

Information for incoming students



indian students at rice

Fall 2012

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Welcome!

Congratulations on being admitted to Rice University! Let me take this opportunity to welcome you not only to a world-class research institute, but also to a close-knit, vibrant community of graduate students of Indian origin.

Indian Students at Rice is an organization dedicated to creating a warm and welcoming environment for Indian students on campus, showcasing Indian culture and history to the student body, and fostering social ties with the Indian-American community in the Greater Houston area. We achieve this by organizing a number of events through the year, including our flagship event Deepotsav on the occasion of Diwali. Our activities include camping trips, an annual *antakshari* competition with the association of South Asian undergraduates at Rice, *kavi sammelan*, and an annual Freshers' party. We celebrate events of national importance such as Independence Day, Republic Day and Holi. In the fall semester of 2011, we collaborated with the Office of the President in hosting the former President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, and later with the Chao Center of Asian Studies in organizing a festival of contemporary Indian cinema. We are looking forward to having you join us in our activities in the upcoming year!

ISAR is more than just a social organization - we exist to be a source of support and information as well. As you prepare to travel to Houston, we are here to help you with the transition. This document contains advice and tips on booking flights, packing, etc. In addition, we also offer airport pickups for all incoming Indian graduate students in the fall semester. If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity, please visit our website at www.ruf.rice.edu/~isar and fill out the online signup form there; a volunteer from our group will pick you up at the Houston airport and drive you to your apartment or Rice graduate housing.

I also encourage you to stay connected with us by joining our groups on Facebook and Google, as well as the ISAR mailing list. Links to these can be found at the end of this document. Do feel free to use these forums to discuss housing opportunities, ask questions, or seek advice from the Rice Indian community. Please don't hesitate to contact us at isar@rice.edu or contact me personally at arunima@rice.edu.

Let me welcome you once again to Rice University, and I look forward to meeting you this fall!

Best regards,

Arunima Ray

President, Indian Students at Rice (2011-2012)

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ISAR events (2011-12)

Date	Event
July 1, 2011	Diners' Club
August 14, 2011	Independence Day Diners' Club
August 18, 2011	Graduate Activities Fair (organized by the Graduate Student Association)
August 26, 2011	Student Activities Fair (organized by the Office of Student Activities)
August 22, 2011	Reception for Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (with the Office of the President)
August 29, 2011	Swagat 2011 (Helpful information for new graduate students)
September 21, 2011	Indian-themed coffee break (with the Graduate Student Association)
September 25, 2011	Freshers' Party Diners' Club
October 5, 2011	Festival of Contemporary Films from India – Curtain raiser (with the Chao Center for Asian Studies)
October 13, 2011	Bake sale benefitting Pratham USA (primarily organized by Pratham@UH)
October 15, 2011	Antakshari (with the South Asian Society)
October 30, 2011	Deepotsav 2011
November 4-6, 2011	Festival of Contemporary Films from India (with the Chao Center for Asian Studies)
January 26, 2012	Republic Day
February 17, 2012	Graduate International Cultural Night (with the Graduate Student Association & other cultural organizations at Rice)
February 23, 2012	Meditation Session (with the Isha Yoga Foundation)
March 3, 2012	Seniors vs. Juniors Cricket Match (with the Rice Cricket Club)
March 11, 2012	Holi
March 15, 2012	Meditation Session (with the Isha Yoga Foundation)

Date	Event
March 16, 2012	Culture Fair (organized by Rice ADVANCE)
March 23, 2012	ISAR Potluck

Upcoming events

Date	Event
April 20, 2012	Antakshari (with Rice South Asian Society)
April 2012	ISAR General Elections
May 2012	Farewell picnic for 2012 graduates
July 2012	Networking/Mentoring session (with ISAR alumni and IITAGH)

