



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI - ST. LOUIS  
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

**THE BGSA**  
**BIOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENT MANUAL**

**A Survival Guide**  
**2017 – 2018**

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## Letter from the Chairperson

Welcome to the Department of Biology. Our graduate program has two broad areas, each of which offers both M.S. and Ph.D. degrees. The Evolution, Ecology, and Systematics (EES) program is large, and the Cell and Molecular Biology (CMB) program is smaller but growing. Within EES there is also a Certificate in Tropical Ecology and Conservation, and within CMB there is a Certificate in Biotechnology. In addition, the Department of Biology, in cooperation with the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, also offers a M.S. program in Biochemistry and Biotechnology. Although the EES and CMB programs are administered somewhat differently (for example, the qualifying exams are structured differently, as appropriate for the sub-disciplines they represent), our graduate program and department function as a single cohesive unit. Our program also is the home for the Whitney R. Harris World Ecology Center and cosponsors the Center for Neurodynamics with the Physics Department.

Our partnerships with other departments on campus are amplified by our partnerships with other institutions in the St. Louis community. Our students go regularly to seminars and classes at Saint Louis University and Washington University, and their students come to us as well. Non-academic community partners are equally important. We have professors jointly appointed at the Missouri Botanical Garden, the Danforth Plant Science Center, and the Saint Louis Zoo, and this is accompanied by lots of student movement among these institutions. These positions cut across the EES/CMB boundaries, creating a strong fabric of department, campus, and inter-institutional links. All in all, there is staggering variety of opportunities to students in our program. We encourage you to take advantage of them, and we are ready to help you make the connections that will best serve your academic plan. As you begin your graduate studies at UMSL, do not hesitate to explore these possibilities.

Teaching will help stretch our minds, you are at the core of our research mission, and you contribute directly to our undergraduate teaching mission. Our graduate program holds students to very high standards, but in an atmosphere that we hope is supportive and friendly. We want you to have what you need to succeed, and we will work closely with you in designing your program and finding funding for the execution and dissemination of your research. We will also work with you in the classroom. You are the next generation of scientists, and we will be replaced by you and your future students, so we want you to be as good as you can be – certainly, better than we are.

Best wishes for a productive and satisfying time at the UMSL Department of Biology. You will work very hard, but it will be well worth it.

Chairperson  
Department of Biology

# **A Welcome Note to the New Students from the BGSA**

The Biology Graduate Student Association (BGSA), would like to welcome you, its newest members, to the University of Missouri - St. Louis biology graduate program. You have accepted the many challenges of graduate school by entering the program and the BGSA is here to help you overcome those challenges. The BGSA is composed of us, the graduate students, and it has but one goal, which is to support us in our endeavors in the graduate school by addressing the issues and concerns that face us. The BGSA is an organization well supported by our graduate students as well as our department. In the past years we have successfully lobbied for important issues such as an increase in our stipend, a better health insurance, as well as unlimited computer and internet access. We also request and obtain an annual budget from the Student Activities Fee to be used to invite a distinguished scientist to speak at our spring and fall BGSA Invited Speaker Seminars.

As an incoming biology graduate student you are automatically a member of the BGSA and your support of the organization is essential for its survival. We meet approximately once per month to discuss matters of interest to us. In addition, a coffee/tea hour is scheduled every month, during which graduate students have a chance to get to know each other.

This manual is a guide, which has been put together for you by the BGSA. In reading this manual, please keep in mind that it is only a guide and that graduate school rules precede the information contained in this manual. The purpose of this manual is to ease your transition into our graduate program as well as to serve as a reference for other information that you may need. The components of this manual have been assembled by your fellow graduate students based on the information that we have found to be essential for incoming students, as well our own personal experiences in the graduate school. Please take some time to read the entire manual, for the information contained may indeed save you from many headaches later on.

President, BGSA

## **First Things First**

Critical things to do immediately upon arrival to campus:

- ✓ Meet with your advisor and sign up for classes
- ✓ Get your UMSL ID card (you must be enrolled first in order to get this card)
- ✓ Do your other paper work on taxes, contracts, get on payroll, etc.
- ✓ Get your parking sticker and MetroLink Pass (these are free after registration at the Cashier's Office, you must present your UMSL ID)
- ✓ Sign up for health insurance (this is mandatory and automatic for international students)
- ✓ Activate your "My Gateway" account
- ✓ Set up a Direct Deposit of your monthly payment to your bank account

# Grad School Academics

## EES and CMB

Based on research interest, biology graduate students are part of the Cell and Molecular Biology (CMB) division, or the Ecology, Evolution and Systematics (EES) division of the Department of Biology. Biology graduate students take courses related to their own research; therefore it is relatively infrequent for EES and CMB students to share courses.

