



Center for Cultural &
International Affairs
West Virginia Wesleyan College



International Students' Guide for F-1 Visa Holders Fall 2025



Contacts

Primary/Designated School Official at a Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified school serves as a key point of contact between WV Wesleyan College, F-1 students, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Your DSOs are here to support your academic success. It is essential to stay in contact with your DSO and report any changes to maintain compliance with federal regulations.

Primary/Designated School Officials (PDSO/DSO)

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Introduction

As an international student on an academic journey to the United States under the F-1 visa program, it's crucial to familiarize yourself with the rules and regulations governing your experience before arrival and throughout your stay. This guide serves as a compass, providing insights into maintaining a secure F-1 status within the U.S.

It's important to emphasize that while this guide offers valuable guidance and practical tips, it is not a legal document or a substitute for official legal advice. It's imperative to acknowledge that abiding by the law is a fundamental aspect of your journey as an international student. Always prioritize compliance with the law, follow official guidelines, and consult legal authorities when needed to ensure you stay within the legal boundaries set forth by the U.S. government.

Failure to adhere to these rules and regulations, outlined in this guide and the official legal statutes, may have serious consequences, including termination of your I-20 and, in some cases, deportation. Therefore, it is in your best interest to understand the advice provided here and diligently follow the law, as it is the foundation for your academic pursuit in the United States.



Remember, staying informed about the legal requirements and abiding by them will ensure a smooth academic journey and safeguard your rights and privileges as an international student.



F-1 Visa Facts



PURPOSE

The F-1 visa is a **non-immigrant visa** that allows international students to study in the United States at accredited academic institutions.

ELIGIBILITY

The F-1 visa is intended for individuals seeking **academic studies (such as a degree program) or language training programs** in the United States at **recognized educational institutions**.



IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

For F-1 Visa Students:

- Valid passport and visa
- Form I-20
- I-94 (arrival/departure form)
- Full-time enrollment

NOTE: Report any changes to your DSO

Maintaining F-1 Status

MAINTAINING FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT

To maintain F-1 status, international students must enroll in at least 12 credit hours per semester.

Withdrawing from a Course

Approval to drop below the required credits isn't guaranteed, but students may request a reduced course load in specific situations:

- Medical leave
- Final term, which does not need a full course load
- Unforeseen academic difficulties

Important: Get DSO approval before dropping below the required credits. Reducing your course load without approval violates F-1 status and could terminate your I-20.



ONLINE CLASSES

F-1 students can not exceed **(3) credit hours of online classes per semester.**

Maintaining F-1 Status

AVOID THESE COMMON VIOLATIONS - CONSULT YOUR DSO

Undergraduate students must enroll in at least 12 credits per semester.

- Graduate students must meet the full-time requirement as defined by their program.
- If you need to drop below full-time (for valid medical or academic reasons), you must first get written approval from your DSO.
- Falling below full-time without approval is a violation of your F-1 status and can lead to termination of your SEVIS record.

Unauthorized employment

- On-campus jobs are allowed up to 20 hours per week during the semester (full-time during breaks).
- Off-campus employment (like CPT or OPT) requires prior authorization from your DSO and/or USCIS.
- Never work, including unpaid internships or online jobs, without obtaining proper authorization.
- Unauthorized employment is one of the most common and serious violations of F-1 status.

Not reporting a change of address

- You must report any change of your U.S. address within 10 days to your DSO, who updates SEVIS.
- Keep your phone number and email address current with your school.
- Failure to report changes can result in SEVIS showing you as “out of status.”

Academic disciplinary issues

- Acts of academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism) or repeated poor academic performance can lead to dismissal.
- Dismissal from your program automatically ends your F-1 status.
- F-1 status depends on being actively enrolled in good standing.

Overstaying the authorized stay

- After completing your program (or OPT), you have a 60-day grace period to:
 - Leave the U.S.
 - Transfer to another school.
 - Apply for a change of status.
- Staying beyond the grace period without taking action violates your F-1 status.
- Overstaying may result in a ban on reentry or future visas.

Not obtaining travel authorization

- Before traveling outside the U.S., make sure your I-20 has a valid travel signature (signed within the last 12 months).
- Re-entering the U.S. without proper documentation can result in being denied entry and termination of your SEVIS record.
- Even short trips without proper travel documents can jeopardize your status

A hand holding a stack of papers, viewed through a circular opening in a dark, textured wall. The scene is dimly lit, with the light source coming from the opening, creating a silhouette effect. The papers are slightly blurred, suggesting movement or a shallow depth of field. The circular opening is framed by a dark, possibly metal, border.