Planning your trip

Applying for a visa

1. The best sources of information about matters related to US visas are the US Consulate websites and the Office of International Students & Scholars at Rice. If you have any questions whatsoever, email the OISS office at oiss@rice.edu. **Do not take any chances when it comes to applying for your visa!**
2. When you receive your I-20 or DS-2019, you will need to apply for your F-1/J-1 visa at a U.S. consulate or embassy. You cannot apply for your visa earlier than 120 days from the start date on your I-20 form – **apply as early as possible** within this framework.
3. There are five US consulates in India – in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad. Visit the website of the US consulate closest to your hometown and follow the procedures for documentation, interview request, etc. In general, you should keep the following documents with you for the interview:
 - a. A valid Indian passport.
 - b. I-20 or DS-2019
 - c. Admission letter from Rice University
 - d. Financial documents to prove you have the funds required for a least a year's stay in the U.S. (as indicated on the I-20 or DS-2019)
 - e. Proof of payment of the SEVIS fee. All F-1 and J-1 visa applicants need to pay the onetime SEVIS fee prior to applying for a visa. Keep your receipt as proof of payment to present to the US Consulate, port of entry officials when entering the US, OISS upon check-in, and for your records. For more information visit www.FMJfee.com
 - f. Completed visa application forms – be sure to indicate your name as stated on your passport and your I-20/DS-2019 documents to better ensure that your name on your visa stamp will be displayed properly.
 - g. Visa appointment payment receipt
 - h. GRE & TOEFL original score reports
4. If you are currently enrolled at another school in the U.S. but will be leaving the US prior to coming to Rice: if your visa from your former university has not expired, you can still use it, as long as you have a valid I-20 from Rice when re-entering the US. You may get a new visa, but it is not necessary. If you will not be leaving the US, you should still check in with OISS when arriving at Rice.

Booking a flight

1. New graduate students **must attend the Graduate Orientation** which occurs in August before classes start. Make sure to book your flight so that you arrive in time for this! Check with your department if you need to arrive sooner to attend departmental orientation. Your date of entry in the US must be **within 30 days of the start date** of your academic program as listed on the I-20 form, and **within the dates of validity for your visa**.
2. Try to **minimize the number of stops at intermediate airports**. As of March 2012, there are no direct flights from India to Houston. However, there are several airlines (Emirates, Qatar Airways, etc.) which fly from India to Houston with a single stop.
3. Try to **avoid changing airlines within a single journey**. If a change of airlines cannot be avoided:
 - a. Make sure that there is at least 4-6 hours gap/layover between the scheduled arrival of one flight and the scheduled departure of the connecting flight. Depending on where you are stopping (e.g. Heathrow airport in London), there may be additional screening before you are allowed to enter the terminal upon arrival, and this usually takes time.
 - b. You have to go through **immigration processing** at the first US airport that you land in. This can take several hours. If you are flying to a different US city and then taking a domestic flight to Houston, make sure to leave an additional 2-3 hours between flights.
 - c. **Checked baggage** is usually **safe within a single** airline while change of airline sometimes leads to misplaced luggage. Some airlines will not transfer luggage and you may have to personally carry it to the check-in counter for your next flight. Check this with your **travel agent!**
4. Some airlines (e.g. Emirates) **offer accommodation** if you have a long layover (12-24 hours) between flights. Check with your travel agent or the airline website to see if you qualify.
5. The **weight/piece allowance for baggage** may vary for different airlines. Ask your travel agent about this or check the airline website.
6. When booking your flight, you can indicate whether you want **Hindu meal/Asian Vegetarian Meal (AVM)**, non-smoking section, etc.

7. Some airlines offer **Frequent Flier programs** (e.g. Continental One Pass, Lufthansa Miles and more, Star Alliance, etc.). Such programs are frequently free to enroll in and one can redeem miles traveled with that airline or its partners for upgrades, discounts, free flights, etc. You can enroll in such programs by creating an online account on relevant websites. Traveling home to India even once a year can lead to your accumulating a lot of miles!

