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HEALTH INSURANCE
All Rice-sponsored F-1 and J-1 International Students are required to enroll in either the Aetna Student Health Insurance plan or Rice’s approved Alternative Insurance Plan for International Students by Student Assurance Services (SAS).

Fall 2020 Open enrollment will start on July 1st, 2020, and end on August 28th, 2020.

If you do not enroll yourself in coverage, you will be automatically enrolled into the Aetna insurance plan and responsible for the full annual premium amount.

Visit https://oiss.rice.edu/studenthealth/ for more information on health insurance for Rice international students. Questions regarding coverage, claims, etc. on Aetna should be directed to studentinsurance@rice.edu. Questions regarding the SAS plan should be directed to oiss@rice.edu.

* Doctoral students may also be eligible for a subsidy for the Aetna Student Health Insurance plan from Rice. To learn more, go to https://graduate.rice.edu/health-subsidy/.

HEALTH FORMS
All new graduate students are required to submit a properly completed Health Data Form (HDF) to Student Health Services by July 1st. Completed forms should be mailed to the address on the form, faxed or uploaded to the Box on their website. If you are unable to meet the deadline, please submit your forms as soon as possible. You do not need to email Student Health for an extension. A properly completed HDF is required for registration for classes.

If you have further questions, please review the FAQ page at https://health.rice.edu/new-students/health-data-form-faqs before contacting Student Health (hlsv@rice.edu).

* Note: Health insurance premium and Rice health services are two different fees.
GETTING AROUND HOUSTON

Although Houston is a big city and many people commute via driving, there are still a variety of options available to get around town!

Public transportation

METRO is Houston’s public transit system. There are multiple bus lines and a few light rail lines, one of which (Red Line) will take you from campus to downtown. You can either pay cash or use a Q card to ride the bus/rail. You can purchase a subsidized Q card at the Cashier’s Office for $55, which will come preloaded with $250. You can purchase one Q card per academic year.

Biking

Biking is arguably one of the cheapest options to get around Houston. If you don’t want to buy one, consider using Bcycle, Houston’s bike sharing system. If you would like to learn which streets in Houston are safe to bike on, go to https://bikehouston.org. Be sure to always wear helmets and follow the road rules if you are biking on the streets!

Zipcar

Zipcar is an on-demand car sharing service. There are two Zipcar locations on campus, one of which is in the Rice Graduate Apartments. You may still be able to register as a member with a non-US driver’s license. Go to https://www.zipcar.com/rice to learn more.

Other Options

Many students use ride sharing services (Uber, Lyft, etc.) to go grocery shopping, or to go out in general. Rice also operates weekend shopping shuttles on Saturdays.

For more detailed information on transportation options, please visit https://transportation.rice.edu/.

WEATHER IN HOUSTON

Houston has two seasons - hot, humid summer, and warm/cool winter. Expect temperatures of 90-100 F (32-38 C) from May to October, followed by a very mellow winter (Houston drops below freezing only a few times every year). Don't expect to see a lot of snow in Houston! It only snowed once in the past five years.

Most importantly, Houston is affected by the Atlantic hurricane season, which runs approximately from June to November every year. The experts are predicting this year’s hurricane season to be busier than other years, so it is important to be well-prepared. For more information, go to https://www.houstonoem.org/hurricaneprep-covid19/.

INTERNATIONAL BUDDY PROGRAM

Visa application, international travel planning, house hunting, class registration, bank account opening... Overwhelmed by the length of your pre-orientation to-do list? Interested in meeting current international Rice students who have gone through the similar experiences and survived? International buddies are here to help you and welcome you to join the big Rice family. Fill out your information here to connect with a Rice buddy. Come find out more about the International Buddy Program during the next OISS Meet & Greet session on July 2nd!

Questions?
Email us at OISS@rice.edu or Visit us at oiss.rice.edu

Mark your calendar for the virtual Meet & Greet on July 2nd at 8:00 AM CDT (1:00 PM GMT)! We’ll be sending out the call details via email.