

Dekaban Program Fellowships

Frequently Asked Questions (May 28, 2024)

Q1: How can I find an apartment to rent in Ann Arbor?

Ann Arbor is a university town, and it offers a large number of rental properties/apartments for students and visitors. You can find these using the Google search engine (for example, by typing ‘apartments for rent in Ann Arbor, Michigan’). You need to be prepared to pay a security deposit on the apartment when you sign the lease, whether on-line or in-person. This deposit will be returned to you upon vacating the property, provided no damage occurred to the property during your stay there. You will find both furnished (with furniture) and unfurnished apartments. You may need to look into furnished apartments, which are more expensive to rent; otherwise, you will need to rent or purchase furniture. The rent payment is usually due at the beginning of each month.

The Dekaban Fund does not endorse any rental property over another. However, U-M runs an online service with housing rental adverts: <https://offcampushousing.umich.edu/housing>

Q2: What is the monthly fellowship compensation and when do I get the first monthly payment?

The monthly 2024-25 fellowship is set for \$4,900 (\$58,800 for 12 months). The payment will be transferred to your bank account, which you will have to open in a U.S. bank after arrival in Michigan. The first payment will be transferred to your bank account at the end of the first month (i.e., end of October 2024, if you arrive by October 1, 2024), and at the end of each month thereafter. The University will not transfer any payments to a Polish or a European bank, except for the last payment, which can be transferred abroad upon request. You need to have sufficient funds for paying all your expenses in the first month, as your first fellowship payment will be deposited in your account at the end of the first month.

Q3: When do I start paying for my health insurance?

You will be automatically signed up to a graduate student health care insurance before your arrival in Michigan. Once you arrive in Ann Arbor, you will be eligible to switch to a regular faculty insurance policy (you will have about a one-month window to change your insurance policy). The price is dependent on the choice of insurance; the Dekaban Fund will pay for part of the cost (typically about 2/3), and the rest will be deducted automatically from your fellowship. The health insurance is mandatory, and it will include your dependents should you come with your family. You will be eligible for the same insurance as regular faculty at the University of Michigan. The monthly insurance premium is charged for the period of an entire month, regardless of the start date.

Q4: Will I pay taxes in the U.S?

It is your responsibility to research your options regarding paying taxes in the U.S. or in Poland, and inform the financial services at the University of Michigan of your choice.

Q5: How do I get a U.S. visa to be eligible to work at the University of Michigan?

Should you win the fellowship competition, you will be asked to fill out a visa form sent to you by the International Center at the University of Michigan. The International Center will need a copy of the main page of your passport to process the paperwork. If you plan to bring your family with you, copies of your family members' passports will also be needed. You will later receive the visa paperwork delivered to you by a courier service (the International Center will need your correspondence address and your telephone number), and you will go with this paperwork to the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw to claim your visa (and visas for your family members if they are coming with you).

Q6: Can I take time off during my fellowship?

Typically, the intensity of work slows down during the holiday season in December, but this is a busy travel period, not recommended for visiting other parts of the country. You can take two weeks off in late spring or summer in consultation with your advisor. Make your travel plans ahead of time; some of the National Parks, e.g., Yellowstone, can get very busy in spring and summer.

Q7: What is the closest major airport to Ann Arbor and when do I get reimbursed for my travel from Warsaw to Ann Arbor?

The closest international airport is Detroit Metro Airport (DTW), about 25 miles from Ann Arbor, which is a hub of Delta Air Lines. An easy connection is by KLM and/or Delta with a connecting flight from Amsterdam. You will be reimbursed for your round-trip airfare after presenting an appropriate receipt/invoice (showing your name and the form of payment), and the reimbursement will be transferred to your U.S. bank account after it is processed. The reimbursement will be processed for the Dekaban Fellow, not for the members of the family.

Q8: Do I need to own a car while in Ann Arbor?

Ann Arbor has a public bus system of transportation and the University has a fleet of M-buses that can take you from North Campus, where the College of Engineering is located, to downtown and Central Campus, and vice versa. M-Buses are free, and the city buses will be free for you after you receive the UM identification Yellow Card (they will not be free for the members of your family). Most Dekaban Fellows purchased a vehicle while in Michigan, particularly those who brought their families with them. Ownership of a car makes it more convenient, and gives additional options for visiting the country. You do not need to have Michigan driver's license to purchase and register a car.

Q9: Do I need to obtain a Michigan driver's license?

It is not necessary to have a Michigan driver's license as long as you have your Polish license and an international driver's permit (IDP) obtained in Poland (serving as a translation of your Polish document). However, keep in mind that IDP is issued for twelve months, so it will likely expire before the end of your stay in the U.S.

According to state law, if you rent an apartment and pay bills (e.g., energy), you are eligible to apply for a Michigan driver's license. You would have to take a driving knowledge test (typically computer-based) and a road driving test. Having a Michigan driver's license is convenient, as it serves as a government-issued identification document in Michigan and all other states.

Regardless of the option you choose, it is good to familiarize yourself with Michigan's traffic laws by reading the booklet "What every driver must know:"

<https://www.michigan.gov/sos/Resources/Forms/what-every-driver-must-know>

Q10: What are the childcare and schooling options in Ann Arbor?

Children are eligible for free education in public schools once they are five or six years old. Those who turn five in July or later are eligible to join Young Fives (a pre-kindergarten group at public schools). Public schools in Ann Arbor are considered to be some of the best in Michigan.

Preschools and daycares are not free. Even in preschools run by the Ann Arbor Public School district, tuition is charged. Usually, to join a preschool, you need to wait and enroll on a waiting list first.

Additional resources:

An excellent source of information about living in Ann Arbor can be found at:

<https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/life>