Things to ask your travel agent

1. What is the **weight limit for baggage**? What size suitcases are allowed?
2. What can I do if my flight gets **delayed or cancelled**? Should I get travel insurance?
3. When I stop at an intermediate airport, will the airline **transfer my bags** or will I have to take care of it myself?
4. Every person leaving India should have **ECNR (Emigration Check Not Required)** stamped on one of the last pages of your passport. For detailed information, contact your travel agent.
5. For questions on whether one needs **Income Tax clearance certificate**, contact your travel agent.

Tips on packing

1. Start packing **at least 2-3 days before departure date**.
2. Buy strong suitcases - they should be able to withstand **a lot of mishandling**. They should be as large as possible within the size limitations (however, most airlines are quite lenient about baggage size).
3. As an example, here are the current (March 2012) baggage allowances for Economy class travel from India to the US on Emirates (please note that the specifications might be different for other airlines, other routes and other classes of travel):
 - a. Checked baggage: maximum allowance of **2 bags, up to 23 kg each**. Total dimensions (length + width + height) of each piece must not exceed 158 cm (62 inches). For Economy passengers with two pieces of luggage, the total combined dimensions of both pieces must not exceed 273 cm (107 inches). Customers with baggage exceeding these dimensions will be charged an additional fee.

- b. Cabin baggage: You can carry **one bag**, whose size of the bag (length + width + height) is not to exceed 115 cm (45.3 inches). The weight should not exceed 7 kg. In addition, you are allowed to carry **a laptop bag or purse**.
4. Put **identifying marks and labels** both inside & outside the suitcases, in addition to the labels provided by the airline.
5. Ideally, a student can bring 20-30% in cash and the remaining 70-80% of the total amount of money in traveler's checks. In case you are not funded by your department, carry with you a personal draft of the amount equal to one semester's expenses. Check your I-20 form to determine this amount.
6. Many departments will actually provide **office supplies such as pens, paper, notebooks, etc.** (you can check with your respective department if this is true) so you **do not need** to bring them with you.
7. Check with your department if there are **specific first-year courses** that you will be required to take. Try to contact the professor to determine the **required textbooks** and see if you can get them from India for cheaper.
8. **Don't buy electrical items from India** – the power supply here is 110V, while in India it is 220V; in addition, the power sockets are a different shape. **If you are buying a laptop in India**, make sure you get a power cord or an adaptor which can be used in the US.
9. Pack about **2 weeks' worth of clothing** – consider getting some loose clothes since they might shrink in machine wash or you might gain some weight! Summers are quite hot and sunny, so **cotton clothes** are really helpful. Winters are colder than you may have experienced before (temperatures reach 2-3°C).
10. Kitchen utensils can be quite expensive in US, but used items can be loaned from Loan Closet at nominal rate (see section below). Most apartments have electric stoves, so try to find **flat-bottomed pots and pans** – a normal kadai from Indian might not balance on an electric stove.

Loan Closet facility at Rice Graduate Apartments

Many household items – utensils, cutlery, furniture, pillows, etc – can be obtained at a nominal annual fee (\$25) from the Rice Graduate Apartments Loan Closet: gradloanclinet.blogs.rice.edu. This facility is available to all graduate students enrolled at Rice, even those who do not reside at the Rice Graduate Apartments.

Checklist for packing

Checked baggage

Miscellaneous items

- Copies of certificates and documents (originals in cabin baggage)
- Books – light reading or textbooks
- Medical history file
- One pair chappals
- 1 or 2 towels
- 2 sets of bed sheets, pillow covers, etc. (beds at RGA/RVA are full size: 54in x 75in)
- Umbrella
- Blanket
- Soap
- Toothbrushes, Razors, etc.
- Comb, Nail cutter, etc.
- CDs/mp3s of music of your choice
- Spices, other food items, such as pickles, sweets, etc. (must be sealed completely)
- Spare set of glasses, contact lenses, contact lens solution, etc.
- School bag to take to classes

Clothes

- Undergarments
- Socks
- Handkerchiefs
- Jacket
- Extra woolen sweater
- Swimwear
- Clothes for daily wear (jeans, T-shirts, etc.)
- Formal wear (at least 1 set, for presentations, conferences, etc.)
- Indian clothes for special occasions

Shoes

- Men: Consider bringing a pair of leather shoes from India. Other types of shoes are not too expensive in the US
- Women: Nice shoes (heels) can be expensive in the US. Consider bringing some nice shoes from India if you want them.

