

Roadmap for Internationally-Trained Professionals

Intended Audience: prospective students with prior education and credentials from abroad seeking to pursue their education at USM

Goal: to help internationally-trained professionals make informed academic and career choices

Key Contacts at USM

Admissions: [Britney Mitchell](#) - International transfer admissions

Admissions: [PJ Singh](#) - Undergraduate Admissions; International Admissions (with no prior degree from abroad)

Admissions: [Meghan Bradley](#) - Prospective students who are out-of-state residents



Admissions: [Sara \(Cookie\) Treible](#) - Graduate Admissions

Credit for Prior Learning: [Rusty Dolleman](#), [Kristi Hertlein](#)

ESOL/ MLL Academic reading and writing support: [Andrea Vasquez](#)

Global Talent Navigator: [Marina Chakmakchi](#)

I. Preliminary Work

1. Learn about U.S. higher education
 - a)  [Key Features of U.S. Higher Education](#)
 - b)  [Demystifying the College Financial Aid Process for Immigrants ...](#)
 - c) [Portland Adult Education - Video about college](#)
 - d) [Tuition Tracker](#)
 - e) [Finance Authority of Maine](#)
 - f) Understand differences between associate and bachelor degrees; non-credit and credit courses; mandatory/prerequisite/elective courses; certificate courses; microcredentials; badges
2. Understand U.S. licensing requirements (if you're planning to work in a regulated profession: nurse, teacher, lawyer, engineer, social worker, accountant, occupational therapist, psychologist, etc.)
 - a) Requirements of education, examinations, experience, background checks
 - b) Read the [relevant licensing guides](#) prepared by the New Mainers Resource Center
3. Research your career options
 - a) [ME Department of Labor](#)

- b) [O*Net](#)
- c) <https://www.careeronestop.org/>

II. Credential Evaluation

We recommend submitting your application to USM once you decide to continue your postsecondary education. You can proceed simultaneously by choosing a credential evaluation agency and submitting your documents. This allows you to designate USM as a recipient of the completed evaluation report. **Please be aware:** If you receive a sealed copy of your evaluation report from the agency and break the seal by opening the envelope, it will no longer be considered an official document. In this case, USM's Admissions team will require you to contact the agency again and request them to send the evaluation report directly to USM.

- A. Required documents
 - 1. Some agencies will require original transcripts/diplomas
 - 2. Some agencies will allow scans or photos of transcripts/diplomas
- B. Choose an agency (check the Your International Education Matters one-pager)
 - 1. [National Association of Credential Evaluation Services](#)
 - 2. [Association of International Credentials Evaluators \(AICE\)](#)
 - a) If your prior credentials are in a regulated profession (lawyers, engineers, nurses, teachers, etc.), please make sure you choose an appropriate credential evaluation organization
 - (1) National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying ([NCEES](#))
 - (2) Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools ([CGNFS](#))
- C. Translate academic credentials
 - 1. [House of Languages](#)
 - 2. [Language Partners](#)
- D. Paying for credential evaluation
 - 1. [Foreign Credentialing Grant](#)
 - 2. TANF-eligible participants can have this expense paid through TANF funds (talk to your Fedcap Career Specialist)
 - 3. [ECE® Aid](#) is the philanthropic initiative offering free reports for refugees and other displaced populations.
 - 4. The [WES Gateway Program](#) assesses the educational credentials of individuals who have been displaced as a result of adverse circumstances in their country and have limited proof of academic achievements. The program is available to individuals educated in Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Syria, Türkiye, Ukraine, and Venezuela, who meet program requirements.
- E. If your credential evaluation report indicates that your prior degree is equivalent to a Bachelor's degree, it might be appropriate to apply for an advanced degree, such as a Master's degree provided that you have [the required level of English](#).

1. If you pursue a graduate degree, you can apply to be a graduate assistant or research assistant
 - a) This often comes with tuition benefits.

III. Planning (the questions are adapted from Portland Adult Education)

A. General

1. What would be the best timing to start college?
 - a) USM classes start in late August for fall semester and mid January for spring semester. It is best to start the application process 3-4 months before you plan to begin college.
2. What are your career goals? What are the hard and soft skills relevant to your desired career?
3. What degree/classes do you want to pursue?
 - a) Are you interested in continuing your prior education and professional experience?
 - b) Are you interested in pursuing a new degree program?
4. What license, if any, do you need to work in this career?
5. How long will it take to achieve your goal?
6. How much will it cost?

B. Time and Commitment

1. Do you have time and energy in your life to devote to college courses?
2. Do you know whether you will attend full- or part-time?
3. Do you plan to attend classes in person or virtually?
4. Do you know how to manage your time when you have many assignments? (1 three-credit college course = 4 hours of class time + 8-9 hours of homework per week)
5. Will you be able to combine classes, work, and family responsibilities?

