Alinea (alinea-restaurant.com), run by chef Grant Achatz. It was recently voted the seventh best restaurant in the world, and the best in North America. Achatz is also opening another restaurant called Next (nextrestaurant.com) which is expected to be less pricey than his flagship restaurant. Other world-class restaurants in Chicago include the world famous Charlie Trotter's (charlietrotters.com) and Everest (everestrestaurant.com).

Many of the better Chicago restaurants might cost a bit too much for regular students. However, their food can be enjoyed for more reasonable prices during Restaurant Week (choosethechicago.com/eatitup/pages/restaurant.aspx). For a week every February, restaurants serve a fixed-price, set-meal which provides very good value and would cost much less than a normal priced meal at the same restaurant any other time of the year.
As with many other big cities, for ethnic food, the ethnic enclaves are the places to head to. There are neighborhoods where you can find Chinese (Chinatown), Indian (Devon), Mexican (Pilsen), Polish (Belmont), Vietnamese (Argyle) and many other types of ethnic cuisine. With immigrants from many of these countries owning the restaurant and serving the food, patrons can expect an authentic dining experience.

Thanks to the Student Government, all University of Chicago students are entitled to discounts at various dining establishments in Hyde Park. A list of such establishments can be found online (facebook.com/group.php?gid=218838602872). In addition, SAMSU members are entitled to discounts at various restaurants in Chinatown if they produce their SAMSU membership cards. The full list of restaurants with discounts can also be found online (samsu.uchicago.edu/shopping.html).

**SAMSU/School Traditions**

Being members of both the University of Chicago and SAMSU Singaporean Society, you can expect to be fully immersed in both communities, taking part in various traditions and events that happen throughout the school year. Being a college, nakedness, especially in the dead of winter, does tend to be involved in a few traditions. One such tradition is the track team streak, where members of the track team streak through the Regenstein Library the Sunday before finals week of Winter quarter. Another is the Polar Bear Run, where members of the college community run naked from one end of the Main Quad to the other. The Polar Bear Run is actually the finale of Kuviasungnerk/Kangeiko (or simply called, Kuvia). Kuvia is a week-long festival in the dead of winter, where students get up early in the morning and take part in mass exercises at 5:30am.

Another tradition is Midnight Breakfast, which is held late on Sunday night before finals week. Many students take a break from studying to grab a free supper of breakfast food. Also related to food is Dollar Shake Day at Reynolds Club. The Einstein Bros. Bagel franchise sells milkshakes for $1 every Wednesday and was only allowed to open on campus if it adhered to the tradition. Also in the Reynolds Club, is a seal on the ground, bearing the crest of the University of Chicago. Rumor has it that students who step on the seal would not be able to graduate within four years.

The annual Latke-Hamantash Debate has been a fixture of the University calendar since 1946, where faculty debate about the relative merits of latke and hamantash, two Jewish holiday treats. Faculty debate in a mock serious tone, using expertise in their respective fields to advocate their positions.

By far the largest and most unique tradition to the University is the annual Scav Hunt (scavhunt.uchicago.edu). It is sometimes called the largest scavenger hunt in the world and teams are required to acquire items from a list of approximately 300 items, with each item given a points value. Items in the list are often challenging to acquire and extremely random. Previous years’ lists can be found at the Scav website.
SAMSU also has various annual traditions, most of which happen in spring. These include the Spring Barbecue for graduating seniors, where a barbecue is held at Promontory Point, by Lake Michigan, in honor of the graduating seniors. The Spring Barbecue is also an occasion to give out prizes for SAMSU Assassins. Assassins is a live-action game where players try to eliminate each other from the game using mock weapons in an effort to be the last surviving player.

Besides these events in spring, there are also other events throughout the year, like Pub Night, where SAMSU members over-21 head to the University Pub in the basement of Ida Noyes Hall every Monday for wings, and Games Night, where members meet to play all kinds of games ranging from mahjong to Guitar Hero. Also, there is an annual Thanksgiving dinner and Chinese New Year study break. Finally, SAMSU's biggest event of the year is Citylights, where a certain aspect of Singaporean culture is showcased to the University community. Previous Citylights presentations have included a play about army, a mock wedding, a staging of Dick Lee's Beauty World and a play about junior college life.

(xiv) Districts
Chicago is a large city with numerous districts radiating from downtown. As downtown is bordered on the east by Lake Michigan, there are three distinct areas, namely the North, South and West sides, split into various districts. There is a rivalry between the North and South sides, especially with respect to baseball. Chicago is easy to navigate, with "streets" running east-west and "avenues" running north-south in general and their numbering based on the distance from the zero point of the address system, the intersection of State Street (north-south) and Madison Street (east-west). Therefore, since the Regenstein Library is at 1100 E 57th Street, it is 11 blocks east of State Street and 57 blocks south of Madison Street. Below is an outline of various districts in Chicago and the suburbs that Singaporeans frequent.

