Welcome, new Nelson Institute graduate students!!

Welcome to the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies (aka, Nelson Institute)!
We are your student reps, here to assist and represent you! We help new and prospective students with their decision-making and transitions, and provide student input to Nelson Institute faculty and staff. We know how overwhelming it can be to begin a new program in a new city, and we have put together some information that will help smooth the way for you. These are the nitty-gritty details and the inside scoop, things it took us a while to figure out, that we wish we’d known ahead of time. We encourage you to call us with any questions not answered here. We’re looking forward to meeting you!

DON'T MISS THESE EVENTS!

New Graduate Student Welcome: Wednesday, August 28th starting at 11:30am, Union South. This is an opportunity to meet Graduate School faculty and staff, as well as an opportunity to have current students answer any questions you might have. You can visit displays and presentations about campus services, extracurricular activities, and local groups of interest to students as well as obtain valuable goodies like bike maps of Madison and free flashing bike lights! More information on this can be found at http://www.grad.wisc.edu/education/gradstdntlife/welcome.html.

Fall 2013 Nelson Institute New Student Orientation: Thursday, August 29th, 1:30pm, Room 180 Science Hall. This orientation will give you an introduction to the Nelson Institute, and it is a great opportunity to meet other new environmental studies students, continuing students, faculty and staff.

Fall 2013 Nelson Institute New Student Picnic Thursday, August 29th, 4:00pm, Room 15 Science Hall. Come meet and socialize with other new students, continuing students, and some fun-loving faculty and staff in an informal environment. Enjoy great food including veggie burgers, burgers, and, of course, the finest Wisconsin brats.

This packet is organized into eight main sections addressing the major categories of questions that you probably have. They are:

1. Things To Do Before You Arrive in Madison
2. Academic Info
3. Funding Info
4. Campus Info
5. Housing Info
6. Madison Info
7. Important Places to Visit When You Get to Madison
8. Resources for Information

THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU ARRIVE IN MADISON

1. Sign up on the My UW system so that the university administration has your correct mailing address, phone number, and email (for many important purposes). To access My UW, go to http://my.wisc.edu/portal/. You’ll need to activate your NetID which you can do online at this same web site. You’ll need your UW-Madison student ID number to complete this process.
2. Activate your NetID.

3. Enroll for classes (see the “Academic Info” section for details).

4. Look for housing (see the “Housing Info” section for details).

5. Look for jobs or funding (see the “Funding Info” section for details).

6. Sign up for list servers. You can sign up for ESSA, the student-run e-mail forum for social/political/environmental information, by going to http://www.nelson.wisc.edu/education/essa.php and following the instructions provided. ESSA is an acronym for Environmental Studies Student Association. If you have problems subscribing to ESSA, please contact the list manager at owner-essa@lists.wisc.edu.

ACADEMIC INFO

1. Enrolling for classes—You will want to enroll as soon as possible because new students are the last students to sign up, and classes close quickly (you will be able to enroll beginning Monday, July 8th). If you don’t get into the classes you want, you can change your choices during the first week of classes. Sit in on as many classes as possible, and speak with professors even if their course is listed as “full.” Spaces often open up at the last minute. Pre-enrollment is always the safest option. To enroll, follow the instructions in the email from the Registrar’s Office notifying you with an invitation to enroll (you will probably receive this message in late June).

2. Choosing classes—To choose your classes, refer to the University Timetable, (available online at http://registrar.wisc.edu/schedule_of_classes.htm), and any course lists provided by your program. If you would like additional information once you arrive on campus, don’t hesitate to ask the students! Your classmates are your best resource for advice and are always happy to help.

3. Environmental Studies Orientation Field Trip and Seminar—We highly recommend that you enroll for ENVIR ST 901. This class (one or two credits) is a great way to get to know other new students and find out about what Nelson Institute professors are teaching and researching. The greatest value from this class is that you will really get to know a good chunk of the students in your cohort. Many a seminar this past year ended with a beer at the Memorial Union. If you intend to do just the weekly Wednesday night seminar or just the 3-day weekend field trip, then enroll for one credit of 901. If you intend to partake in both the seminar and field trip, enroll for two credits! As a side note, many departments offer weekly seminars, brown bags, forums, colloquia, etc on environmental- and related-topics, some of them for academic credit. Check in with your advisor and current students once you arrive on campus to find out more about some of these opportunities.

4. Advisors and committees—Every program requires an Advisor, as well as a Committee—but don’t panic if you don’t have an advisor yet. Most WRM students arrive without an advisor, and many CBSD and ER students don’t have a clear research topic defined. Your first semester is a great time to meet with a lot of professors and focus your interests. When you get to Madison, you can talk to students, faculty and Nelson Institute staff about the logistics of this process.