Course load—9 hours is considered full-time, however, 3 credit hours are waived for those supported on TA or RA. Especially if you are a TA for the first time, your first semester can be very stressful. If possible, we recommend taking a lighter (less challenging) course load your first semester. *In addition to maintaining a 3.0 GPA to remain in good standings, all students receiving support and all international students must maintain a full-time status at all times.*

Rotations—Most CMB Thesis Masters and Ph.D. students will rotate among labs that are accepting students. This is your time to get a taste of the research done in each lab and choose a lab to conduct your research in that best suits your needs.

Forms—At each step along the path to graduation (i.e. appointment of committees, proposals, etc.) there are forms to be submitted to the graduate school. Current versions of all forms required by the graduate school, where to turn them in and when they are due are available at <http://www.umsl.edu/gradschool/forms.html>.

Planning ahead—Most courses are not offered every semester or even every year. In order to avoid course overload or scrambling to find courses to fill your schedule, we *highly recommend* that you check the 3-year course schedule, see

<http://www.umsl.edu/~biology/Graduate%20Programs/index.html>.

Then sit down with your advisor as soon as possible and work out a tentative schedule for completion of your degree. Plan the courses you will take and when you will take them. Also set goals as to when you will complete other requirements, such as a research proposal and qualifying/comprehensive exam (QE).

Committees—At some point (prior to research proposals), Thesis Masters and Ph.D. students must appoint faculty members to a thesis or dissertation committee. Master's students may appoint any three faculty members. EES Ph.D. students must also appoint a faculty member from outside of the Department of Biology. The chair of the committee can be the research advisor. CMB Ph.D. students must also choose a similar qualifying exam committee, but all members can be within biology. In all cases your advisor should work closely with you to arrange the most beneficial research advisory committee structure.

### ***Ph.D. Requirement:***

Course work—Total 60 hours (up to 30 hours can be research credit, Bio 6905). Specific course requirements are available in the online bulletin at

<http://bulletin.umsl.edu/artsandsciences/biology/#graduatetext>.

*Note that there are different courses required for CMB and EES students.*

Qualifying examination (QE)—This must be completed and passed; along with the completion of all course work, it is required for formal acceptance to candidacy.

CMB—Students must complete a NIH style grant proposal in an area of research other than the student's area of interest. The proposal will be presented written and orally to the QE committee for approval during or immediately after the 4<sup>th</sup> semester. For more details contact your CMB advisor.

EES—In your third semester as a Ph.D. student, students are expected to choose 2 major areas and 3 minor areas of 6 subject areas in the EES component of biology (Conservation Biology, Systematics, Evolution, Population Biology and Genetics, Animal Behavior and Behavioral Ecology, and Community Ecology). You are given questions in those areas that you are expected to answer in the form of 1 (for minor areas) to 4 (for major areas) page essays. You will present your answers to a QE committee for approval and defend those orally. The QE committee will be assigned based on the topics you have chosen. Your advisor will not be a member of this committee.

Written and oral dissertation research proposal—A detailed research plan, including preliminary results, must be presented to and accepted by your dissertation committee, the department, and graduate school. This should be done during your third year for a Ph.D. and first year for a Masters.

Teaching—All Ph.D. students must complete at least one semester of teaching (TA). (It is also possible to obtain a Certificate in University Teaching – for more information, see Center for Teaching and Learning <http://www.umsl.edu/services/ctl/>)

Candidacy—After completion of QE and mandatory course requirements (see <http://bulletin.umsl.edu/artsandsciences/biology/#graduatetext>), Ph.D. students apply for admission to Ph.D. candidacy. After this point, full time status requires registration for at least 1 credit hour per semester and it is expected that you concentrate on completing your dissertation research.

Dissertation and defense—An oral defense of your dissertation must be completed prior to graduation and accepted by your dissertation committee. Your written dissertation must also be submitted to the graduate school for approval. Remember to file the appropriate forms and frequently check deadlines set by the university.

### ***Master's Requirements:***

There are two options when seeking an M.S. The thesis option requires research and presentation of a thesis on that research, while the non-thesis option has no research requirement. All students are considered non-thesis unless accepted in a lab by a faculty member to work under his/her supervision.

Thesis—30 hours (up to 13 hours can be research, Bio 6905) - Detailed course requirements are available in the bulletin and online at <http://bulletin.umsl.edu/artsandsciences/biology/#graduatetext>.

Written and oral proposal of thesis research project - A detailed description of research plan, including preliminary results, must be submitted to and approved by a thesis committee. This is usually completed within the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> semester.