Hyde Park
- Hyde Park is the neighborhood in which the University of Chicago and where students of the College spend most of their time. However, the University is not all that Hyde Park is about. It has a rich history, having played host to the World's Fair in 1893 and has been the home of many famous people, including some not affiliated to the University, like Muhammad Ali, Amelia Earhart and Hugh Hefner.
- The district is bordered by Washington Park on the west, Lake Michigan on the east, the Midway on the South and (officially) 51st Street on the north. The majority of the south-west of the district is taken up by the University of Chicago and its affiliated hospital and the east is
occupied by a park on the shore of the lake. Odd numbered streets are home to commercial establishments, including offices, shops and restaurants, especially 53rd Street, which has the highest number of such establishments.

- Besides activities on campus, there are numerous things to do, see and eat in Hyde Park. There are many small cafes in the area that serve baked goods and coffee. Good baked goods can be found at establishments like Medici (medici57.com), while probably the best coffee in Hyde Park can be found at Istria Cafe (istriacafe.com). Interestingly, there is a cluster of Asian restaurants on 55th Street that serve reliable Thai and Korean food. For great South Side fried chicken, head to Harold’s Chicken Shack, reportedly Obama’s favorite fried chicken. With its staff working behind bullet proof glass, it is definitely a unique experience, with great chicken to boot.

- Since the University has a large say in land zoning in Hyde Park, they have managed to prevent many large chain stores from setting up shop in the area. However, there are still convenience stores like CVS and Walgreens a few blocks from school. There are however, a number of small bookstores on 57th Street near the Metra tracks selling an interesting array of books. For something different, there is a farmer’s market on 61st Street between Dorchester and Blackstone Avenues every Saturday from May to October, selling agricultural produce.

- There are things to do in Hyde Park. For a start, the Midway Plaisance borders the College to the south and has many fields where people can often be seen playing soccer, frisbee and other sports. Also on the Midway is an ice skating rink which is in operation in winter. There are some days in winter when students from the College can skate for free. The Museum of Science and Industry, as mentioned earlier, is also worth visiting. Since it borders Lake Michigan, many students also head to the lake during the warmer months. Students can be seen at barbecues at the pits near Promontory Point or head further south to relax at the beach.

**Downtown**

- Downtown Chicago is where all the action happens. For purposes of convenience, it can be split into the Loop, the Magnificent Mile and two parks on the lakefront called Millennium Park and Grant Park. The Loop is literally the downtown loop that the L (for elevated) trains take when going through the main financial area. Magnificent Mile is the main shopping area of Chicago and is a stretch of North Michigan Avenue north of the Chicago River.

- Being the main commercial area, the Loop does not offer much for a tourist to do. In fact, besides visiting some famous sights and a little bit of shopping, there is not much else there. Shops can be found along State Street and Michigan Avenue, facing the parks and include H&M, Old Navy and a few department stores. There are a few interesting sights in the Loop. For a start, there are many buildings that are famous and beautifully designed, including several buildings that can be seen in the Dark Knight. The top of the Willis Tower (formerly the Sears Tower and the tallest building in the world), is worth a visit as well.

- Grant and Millennium Parks are the areas in Chicago where major events are held and many historic Chicago events have happened there, including a huge gathering of people the night Obama got elected into office. There are often many concerts held in the park as well, especially during summer, which begins after the Memorial Day weekend. Grant and Millennium Parks are
home to a few famous landmarks. This includes Buckingham Fountain, the Bean (literally a polished, stainless steel bean but officially called Cloud Gate) and the Pritzker Pavilion.

- If you like shopping you would love the Magnificent Mile, with a huge range of shops available to satisfy even the most hardcore shopper. Shops range from department stores like Nordstrom to internationally well-known retailers such as Eddie Bauer and Apple. For those who do not enjoy shopping as much, the architecture is worth a visit to the Magnificent Mile as well. Famous buildings include the Water Tower, Wrigley Building and the Tribune Tower. Visitors can also head to the observatory at the top of the John Hancock Center for an amazing view of Chicago.

Chinatown

- Chicago’s Chinatown is the third-largest Chinatown in the United States but do not go there expecting a truly authentic Chinese experience. Despite this, Chinatown does provide a place where you can find Chinese food, bubble tea and shop at an Asian supermarket. To get to Chinatown from College, most students typically take the Red line and stop at Cermak-Chinatown.