Cooking utensils

- 3-4 plates
- Bowls
- Knives, forks, spoons
- Ladles for serving

- Knife for cutting vegetables, etc. (A good sharp knife is ludicrously expensive in US)
- Frying pan/tava
- Pressure cooker
- Tongs
- Rolling pin
- Kadai
- 2-3 storage containers
- Tumblers for water/beverages

Cabin baggage

- Important documents
 - Passport
 - I-20 form
 - Financial documents (CA certificate, bank statements)
 - Admission letter
 - Affidavit from sponsor
 - College/school grade sheets and related certificates
- First aid medicines (for headache, nausea, fever, etc.)
- Reading material (novel/magazines/eReader for the flight or layover)
- Address book/phone book
 - Phone number for OISS (Office of International Students and Scholars)
 - Phone number for the individual who is meeting you at the airport
 - Your address in the US (needed for I-94 form)
- Copies of your photograph (passport size)
- 1 or 2 sets of clothes, in case checked baggage is misplaced
- Cash/travelers' checks

Things to leave with your family

- Your address in the USA
- Phone numbers where you can be reached
- Phone number for OISS (Office of International Students and Scholars)
- Copies of all your important documents
- Copies of all relevant parts of medical history file
- Consider leaving a few blank signed papers so that your family can be authorized to look after anything on your behalf

Housing options in Houston

Rice Graduate Housing

Information about on-campus housing for graduate students can be found at gradapts.rice.edu. Most international graduate student receiving funding from their academic departments live in Rice Graduate Housing for their first year, and then move off-campus in their second or third years.

The housing application for the 2012-13 academic year is available online from March 12, 2012. Room assignments will begin on May 1, 2012 and will continue until all available spots are filled. If you are confident that you intend to come to Rice, fill out an application soon – once apartment assignments are made, you will have two weeks within which you can decline the offer and have your deposit refunded if you so desire. Last year (fall 2011), the graduate apartments filled up fast - so apply early!

Advantages

1. This is a great option for your first year – you can meet many other graduate students, from different countries and departments, and also get to live close to most other incoming Indian graduate students.
2. The graduate housing complexes are partially furnished – each resident receives a bed (with mattress), a dresser, a nightstand, a desk and desk-chair, and occasionally a bookcase.
3. If you have decided to live in a 2-bedroom apartment (which is cheaper than living in a 1-bedroom apartment), the Graduate Housing Management is responsible for finding you a roommate. Usually Indian graduate students end up being roommates.
4. There is a shuttle bus from each graduate housing complexes to campus every 15 minutes Monday-Friday from 7:30 am to 8 pm. There is a night escort service from 10 pm to 6 am on Sunday-Thursday which goes to the graduate housing complexes upon request.
5. There is a shuttle to the closest grocery store and supermarket on Saturday mornings (every 45 minutes from 10 am to 3 pm.)
6. Since the apartment complexes are part of Rice, high-speed Rice internet is provided to all residents with no additional charge. Basic cable TV and water are also included. Residents of Rice Graduate Housing are, however, required to pay their own electricity bills.

7. Residents of Rice Graduate Apartments (RGA) are able to easily access the Graduate Loan Closet. However, residents of Rice Village Apartments (RVA) or Morningside Square Apartments (MSA), have to find a way of transporting furniture to their apartment complexes if they choose to take advantage of the Loan Closet.
8. The Rice apartment complexes are gated and monitored by the Rice University Police Department.
9. Since the housing complex is designed for Rice graduate students, the management has experience working with academic department. Lease terms are for the academic year and can be extended over the summer. If you are going to be away from the entire summer, but wish to leave your furniture in your apartment, you can opt for 'Summer Storage', which allows to you to do so while paying only half rent. If a student graduates, studies abroad, gets married, etc. the management will allow you to terminate your lease with a reduced penalty.