Written and oral defense of thesis. Must be approved by your thesis committee, the department, and graduate school. Remember to file the appropriate forms and frequently check deadlines set by the university.

Non-thesis—30 hours of course work alone - Detailed courses and specific requirements are available in the bulletin online at <http://bulletin.umsl.edu/artsandsciences/biology/#graduatetext>.

### **Advisor**

A professor within your anticipated field of study will be assigned as your advisor upon admission, but you may well want to change advisor as your research interests develop; this is no problem. Your advisor is to advise you on developing research as well as on the completion of the various tasks required for graduation.

### **Bulletin**

Contains detailed course descriptions and degree requirements. Everyone needs to study it carefully for it has the final say. You can look it up online at <http://bulletin.umsl.edu/artsandsciences/biology/>.

### **Transfer Credits**

Credit for graduate level courses taken at other accredited institutions may be transferred to UMSL and applied toward your graduate degree. Less than half of the total credits required for your degree may be transferred credits. The Graduate School recommends writing a letter for approval to your advisor, listing the courses to be transferred, including the institution and detailed description of the course. Once your advisor approves the credits, the letter should be forwarded to the departmental committee on graduate studies and then to graduate school where they will approve and apply your credit transfer. Please note that as long as these courses are graduate academic courses from a reliable institution and approved by your advisor and the graduate studies committee, any course, including seminars, may be transferred in.

*Note: Credit transfers do not apply to research hours.*

### **Student Representatives in the Department**

These are elected every semester during our first BGSA meeting, and they represent all graduate students in different committees:

Faculty Representative—Represents graduate students in monthly faculty meetings; responsible for faculty-student body communication.

Publicity and Recruitment Representative—Focus on prospective students, even before applications; works with attracting new students and promoting the program and the department (both undergraduate and graduate students).

Graduate Committee Representative —Represents graduate students post application, coordinates visits, interviews, revise applications – works with the graduate school and Dr. Thiel (graduate school coordinator for Biology).

Faculty Search Representative (depends on demand)—Coordinates interaction of students with candidates interviewing for faculty positions; organizes graduate student lunch, student meetings with candidates and occasionally attends to dinner/lunch/breakfast with candidate.

SGA Representative—Represents the BGSA in the Student Government Assembly at UMSL. Must assist to all SGA meetings (one per month) so the BGSA remains a legitimate organization at UMSL and can access the funds managed by the SGA.

## **Seminars and Discussion Groups**

UMSL Departmental Seminars—These take place on Tuesdays, unless otherwise noted. These seminars are organized by the department and have a wide range of topics. Most speakers are invited faculty members from other institutions. For the weekly seminar schedule, see <http://www.umsl.edu/~biology/Seminars/index.html>.

Biolunch—It meets every Wednesday at 12:30–1:50pm and it is a forum for students and faculty to present their research. You may also enroll for the class and receive 1 credit hour of graduate work. The official course name for Biolunch is BIOL 5059 Topics in Ecology, Evolution and Systematics. For a seminar schedule, see a posted list in the biology office, or <http://www.umsl.edu/~biology/Seminars/seminar.html>.

Animal Behavior Discussion Group—Every Friday at 11–12:30pm in Benton 116. This group discusses journal articles and topics in animal behavior. For more information, see Dr. Aimee S. Dunlap.

BGSA Invited Speaker—Once or twice every semester (depends on funds). These seminars are organized by BGSA. The topics will alternate between EES and CMB.

Journal Club—The molecular and cellular journal club papers for discussion in each semester will focus on a specific cellular or molecular biology topic. You may also enroll for the class for 1 credit hour of graduate work. The official course name for Journal Club is BIOL 5069 Topics in Cellular and Molecular Biology. For a seminar schedule, see <http://www.umsl.edu/~biology/Seminars/index.html>.

Biodiversity Journal Club—This group has broad interests – ecology, evolution, and systematics – and meets Fridays at 4 pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor in the MOBOT Monsanto Building. For more information, see Peter Stevens [peter.stevens@mobot.org](mailto:peter.stevens@mobot.org) / [stevensp@umsl.edu](mailto:stevensp@umsl.edu)

Washington University Departmental Seminars—These take place on Mondays (Biology Seminar), and Thursdays (Evolution, Ecology and Population Biology Seminar), at 4 pm in Rebstock 322. For the weekly seminar schedule (and other events), see [http://wubio.wustl.edu/events?field\\_event\\_tags\\_tid=All](http://wubio.wustl.edu/events?field_event_tags_tid=All).