5. Space and keys—Locker space in Science Hall is provided on a first-come, first-served basis and priority will be given to those students whose advisors have not provided office space for them. Stop by Room 70 to see Tara Mohan about lockers and keys/codes to the student commons area (Room 15 Science Hall) and the outside door of Science Hall (for night and weekend access).

6. Libraries—As you might expect, UW-Madison has many libraries on campus. A list can be found at http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries. Library Tours are offered at the beginning of the semester and can be quite helpful. Check out schedules for these, especially in Steenbock (the big agricultural/natural sciences library) and Memorial Library (the main social science/humanities library). Many libraries also offer workshops on conducting searches and using library resources. Check out each library’s schedule on the above website.
FUNDING INFO

1. Assistantships and internships—All Teaching Assistant (TA), Research Assistant (RA), or Project Assistant (PA) appointments of at least 33.3% time over an entire semester qualify you for Full Tuition Remission. These positions also have a monthly stipend and benefits, although you are still responsible for the segregated fees. To find out about these types of positions, contact Jim Miller (jemiller@wisc.edu). Also pay attention to the UW-Madison Student Job Center web site (http://jobcenter.wisc.edu/)

CAMPUS INFO

1. Getting around—The campus is big, so the first thing you’ll probably want to do is get a map to familiarize yourself with its expanse. Maps are available at the Red Gym (716 Langdon St, next to the Memorial Union), the Campus Welcome Center (21 N Park St), or the Campus and Community Information Welcome Desk (Union South). There is also an interactive online campus map available at http://map.wisc.edu/. Also, it’s not a bad idea to take a tour of the campus. Check out http://www.vip.wisc.edu/tours.html for more details and to schedule a tour.

You will also probably want to bring a bike as the campus is spread out and fairly flat. Parking on or near campus is often close to impossible and expensive. State St (runs from the Capitol to the campus) is for buses and bikes only, and there are one-way bike lanes on University Ave and other large streets. Vehicle traffic laws are enforced for bikes, so don’t get a ticket because you blew a stop sign on your bike! You also are technically required to register your bike (https://www.cityofmadison.com/bikeMadison/programs/registration.cfm). Many people don’t bother, but if you do get pulled over on your bike your ticket gets a little bit bigger.

Buses are also a convenient (and free) way to get around campus and have racks to store your bike on those days that the rain doesn’t come until after you got to campus. Bus route information can be obtained when you pick up your free bus pass (details in the “Important Places to Visit When You Get to Madison” section) or by visiting http://www.cityofmadison.com/metro/. Use of the Madison Metro bus system outside of campus is free with a bus pass (covered by your segregated fees). You can pick up your pass starting approximately August 26th at the StudentPrint office of the University Square building (333 East Campus Mall) http://www.asm.wisc.edu/buspass.html.

2. Science Hall—Science Hall (550 N Park St), a large red brick building across the street from the Memorial Union, is the home of the Nelson Institute. Though your classes will be scattered across campus and your desk space may well be elsewhere, take the time to become familiar with this building because it is full of resources for you. The program staff—who can answer just about any question—is in Room 70. The student commons is located in Room 15. This room contains meeting space, lockers, a refrigerator and a microwave. All students can request a Science Hall mailbox located in the basement hallway. These are very useful for receiving campus mail items or packages, especially if you can't receive packages in absentia at your apartment. However, please do not use your Science Hall mailbox as your primary mailing address. These are just a few of the treasures located in Science Hall. Stop by and say hello!

3. Memorial Union/Union South—the Memorial Union is the social hub of campus. The Union houses numerous campus programs, the Craftshop art studio, a movie theater, an ice cream shop and innumerable meeting rooms. But it is best known as a place to meet with friends and fellow students to eat, socialize, and drink beer. In nice weather the place to be is the Terrace, an extensive outdoor patio that fronts on Lake Mendota, which is equipped with outdoor bars and a brat stand during the summer. When the weather turns nasty, hole up inside at the cozy Rathskell or the best bar on campus (Memorial Union and Union South) listing times and locations for events in the building.

Union South is the other major on-campus socialization spot that just opened in the spring of 2011. The LEED Gold-certified building offers a bowling alley, climbing wall, state-of-the-art movie theater with free films 5 nights a week, a concert venue, and lots of areas for studying or tailgating before fall Badger football games. Get your campus student ID card (Wiscard) there as soon as you can after arriving on campus http://www.wiscard.wisc.edu/. You will need it for nearly
everything you do including gaining access to some libraries and computer labs. Note that there is a lag before your student ID is valid for some purposes (like getting your free bus pass and activating your e-mail account).