Disadvantages

1. Living on-campus is somewhat more expensive than living off-campus – but quite affordable with most department stipends.
2. If you are assigned an apartment in your first year, you are allowed to renew for your second year. However, once past the second year, residents of RGA and RVA who wish to continue living in graduate housing are entered into a lottery. (Residents of MSA can always choose to extend their lease as long as they are enrolled at Rice)
3. While the shopping shuttle runs to the grocery stores every Saturday, there are very few grocery stores actually close to either graduate housing complex.

Apartment complexes close to Rice

There are some apartment complexes within walking distance of Rice, and even more within biking distance. If you decide to live off-campus, it will make your lives significantly easier if you own a car, or at the very least a bicycle.

Advantages

1. The baseline rent is somewhat cheaper if one lives off-campus. As a reference, the rent for a 450 sq ft 1-bedroom apartment at RVA is \$855/month, while the rent for a 660 sq ft 1-bedroom apartment off-campus within biking distance to Rice is roughly \$700/month. The rent for a 637 sq ft 2-bedroom 1-bathroom apartment in RVA is \$630 per bed per month, while the rent for an 875 sq ft 2-bedroom 1-bathroom apartment off-campus is roughly \$460 per bed per month. The farther one lives from Rice, the cheaper the rents get.
2. You can renew your lease every year – there is no lottery to worry about.
3. There are apartment complexes quite close to bus stops, grocery stores, etc.

Disadvantages

1. Rents do not usually include water, cable, power, internet, etc.
2. If you choose to live in a 2-bedroom apartment, you are responsible for finding your own roommate.
3. Apartments are rarely, if ever, furnished. You will have to provide your own bed, desk, etc.
4. It is quite difficult to get by without a car/bicycle, to get to Rice and to grocery stores.
5. Usually one has to prove that one's monthly income is three times the monthly rent, or pay a much larger security deposit.
6. Some apartment complexes are not gated, others might be located in unsafe areas.

Ideas for finding off-campus apartments

1. Look at Rice's list of off campus housing options at offcampus.rice.edu
2. Email the ISAR mailing list at isar-l@mailman.rice.edu asking if anyone is looking for a roommate.
3. Post a message at the ISAR Facebook group at tinyurl.com/isarfacebookgroup
4. Post a message at the GSA Facebook group at www.facebook.com/groups/101585130539

5. Email the Rice international student office's mailing list at oiss-market@rice.edu
6. Contact apartment complexes close to Rice. A google map with some such places marked can be found at tinyurl.com/rice-conv-apt-cxs

Prepare for your move to Houston

Things to do before leaving India

Over the summer

1. **Secure a place to live in Houston.** Check out the Housing in Houston section for more details. Make sure that you know how to get to Rice campus from your apartment, where the closest grocery stores are, etc. If you have decided to live off-campus, you might consider finding another incoming Indian graduate student to be roommates with – you can seek such students on our Facebook group, or via our mailing list.
2. **Learn to drive:** It is very helpful to be able to drive in a big city like Houston. Learning to drive in the US is expensive, so it is better to know how to drive before coming here. Even if you do not plan to buy a car, having a valid driver's license will enable you to rent cars. Take a look at the Zipcar program available to Rice students: <http://www.zipcar.com/rice/> Try to get an International Driving Permit (IDP) prior to leaving India - this will allow you to drive in the USA for six months while you get a US driving license.
3. **Learn to cook:** While there are many dining options on and around Rice campus and in Houston, nothing beats a home-cooked meal! Cooking at home not only saves money, but also helps you have delicious Indian food without having to go to a (possibly expensive) Indian restaurant. If you are vegetarian, you might have trouble finding vegetarian food options and learning to cook is even more important.
4. **Get a complete medical and dental checkup done:** Get prescriptions & medicines for common ailments (the technical name of the medicine along with Indian/US brand names). Get your eyesight checked; get a new prescription for glasses. Buy at least one extra pair of glasses, lenses - glasses are very expensive in the US! If you wear contact lenses, get a few months' supply from India. Make sure to get the required immunizations (especially MMR, meningitis, etc.) as required by Rice University. **Remember to fill up the Health and Immunization record form that has been sent to you with the I-20 packet!**
5. **Decide how you will stay in touch with friends & family:** Most students have fixed times when they talk to friends & family via video-chat, using Skype, GoogleTalk, etc. Your family might need to be shown how to use these applications. One can use Google to make phone-calls to India at a low price from a computer. Of course, one can also stick to old-fashioned phone calls.

