Cellphone Information

If you would like to get a US phone here is some information for you.

There are two major types of cell phone plans available in the U.S.: contract and pre-paid. There are different prices and rules for each of the two types of plans.

Contract Phone Plans

- Most cell phone companies offer two-year contract plans which allow you to get a cellphone and a voice/data plan at an affordable price.
- If you don't have a US Social Security Number, expect to pay a deposit (the deposit should be returned at the end of the contract). Some providers have become friendlier toward international customers recently. T-Mobile, for example, allows F-1 student visa holders to get contract phones with lower deposits.
- Text messaging (SMS) typically carries an additional charge if not included in a plan. Ask about adding texting to your plan.
- For most companies, you must have a compatible phone. Ask specifically if you want to use one you currently have.
- If you break the contract, be expected to pay a somewhat expensive penalty fee which is usually calculated based on how long you've had the phone into the contract.

Pre-Paid Plans

- If you intend to make calls to your home country, ensure this is possible with your specific plan.
- May be month-to-month subscriptions or "add minutes as you go."
- No deposit required.
- Cheaper phones– generally basic features such as SMS and calling.
- Cost ranges from minimal to comparable to contract services.

Cellphone retailers near IEC@OCC

Verizon Wireless: Verizon cannot offer SIM cards for phones outside of the USA. Most phone contracts with them offer you the ability to pay for the phone in installments as part of your monthly contract. They do however, have plans that specifically cater to international students. You can find more information at this website: http://www.verizonwireless.com/landingpages/international-student/

AT&T: AT&T will be able to offer you a SIM with an American phone number if your phone is unlocked and operates on a CDMA network from your home country. If your phone is not unlocked there are a few more options for you, but it's best that you go in and talk to one of the representatives at the store.

T-Mobile:

T-Mobile is the friendliest U.S. cellphone provider for international students. Most international students are able to find appropriate and affordable cellphone plans through T-Mobile.

Remember to bring your passport and I-20 when you go to the store!