ADDRESS CHANGE

As an F-1 student, it's crucial to **regularly inform your designated school official about any changes in your address.** This ensures that your information remains accurate in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). **Federal regulations mandate that you report any changes to a designated school official to maintain your student status.**

Nonimmigrant Student Status

Class of Admission

F-1

ACADEMIC AND
EMPLOYMENT

I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status
OMB NO. 1653-0038

Form I-20

NAME: Student

I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status
OMB NO. 1653-0038

NOTICE OF ADDRESS. When you arrive in the United States, you must report your U.S. address to your DSO. If you move, you must notify your DSO of your new address within 10 days of the change of address. The DSO will update SEVIS with your new address.

When you leave the United States and return within a valid passport; 2) a valid F-1 visa; and 3) your Form I-20.

Security

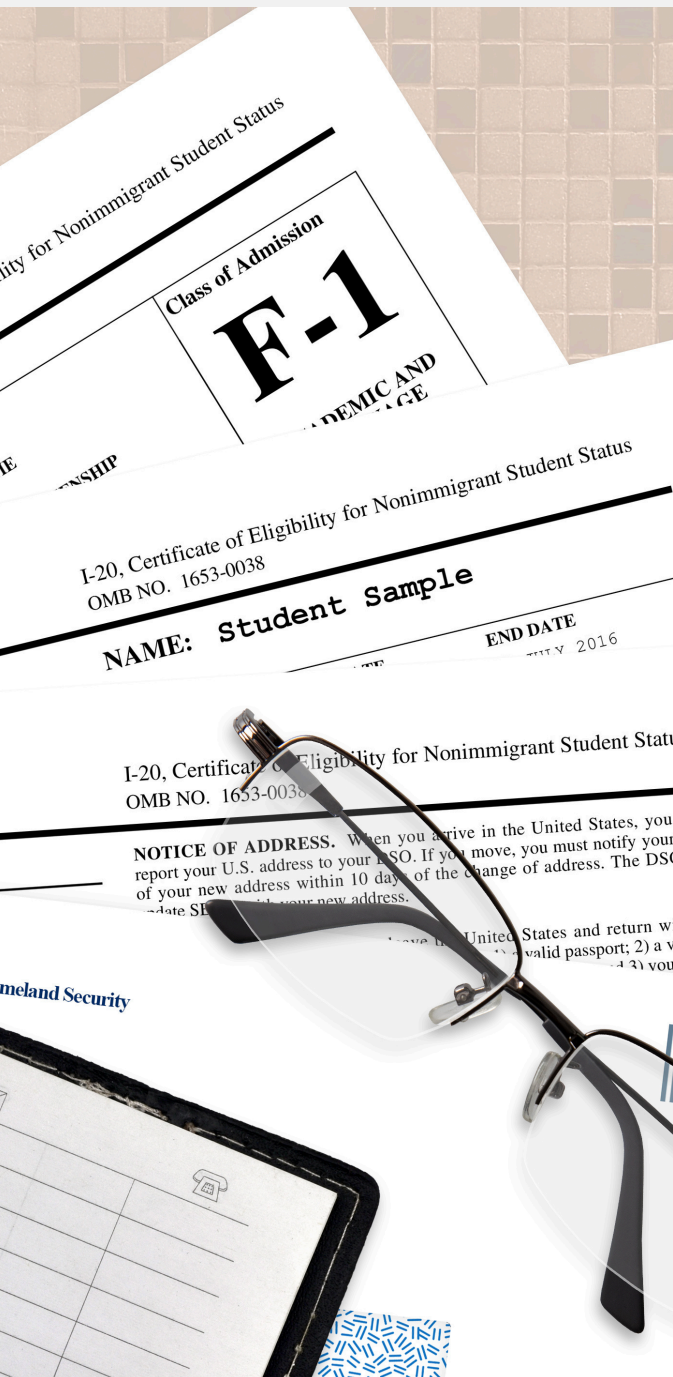
Post
012A012345678
ZIP 00123

FIRST CLASS

US POSTAGE
\$ 00.46
11/21/2019

US OFFICIAL MAIL
\$3.00 Penalty
For Private Use

Form I-20 serves several crucial purposes:



01 Maintaining F-1 Status

- You must keep your I-20 current and follow the regulations outlined on the form to maintain your legal F-1 Student status in the U.S.

