

Welcome to Rutgers! Congratulations on getting accepted into the Graduate Program in Oceanography. Here is a guide put together by other graduate students to help you in your transition into the university.

A note before you continue: This was updated in September 2024, so things may have changed. Rutgers is a big University with a lot of websites. If you have any questions, always feel free to ask grad students or your advisor!

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After you are all settled, if you feel there is anything missing from this guide, please let the grad students know! We are always looking to add/improve!

1. Where is DMCS?

The Department of Marine and Coastal Studies (DMCS) is under the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS) in the School of Graduate Studies (SGS). DMCS is home to the Graduate Program in Oceanography (GPO), the Operational Oceanography Master's Program (MOO), as well as other undergraduate degree programs.

DMCS is located at 71 Dudley Road New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8520 on the Cook Campus.

Department Website: <https://marine.rutgers.edu/>

Once you are here, the Program Director will reach out and schedule an orientation where you will meet the support team and learn a little more about the Department. There are some common spaces, like the mezzanine and courtyard where you may find people eating lunch or chatting. There is also a fridge and microwave in the mezzanine for everyone to use.

2. Finding a place to live in NJ

Highland Park (right across the river from New Brunswick) is a popular place for grad students to live. It is easy to get to downtown New Brunswick, the train station, campus, etc. from Highland Park via car, walking, and bike. Housing ranges from apartment complexes to private rentals.

Other areas include North Brunswick, New Brunswick, Piscataway, and Somerset. These are all roughly 10-20 minutes away from the DMCS building. Rutgers also offers on campus graduate student housing. This could be a convenient, move-in ready option; however, most of our students opt to live off campus.

Useful websites:

Rutgers has a website that provides resources for students who are living in the off-campus community!

The Rutgers off-campus housing website:

<http://ruoffcampus.rutgers.edu/index.php?HousingSearch=1>

Rutgers partners with a site called Places4Students where landlords can post their rentals that are specifically tailored towards students. You can also look at roommate profiles!

Places4students.com

Other useful websites to look through include Zillow, Apartments.com, Rent.com, etc. Sometimes you can find places on Facebook Marketplace or Craigslist. There is also Rutgers (RU) Housing, Sublets, & Roommates (New Brunswick Campus) Facebook group that has listings. This is **not** affiliated with Rutgers University.

As always, be sure *to be careful of scammers*. Given that there is a large population of college students, scams are imminent. Here is a useful article about Rental Scams: <https://www.avail.co/education/guides/a-tenants-guide-to-finding-an-apartment/how-to-spot-a-rental-scam>

Other Resources:

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) Market is a university-wide mailing list where people post about housing as well as selling and searching for various items. When you sign up, check the box that groups listings into daily emails to minimize the spamming.

https://email.rutgers.edu/mailman/listinfo/gsa_market

Here is an ongoing list of useful questions to ask landlords when renting:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/11eO5IsQtwDtc5N-2I2Zw56OfQ5SryukXY5Y5N8u3oXg/edit?usp=sharing>

On campus Graduate Student housing:

<http://ruoncampus.rutgers.edu/graduate-student-housing/>

This is a link to a bunch of stuff in the New Brunswick Area. We did not create these and don't necessarily check if they are up to date:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1rV5dsdVSQC9prWi6Sf9xaAhQB8enltGo?usp=drive_link

3. NJ Residency

It's *not* 100% necessary, but if you are not already a NJ resident, it could be useful that you change your residency. Before changing your residency, be sure to talk with your advisor about it.

You must be a NJ resident for a year before you will be granted resident status, so it is essential that you change your residency quickly. The best way to "prove" residency is to get a NJ driver's license or other photo identification card and to register to vote in NJ.

All of this can be done at the NJ Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC, aka the DMV). The NJ MVC website describes the evidence you need to collect to prove residency and other procedures involved in relocating to the state:

<https://www.state.nj.us/mvc/drivertopics/movetonj.htm><http://www.state.nj.us/mvc/licenses/>

This has been done via *appointment only*. If you are transferring a license from out of state (i.e. switching from one state to NJ), there are specific MVC offices for this. You can't just book an appointment at any MVC.

