

Studying At Bennington College

Congratulations on enrolling at Bennington. This information is provided with the **Certificate of Finances** and should be fully explored to understand the resources available to you on campus as well as the financial responsibilities. We know you did not take the decision to enroll at Bennington lightly. We want to provide you with the information you need to make your transition to college and studying in the USA an easier one. As always, we are here to answer your questions, so please ask!

A Bennington Education

One of the factors that attracted you to Bennington is the liberal arts approach to education. You are encouraged and expected to study a wide range of disciplines during your first year and throughout your time at Bennington. You will work with faculty to develop an individualized course of study that is driven by the questions you are most compelled to answer.

- The process by which Bennington students declare their specialized area of study is called the Plan Process. The Plan Process replaces the traditional major/minor structure to allow you to work in conjunction with faculty mentors in crafting a curriculum that best addresses your areas of interest.
- A central tenet of the liberal arts philosophy is that students will explore various academic disciplines. One of the requirements of the Plan Process is for students to conduct an interdisciplinary investigation in their field of study. You will take courses in a variety of subjects in order to comprehensively understand the intersections among disciplines and to develop the ability to adapt to a world that increasingly demands versatile thinkers.

Student Housing

One of the best aspects of Bennington is the residential experience, and Bennington student houses consistently top the rankings in Princeton Review's "Dorms Like Palaces" list. All students live on campus unless approved otherwise. Students live not in dorms but in houses of generally 30–45 people each, with architectural styles ranging from modern design to clapboard houses reflecting 1930s New England.

- Each house offers kitchens and cozy common areas (most with fireplaces), where students relax, study, socialize, and hold weekly Coffee Hours to discuss campus and house issues together.
- All houses are co-educational. There are co-ed bathrooms for every four to five rooms, all with showers, and many with bathtubs. Depending on where you live, you might find yourself enjoying a patio or porch overlooking panoramic views of the mountains, a piano, or a second living room.
- House communities are made up of students from all classes, continuing students, transfer students, and first-year students. Some of the current students will have lived in your house for many terms, while others will be new to the house. Through your housemates, you'll discover new ideas and influences, and express your personality and passions.
- House Chairs are undergraduate students who serve as community leaders to house residents. There are two House Chairs in each house. They are knowledgeable about resources available on campus, serve as a liaison between campus services and your house, and run Coffee Hour, the weekly house meeting.
- All first- and second-year students have one or more roommates. This is integral to the co-educational structure that Residential Life at Bennington prides itself on. After their first year, students have the option to continue living with their first-year roommates or to room with someone new.
- Some of the more independent housing options available to upperclassmen do not require a full meal plan. Longmeadow, Paran Creek Apartments, Welling Townhouse, and Shingle allow students to prepare food in their residences and purchase the less expensive Flex-7 meal plan option. See your financial aid award letter and the financial aid handbook for more information about housing and meal plan exceptions.
- Exceptions to the residential requirements are rare, and students should not expect that living off-campus will be an option during their time as an undergraduate at Bennington. Students who are 24 years or older are eligible to live off campus; the other exceptions can be found in the Student Handbook available on the Bennington College website.

Housing On-Campus for FWT, Holiday Breaks, and Summer

Some international students cannot return home during FWT, one of the breaks, or for the summer; or they may be unable to travel or stay with friends or relatives; or they may have an on-campus job during this time. If this is the case for you, you have the option to apply for obtaining on-campus housing during this time. It's important to know that campus housing over FWT is not part of the regular room and board fee, but it is offered at a discounted price and is often less expensive than international travel. Students should register for their job or FWT on Handshake and then work with Student Life and International Student Services to apply for on campus housing. On-campus housing is not guaranteed and space is limited.

During FWT and most mid-term breaks, many campus services are not open, including the dining halls and Health Services. Since there is no meal plan available over the winter period, students staying on campus prepare their own meals in the kitchenettes of their assigned house and cover their own food expenses. Shuttles are available through Green Mountain Express to take students to a local grocery store and to downtown Bennington.