02 Work Authorization

If you are eligible for Optional practical training (OPT) or Curricular Practical Training (CPT), your I-20 will be used to request work authorization.

F-1 Visa Holders Life Cycle

F-1 Visa Holders Life Cycle

INTERNATIONAL INSURANCE

International Students are required to hold health insurance. Detailed international insurance information is provided online at: <https://www.wvwc.edu/international-student-apply/>

UPON ARRIVAL

1. Check-in at the Center for Cultural & International Affairs (CCIA).
2. Attend the orientation program.
3. Bring your **I-20, passport, Visa, Admission letter, and most recent I-94** to the CCIA.

FINAL SEMESTER

1. **At the start of your final semester**, register with the CCIA for a graduation stole representing your home country.
2. F-1 students have **60 days after program completion** to leave the U.S. or explore other options.
3. F-1 students must maintain legal status or leave the U.S. after completing their program.



DURING YOUR STUDIES

1. Attend all classes and maintain normal academic progress.
2. Maintain a **full course of study** each term and consult DSO **before dropping a class**.
3. Discuss with DSO and request an extension before the program end date if needed.
4. Inform your DSO of any **Address, I-20, or Visa changes** to maintain accurate SEVIS records and student status.

A person with long dark hair, wearing a dark jacket and a light-colored backpack, is walking through a modern building with large glass windows. They are pulling a large, dark, textured suitcase. The scene is captured from a low angle, emphasizing the person's movement. The image is overlaid with a large, semi-transparent orange diamond shape.

Travel

Traveling as an F-1 Student:

A Travel Signature is a signature issued by your **Designated School Official (DSO)** on your I-20 after you enter the U.S. to begin your F-1 student life cycle. The DSO signature on page 2 of your I-20 form confirms that you have valid F-1 status.

You must have a valid travel signature on your I-20 to travel as an F-1 student. The consequences of traveling without a valid signature increase the risk of being denied re-entry into the U.S. Each signature is valid for **one year** (For F-1 students on OPT, the travel signature is valid for six months). If your current travel signature will expire before you return, you must request an updated one.

To get a travel signature, you must:



Have a valid I-20 issued by WV Wesleyan College (WVWC)



DSO must have your most up-to-date contact information, including a daytime telephone number at the school and an emergency phone number



Meet the full course of study requirements for immigration.



Academic performance aligns with the requirements for maintaining lawful F-1 status and eligibility for re-entry.



Have completed the required enrollment steps (for new students)



Transportation Services

ARRIVAL SERVICE

The CCIA provides arrival transportation to international students, ensuring a smooth transition to campus life. Students arriving at the start of the academic semester can request pickup from any of our 3 locations for a safe and efficient transfer.

DEPARTURE SERVICE

Departure transportation is provided for international students at the conclusion of each semester and during breaks. Drop-offs are available to any of the 3 locations ensuring reliable and secure transportation home during breaks.

NOTE: The pick-up location on campus is The Oval (near the Benedum Campus Center fountain). See back page for map or click the link: [WVWC Campus Map](#)

MID-SEMESTER SERVICE

The CCIA offers mid-semester service for transportation to local and essential destinations within the region throughout the academic year. These destinations may include the Social Security Administration (SSA) office, Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), town center for essential errands, and urgent medical appointments, among others.

***PLEASE NOTE:** Transportation is reserved for requested students only and not for accompanying friends or family.



Scan the QR Code
to fill out the
Arrival
Transport
Request
Form



Scan the QR Code
to fill out the
**Departure
Drop-Off**
Request
Form



Scan the QR Code
to fill out the
Mid-Semester
Transport
Request Form

A group of people, including a man and two women, are shown in profile, looking towards the right. They appear to be in a professional setting, possibly a meeting or conference. The image is overlaid with a large, semi-transparent orange diamond shape. The word "Employment" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the center of the diamond. Below the word is a short, solid orange horizontal line.

Employment



MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT

Unauthorized employment on an F-1 visa can lead to serious consequences, including loss of status and deportation.

On-campus employment is limited to 20 hours per week during the academic year and full-time during breaks. DSO authorization is required before starting work.

Off-campus employment is not allowed unless authorized under specific programs like Optional Practical Training (OPT) or Curricular Practical Training (CPT), which require USCIS approval and/or DSO recommendation.

