

Welcome from SPHISO

The School of Public Health International Student Organization (SPHISO) would like to extend a warm welcome to you. We are a new organization, established in January 2012. The UT School of Public Health has hundreds of vibrant international students from across the world. We pioneered SPHISO to provide support and resources for making the transition easier and less stressful for all international students coming from across the world to attend school in Houston.

Life in Texas: Snippets of life in Texas shared by our SPHISO Comrades

Places to Live around Campus

UT Housing:

If you have received your letter of acceptance, apply for the UT Housing as soon as possible.

There is usually a long waiting list. To see their web page, visit this link:

<http://ae.uth.tmc.edu/housing/index2.htm> In most cases, newly admitted students will be put on a waiting list for UT Housing, and thus need to seek alternative housing upon their arrival in Houston.

Other Apartment Complexes:

Parkview, Montreal Place, Holly Hall, Scotland Yard, Harvest Hill, Crossing on Kirby, Fannin Street Station, The Lanesborough Apartments, AMLI at the Medical Center, Equinox, 7100 Almeda, 7901 Cambridge St. (The Park on Cambridge) are among some of the apartment complexes that can be found around University Housing. There are many more in the area. You may find advertisements about places for rent at the UT shuttle stops or in some of the UTSPH lobby areas.

You may also use a real estate agent to find you an apartment (<http://www.har.com/>). This service is free to you as the apartment complexes pay the realtor fees. You can contact the real estate agent by email before coming to Houston and specify the area where you would like to live (Medical Center), the type of apartment you're interested in (two bedroom/one bath, one bedroom/one bath etc.), whether you would like to live alone or with a roommate, a price range, and other issues that are important for you. The real-estate agent will email you updates with potential rental places, with photographs and descriptions, so that you can make a decision before arriving in the US. You will probably be asked to put down a security deposit and first month's rent, so you will need to send a check or pay by credit card online.

You can also search **ULoop** for posted announcements (<http://www.uloop.com/>). If you have student friends at other Houston universities, you may ask them to send mass email their server lists with your request for a roommate or for an apartment to rent. You can also post roommate requests on the UTSPH Entering Class Facebook Page.

Temporary Housing:

- Econo Lodge Hobby Airport - 8381 Broadway Street, Houston, TX 77061. Tel: 713-645-1333. The average price of a room is \$69/night, plus tax. Free continental breakfast.
- Days Inn Hobby Airport - 1505 College Ave., Houston, TX 77587. Tel: 713-946-5900. Room prices range from \$45.90 to \$64/night, plus tax.
- Hilton Hobby Airport - 8181 Airport Blvd., Houston, TX 77061. Tel: 713-645-3000. Rooms cost between \$119 and \$139/night, plus tax..

Getting around Houston

Getting to and fro from the Airport:

Super Shuttle:

You will usually find their counter right at the point where you come out after baggage claim. (<http://www.supershuttle.com/>). Upon arrival, look for the Super Shuttle desk in the baggage claim area. Book your ride to your accommodation before coming to the US or before coming to Houston. You can also book your ride at their counter at the airport. Estimated cost is \$30, and the Super Shuttle van will take you to the location you indicate in the reservation.

Car rentals:

You may rent a car from the airport, either online in advance or on the spot. Shuttles will take you from the airport to the car rental company car lots. Some examples of car rental companies: Enterprise, Budget, Thrifty, Fox etc. You can compare prices among companies using priceline.com, kayak.com, etc.

Taxicabs:

Estimated costs would be \$40-\$50 from Intercontinental Airport, or \$25 from Hobby Airport. Heavy luggage may incur additional charges. Taxi drivers are usually tipped (This is about 15% of the fare). The drive from Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) should take about 45 minutes and the drive from Hobby Airport should take about 25 minute. These taxis should also be able to get you around the Texas Medical Center:

- Yellow Cab (713-236-1111)

- Fiesta Cab Company (713-225-2666)
- Liberty Cab Company (713-695-6700)
- Square Deal Cab Company (713-659-7236)
- United Cab Company (713-699-0000)

Metro (Bus System):

Make sure you get the Q card. As a student you get a 50% discount on your ride. You will receive information about this during orientation. You will need a letter from the school attesting that you are an international student. You can obtain this after you register for classes. Then you will take the Light Rail to the Metro headquarters (get off the rail at Downtown Transit Center and it will be across the street). Before being a registered student, you will not be able to get your student Q card. So, for the first few days in Houston, you will ride the bus using exact change in cash. You may pay this one way fare when you get on any bus (there is a slot machine by the driver).

Light Rail:

Make sure you get the **Q card**. As a student you get a 50% discount on your ride. Before being a registered student, you will not be able to get your student Q card. So, for the first few days in Houston, you will ride the light rail using cash. You may pay this one way fare by depositing cash in the pay machines located at each Light Rail stop before boarding. You will receive a ticket which you keep with you during your trip.

Private Cars: Multiple Car Dealerships are located around the Medical Center if you are willing and able to purchase a car.