- Chinatown is split into “Old” and “New” Chinatown. When Singaporeans speak of Old Chinatown, they are referring to a stretch of Wentworth Avenue, which is an older and the original part of Chicago’s Chinatown. There is a wide variety of shops there that sell all kinds of Chinese products, from trinkets to baked goods. Generally, in Old Chinatown, the shops are older and what some might regard as “more authentic”. New Chinatown is basically a mall along Archer Avenue, a block away from Old Chinatown. This is where most of the restaurants in Chinatown are and you will be spoilt for choice. There is a variety of cuisine from various Chinese regions, a variety of settings from traditional Chinese to modern and somehow, all around the same price.
• It is important to know that the area around Chinatown is not considered safe, so while it is interesting to explore Chinatown on foot, try not to stray too far away from the main Chinatown strip.

Argyle
• Sticking to the Asian theme, there is a small Asian district located uptown around the Argyle station on the Red Line and this area is often referred to as “Little Vietnam” for its concentration of Vietnamese eateries. Beside eateries, there is also an Asian supermarket that stocks all things South East Asian including fresh fish and durians.
• While the district is not as bustling as Chinatown and actually looks run-down and seedy, it is still worth visiting. Generally, areas north of the Loop are safer than areas south, and Argyle is no exception. You can walk around Argyle feeling relatively safe.
• For Singaporeans, the draws here would undoubtedly be the eateries. One of the better Vietnamese joints is Pho Xe Tang (or just called Tank Restaurant). The food is tasty and comes in large portions, at prices that cannot be found elsewhere in Chicago. Their pho is really good. Sun Wah BBQ specializes in roast meats and is worth trying out as well. They are well known for their roast duck but have other good meats as well. There is also a large Asian supermarket 2 blocks south of Argyle, along Broadway St. It is Vietnamese run but has all things Asian. This is a good place to get a whole range of Asian goods, including some things from Singapore like Yeo’s drinks.

Lincoln Park
• One of the more affluent neighborhoods in Chicago, Lincoln Park has a wide range of options for visitors, even if you are on a budget. Lincoln Park is situated directly north of Downtown, bordered on the east by Lake Michigan. From college, the best way to get there is via the Red Line. Lincoln Park Zoo is the main zoo in Chicago and one of its main tourist attractions. While Singaporeans might compare it unfavorably with the Singapore Zoo, the zoo in Lincoln Park is considered one of the best in America and, best of all, it’s free. One can also visit the North Avenue Beach from late-spring to early-fall. It is one of Chicago’s main beaches and can be said to be the beach volleyball capital of the Midwest.
• Steppenwolf Theater and Second City, among others, are some theaters that are located in Lincoln Park. They put on high-quality, world-class productions, and are worth checking out. As mentioned earlier, the UChicago Arts Pass can be used at some of the theaters to obtain discounts. It is no accident that two of the best restaurants in Chicago are found in its most fashionable district. Alinea and Charlie Trotters can be found near Steppenwolf Theater and serve expensive but impressively executed food. The two restaurants are definitely worth a visit in your time in Chicago.
• If further education is more your thing, the Goose Island Brew Pub offers an MBA, or Masters of Beer Appreciation. Like the UofC, you need to finish 42 credits (or beers) to graduate and you will be given a certificate and have your name on a plaque on the wall. Besides an education, Goose Island, one of Chicago’s better breweries, also serves good food and is a good place to head to for dinner before a play at Steppenwolf.

Boystown
• Boystown and the area around it is one of the best places to go to experience Chicago’s nightlife. Not only is it safe but this area has many of Chicago’s better bars and restaurants. This area is called Boystown because it is the home of the GLBTQ community in Chicago and is one of the largest GLBTQ communities in the United States. Wrigleyfield, the home of the Chicago White Sox, is also in this district.
• Honestly, one cannot go wrong with most of the bars or restaurants in the area. The bars generally have a more laid back atmosphere than the more up-market and classy bars downtown, and those in Boystown are more playful and interesting. The area does not have any large brand name stores but has many smaller shops selling clothes and accessories.

• Being the home of the GLBTQ community in Chicago, there are some events in Boystown that cannot be missed. One happens every year in Halloween and is the Halloween parade. People from all over Chicago go to the area in their costumes to either participate in or to watch the parade. The atmosphere is relaxed and friendly, with no one objecting to photos being taken of themselves. There is also a large pride festival the last weekend of June. It is always crowded and lively but also good-natured and a little risqué. Definitely not an event to bring your visiting parents to in Chicago but one to see with friends just for the experience.
(i) Administration

CMore (http://cmore.uchicago.edu)
- Effectively the university’s ‘admin’ portal, where you can update important personal information, view current course schedule, access your academic history, and so on. (CNet ID login required)

- The place to go for any sort of academic information. Some notable sites include:
  - Time Schedules (http://timeschedules.uchicago.edu/)
    1. The complete timetables of the current, next and past academic quarters, sorted by department.
    2. Effectively your personal homepage during Week 8 of every quarter, when you start choosing your next bunch of classes.
  - Academic Calendar (http://academic-calendar.uchicago.edu/)
    1. This page lists important dates such as start / end of quarter, as well as any upcoming holidays.
    2. Absolutely essential for planning flights / vacations out of town.
  - Final Exams (http://registrar.uchicago.edu/courses/final-exams.shtml)
    1. Here you can find the date and location of every final exam in the College; the publishing of the current quarter's schedule heralds the approach of the dreaded Finals Week.