Saint Louis University Departmental Seminars—These take place on Fridays 1:10–2 pm, in Macelwane Hall 334. For the weekly seminar schedule, see Seminar Schedule at <http://www.slu.edu/departments-of-biology-home>.



UMSL & WASH.U. Yeast Club—The yeast club meets once a month at Washington University. It is a gathering of the yeast labs of UMSL and WashU in which both faculty and students present their respective research. For more information, see Dr. Wendy Olivas.

History and Philosophy of Science Brownbag Seminar—Washington University, Life Sciences Building on Wednesdays. For further information contact the Washington University Biology Department.

## **Libraries**

UMSL Library—You may access our library thru the following link <http://www.umsl.edu/~libweb/>.

Online Articles—You can receive many articles online through UMSL library. There are several databases to search for articles on, e.g. Web of Science, BioOne, and Jstor. If you cannot find an article online or in the UMSL print collection, you can request an inter library loan (ILL) through the UMSL library.

### Washington University

Becker Medical Library—For more information go to <http://becker.wustl.edu/> .

Main Campus Library—For more information go to <http://library.wustl.edu/>.

Missouri Botanical Garden Library—For more information go to <http://www.mobot.org/MOBOT/molib/>.

## **Mentor Change for M.S. or Ph.D. student**

While most graduate students successfully complete a thesis or dissertation under the mentorship of a faculty member of their choice, occasionally either the advisor or the student is not satisfied with the relationship and would like a change. This document describes four situations and the procedures for a change in advisor, initiated by either the advisor or the student.

1. *The student wishes to change advisors and both the current and the new advisor agree to the change:* The student must file a new M2 (MS) or D2 (PhD) form with Graduate School indicating the new advisor.
2. *The student wishes to change advisors, often because of unresolved problems, but has not identified a new advisor:* The student will meet with the Graduate Director, who will arrange for the student to meet with the Graduate Committee to discuss the problems. If the student's current advisor is a member of the Graduate Committee, she/he will not take part in the discussion. Members of the graduate committee will meet separately with the advisor to discuss the problems and, with the help and advice of the student's research committee, will mediate a solution. Possible solutions include helping the student and advisor to resolve the problem, or identifying a faculty member who will become the new advisor for the student. If neither of these options is feasible, the student (MS or PhD) will be encouraged to complete an MS degree (thesis or non-thesis, depending on circumstances).

3. *The faculty member no longer wishes to serve as the student's advisor:* The faculty member will meet with the Graduate Director, who will arrange for the faculty member to meet with the Graduate Committee to discuss the problems. Members of the graduate committee will meet separately with the student to discuss the problems and, with the help and advice of the student's research committee, will attempt to mediate a solution. If the student's advisor is a member of the Graduate Committee, she/he will not take part in the discussion. Possible solutions include helping the student and the faculty advisor to resolve the problem, or identifying a faculty member who will become the new advisor for the student. If neither of these options is feasible, the student (MS or PhD) will be encouraged to complete an MS degree (thesis or non-thesis, depending on circumstances).
4. *The faculty member is leaving the university and can no longer serve as the student's advisor:* The student will meet with the Graduate Director, who will arrange for the student to meet with the Graduate Committee to discuss a new primary advisor. If the current advisor is available, she/he may take part in the discussion. Members of the graduate committee, with the help and advice of the student's research committee, will attempt to identify a faculty member who will become the new advisor for the student. The student must file a new M2 (MS) or D2 (PhD) form with Graduate School indicating the new research advisor.

#### Additional issues

Note that any allegations of discrimination, harassment, or research dishonesty on the part of either an advisor or student must be addressed separately through the normal UMSL procedures, not by the Graduate Committee. Any case of sexual misconduct (Title IX violation) reported to any UMSL employee will necessarily result in a mandatory report of the allegation to the UMSL Title IX officer.

Sexual harassment: <http://www.umsl.edu/title-ix/reporting.html>

Discrimination: <http://www.umsl.edu/services/academic/students/srr.html>

Research dishonesty: <http://www.umsl.edu/services/ora/policies-index.html#integrity>

## **Grad School Finances**

### **Graduate Teaching and Research Assistantships (TAs/RAs)**

The Department of Biology offers teaching and research assistantships to qualified graduate students. Teaching assistantships are available to graduate students -usually to doctoral students - on a competitive basis and appointments are made directly by the department. Inquiries and applications for assistantships should be addressed to the director of the graduate program of the Department of Biology. Applications should be submitted no later than December 1<sup>st</sup> for the following fall semester. You will have the opportunity to list classes you would prefer to teach as well as classes you have previously taught on a form that is sent out every semester. More information on these opportunities can be found at the Department of Biology's Application and Admission web site <http://www.umsl.edu/admissions/>. Research assistantships are only awarded by individual faculty members and at their individual discretion.