Dining Services

- The Dining Hall has several dining rooms and an outdoor patio. Newly opened Commons offers many seating options. It serves three meals a day on weekdays, and on weekends a continental breakfast, brunch, and dinner. Students with visiting guests can purchase guest passes through Dining Services.
- Dining Hall meals offer students a wide range of options, drawing on cuisines from Thai to Cajun to Italian.
- Vegetarian and vegan selections are served at every meal and special events.
- Cooking stations and ingredients are available for students to prepare some of their own food.
- For special dietary restrictions, we encourage you to meet with the executive chef to explore available options.
- All students are enrolled in the campus meal plan. In rare cases, exceptions to this policy may be granted. Certain housing options have the option for reduced meal plans.

Health Insurance

Health insurance is required by the federal government for all students. We require international students to subscribe to the IFS Prime policy (approximately \$1,200 each year). IFS is very good (and very reasonable) coverage and is accepted at health and psychological services on campus without out-of-pocket co-pays after the first \$200 deductible. Learn more about the requirement for health insurance and the glossary of terms [here](#). ***Students are required to confirm insurance coverage [online](#) by August 1 or the policy will be added to your student account (with an administrative fee) and you will need to pay the college back.*** Students on J-1 visas and any J-2 accompanying spouse and dependent(s) may also be subject to the requirements of the Affordable Care Act [22 CFR 62.14(a)]. Be aware that the ACA requirements may exceed the U.S. Department of State requirements. (Minimum Requirement: Medical Benefit \$100,000, Repatriation of Remains \$25,000, Medical Evacuation \$50,000, Deductible per accident or illness \$500)

Transportation

- **Plan your travel.** Learn more about traveling to the US and getting to Bennington College [here](#)
- **From the airport.** Albany International Airport in Albany, New York is the closest airport to Bennington College. This is still 50-60 minutes from campus and will require additional local travel to get to the College via bus or RideShare. Hiring a taxi is more expensive than taking the bus.
- **On and around campus.** Once here, the local Green Mountain Express shuttle service is on campus several times a day and will take students to local shops and destinations. This shuttle is free with your Bennington student ID.
- **On foot or by pedal.** The college is located in North Bennington, Vermont. The campus is walking distance to a large grocery store, hardware, pharmacy, and several places to eat. A limited number of bikes are available to rent on campus.

Resources and Support On Campus

There are many resources and areas of support available to international students, including campus waivers for different services, emergency loans, help with emergency travel, Vermont State waivers for hospital fees, checking out laptops for the term, FWT fellowships, need-based FWT grants, staying on campus over breaks, FWT or summer (see FWT section regarding cost of housing), FLoW (a support group for First-generation Low-income Working-class college students), Free and For Sale group, Ride Share, local thrift shops, and affording class materials. There is a local bus service that comes to campus several times a day and shuttles to local stores. At the beginning of term international students will meet for several orientation sessions to go over important details. Most importantly, the International Student Services office ISS@bennington.edu is available to help with your transition to college and send you emails periodically about events and group meetings during term.

Field Work Term

Another unique feature of the Bennington education is the Field Work Term (FWT). This six-week off-campus experience takes place from early January until the middle-end of February each year, during which students pursue jobs and internships in areas that complement their studies. It is an opportunity to immerse yourself in a working environment, and apply and reflect upon your classroom experience in the real world. Waivers to complete FWT over the summer months may be available and discussed with fwt@bennington.edu. By the end of your time at Bennington, you will have completed four FWTs and have acquired a body of work experiences, a set of references, a network of professional contacts, and most importantly, the confidence that you can make your way in the world.