INTERNSHIP

The internship application process begins with an online form accessible on the Academic Services website or **forms.wvwc.edu**.

Students submit online forms, syllabi, and learning contracts for approval. The faculty sponsor, site supervisor, school director/department chair, experiential learning coordinator, and registrar review the form. After approval, the registrar sends an email notification.

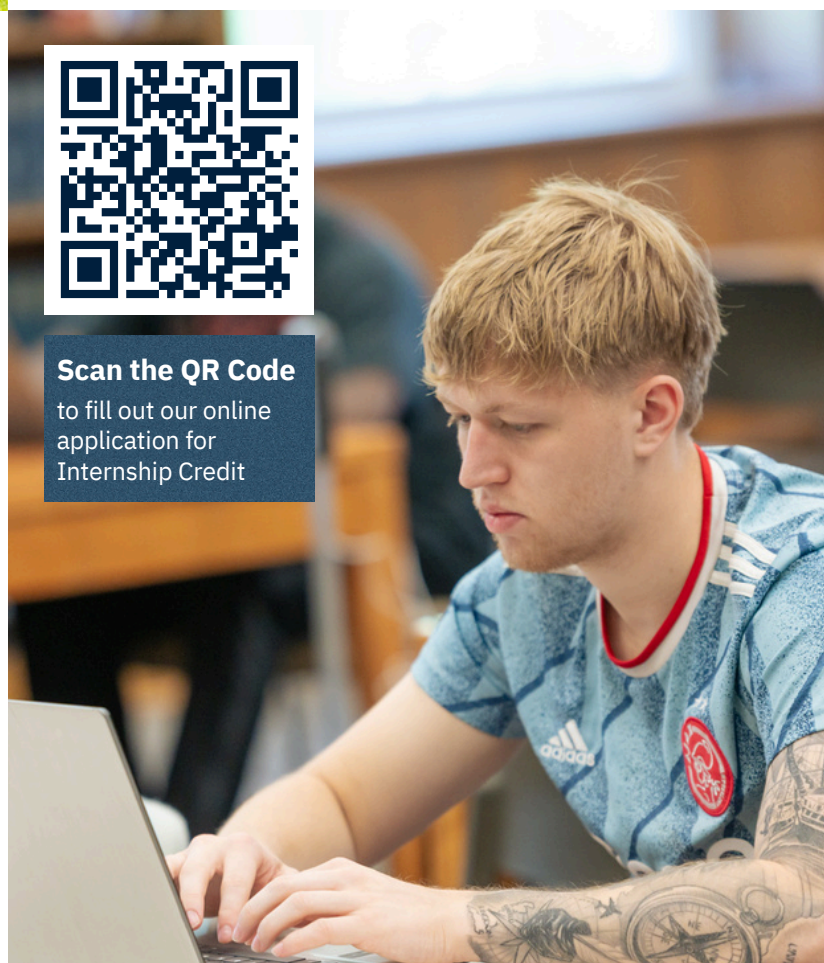
International students may need additional documentation. For internship questions, contact:

- **bowers.j@wvwc.edu** (Experiential Learning Coordinator)
- **registrar@wvwc.edu** (Registrar's Office)



Scan the QR Code

to fill out our online application for Internship Credit





CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

International students at WV Wesleyan College can participate in CPT related to their major.

CPT Authorization: Students need to obtain CPT authorization from their DSO before starting work. To obtain CPT authorization from your DSO, you will need to provide the following:

1. Letter of employment with company information and start and end dates.
2. Whether the position is full-time or part-time, and job responsibilities.
3. Letter must be signed and on company letterhead.
4. Bring letter and immigration documents to DSO.

OPT Impact: Full-time CPT for 12 months makes students ineligible for OPT, while part-time CPT allows OPT eligibility.

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

OPT is temporary employment related to an F-1 student's major. Eligible students can apply for up to 12 months of OPT before or after completing their studies. However, all pre-completion OPT periods are deducted from post-completion OPT. F-1 students with STEM degrees from designated programs may apply for a 24-month OPT extension if employed by an E-Verify employer.

To apply for OPT, you must generally:

1. Request your DSO to change your OPT status & recommend OPT by endorsing your Form I-20 & making a SEVIS notation.
2. Complete and File the Form I-765 online with USCIS, accompanied by the required fee & supporting documentation.

Note: F-1 students should carefully follow the regulations & guidelines set by the U.S. government & their academic institutions to avoid issues related to employment restrictions.



DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OPT & CPT

CPT (Curricular Practical Training) is typically used **before graduation** and is considered an academic internship. It allows F-1 students to work in paid or unpaid internships **while earning course credit**, usually by registering for at least one credit hour. While many majors require CPT, it is not always mandatory.

OPT (Optional Practical Training) is generally used **after graduation**. It allows F-1 students to work in a job **directly related to their field of study**, but **does not provide course credit**.

Obtaining a **Social Security Number (SSN)**

The Social Security Administration (SSA) assigns nine-digit SSNs to U.S. citizens, permanent residents, and eligible non-immigrant workers. SSNs are used for reporting wages, tracking benefits, and identification. Every F-1 student with employment authorization needs an SSN. West Virginia State requires an SSN or if unemployed, a rejection letter (also from SSA), before applying for a driver's license.

Steps to Obtain an SSN while studying as an F-1 Student in the U.S.:



Talk to your DSO about working and training in the U.S. The DSO will share regulations and requirements for you as an F-1 student and confirm eligibility for an SSN.



Verify your SEVIS record is in Active status for at least two days before applying for an SSN.



Wait 10 days after arriving in the US to apply for an SSN, allowing time for your arrival info to update in government systems.



Once you have made an appointment, visit the SSA office on stated date and time to apply for an SSN in person. Carry your valid passport, visa, most recent I-94, letter from DSO and proof of employment offer. For more info on required documents, visit [the SSA website.](#)

A photograph of a car driving on a winding road through a forest. The road is paved and has a white line on the left side. The car is a light-colored sedan, seen from the rear. The road curves to the right. The background is a dense forest of green trees. In the foreground, there is a large, semi-transparent orange diamond shape that covers most of the image. The word "Driving" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the center of the diamond. A thin orange horizontal line is positioned below the word.

Driving

Driver's License

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

When applying for a driver's license at your local DMV, ensure you carry original copies of the following documents:

- I-94 Form
- Social Security Number (SSN)
- Proof of Address
- Letter from your DSO confirming your student status
- Any other immigration documents the DMV may request

To prepare for the driving test, study both the written test and driving practice portions. The West Virginia Driver's Licensing Handbook provides comprehensive information on driving rules and regulations.

Helpful contacts include:

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (SSA), ELKINS

Address: 300 3rd St Suite 325, Elkins, WV 26241

Website: ssa.gov/

DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES (DMV), ELKINS

Address: 1029 N Randolph Ave, Elkins, WV 26241

Website: transportation.wv.gov/DMV



Before your appointment, call the SSA or the DMV to confirm the required documents.



Scan the QR Code

to access a **sample written test** that will help you prepare.



Additional Resources

Transport Resources



CLARKSBURG AIRPORT - CKB AIRPORT

Allegiant & United Flights: flyckb.com

GREYHOUND BUS

Website: greyhound.com

Locations

Weston: BFS Foods - 57 Staunton Dr,
Weston, WV 26452

Bridgeport: White Oaks Blvd, Bridgeport, WV
26330

BARONS BUS

Website: baronsbus.com

Locations

Weston: 57 Staunton Drive Weston, WV
26452

Bridgeport: Clarksburg/White Oaks Shelter,
Bridgeport, WV 26330, USA

TAXI/SHUTTLE

Royal Cab Company:

(304) 326 - TAXI

Motown Taxi:

(304) 622 - TAXI
motowntaxis.com

Limousines By A Touch of Class

(Shuttle Service)
(304) 669 - 1579

Lodging near Transportation

1

Super 8 by Wyndham Weston

(304) 904-4049

Near Weston Greyhound Stop

2

Comfort Suites Bridgeport

(304) 933-6497

Near Bridgeport
Greyhound Stop

3

Holiday Inn Express & Suites Weston Weston

(304) 269-3550

Near Weston Greyhound Stop

4

Comfort Suites Bridgeport

(724) 899-1234

Hotel attached to PIT Airport



On-Campus Resources

1

The Office of Student Accounts, located on the first floor of the Administration Building, provides a variety of services for the students. Current WVWC students can review student account information through [Colleague Self-Service](#).

studentaccounts@wvwc.edu

<https://www.wvwc.edu/student-accounts/>

Phone: (304) 473-8569

2

Office of the Registrar, located on the first floor of the Administration Building and offers student services including advising and scheduling, the Registrar's office, and transcript processing.

registrar@wvwc.edu

<https://www.wvwc.edu/registrar>

Phone: (304) 473-8046

3

English as a Second Language (ESL) Program Students whose English language skills are not yet adequate are required to enroll in the College's English as a Second Language program.