**HOUSING INFO**

1. **Where to look**— There are lots of ways to look for housing, and many of them can be done long-distance. However, there is no substitute for seeing a place before you sign a lease. Start your search on the Internet. Try the Visitor & Information Programs web site at [http://housing.civc.wisc.edu/](http://housing.civc.wisc.edu/). They have updated housing listings as well as information about tenants’ rights, university apartments, and finding housing in Madison. You can reach them by phone at 608-263-2400. Classified ads from The Capital Times and Wisconsin State Journal are at [http://homes.lee.net/madison/for-rent/madison-wi-usa](http://homes.lee.net/madison/for-rent/madison-wi-usa). The local independent weekly, The Isthmus (http://www.thedailypage.com), also has listings, and there is always the standby of Craigslist ([http://madison.craigslist.org](http://madison.craigslist.org)). People often times post such information on the ESSA list server as this is a great way to line up housing!

2. **Where to live**—Many graduate students live east of the Capitol in the Williamson (Willy) St area or south of campus in the Vilas Park area, but there are also some that live as far away from campus as Middleton. Leases are almost all 12 months long. The louder areas of town are on and near W Washington Ave, Langdon St and State St. Most leases begin on August 15th, and because it’s a university town, people tend to sign several months ahead of time. You will likely be able to find a place quickly if you contact someone who just graduated and sublet from them. As stated previously, many environmental studies students post their sublets on ESSA!

3. **Utilities**—Some apartments in Madison rent with utilities included in the rent payment, and others require the tenant to pay for utilities. To make it more confusing, some include partial utilities but don’t include, for example, electric or hot water. The take-home message is **read a lease carefully before you sign**. This is particularly important relating to heat. If you’re not from the frozen north, heating bills are going to shock you. They can be as much as $50/winter month/person, or even more depending on the place. A lot of the housing in Madison is beautiful, but the older buildings can have leaky windows. Be sure to factor this in when calculating rent. It is easier, and often cheaper, if you find an apartment with heat included. Also, you might have to contact Madison Gas & Electric (MG&E) to get your electricity and gas turned on. This is generally as easy as making a phone call or submitting a request online ([https://www.mge.com/my_mge/serviceforms/index.htm](https://www.mge.com/my_mge/serviceforms/index.htm)). For phone and Internet service there are a few options, so you probably want to do a little research to see what’s best for you. AT&T serves landlines in Madison ([http://www.att.com](http://www.att.com)) and has many bundling options to combine Internet, landline, cell and cable as well. For wireless Internet access there is also Mad City Broadband, a network that you can access almost anywhere throughout the city for a monthly fee ([http://www.madcitybroadband.com/](http://www.madcitybroadband.com/) or [http://www.merr.com](http://www.merr.com)). However, this access is slow, and there is free Internet in most cafes throughout the city, plus wireless access in all UW campus buildings.

4. **Parking**—If you’re going to bring your car, try to get off-street parking included in your housing lease. Otherwise, you’ll have to move your vehicle every one or two days in some parts of the city unless you live on the Isthmus (once or twice a week there). You will also have to get a parking permit from the City of Madison Parking Utility, which is located at 215 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, if your neighborhood requires this. For example, the Williamson “Willy” St neighborhood doesn’t. For those that do require one, you will need to bring a copy of your lease along with your driver’s license and vehicle registration. The permit is $21. For more information, call 267-1104 or get on-line at [http://www.cityofmadison.com/parkingutility/permits/residential.cfm](http://www.cityofmadison.com/parkingutility/permits/residential.cfm). Off-street parking may cost you a little extra on your lease, but depending on the parking situation on your street, it may be worthwhile for the hassle it saves you!

**MADISON INFO**

1. **How to get here**—Transportation is easy from the **Chicago O’Hare Airport** to Madison via Van Galder Buslines, [http://www.coachusa.com/vangalder/](http://www.coachusa.com/vangalder/), 1-800-747-0994, for $29 one way (over 10 trips a day, 3.5 hour trip). UW-Madison students, Memorial Union members, Edgewood College students, MATC students, & WESLI students with a valid ID, may purchase $44 round-trip tickets ONLY to O’Hare and downtown Chicago at Essentials, Memorial Union (608) 265-3000. The Van Galder also offers 8 daily trips (4.5 hour trip) from **Chicago’s Midway Airport** to Madison for $31 one-way. If you fly in to **Milwaukee’s Mitchell Airport**, Badger Bus Lines, [http://www.badgerbus.com](http://www.badgerbus.com), 1-877-292-8259, offers up to
7 trips a day (2.25 hour trip) for $22 one-way ($21 if booked online). The Amtrak train stops about 20 miles from Madison in Columbus, WI. It also goes through Chicago, and bus service (Van Galder) runs daily from the Amtrak station in Chicago to Madison.

2. How to get a bank account—Most students have accounts through the UW Credit Union (http://www.uwcu.org/), which is open to all students, faculty and spouses in the entire UW system. It is a credit union, which is a little different from a bank, but suits most students’ needs perfectly. You can open an account online, or in person at any branch. There are many other banks in Madison as well: Chase Bank, M&I Bank, US Bank and Associated Bank are just a few of the options available.