- Appointments—Assistantship appointments are usually considered half-time (20-hours per week). Students with a TA are expected to teach, study, and conduct research during each academic semester and continue to conduct their research during the summer. The stipend is paid in 12 monthly. For more information, see Kathy Burney-Miller in the Biology office.
- Payment of Educational Fees (tuition) —Graduate Teaching Assistantships and Graduate Research Assistantships who hold a 0.5 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) appointment are eligible to pay fees at the in-state educational fee rate. They will not be required to pay at the out-of-state rate. However, students will be required to pay any non-educational fee-related charges or any tuition surcharges. Graduate Teaching Assistants and Graduate Research Assistants who hold a 0.5 FTE appointment will have their educational fees (both in-state and out-of-state) paid by the Graduate School. However, students will be required to pay any non-educational fee related charges (student activity, health fee, computing fee) or any tuition surcharges. If you are in the field without support from your advisor, your tuition and fees will not be paid by the department.  
*NOTE: The Graduate School will only provide payment of educational fees for 9 hours of graduate level courses (5 hours in summer).*
- Possible Impact of Tuition Coverage on your Financial Aid Package—Students who receive tuition remission after their financial aid is awarded must undergo another financial analysis, and the tuition grants must be deducted from the total award. It is in your best interest to check with a Financial Aid advisor to make sure know how your TA/RA salary, tuition remission and any other awards may affect your financial aid package.
- Enrollment Requirement—In order to qualify for the fee waivers, TAs or RAs with a 0.5 FTE appointment must be enrolled in a minimum of six credit hours for the regular 16 week semesters and 2 credit hours in any of the summer semesters.  
*NOTE: Contracts to pay TAs/RAs/Graduate Instructors cannot be approved until the student is enrolled in the appropriate number of graduate credit hours.*
- Length of Financial Support—Ph.D. Students: The department is committed to 4 years of support, with the 5<sup>th</sup> year contingent upon performance. Extensions beyond the 5 years residency are not guaranteed and must be specifically requested and approved by your advisor, graduate studies, and the department. Thesis Master's Students are not normally admitted with Departmental TA support, although it is sometimes possible to receive support on a semester-by-semester basis. In general, support from the department is through a combination of research and/or teaching assistantships.

## Scholarships and Grants

A list of these can be accessed at UMSL's Student Financial Aid Office. The office's website also allows access to information on grants, student loans, and work-study opportunities. For graduate financial considerations please visit: <http://coe.umsl.edu/w2/Financial%20Aid/>.

For internal and external funding opportunities through the Department of Biology please visit <http://icte.umsl.edu/Students/scholarships.html>.

## **Tax Matters**

All students, both domestic and international, must fill out proper tax forms (including international students with external funds). Both domestic and international students must fill out tax forms with Kathy Burney-Miller in the Department of Biology. International students must also go to the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (e-mail: [iss@umsl.edu](mailto:iss@umsl.edu), phone 516-5229, or see James Webb directly). This Office organizes tax workshops to help international students fill out their tax declarations. For more information and for an international visitor handbook please visit <http://www.umsl.edu/services/intelstu/>.

## **Grad School Miscellaneous Matters**

### **UMSL ID Card**

Once you enroll, you may obtain your UMSL ID from the Center for Student Success, 225 Millennium Student Center. Your ID is required for the use of campus facilities.

### **Parking/Metrolink**

Students must park in the student parking lots. Parking stickers can be obtained from the Cashier's Office. UMSL students can also obtain a Metrolink pass for each semester enrolled. This is an unlimited use of bi-state bus and metro public transportations. The Metrolink pass can be obtained from the Cashier's Office. Parking stickers and Metrolink passes are free for all enrolled graduate students.

### **Mailbox**

All doctoral students and teaching assistants are issued a mailbox in the Biology Office as space permits. Your mail should be checked daily.

### **Health Insurance Information**

UMSL provides a fairly comprehensive health insurance plan for both domestic and international students. International students must have health insurance at all times.

#### o Enrollment

Make sure you are enrolled early. Graduate students get part of their insurance paid by the Graduate School. To enroll if you are a domestic student, you need to contact Cornell Lewis (516-5898), and he will sign you up. International students should go through the Office of International Student and Scholar Services. Make sure you obtain an insurance card. If you do not get a card, it may be because you are not enrolled. International students may bring their own insurance from their respective country, as long as it is approved by the International Student Office. For more information about UMSL's health insurance, go to <http://www.umsl.edu/services/health/insur.htm>.