Funding Field Work Term

Students are responsible for all costs during winter break and Field Work Term, including transportation, food, housing and personal expenses. Costs will vary depending on the location you choose, with expenses ranging from \$500-\$2500. FWT jobs that pay and/or that offer housing can help cover these costs. Most students save up money over the summer and during the fall term to help cover expenses during this time. Due to limited FWT work options for first-year international students on F-1 visas, the College has made available a (limited) number of on-campus FWT positions and housing opportunities. For budgeting purposes, the on campus fee for FWT housing was \$575.00 last year and summer was \$900.00. Students hired to work on campus over FWT will earn approximately \$2,000 to help cover living expenses such as meals and housing. Students should work with Student Life and International Student Services to arrange housing after applying for an FWT or summer job on Handshake, our on campus job application system. The College has also established a need-based grant to help students with demonstrated financial need to assist with expenses related to FWT. Grants are limited in number, and intended to cover only a portion of FWT expenses. For more information about FWT grants and fellowships, please click [here](#).

FWT Work and the F-1 Visa

The Department of Homeland Security regulations affect FWT options for international students during their first year. International students on F-1 visas who have been in the country for less than nine months are generally not eligible to work off-campus in the United States for any type of compensation—including pay, room and board, academic credit, graduation requirements, etc. As a first-year international student, you have several options to complete your first FWT, including:

- Work in a paid position on campus
- Defer your first FWT to the summer when you can work for pay anywhere in the U.S.
- Apply for a FWT position in your home country
- Arrange a volunteer FWT position abroad

You can discuss these options when you arrive on campus and choose the one that works best for you. For more information on the above options, click [here](#).

U.S. Work Opportunities

The work opportunity listed in financial aid awards is for on-campus employment, paid directly to the student every other week for hours worked. Students are not permitted to work more than 20 hours per week on a student visa during term and can work up to 40 hours during the summer. Early in the first term, students will go to the Social Security Administration to apply for a Social Security card, allowing them to work. You will learn more about on-campus employment during fall orientation before classes start.

- **Spring and Fall Terms:** Students studying in the United States on an F-1 student visa are able to work and earn income on campus. This is a basic privilege of the F-1 visa and does not require special paperwork.
- **Field Work Term and Summer:** After F-1 students complete their first academic year of full-time study, they are eligible for paid employment opportunities anywhere in the U.S. that are related to academic pursuits and a required part of their degree program.
- Review the specifics about working on www.bennington.edu search CPT and OPT or follow this [link](#).

Taxes for International Students

It is a legal requirement for all international students to report to the U.S. tax service each year, even if you did not work in the previous year. If you earned income in the U.S. in the previous year, you may be obligated to pay taxes.

- **Income from work (W-2)** Sources of income may include on-campus employment, practical or academic training, scholarships, fellowships, and any other compensation received in exchange for a service. If you are employed in the United States, your employer will send you a statement of earnings, called a Form W-2, by the end of January that details your income and any taxes withheld during the previous year.
- **Income from a scholarship for housing and meals (1040-S)** “Income” is not limited to wages paid through a paycheck; but also includes any portion of a scholarship, fellowship, or assistantship from a U.S. source paid to the College and applied to housing and meal expenses. The portion applied to tuition, fees, and books is not considered income by the federal government. After each calendar year concludes, you will receive a tax document called the 1042-S, created by the College that estimates the taxes you will likely be responsible for based on your scholarship from the school and the treaty between your country and the U.S., if one exists. Be sure to keep copies of all your tax documents.
- **Help with taxes.** You may have questions about how taxes will apply to you. Bennington College uses Sprintax Tax Prep Software to help our international students estimate, track, and prepare annual required tax filings. You will learn more about Sprintax when you are on campus. You can also [estimate your taxes](#) using this tool on our website.

Mail

Campus post office. The college has an on campus post office, which is located in the Commons building. Students can send and receive mail and packages at: Student Name, Bennington College, 1 College Drive, Bennington, VT 05201, USA

Term Start-up Expenses

For many students, most of the funds for books, supplies and personal expenses are needed at the beginning of a term, generally before the student can get an on-campus job and paycheck. You should plan to arrive on campus with sufficient funds for books, supplies, and initial living expenses (at least \$600). The first paycheck for students with on-campus jobs arrives nearly a month after classes begin. Students who will not work should anticipate expenses totaling at least \$3,000 for books, supplies, and personal expenses during the year. International students may work on campus during FWT or Summer and get paid for hours worked. Students can work and earn money during term for some of the personal expenses listed below.