Appointments book up quickly, so be sure to check the MVC for more details. The best way to secure an appointment is to check the appointment booking website first thing in the morning. This is when the system refreshes with open slots from cancellations from the day prior, you may be lucky enough to get an appointment this way. If not, you may be waiting for a little bit.

You can file for in-state tuition in your third semester. It can be done a week or two before the end of the semester and applied retroactively to that semester. The application for instate tuition and details on the process are available here on the registrar website:

<https://registrar.rutgers.edu/registrar/>

Direct link to PDF form:

<https://scarlethub.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/ResidencyFillable-11.9.23.pdf>

The application and the documents have to be notarized. This is free if you do it in the Graduate Registrar's office, but you have to make sure the notary is there at the time you want to file your application. Denise Laible-Brucato is a notary in the front office! Ultimately, forms must be delivered to the Administrative Services Building, 65 Davidson Rd, Rms 200 A-L, on Busch campus.

There are a lot of useful graduate student forms here:

<https://grad.rutgers.edu/academics/forms?&location=23>

4. The Support Team at DMCS

The Support Team at DMCS helps us all! They can be found in the front office, or some are upstairs. From payroll, reimbursements, notary services and travel to room access and IT help, they are great people to know!

<https://marine.rutgers.edu/our-team/staff/>

Most of our support team is in Office Suite 104!

There are specifics on how you need to book travel. For more information, reach out to Donna Napoli, Patty Gillen, or Tom Coluccio in the front office. They are more than happy to help. Denise Laible-Brucato is also a notary!

Faculty, Staff and Other Students:

On the DMCS website, you can find the emails of nearly everyone in the department, including other graduate students under the “People” tab.

Graduate Program Director: Dr. Yair Rosenthal (rosenthal@marine.rutgers.edu)

Department Chair: Dr. Oscar Schofield (oscar@marine.rutgers.edu)

5. University Parking Permit

As a TA (teaching assistant) or GA (graduate assistant), you are entitled to a Rutgers Faculty/Staff parking permit that is proportional to your salary. There is a parking lot right across the street from DMCS (Lot 98B).

You must apply for your real parking permit after your first paycheck. As a TA/GA, your parking permit will cost around +/- \$50 each year.

In 2024, Rutgers allowed for temporary permits for TA/GA’s until their first paychecks came in. A lot of times, the TA/GA permit does not appear in the parking portal, so you will need to contact the RU Department of Transportation Services (DOTS) via inquiry form. You just need to say something simple like, “I’m a graduate student on a GA/TA, can you change my status in your system so my parking permit option shows up?”

*Note: sometimes they are difficult to contact so be sure to follow up if you receive no response

Direct Link Parking Portal:

<https://rudots.nupark.com/v2/Portal/Login?ReturnUrl=%2Fv2%2FPortal>

For more information on parking, visit the RU Dept. of Transportation Services website:

<https://ipo.rutgers.edu/dots>

Help Website: <https://DOTSHelp.rutgers.edu>

Help Inquiry Form:

https://dotshelp.rutgers.edu/ru_dots?id=dots_get_help&sys_id=0ac4a5dbdb65fc105a54230bd3961949

6. Rutgers ID Card

Being that TA/GA's are employees and students of Rutgers, you will typically get a Faculty/Staff ID at in-person New Employee Orientation if you are a TA/GA. You can also get a Student ID. Some of the grad students in the department have a faculty/staff ID and others have a student ID. It shouldn't matter which one you get.

Your ID card can be used at the library, the gym, intramural sports, etc. and gives you access to your office and other spaces you need access to at DMCS.

To request an ID, you must first submit a photo of yourself to the online portal. To request an RU ID remotely, you must submit a case with UHR OneSource (Rutgers HR Department) at (732) 745-SERV (7378) or rutgers.service-now.com/hrportal. After you log in, you can go to "Service Catalog→General→Rutgers ID Card Request"

If there are any issues, you can always go to the Administrative Service Building (ASB) II at 57 US Highway 1 New Brunswick, NJ 08901.