### **Information Technology**

#### o Getting an email account

IT services will provide you with a user ID consisting of your initials and three random characters. Go to [https://sso.umsl.edu/perl/id\\_search.pl](https://sso.umsl.edu/perl/id_search.pl) to look up your ID. Your email address will be [xxxxxx@mail.umsl.edu](mailto:xxxxxx@mail.umsl.edu). You can get a personalized e-mail account by following the

Student link on MyGateway. Go to [mygateway.umsl.edu](http://mygateway.umsl.edu) and click on login to access your account and find out more. You can access web email from any internet connection at <http://mail.umsl.edu>.

- Getting on the biograd list  
You will want to get on biograd, the department's graduate student list serve, as soon as you can – important announcements, including all BGSA announcements, will come through the biograd. Contact the Biology Administrative Assistants to be included in the list.
- Computer access on campus  
There are labs around campus that we can use, including the labs in the library and the basement of SSB. However, the lab you will use most is in Benton Hall 232.
- Other IT Info  
Contact IT Services at ext. 6034, 211 Lucas Hall, [helpdesk@umsl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@umsl.edu), <http://www.umsl.edu/technology/tsc/studentres.html>.

## Personal Matters

### Housing

- On-Campus  
There are three types of housing facilities for students offered by UMSL; however, you will probably want to choose between two (Mansion Hills and The University Meadows) because the third option is living in a dorm. One important note here is that even though this is available to any student who wishes to live there (sometimes there is a waiting list), the vast majority of students who live on campus are undergraduates and NOT graduate students. Living on campus has many academic benefits; most importantly it is close to libraries, labs, student events and activities, faculty and administrative offices. However, on-campus living (renting) is more expensive in comparison to renting off-campus.
  - *MANSION HILLS.* Mansion Hill Condominiums are located adjacent to the campus and offer one- and two-bedroom units for students who are 21 and older. These unfurnished units offer dishwashers, ceiling fans, a recreational area, pool, and laundry facilities. Rent is billed to the student's University account. Rates for one and two bedroom apartments are available at:  
[http://www.umsl.edu/services/reslife/housing\\_rates/housing\\_rates\\_index.htm](http://www.umsl.edu/services/reslife/housing_rates/housing_rates_index.htm).
  - *THE UNIVERSITY MEADOWS.* "The Meadows" is a residence hall that is styled like an apartment complex. Most units are furnished and are fully electric. University Meadows also offers you numerous amenities at no additional charge, such as basic cable TV in every room, computer network ports in every bedroom, dishwasher, garbage disposal, icemakers, clubhouse, pool, limited access gates, sand volleyball court, barbeque pavilion, hot tub, and shuttle service to campus from the front gate. Rates for these apartments are found at:  
<http://www.campushousing.com/umsl/floorplans.htm>.

- Off-Campus... Neighborhoods

As a graduate student you are most likely to live in an apartment off-campus (recommended!). There are several neighborhoods to choose from in St. Louis with respect to where to live, however the following three are those neighborhoods most commonly chosen by students because of accessibility, prices and surroundings. Note that all apartments come with a kitchen stove and refrigerator, most have some sort of laundry service in the basement, and some also come with a dishwasher.

- *UNIVERSITY CITY*. This neighborhood is located in the heart of the St. Louis metropolitan area; it is a district known for its restaurants, shopping, arts & entertainment. The U-City Loop has many apartment buildings occupied mostly by college students U-City can be reached by metro directly from the university (get off at the Delmar stop), and it takes approximately 30 minutes to get from U-City to the university by bike.
- *THE GARDEN*. This neighborhood is located next to the Missouri Botanical Garden (MBG) in south St. Louis. The Garden neighborhood is surrounded by many one-bedroom apartments, and it is especially convenient for students who will spend a lot of their time at the MBG. Thus, the majority of graduate students who work at the Garden live here. You will need to take both the metro (Central West End stop) and the bus to get to the university.
- *CENTRAL WEST END (CWE)*. This neighborhood is located east/northeast of Forest Park. It is usually more expensive than other neighborhoods, but many students live on or around Waterman Boulevard, where there are several affordable apartments, often with heat and electricity included. MetroLink and MetroBus service CWE.