6. **Sign up for airport pickup:** Make sure someone is meeting you at the airport. You can fill out the form at www.ruf.rice.edu/~isar to be picked up at the Houston airport by a volunteer from ISAR. The sooner you do this, the easier it is for us to make arrangements to pick you up!

The week before your flight

1. **Have you started packing yet?**
2. **Call the airline office to confirm your flight:** Cross-check everything the travel agent may have told you (e.g. extra baggage, meal options, transit visa, etc.) If someone is picking you up at the airport, inform them of any changes to your travel plans.
3. **Prepare important documents:** Photocopy your passport, tickets, I-20 form and Rice admission letter. Make sure to keep these copies in addition to contact information for the Rice Office of International Students & Scholars in each piece of luggage, including your cabin baggage. Keep original copies of your CA certificate, bank statements, sponsor's affidavit, passport, admission letter and all other important documents in your cabin baggage. Sometimes, the immigration officials may ask you to present them at the US port of entry.
4. **Contact your apartment complex** to make sure everything is clear about your moving in. **Print out a Rice campus map** if possible. Find out how to get from your apartment complex to the Rice campus.
5. **Rest well; spend time with friends and family:** It's going to be a long journey and it might be many months or years since you see them again! Try to have some of your favorite foods!
6. **Make sure to get to the airport 4-5 hours before the scheduled departure of your flight:** Try to wear loose, cotton clothes and comfortable shoes for your flight. Keep a pen with you.

During your journey

1. **Relax:** Sleep as much as possible. Drink lots of water. If you are vegetarian, make sure you are given the vegetarian food option.

2. Once out of India, be cautious. Don't hesitate to ask questions – most people will be happy to help you out – but be careful. In general, try to ask questions of individuals who work at the airport. Don't hire a taxi (unless it is an emergency) until you reach your destination.
3. As the airplane prepares to land, the local time will be announced – **set your watch to Houston time**. Houston is 10:30 hours behind India from March 11th to November 4th and 11:30 hours behind otherwise.
4. **I-94 card/customs form:**
 - a. Before landing, the flight attendant will distribute customs declaration forms and immigration forms.
 - b. Fill these out on the plane – you will have to submit these to the appropriate authorities when you land. Do not hesitate to ask the flight attendant for assistance. On the customs form, you can indicate that you have nothing to declare and that the total value of all goods you are carrying is less than \$100.

At the US port of entry

1. Once you are off the airplane **go straight to the immigration counter** - there is usually a really long line, and if you rush you won't have to wait too long. You might be in line for **as long as 1 hour**.
2. **At the immigration officer's desk:**
 - a. Keep your I-20 form, passport, admission & aid letters ready. The officer might ask you a few questions, such as the following: Is this your first time visiting the US? Are you a student on an F1 visa? Which university are you joining? What are you studying?
 - b. After seeing your documents, the immigration officer will indicate length of stay, university, etc. on the I-94 card. The card is then (usually) stapled to your passport. **You must retain this I-94 form until you leave USA!**
3. **Claim your checked baggage:**
 - a. Go to the conveyor belt to collect your luggage.
 - b. Get a cart to carry your suitcases
 - c. Make sure you get the right suitcases! (Many suitcases look alike, which is why you should have some identifying marks on your suitcases)

- d. If your suitcases are not on the baggage carousel, go to the airline counter, or airline/airport staff to direct you to the Lost Baggage Counter.

