Dear New Students,

I, on behalf of Rice Chinese Students and Scholars Club (RCSSC), sincerely welcome you to our Rice University Chinese students and scholars family. RCSSC is a students and scholars organization for all Chinese undergraduates, graduates and scholars who are currently enrolled in Rice University. Up to now, there are more than 900 Chinese students and scholars, which is about 10% of the student population, as well as the largest international student community at Rice. The mission of RCSSC is to promote the communication among the Chinese students and scholars, to enrich the school lives of the community members and to promote the Chinese culture to the Rice community.

Providing warmest care and help to new students has been our tradition ever since RCSSC was founded. This year, we still have various programs to help our new members to get used to new life in Houston, including airport pickup, welcome mixer and other panels delivered by upperclassmen. You can reach RCSSC at our official website: http://rcssc.rice.edu/

Or interact with us via following social network websites:
RCSSC renren: http://page.renren.com/600836867
RCSSC weibo: http://www.weibo.com/riceuniversity
Mailing List (rice e-mail registration required): https://mailman.rice.edu/mailman/listinfo/rcsc
RCSSC facebook: http://www.facebook.com/groups/rcssc/
RCSSC QQ 2014 group: 250048071

Also, here are some important tips concluded by upperclassmen. Hope these can be helpful to your preparation for this exciting new life at Rice University!

1. Check your information on all your documents, including your I-20, DS-160 for undergraduates, DS-2019 for graduates. If there is any question or mistake on any forms, feel free to contact your department or OISS as early as possible to make sure you can successfully pass the custom.

2. VISA and Flight information.
You can find a lot of VISA tips at BBS in China under ‘overseas’ and ‘VISA’ topics. Meanwhile you are waiting for your visa to be approved, you can find friends via QQ group to book tickets and fly to Houston together. Flying with a group of people is much safer and convenient for us to pick you up. This year, for any airport pick up information, please contact: rcssc@rice.edu

3. Housing.
   a) Undergraduates
All undergraduates in their first year at Rice(including freshmen and transfers) are recommended to live on campus. It is better for you to get along with college friends and used to cultural differences. But during summer time, residential dorms are closed until several days before IPrep(International students preparation day). So please check academic calendar on Rice official website for the date when dorms will open. It is better to book your arrival flight date after that day. If you have to arrive earlier, please make sure you book your hotel or any temporary place to reside (please feel free to contact your upperclassman for
any help. They are more than willing to!)

b) Graduates

Rice Graduate Apartments (RGA) is the first to recommend. The community is safe, close to Rice, 5 to 10 min walking distance to most classrooms and departments. It is very convenient if you are not planning to get a car. Detailed application process of RGA will be sent via email. You can also email your department secretary or OISS staffs for further information. Deposit is required for applying RGA. It can be paid via wire transfer from Bank of China or China CITIC Bank. Or you can ask department secretary as your temporary guarantor and pay your deposit after August when you arrive. Also, please especially double check application deadlines.

Second choice is Rice Village Apartments (RVA), a little bit farther to Engineering buildings than RGA. Application process is similar to RGA's. Don't forget to check your email frequently to get the most updated information.

4. Medical Insurance

Students are required to buy medical insurance in order to be successfully registered. The insurance company can be the one recommended by Rice or any other medical insurance companies. Rice University also requires students to mail their health examination and vaccination test result to Rice medical department before deadline. Note that, for all tests to be done, it requires about a month. So please arrange your time in advance. More detailed information and requirements will be sent out by university email.

The tips mentioned above are the most basic and important preparations. After that, here are some more useful tips to live a better life in Houston!

1. Prepare for a hot hot summer in Houston!

Houston has super long summer, from end of April to end of October, with high temperature, strong sunshine, and great humidity. Plenty T-shirts are must-haves. Some sweaters and wind coat are enough for the coldest weather in January and February (mostly above 0 degree Celsius). Although it is hot outside, indoor can be cool due to strong air-conditioning, so long sleeve jeans and pants are also needed.

2. Chinatown

Houston has the largest Chinatown in southern US. You can buy almost every spices, sauce and food at Chinatown. If you are planning to bring food to Houston, please keep in mind that do not bring any fresh food, or any kinds of pork and beef. The highest fine can be up to 250 dollars.

3. Others

   a) Textbooks

      Textbooks are much expensive in US. You can check your course textbook online and buy them in China in advance.

   b) Don't bring any pirate CD, movies, DVD and softwares.

   c) Umbrellas, small gifts, haircut tools, medicines are welcomed.

   d) Cooking and driving skills are highly recommended!

In order to help you to have a better preparation of studying abroad, RCSSC will hold meet-ups in China. You will have chance to face to face talk to upperclassmen at the time. We will announce
the detailed date and time via RCSSC website, weibo, renren, qq group and mailist. Also, rice will have official reception in China this summer. Don't forget to check your email for more information!

See you in August, right here in Houston!

Linyuan Xin
President, Rice Chinese Students and Scholars Club