## **Money**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Month

Beware that you may not get paid until the end of September, so you need to have some cash saved for your initial expenses - around US \$3,000 if you're very thrifty and are moving in with someone who already lives in St Louis, probably US \$3,500 to be on the comfortable side. Apart from daily expenses with food and such, you'll need to pay a deposit if you're renting your own place (usually one or two months' worth of rent), plus the rent. You'll also need to pay a deposit to get your gas service started and phone service installed. If you're a TA or RA, you'll pay incidental fees and a portion of your health insurance and, if you're an international student, you'll also have to get health insurance. (CHECK DATES FOR PAYMENT AND REGISTRATION). Also, you'll probably want to buy furniture, although you might be able to borrow some stuff from other students. There are a number of thrift value stores in the area, but you'll definitely need a car for that. Most of us bought used furniture at some point, so ask around for tips and directions. Paychecks are issued on the last workday of each month and will be direct deposited into your checking or savings account. ***Yes, direct deposit is required.***

- Banking

One of the first things you'll need to do after you get here (and after you get your social security) is to open a bank account because your paychecks will be directly deposited into your bank account. The only bank with a branch on campus is U.S. Bank which has free student checking accounts. Besides U.S. Bank, there are many other banks in the area that you might

want to check out. Look for banks that have student checking accounts; most banks should have them.

## **Safety**

The most peculiar characteristic of St. Louis is that it is a very patchy town. One minute you may be walking in a luxurious neighborhood and the next minute, two blocks away, be in a bad neighborhood! So it's important to keep track of where you are. Most of the time nothing will happen; however, as in any town in the world, you want to be careful of being alone, at night in a neighborhood you are unfamiliar with. At the university, if you have stayed working until late at night and need to walk to the metro by yourself (a 10 minute walk from the Department of Biology), the university police offers an escort service, available free of charge anywhere on campus, so that you don't have to walk alone to the metro or, if you live on-campus, to your apartment. The neighborhoods listed above are pretty safe, however be cautious of securing your space; make sure your front and back doors are locked, as well as your windows if you live on a first floor.

## **Driver's license**

Even if you don't intend to drive in Missouri, you should get a driver's license or state ID as a form of identification - some places won't even let you in if you don't have a document showing you're over 21, the minimum legal age to drink alcohol. If you don't drive, you can get a state identification card if you establish residency in the state. To get both kinds of documents, you will need to go to the Missouri Department of Revenue (DOR) and you'll need two proofs of identity (the Social Security Card counts as one of them and pay a tax. You will need to take both a written exam and a driving test (and you do need to bring your own car). For information on procedures and local DOR locations, go to <http://www.dor.mo.gov/mvdl/drivers/dlguide/>.

## **Social Security Number (SSN)**

While temporarily in the United States and while attending college with a nonimmigrant student F-1 or J-1 classification, you will be asked for your Social Security number. A Social Security number is only assigned to people who are authorized to work in the United States (e.g. on campus as a Teaching or Research Assistant). Social Security numbers are used to report your wages to the government. Social Security will not assign you a number just to enroll in school. *In the United States, your SSN may be the most important number in your life, so be sure to protect it well.* Your SSN will be used to start a bank account, to apply for a credit card, to get paid from the university, and in some cases to be able to rent an apartment, to mention a few examples.

To apply for your SSN you will need your passport, visa, I-20 form, and I-94 form. Most importantly, you will need a letter from the Biology Department offering you a job (TA or RA), and a letter from UMSL approving that job. Once you apply, the Social Security offices will verify your immigration documents with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) before assigning a Social Security number to you. Social Security will assign your number and issue your card within two weeks of receiving the verification from DHS.

## **Recreation**

St. Louis has a variety of places where you can go and have fun. These include restaurants, bars, museums, amusement parks, movies, Broadway and shopping centers (malls).