C. College-level English Language Requirements

1. Do you read and understand college level text? (Try www.nytimes.com, www.pressherald.com, or the maximum level at www.newsela.com)
2. Do you read books in English?
3. Can you read (and thoroughly understand) a large number of pages quickly enough? Could you read 30 or 50 pages for the next class?
4. Do you know how to write several kinds of academic essays?
5. Do you know how to find, evaluate, and cite sources for a 5+ page research paper?
6. Is your writing mostly grammatically correct, so that your meaning is clear?
7. Do you use advanced words and sentence structures in your writing?
8. Do you know how to summarize text without plagiarizing, and also to analyze and respond to a text?
9. Do you know how to study effectively for a test?
10. Do you know how to turn in your assignments on time?

11. Do you know how to type quickly and accurately in English?
 12. Do you know how to send a professional email message to a professor?
 13. Do you know how to comfortably use Google Drive and other online systems such as Google Classroom?
 14. Practice English - you can review some preparation tips [here](#) (2nd page).
 15. Take a [Duolingo test](#) to assess your English Language proficiency. You'll need to create an account.
 16. Work on your academic English and your [elevator pitch](#) (you should be able to explain to a college professor what you studied before)
- D. Have you chosen a field of study? Have you researched and chosen a degree program?
1. For example, learn the difference between taking classes within the [Department of Engineering](#) and the [Department of Technology](#)
- E. Have you visited a USM campus?
1. Schedule a campus tour.

IV. Applying

- A. Do you have a personal statement that you can submit as an optional college application essay?
1. Undergraduate programs - an essay is optional
 2. Graduate programs
 - a) Some graduate programs require a brief essay (300-500 words) stating your reason for pursuing graduate study, your professional goals, and how you think this program of study will contribute to these goals.
 - b) Some graduate programs require letters of recommendation
 3. ESOL resources to provide support with a college application essay:
 - a) [Portland Adult Ed has a Writing Center for their students](#)
 - b) Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center - 24 Preble Street, Portland 3rd floor, 207-517-3401
 - c) Hope Acts: 14 Sherman St, Portland , 207-228-1140, info@hopeacts.org
 - d) In Her Presence (women only): 4 Milk St., Ste 201, Portland 207-280-7780. Children are welcome.
 - e) Learning Works: 181 Brackett Street, Portland
 - f) The Root Cellar: 94 Washington Ave., Portland, 207-774-3197
 - g) The Salvation Army: 297 Cumberland Ave, Portland, 207-774-4172, mary.irace@use.salvationarmy.org
- B. USM English proficiency requirements
1. [English Language requirements](#)
- C. Have this information ready:
1. Social Security Number
 2. Visa or permanent resident information
 3. Maine driver's license or Maine ID

4. Dates of high school attendance. If you did not attend high school in the U.S., you will not need a CEEB code.
5. Dates of college attendance (if you've taken college-level classes before)
6. The program and degree you're interested in.

V. Paying for College

A. [USM's Net Price Calculator](#)

1. Books (at least \$500 for books per semester): purchase used or new, rent, download digital books, Google books, school library, public libraries, classmates
2. Housing
3. Supplies
4. Incidentals
5. Computer
6. Transportation

B. How much financial aid can be obtained?

1. Federal Student Aid
 - a) Federal Pell Grants are usually only awarded to undergraduate students who display exceptional financial need and have not earned a bachelor's, graduate, or other professional degree.¹
 - b) Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) is discretionary funding allocated by institutions based on need. Students can receive up to \$4,000 per academic year depending on the institution's available funds.²
 - c) Direct Subsidized Loans are offered to undergraduate students who demonstrate financial needs³
 - d) Direct Unsubsidized Loans are offered to undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. Eligibility is not based on financial need.⁴
 - e) Direct PLUS Loans are offered to eligible parents and graduate or professional students to help cover expenses not already covered by other financial aid. The maximum PLUS loan amount one can receive is the cost of attendance (determined by the school) minus any other financial aid received. Direct PLUS Loans currently have the highest interest rate of FSA loans: 5.30%⁵
 - f) Federal Work-Study jobs are designated positions on and off campus for students who demonstrate financial need. Students apply for

¹ Available at Federal Student Aid. Pell Grant. U.S. Department of Education. <https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/pell>

² Federal Student Aid. Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (FSEOG). U.S. Department of Education. <https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/fseog>

³ Federal Student Aid. Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans. U.S. Department of Education. <https://studentaid.gov/understandaid/types/loans/subsidized-unsubsidized>