Getting to and from campus

Depending on your means and where you live, this may involve driving, bicycling, using the Metro, or using the UT Shuttle. There is expensive and limited parking on campus, but some cheaper alternatives for students near the Medical Center, see <https://sph.uth.tmc.edu/content/uploads/2011/12/Student-Parking-Options-2011.pdf>

UT Shuttle: This gets you to various locations in the Medical Center and to be eligible to ride, you have to present your UT ID Badge (You have to wear your badge at all times).

Favorite Places to Eat - On a Budget

You can get discounts via [Groupon](#) and have discounted rates at restaurants in Houston.

Also, do not forget to get your 10% discount card from the Student Affairs Office at the School of Public Health. Presenting this discount card makes you eligible for a 10% discount on some major restaurants in and around the Medical Center.

For the 2011-2012 Academic Year, these restaurants are as follows:

- Bombay Brasserie - 2414 University Blvd
- Buffalo Wild Wings - 2525 Rice Blvd, Greenway Commons, Midtown, Wash Ave
- Fadi's Mediterranean Grill - 4738 Beechnut St
- Kubo's Sushi Bar and Grill - 2414 University Blvd
- My Fit Foods - 2280 W. Holcombe Blvd
- New York Pizzeria - 2250 W. Holcombe Blvd
- Panera Bread - 3151 W. Holcombe Blvd
- Ruggles Cafe Bakery - 2365 Rice Blvd
- Thai Spice Restaurant - 5117 Kelvin St

Things to Do in Houston

Paid:

- Houston Zoo
- Rodeo Houston (including Concerts; only in Feb-March of each year)
- Houston Rockets
- NASA
- Aquarium at Downtown (although a bit small)
- Froberg's Farm: Strawberry and other fruits picking <http://www.frobergsfarm.com>

Free:

Houston Zoo on Holidays (or the first weekend every month with Bank of America card)

Miller Outdoor Theater

Museums (Fine Art, every Thursday; Natural Science, every Tuesday after 2pm)

Memorial Park, Hermann Park

Things to do in Texas

- Riverwalk in San Antonio
- Seaworld in San Antonio
- Galveston Island and Corpus Christi - Go Fishing, Crab Catching, Beach, Restaurants, Sight Seeing
- Kemah - Enjoy walking along the pier
- Brazos Bend Park - The Alligator Park
- Six Flags - Arlington and San Antonio

- Alvin Bayou Wildlife-take a tour of the wildlife park and get to feed the animals (ostriches, llamas, camels, giraffes & others)

Grocery:

- **Fiesta** is a major grocery near the Medical Center that offers huge variety of International food items.
- **Kroger**
- **Target**
- **Walmart**
- There is a big **Chinatown** (Bellaire Boulevard): Chinese Supermarkets (Jusgo, Welcome), good restaurants.
- **Ranch 99**: a large supermarket selling Asian foods and goods and housing a few affordable Asian restaurants
- **Sam's Club**: a large warehouse where you can buy goods in bulk. You will need an annual card to purchase merchandise there.
- There is a huge **Indian Grocery market** at Hillcroft
- **H mart** (with great and cheap Korean foods)
- **Hong Kong market**
- **African Food Stores** (11332 Fondren Road Houston, TX)
- Southwest Farmer's Market (9801 Bissonnet St Ste U, Houston, TX)
- **Makola Imports** (10814 S Gessner Dr, Houston, TX); and many others

Banking:

You can open a checking account with Bank of America or with Chase as well as other banking institutions in the area. **Chase** requires a monthly direct deposit to get the monthly fee waived. There is no monthly fee with **Bank of America**. Ask for an account with online access and no monthly fee; however, you will need to pay for every operation going through a teller (which will be very few, if any-a cashier's check for a rent down-payment would be an example of a situation where you would need a teller to help you).

Safety:

- In case of Emergency, **Call 911** Immediately!
- University of Texas Police (UT Police): 713-792-2890

Driving:

This Rice University Web page has useful information; [Click Here](#)

Immigration:

Visit UTHealth's **Office of International Affairs** Web Page for visa or immigration information:

<http://www.uthouston.edu/international-affairs/>

Employment:

Contact the [Office of International Affairs](#) (OIA) for more details. As an International student (with an F-1 or J-1 visa) you must contact OIA and obtain the appropriate work authorization **before** you can start to work. **You will have to leave the country or face deportation if you work even one day prior to or after you obtain authorization.**

Working on-campus is limited –it is considered part-time (Usually it is **20 hours or less per week** or 50% time). Contact the [Office of International Affairs](#) (OIA) for more details.

To search for employment opportunities on-campus at the School of Public Health (SPH) you will have to log on to **Job Ops**, the online system which UTSPH uses to allow students and alumni to search for jobs, upload multiple resumes, cover letters, reference letters and send online resume referrals to employers. Click this link to access Job Ops:

<https://www.myinterfase.com/sph-uth/Account/LogOn?ReturnUrl=%2fsph-uth%2fstudent%2f>

Further inquiries:

If you have further questions or you would like more details about a certain topic, you may contact SPHISO (sphiso@uth.tmc.edu) or any of the officers directly by email.