- **FOREST PARK.** This park has been called the soul of the city. Forest Park is one of the largest urban parks in the United States. It is much larger than Central Park in New York and it is the home to the region's major cultural institutions—*the Zoo, Art Museum, History Museum, Science Center and the Muny Opera*. It also serves as a sports center for golf, tennis, baseball, bicycling, boating, fishing, handball, ice-skating, jogging, cricket, rugby and more.
- **BARS.** You can use the same websites listed in the restaurants section to look for bars in town. Both the Loop (west of Delmar metro station) and Central West End (close to Central West End Metrolink station) are accessible places that offer a variety of options of bars.
- **MUSEUMS.** Most of the museums in St. Louis are free and open all year round with different exhibitions. See [www.stlouisattractions.com/museums.htm](http://www.stlouisattractions.com/museums.htm), for more information.
- **SIX FLAGS.** This is an amusement park open from April to October where you'll find rollercoasters, swimming pools, raging rivers, and lots to eat. It is approximately 40 minutes from St. Louis, so you definitely need a car to get there, but it is well worth the experience!
- **MOVIES.** There are several movie theatres in the St. Louis area, some of which can be reached by bus. There are two movie theatres, which show only independent movies, one of which is located in University City. Additionally, St. Louis has an IMAX theater located in the St. Louis Science Center, where specially formatted film is projected in a giant dome screen to give you a unique and powerful experience.
- **BROADWAY.** St. Louis has The Fabulous Fox Theater, which is the second largest theater in the U.S., second only to New York's Roxy Theatre. Here you can enjoy many famous Broadway shows, and in the past *The Phantom of the Opera, The Lion King, Les Miserables*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar* have all come here.
- **SYMPHONY.** Powell Symphony Hall is the home to the famous St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. It is a great place to relax while a world-class orchestra performs for you live.
- **BOTANICAL GARDEN.** The Missouri Botanical Garden is a place of serenity, beauty, and fun amid the bustle of the city. A must see in St. Louis.
- **GATEWAY ARCH.** The world famous St. Louis Arch is the hottest tourist attraction in St. Louis and another must see! At the Arch you take a tram ride to the very top where you will get a stunning glimpse of the St. Louis region from a dizzying height of 630 feet.
- **GRANTS FARM.** Grants Farm is a 281-acre wildlife preserve and historical site located just south of the city of St. Louis. The Farm is home to hundreds of exotic animals from around the world.
- **SPORTS.** St. Louis is by definition a sports town. Its home of the St. Louis Rams (American Football), the Cardinals (Baseball), and the Blues (Ice hockey). So if you enjoy sports, there is a game going on at any time of the year.



## Other Important Resources

### Whitney R. Harris World Ecology Center

The Harris World Ecology Center (HWEC), through a unique set of partnerships, promotes research and training in basic ecology and biodiversity conservation across the globe, and increases public awareness and interest in issues relating to global natural resource conservation. The center is housed within the Department of Biology at the University of Missouri St. Louis, and works closely with The Missouri Botanical Garden and the Saint Louis Zoo.

Harris Center - University of Missouri-St. Louis  
B216 Benton Hall  
One University Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63121-4499  
Office: (314) 516- Fax: (314) 516-6233  
For more information: <http://www.umsl.edu/~biology/hwec/>.

### Missouri Botanical Garden

Mission: “To discover and share knowledge about plants and their environment, in order to preserve and enrich life.”

Peter H. Raven, Emeritus Director of the Missouri Botanical Garden  
Missouri Botanical Garden  
4344 Shaw Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63110  
(314) 577-9400, 1-800-642-8842  
For more information: <http://www.mobot.org>

### Donald Danforth Plant Science Center

Mission: The Donald Danforth Plant Science Center is a not-for-profit research institute with a global vision to improve the human condition. Research at the Danforth Center will enhance the nutritional content of plants to improve human health, increase agricultural production to create a sustainable food supply, and provide the scientific ideas and technologies that will contribute to the economic growth of the St. Louis region and of the State of Missouri.

Donald Danforth Plant Science Center  
975 North Warson Road, St. Louis, MO 63132  
(314) 587-1000  
For more information: <http://www.danforthcenter.org>

### The Saint Louis Zoo

Mission: To conserve animals and their habitats through animal management, research, recreation, and educational programs encouraging the support and enrich the experience of the public.

The St. Louis ZOO  
One Government Drive, St. Louis, MO 63110  
(314) 781-0900  
For more information: <http://www.stlzoo.org>.

## Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS)

The University of Missouri-St. Louis is a member of the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS). This allows students to partake in various courses offered by OTS, covering topics from field biology to conservation to public policy. Through a generous gift from Whitney R. Harris, UMSL is a member of OTS and the Harris Center provides support for graduate students towards course tuition and travel to and from the location of the course. Dr. Zuleyma Tang-Martinez and Dr. Nathan Muchhala are the current faculty representatives to OTS from UMSL. Dr. Tang-Martinez ([zuleyma@umsl.edu](mailto:zuleyma@umsl.edu)) or Dr. Muchhala ([muchhala@umsl.edu](mailto:muchhala@umsl.edu)) should be contacted by students planning to apply for course admission. These courses can be credited towards your degree after approval from the graduate school; please contact Nathan Daugherty ([daughertyn@umsl.edu](mailto:daughertyn@umsl.edu)), our study abroad coordinator, for this matter.

For information about courses and application process: <http://www.ots.ac.cr/>.

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516-7284

327 Millennium Student Center

Student Affairs

516-5211

301 Woods Hall

Thomas Jefferson Library

516-5050

Technology Support Center (Computer Help Desk)

516-6034

211 Lucas Hall

Health and Counseling Services

516-5671

131 Millennium Student Center

English as Second Language

516-6240

554 Clark Hall

Institutional Safety (Campus Police)

516-5155 or 911 (emergencies only)

44 Campus Police Building