(ii) Academics

Chalk (http://chalk.uchicago.edu)
- Chalk is the portal where you can access assignments / readings / discussion boards that your professors have uploaded. Quite probably the most visited university webpage during the school term, and justifiably so. (CNet ID login required)

College Catalog (http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/)
- Here you can find the detailed General Education curriculum, as well as syllabi for every single major / department in the College (all in PDF format). Especially crucial for navigating the maze of requirements that define the Core Curriculum.

University Library website (http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/index.html)
- A central portal for all the University libraries, from the imposing Regenstein (undoubtedly, everyone’s favorite ... right?) to infamous Crerar (the Science library).
- Contains links to all information you might ever need to know, especially the detailed opening hours of each library (and in some cases the cafe!), which are updated on a weekly basis.

(iii) Buying/Renting

UChicago Marketplace (http://marketplace.uchicago.edu/)
- The Craigslist of the University, Marketplace contains classified ads offering almost anything
under the sun, ranging from used books to furniture to bicycles.

- Also a useful place to put items up for sale. This website comes in particularly handy if you choose to move out of campus housing after first year, in which case you would probably need to buy a ton of random household appliances.

**UChicago Apartments** ([http://www.uchicagoapartments.com/](http://www.uchicagoapartments.com/))

- Whether you're looking for an apartment / room, or for people to stay in your place over summer, this is the second-best place to start looking (the first being, obviously, the SAMSU Listhost).
- The search function can be customized to narrow down the listings based on price, amenities, etc, and there is also a page for renters containing detailed links to many useful websites (e.g. utility companies).

(iv) **Overseas Singaporean Unit (OSU)**

The **Overseas Singaporean Unit (OSU)**, in the Prime Minister's Office, was set up to coordinate efforts to connect Overseas Singaporeans back to Singapore and with each other. Some of OSU’s key initiatives include:

- **Distinguished Business Leader Series** – high-profile engagement sessions that feature leading business personalities. This is to enable Overseas Singaporeans to stay abreast of developments in the various sectors of the Singapore economy. The DBL series would be of particular interest to those wishing to find out more about job and business opportunities in Singapore and the region.

- **SG Buzz** – an informal event where Singapore luminaries from diverse backgrounds such as the arts, medicine and culinary world share with Overseas Singaporeans the developments back in Singapore.

- **Singapore Day** – an annual signature one-day event that engages Overseas Singaporeans through food, performances and dynamic showcases, held in a major city every year since 2007. Previous Singapore Days were held in New York, Melbourne, London and Shanghai.

- **Overseas Singaporean (OS) Club** – OS Club membership card connects you with Singapore-owned/Singapore-managed businesses, allowing you member privileges and discounts on F&B and lifestyle around the world.
- **OS Funding and the OS-Young ChangeMakers (OS-YCM) Grant** – funding mechanisms to provide seed funding to the OS Community to organise activities that bring Singaporeans closer together and connect them back to Singapore. The OS-YCM Grant, in particular, is administered by the National Youth Council and provides funding for projects initiated by young Overseas Singaporeans that benefit their communities (OS and others) in the host country.

- **Overseas Singaporean Liaison** – an OSU officer, Mr Jason Leong, is stationed in New York to implement OSU’s programmes and serve as a key point of contact for Singaporeans. Jason covers North America and can be contacted at jason_leong@nptd.gov.sg

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**Sign up at Overseas Singaporean Portal!**

– a one-stop platform for Overseas Singaporeans (www.overseassingaporean.sg) to get relevant information about living abroad and news updates from home.

**Join us on Facebook** to get bite-sized updates on home news, events in and outside Singapore, participate in wall discussions on current issues,

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**(v) Others**

**Career Advising & Planning Services (CAPS)** (https://caps.uchicago.edu/)

- While targeted primarily at US students (unless you’re intending to pursue your career in the States), CAPS is a convenient place to begin your search for any sort of internship (https://caps.uchicago.edu/undergrads/internships/).
- The site (https://caps.uchicago.edu/resourcecenter/internationalstudents.html) provides information specifically for international students, such as any special considerations to take note of for your visa type (F1, J1, etc).

**Office of International Affairs (OIA)** (https://internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/)

- This website provides information pertaining specifically to international students (duh). Most importantly, it contains a detailed breakdown of the visa application process (https://internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/students/admitted/), as well as how to maintain it while you’re a student here (https://internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/students/current_students/f1/index.shtml), e.g. when and how to get a new signature on your I-20 form to make sure it’s up to date.