4. Customs:

- a. Cart your baggage to the Customs desk.
- b. Rarely, the customs officer might ask you some questions – these will be much like the questions asked by the immigration officer earlier.
- c. If asked to open your baggage, do so slowly but do not mess up. Note: In most cases, you will not be asked to open your bags at all and will simply be waved through.

5. Pickup

- a. If you have signed up to be picked up by an ISAR volunteer, go and wait for him/her at the nearest exit.
- b. Never leave your baggage unattended. Don't leave the airport until somebody comes to receive you. If you have doubt the person who has come to receive you, don't hesitate to ask for his/her identification.
- c. If you have asked a relative or a friend to receive you then please don't request pick up by ISAR. All volunteers have taken time out of their schedule to drive a long way to come and get you.

Once you have reached your new home

The day you arrive

1. **Call home** immediately to inform your parents & family of your safe arrival. If you have been picked up by an ISAR volunteer, feel free to ask them the best way to do so. If you are living at RGA/RVA and you have a computer already, set up the internet connection.
2. Ask the person who picked you up at the airport if they can take you to the grocery store so that you can **pick up some food and any other necessities**.
3. **Get lots of rest**. Sleep can help you get over jetlag!

Within the first week

1. **Check in** with the Office of International Students & Scholars at Lovett Hall. Obtain a **Rice student ID** at the Rice Police Department. Refer to the Rice campus map.

2. **Visit your department at Rice:** Introduce yourself to the department secretary – he/she is often the best source of information about the department. Find your office or lab if you have one and introduce yourself to other incoming graduate students. Make sure you find out if there is a departmental orientation that you are required to attend.
3. **Open a checking account:** Most international students have an account with Chase Bank, which is located close to Rice. There is also a BBVA Compass Bank close to Rice Village Apartments, which you can get to using a Rice shuttle.
4. Make sure you attend the **mandatory OISS International Orientation** and the **Graduate Orientation!**

Resources on the Web

ISAR resources

Airport Pickup Form	tinyurl.com/isairairportpickup	Sign up to be picked up at the Houston airport by an ISAR volunteer
ISAR Webpage	www.ruf.rice.edu/~isar/	
ISAR Facebook group	tinyurl.com/isarfacebookgroup	Stay up to date with ISAR events and activities
ISAR e-mailing list	tinyurl.com/isarmailinglist	
ISAR Google group	tinyurl.com/isargooglegroup	
ISAR Picasa Album	tinyurl.com/isarpicasa	

Rice resources

Virtual tours of Rice	www.rice.edu/virtualtours	Virtual tour of Rice campus, various facilities and departments
Office of International Students & Scholars	oiss.rice.edu	Learn about the various resources available to you at Rice
Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies	graduate.rice.edu	
Graduate Student Association	gsa.rice.edu	Information about the campus shuttle system & the weekly grocery shuttle
Rice Transportation Department	park-trans.rice.edu/campus.cfm	
Rice Zipcar	www.zipcar.com/rice	Affordable car rental on campus
Rice Graduate Housing	gradapts.rice.edu	Find out about different housing options convenient for Rice students
Apartment complexes convenient for Rice University	tinyurl.com/rice-conv-apt-cxs	
Off-campus housing	offcampus.rice.edu	Rent furniture and household items for a nominal annual fee
Graduate Loan Closet	gradloancloset.blogs.rice.edu	

Houston resources

Houston Public Transport	www.ridemetro.org	Getting around in Houston if you don't drive
India Culture Center	www.icchouston.org	Learn about the vibrant Indian community in the Houston area
India House	www.indiahouseinc.org	
IIT Alumni of Greater Houston	iitagh.org	
Houston Durgabari	www.durgabari.org	