3. How to buy groceries here—Check out the many Food Cooperatives in town including Willy St and Regent St. These places sell organic produce and natural foods and groceries. Plenty of other grocery stores are located around town as well: Copps, Sentry, and Fresh Madison Market to name a few. Woodman’s is the place for “cheap” groceries (i.e. no-thrills, very-warehouse-like atmosphere), but it also has a substantial organic/natural food section. Also, visit the local farmers' markets when the weather is nice. On Saturday mornings the whole town turns out for the famous market at the Capitol Square (check it out at http://dcfm.org/). Another option is CSAs, Community Supported Agriculture. These programs vary depending on the producer, but you can get some general information on the FairShare CSA Coalition web site (http://www.csacoalition.org/).

4. How to have fun here—Madison consistently receives high ratings for quality of life, and it’s easy to see why. Located between four lakes, with a vibrant political scene, a thriving arts community, and of course, a world-class university, Madison is a little city with a lot going on. Whether your passion is windsurfing, pottery, salsa dancing or eating authentic ethnic food, you’ll find plenty to do here. A great way to start learning your way around is to check out the previously-mentioned The Isthmus, the local independent weekly paper (http://www.thedailypage.com), and their famous Annual Manual. This is a guide, with ratings, to just about any place where you might want to eat, drink, dance, shop, hike, etc. The paper version comes out in August, so pick up a copy when you get here!

**IMPORTANT PLACES TO VISIT WHEN YOU GET TO MADISON**

1. Nelson Institute Academic Programs Office—Room 70 Science Hall. Stop in to say hello to the staff! They are very helpful in answering questions you may have. You can get your key to the student commons and find where your mailbox will be.

2. University Square—You need to pay your tuition in full shortly after arriving at UW-Madison. See http://registrar.wisc.edu/fall_deadlines_at_a_glance.htm for a key deadlines schedule. You have the option to pay your tuition at University Square (333 East Campus Mall) in person, although many students pay their tuition online through My UW. Sign into My UW (http://my.wisc.edu) and click on the link to the Student Center. (Remember that to sign into My UW you have to activate your NetID!) There is a section labeled “Finances” with a link to “Tuition Account Summary”. Click on that and follow the directions to pay. Note that the payment requires you to enter an account and routing number, so have those on hand. If you want to reduce the amount of junk mail you receive, click on “Privacy” in the “Personal Information” section of the Student Center homepage, and then click on the tab “restrict third-party mail”. Make sure to save your changes! As a side note, you can also contact the Wisconsin Department of Motor Vehicles to remove your name from lists they sell to companies, assuming you get licensed in the state of Wisconsin. You can also get your free bus pass here http://www.asm.wisc.edu/buspass.html.

3. Memorial Union—You can take a break and get an ice cream cone or a beer and relax on the Terrace! What more do you need? As previously stated, you can get your campus student ID card (Wiscard) at the new Union South as soon as you can after arriving on campus http://www.wiscard.wisc.edu/. You will need it for nearly everything you do including gaining access to some libraries and computer labs. Note that there is a lag before your student ID is valid for some purposes (like getting your free bus pass and activating your e-mail account).
RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION:

- Again, the staff in the Nelson Institute Academic Programs Office in the basement of Science Hall (Room 70) is very helpful and friendly! They should be your first resource for any questions or problems.

- Feel free to speak with, call, or e-mail your Student Reps. We want to help! We can answer questions about requirements, courses, extracurriculars, etc—and if we don’t know the answer, we will try to connect you with someone who does. Please don’t hesitate to contact a student rep from outside your program (rep list available at http://www.nelson.wisc.edu/education/reps.php).

- Visit the University of Wisconsin-Madison Website (http://www.wisc.edu) and the Nelson Institute homepage (http://www.nelson.wisc.edu) for lots of good information about the university and the environmental studies programs.

- The Campus and Community Information Welcome Desk at Union South is the home for everything related to helping new students, including maps (campus map, bus maps) and general information. Madison city maps can be bought at the University Bookstore http://www.uwbookstore.com/home.aspx. Bike route maps are handy and can be picked up at any bike shop.

- You can look up contact information for students, faculty, and staff (phone number, e-mail, and street address) at http://www.wisc.edu/wiscinfo/directories/ on the Internet, or you can call Campus Directory Assistance at (608) 262-1234.

- If you’re an International Student, make sure to attend any International student orientation seminars. You will get important visa, travel, and work information here. Visit the International Student Services Office located in Room 217 of the Red Gym on Langdon St http://iss.wisc.edu/.

Good luck settling in, and welcome to the Nelson Institute! Give us a call if we can help in your transition!