Erin diStefano, Writing Center and ESL Coordinator

distefano.e@wvwc.edu

Phone: (304)-473-8560

4

Test Lab - Paula Strawder, Supervisor. The Test Lab provides extended time accommodations for: Students with diagnosed learning disabilities, Current or former ESL students, or Students referred by Wesleyan faculty.

Haymond Hall 202

testlab@wvwc.edu

Phone: (304) 473-8560

On-Campus Resources

5

The International Student Organization (ISO) is a student organization that provides a space for international students and all students to connect and learn about different cultures. The ISO also hosts events, such as a celebration for India's Holi Festival, an International Food Market, and **bi-weekly members' meetings in the CCIA office.**

iso@wwwc.edu

Phone: 304-473-8163

Discover more student organizations at:

<https://www.wwwc.edu/student-organizations-listing/>

6

The Center for Cultural & International Affairs (CCIA), ensures that every student feels seen, supported, and has the space to flourish both academically and personally. The CCIA prioritizes *Safety*, offering a confidential, judgment-free environment; *Compliance*, guiding international students through visa regulations and cultural transitions; and *Culture*, fostering a vibrant community through diverse events and leadership programs.

2nd floor of the Benedum Student Service Center

Laurie Goux, Director/DSO

goux.l@wwwc.edu

Phone: 304-473-8163

Title IX

AMY KITTLE, TITLE IX COORDINATOR

kittle.a@wwwc.edu/titleix@wwwc.edu

Phone: (304)-621-1316

The Title IX Coordinator, oversees the investigation and resolution of all reports and complaints made by students, employees, and visitors of alleged discrimination, which includes failure to accommodate, harassment, or misconduct in accordance with College policy.

Note: Below are confidential resources on campus who are available for you to talk with.

1. **Jonathan Acord**, MMin, Dean of the Chapel, Office of Religious & Spiritual Life
304-473-8372 acord.j@wwwc.edu
2. **Debra Dean Murphy, Ph.D.** Professor of Religious Studies, Chair of Philosophy and Religious Studies Department, Co-Director of The Center for Restorative Justice **(O) 304-473-8362 (C) 919-412-4369** murphy_d@wwwc.edu.
3. **Laurie Goux, Director**, Center for Cultural & International Affairs, goux.l@wwwc.edu
(O)304-473-8163 (C)304-516-8207
4. **Shauna Jones**, MA, MFA, NCC, PLC, Director of Mental Health Care Services/Counseling
304-473-8803 counseling@wwwc.edu

TITLE IX SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY.

West Virginia Wesleyan College does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national or ethnic origin, creed, ancestry, marital/family status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, religion, age, disability or blindness, or any other characteristic protected by local, state or federal law, to include Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, and the Age Discrimination Act, in the administration of its admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, educational programs, employment, athletic programs, co-curricular activities, or other College administered programs. For inquiries about the application of these laws in Wesleyan's programs or to file a report, contact the Title IX Coordinator at **59 College Ave, Buckhannon WV, titleix@wwwc.edu, or 304-621-1316.**

Campus Map



Campus Map

- | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Reemsnyder Research Center | 8. Benedum Campus Center / See Dining Center | 16. Benedum Hall | 23. Culpepper Field (Softball) |
| 2. Dunn Hall | 9. Lynch-Raine Administration Building | 17. Holloway Hall | 24. Culpepper Stadium (Soccer) |
| 3. Wellness Center | 10. McCuskey Hall | 18. Christopher Hall of Science | 25. Erickson Alumni Center |
| 4. Virginia Thomas Law Center for the Creative Arts | 11. Doney Hall | 19. Rockefeller Center | 26. English Annex |
| 5. Agnes Howard Hall | 12. Fleming Hall | 20. Middleton Hall | 27. O'Roark Nordstrom Welcome Center |
| 6. Wesley Chapel / Martin Religious Center | 13. Haymond Hall | 21. Ross Field (Football & Track) | 28. Tennis Courts |
| 7. Annie Merner Pfeiffer Library | 14. Jenkins Hall | 22. Hank Ellis Field (Baseball) | |
| | 15. Loar Hall of Music | | |