Review Your Budget...Again

Other than your contribution noted on your financial aid award letter as “Anticipated Bill,” there may be other expenses for you to plan ahead and include in your budget. There are some expenses that all students need to consider when going to college and there are additional expenses related to studying in another country. Bennington’s financial aid does not cover these additional expenses. You may be able to bring some of these items from home to save the cost of purchasing them here. All of the expenses listed here may not apply to you, but they should be considered when determining your *entire* budget for college.

Standard budget items:		*Optional budget items:	
	Estimated amount USD		Estimated amount USD
Yearly travel cost to/from the airport	\$ 300.00	Computer, if purchasing. There are many available to use for free on campus	\$ 500.00
Yearly IFS Prime health insurance , paid in fall term each year	\$ 1,200.00	Clothing/footwear appropriate for winter weather and FWT in the Northeast climate	\$ 300.00
Travel cost to USA will vary by student.	\$ 1,000.00	Initial room bedding - sheets, pillow, blanket, toiletries, etc. or bring from home.	\$ 200.00
Books and Supplies can range from 200-1,000 depending on area of study	\$ 800.00	Plan for summer housing/food costs for students who do not fly home.	\$ 1,000.00
FWT (housing, food, expenses) cost to live on/off campus ranges from 500-2,000	\$ 800.00	Personal expenses and pocket money estimate \$20 per week	\$ 600.00
Visa application fee	\$ 165.00	Cell phone -AT&T unlimited data is currently \$35 per month. Try Cricket or Verizon	\$ 315.00
SEVIS processing fee	\$ 350.00	Cost of summer storage if student leaves items	\$ 50.00
Health - out of pocket (off campus or lab fees) after insurance	\$ 200.00	Yearly taxes paid on scholarships for room and board, varies by country treaty	\$ 350.00
Average misc fees - ID card replacement, transcript, library late fees, etc	\$ 100.00	Yearly taxes paid on employment earnings, varies by country treaty	\$ 250.00
	\$ 4,915.00		\$5,565.00

**There are stores near campus, some items can be purchased here when you arrive, if preferred.*

What now?

Accept your Financial Aid. Log in to your [My Financial Aid](#) portal. Select Menu, then “Accept Award” in the dropdown. Accept or decline each of the grants, scholarships, work-study and/or loans you have been offered. We will only be able to transfer accepted aid to the bill on your student account. While logged in, be sure that each document on your Required Documents page is noted as Received.

Certification of Finances. Students must show the total out of pocket expenses amount noted on your financial aid award letter labeled **Estimated Family “out of pocket” Expenses**. This figure includes the charges remaining on your student bill after financial aid is applied as well as showing that you have sufficient resources for the indirect costs you will have for each of your four years studying in the US. Be sure to provide original signatures.

I-20 and Visa. Once the Certificate of Finances has been received in the Financial Aid Office, reviewed and approved, the supporting financial aid documents will be sent to the Admissions Office to generate the I-20. You will use this documentation to get your student Visa.

Billing. An invoice will be sent in mid-May from the Business Office. All future invoices can be accessed on your Populi account; the Billing Office will not send follow up invoices. Student bills must be paid *in full* one month prior to the start of each term. If your student bill doesn't show any of the financial aid you expected, go to your [My Financial Aid](#) page to be sure you have accepted the aid you were offered and all documents on your Required Documents page are noted as Received. Find answers to Student Billing questions [here](#) regarding payment plan contracts, mailing a check, wire transfers, and paying by credit card (online only). Contact [Michelle Rollins](#) in Student Billing for anything else.

