Making a Successful Admission to the United States

OK – I got my visa. What should I do next?
- Check again to see what type of visa you need (F1? F2? J1? J2?) and make sure you received the correct one. If the consular officer made a mistake, go back and get it corrected.
- Make sure your passport is valid for at least six months beyond the date you plan to arrive in the U.S.
- If the consular officer sealed your immigration documents in an envelope, do not open it! The immigration officer at the port of entry will do that.

What should I carry with me?
Carry these on your person – DO NOT pack them in your suitcase!
- Passport
- SEVIS form I-20 (for F visas) or DS-2019 (for J visas)
- Evidence of financial resources
- Ballpoint pen
- Michael Voegerl's business card/contact information.

What other forms will I need?
If you come by air, flight attendants on the plane will give you the CF-6059 Customs Declaration form. Complete this form and have it ready when you arrive. If you come by land or sea, customs and immigration officers will provide this form and ask you to complete it. If you do not understand something, ask for help with this form.

No matter how you travel, you will have to pass through a Department of Homeland Security checkpoint at your port of entry. As you approach the checkpoint, have your passport, your I-20 or DS-2019 (still in its sealed envelope) and the CF-6059 ready for the officer.

What will the inspecting officer do?
He or she will probably ask you why you are entering the United States. Be sure to say that you will be a student at New Mexico Tech and be prepared to say what you will be studying. If the officer is satisfied, he or she will stamp your I-20 and also your passport. On the stamp, the officer will write your visa classification (make sure it matches your visa!) and “D/S,” meaning “duration of status.” If all this happens, you have made a successful entry.

What is “secondary inspection”?
If the officer cannot quickly verify your information and identity, you may be asked to go to another interview area where an inspector can further research your records and verify your information. If the officer says you are missing an important document but thinks you are probably eligible to enter, you will receive a form I-515A which means that you have been granted temporary (usually 30-day) admission, and you have to solve the problem at the local immigration office (Albuquerque) in order to get admitted for your full study program.

What is US-VISIT?
It’s a biometric identification system that is now operational at most ports of entry. You will be asked to scan your two index fingers and smile for the camera. It takes only a few seconds.

After passing through inspection, what next?
Arrive at New Mexico Tech, report to International Programs/Student Affairs, and register for classes. Your SEVIS record will be validated, showing that you have reported to the school and are engaged in the appropriate activity.