⁴ Federal Student Aid. Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans. U.S. Department of Education. <https://studentaid.gov/understandaid/types/loans/subsidized-unsubsidized>

⁵ Federal Student Aid. Grad PLUS Loans. U.S. Department of Education. <https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/loans/plus/grad>

positions through their institution. Money earned does not need to be repaid and can be used at the discretion of the student.⁶

- C. Tuition payment plans
- D. If you're authorized to work in the U.S., [consider applying for a job at USM](#).
 - 1. Full-time employees may take courses not to exceed a total of eight (8) credit hours per semester and in the summer.
 - 2. Part-time employees may take courses not to exceed four (4) credit hours per semester and in the summer.
 - 3. Tuition waiver benefits for dependents.
- E. State-funded Programs
 - 1. [Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment \(HOPE\)](#)
 - 2. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families / Parents as Scholars (PaS)
- F. Paying for “developmental” courses
 - 1. If you use up your federal financial aid (grants and loans) before you graduate, you will need to find a way to pay for the rest. If you take developmental courses or are enrolled in Free College, you will risk using up your funding.
- G. Asylum seekers do not qualify for federal financial aid.
- H. Other funding sources
 - 1. Maine
 - a) [Competitive Skills Scholarship Program \(CSSP\)](#)
 - b) [Adult Learner Scholarship](#)
 - c) [ProsperityME Scholarship](#)
 - d) [Scholarships for Maine Immigrants](#)
 - e) [Portland Housing Authority Scholarship](#)
 - f) <https://lametrochamber.com/scholarships/>
 - g) [Cumberland County Retired Educators Association Scholarships](#)
 - h) [Richard H. Pierce Memorial Scholarship](#)
 - 2. National
 - a) <https://immigrantsrising.org/resource/list-of-scholarships-and-fellowships/>
 - b) <https://theprobatepro.com/scholarship/>
 - c) https://bold.org/scholarships/dreamers-scholarship/?_gl=1*1cwqnxu*ga*MTAyNDkxOTA5LjE3MTE0MTgxODQ.*_ga_6DVE5YBJNP*MTCxMjYxNDExMy4zLjEuMTcxMjYxNDEzNC4zOS4wLjA
 - d) <https://buildyourfuture.withgoogle.com/scholarships/generation-google-e-scholarship>
 - e) <https://www.thedream.us/scholarships/national-scholarship/>
 - f) <https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/>
 - g) <https://www.davisputter.org/>
 - h) <https://www.hsf.net/scholarship>
 - i) <https://www.thelincolnforum.org/franklinmedford-student-scholarship>

⁶ Federal Student Aid. Work-Study Jobs. U.S. Department of Education. <https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/work-study>

- j) <https://www.maldef.org/resources/scholarship-resources/>
- k) <https://www.scholarships.com/financial-aid/college-scholarships/>
- l) <https://www.fastweb.com/>
- m) <https://usahello.org/education/university-adult-education/scholarships/>
- n) <http://dreamersroadmap.org/>
- o) <https://jlvcollegecounseling.com/scholarships/undocumented-students/>
- p) <https://www.jkcf.org/>
- q) <https://www.raise.me/transfer>
- r) https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/effective_practice/scholarships-for-undocumented-students/
- s) <https://www.uarm.org/mapping-scholarships>

VI. When in College

- A. Learn to navigate USM website
- B. Log into USM Portal / Student account
- C. Activate maine.edu email account and check it regularly
- D. Check “to-do list” on Portal
- E. Attend orientation and/or welcome week activities at the beginning of each semester
- F. Understand your class syllabus
 - 1. Professors normally have a lot of information on their syllabus. Understanding your instructor’s expectations will set you up for success.
 - a) Attendance
 - b) Homework
 - c) Deadlines
 - d) Office hours
- G. Identify and access support services available at USM (for example, how to use Brightspace, technical support, Learning Commons)
- H. Do you have prior knowledge and skills gained from experience and/or training? You might be able to receive college-level prior learning credits. Reach out to the [Office of Credit for Prior Learning](#)
- I. Become a member of the professional organizations/associations to stay up-to-date
 - 1. For example, [State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers](#)
 - 2. Read this [Article](#) from a foreign-trained engineer
- J. Visit the Student Life page to learn about clubs, leadership opportunities, and volunteer organizations on campus
- K. Visit USM’s Career Hub for career coaching opportunities

VII. Networking

- 1. [Portland Professional Connections](#)
- 2. [The Third Place](#)

3. LinkedIn lets you search employees and see their profiles to give you a general idea of the job qualifications needed.
4. [Plus Consulting Career Club](#)
5. [Portland Chamber of Commerce](#)