Welcome. An email will be sent to you via email in mid-May which will help you navigate the forms you will need to complete prior to your arrival on campus. These forms include housing, medical, pre-registering for classes, a peek at the fall classes being offered, registering for work on Handshake, and other vital information. Be on the lookout for that email. For any other questions not answered here or in the links offered within this document, please reach out to **International Student Services** - iss@bennington.edu

Contact Us

- International Student Services - iss@bennington.edu
- Admissions - admissions@bennington.edu
- Financial Aid - finaid@bennington.edu
- Student Life - studentlife@bennington.edu
- Provost and Academic Dean - deansoffice@bennington.edu
- Health and Medical Services - healthservices@bennington.edu
- Student Billing - business@bennington.edu

Helpful links

- Admissions Status page - <http://admissions.bennington.edu/apply/status>
- My Financial Aid - <https://myfinancialaid.bennington.edu>
- Bennington's website - www.Bennington.edu
- Funding FWT - <https://www.bennington.edu/career-development-and-field-work-term>
- This document is available in [Spanish](#) or [French](#). Contact financial aid for other translations.

The purpose of the *Certification of Finances* is to help colleges and universities obtain complete and accurate information about the funds available to international applicants who want to study in the United States. Strict government regulations, rising education costs, and economic conditions have made verifying the financial resources of international applicants essential. Institutions do not have the option of deciding whether to verify the financial resources of their international applicants; financial verification must be made prior to institutional issuance of a Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20 or DS-2019).

This form is designed to standardize financial information provided by applicants to colleges, universities, and U.S. consuls. By completing this form and returning it to the college or university requiring it, an applicant, if admitted, may obtain that college's authorization and issuance of a Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20 or DS-2019). If parents and/or sponsors are unable to obtain a bank official's verification, it is recommended that institutions forward a copy of the International Student Financial Aid Application to the family for completion. The institution should attach a copy of this certification to the Certificate of Eligibility. U.S. consuls scrutinize the statements of financial resources given by nonimmigrant visa applicants. This certification will help such officials make their decisions and expedite visa issuance.

Return directly to the college providing or requesting this statement.

The space below is for optional use by issuing institutions for listing student's expected annual budget.

Review the financial resources and responsibility information on the *Studying At Bennington* document.

On page 2, number 8, all resources must be **at least** the amount listed as "out-of-pocket" expenses on your financial aid award letter, for **each** of your four years at Bennington.

Securely upload your completed, signed, Certificate of Finances with any supporting documentation to your My Financial Aid portal. Go to Required Documents for the upload link. Upload the last 3 pages of this document only.

1. Your Name

Mr. Ms. Mrs. Miss

Family (surname)

Given (first)

Middle

4. Date of Birth

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Month Day Year

2. Permanent Address

3. Mailing Address (if different from above)

5. Place of Birth (country)

6. Country of Citizenship

7. Expected Visa Type

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> F-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> G-2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> F-2 | <input type="checkbox"/> G-3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> J-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> G-4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> J-2 | <input type="checkbox"/> H |
| <input type="checkbox"/> G-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ |

9. What is the present exchange rate of your country's currency to the U.S. dollar?
(for example, 3,100 pesos = \$1)

_____ = \$1

10. Does your government currently impose restrictions on exchange and release of funds for study in the U.S.?

Yes No

If YES, describe restrictions.

11. Do you have a source for emergency funds once you arrive in the U.S.?

Yes No

If YES, name source.

Amount available in U.S. dollars \$ _____ .00

12. How will you pay for your transportation to the U.S.?

13. What is the total amount of money you expect to have when you arrive at this institution? \$ _____ .00

14. Do you plan to remain in the U.S. during the summer?

Yes No

15. If remaining in the U.S., do you plan to attend summer school?

Yes No

16. What are the sources and amounts of support available to you during the summer?

Sources	Amount
_____	U.S. \$ _____ .00

17. A CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY (Form I-20 or DS-2019) will not be authorized until this form is completed and returned to the institution to which you are applying. The institution will attach a copy of this form to your CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY. Both the form and certificate must be shown to the U.S. consul to obtain a visa.

Signature of Student _____

I certify that the information on this form is true, correct, and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation may be cause for refusing or revoking admission.

Date
Day Month Year

This is to certify that I have reviewed the declaration and attached documents, if appropriate, and approve issuance of a Certificate of Eligibility.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

SIGNATURE OF COLLEGE OFFICIAL _____ TITLE _____
NAME OF INSTITUTION _____
ADDRESS _____ DATE _____