For more information about RU ID cards visit here:

Faculty/Staff ID: <https://ipo.rutgers.edu/publicsafety/iam/staff-faculty-guest-id>

Student ID: <https://ipo.rutgers.edu/publicsafety/iam/student-id>

You may get your student ID card one week prior to the start of class at any RUconnection card office with a valid government-issued form of photo ID. These cards are used at the library, the gym, intramural sports, etc. See the "Faculty/Staff ID Card Service Centers" or "Student ID Card Service Centers" at the bottom of the webpages above.

Note: You also will have an RU ID number, which is essentially your student ID number.

7. Building Access

Now that you have your RU ID card, you should talk with your adviser about what offices, lab spaces, storage spaces, etc. you should get access to in the building. Lora McGuinness (mcguinne@marine.rutgers.edu) will issue you access via your RU ID card. She will need your advisor's approval to get access to certain labs. In some cases, she will issue keys and a card for accessing the building after hours with a \$10 cash deposit. We would strongly recommend getting a key for the courtyard in the middle of the building – it's a good place to lock a bike and eat lunch.

Your keycard will also open Rooms 103/ 203 (conference rooms) if you ever need to get in when it is locked.

You can also get a key to your desk so that you can lock the drawers if you wish to leave valuables in them (e.g. purse, laptop, etc.). There have been instances of things being stolen out of open offices in the building, so it is suggested that you do not leave valuables out. To acquire a desk key, tell Lora McGuinness the letters/number on the lock on your desk.

Once you are here, there are some common spaces, like the mezzanine and courtyard where you may find people eating lunch or chatting. There is also a fridge and microwave in the mezzanine for everyone to use.

8. RU ID Number, Net ID, Emails and more!

When you get your university acceptance from Graduate Admissions, they will include steps to creating your NetID (your Rutgers's portal login), and an email address. You also are assigned an RU ID number, which is essentially your student ID number. Try not to make an @scarletmail.rutgers.edu account. Sometimes the onboarding system defaults to making one. DMCS is on the Office365 Rutgers Connect System.

An important distinction: Your RU ID number is considered sensitive information to be kept private. Your netID is not considered sensitive information and is asked for often. [my.Rutgers.edu](https://my.rutgers.edu) is a portal to all things Rutgers. You register for classes, view your tuition bills, submit reimbursement requests, view paychecks, W-2's for taxes, and more in this portal. It's a lot of information all at once and can be overwhelming but take on one section at a time and you can master the myRutgers portal.

At DMCS, you get an email address @marine.rutgers.edu. You should talk to the Graduate Program Director or DMCS tech support about being set up with a DMCS email address. At the same time, ask to be added to the GPO and DMCS email lists and register your computer on the relevant networks (DMCS, Tuckerton, etc.). It will also be a good idea to ask your adviser about what printer to use. There is no uniform procedure throughout the building.

Your @rutgers.edu @marine.rutgers.edu will be connected, Rutgers University will issue you an array of other email addresses that you'll have to keep track of as well. The list of email addresses is in constant flux, but you'll figure it out.

If you made an @scarletmail.rutgers.edu email address please talk to IT as they can force your @rutgers.edu to go to your @marine.rutgers.edu

You can check your DMCS email through the [Office 365 webpage](#) or with Outlook. Checking email with other applications now violates University policy.

DMCS Office 365 Web Application: <https://connect.rutgers.edu>

In order to join the University Wifi, you need to add Rutgers secure network profile to your device. There will be steps on how to do this when you first join the network, but just don't be alarmed when it asks you to download something to your device!

More information about the NetID and RUID can be found here:

<https://scarlethub.rutgers.edu/registrar/personal-information-updates/ruid-information/>

9. University Trainings

There is official university training you have to complete before being allowed to drive university vehicles, conduct lab research, work with animals, etc. You should talk with your adviser, lab manager, and/or Lora McGuinness (mcguinne@marine.rutgers.edu) to identify which training(s) will be relevant to your graduate experience. Resources for a few relevant trainings are listed below:

- Defensive driving: <http://rues.rutgers.edu/defense.shtml>
 - This is now a 6-hour, self-paced online course (January 2024) that can also be used for your car insurance.
- Lab safety: http://rehs.rutgers.edu/rehs_train.html
- IACUC: <https://research.rutgers.edu/animal-care/institutional-animal-care-and-use-committee>
- Human Subjects:
<https://research.rutgers.edu/researcher-support/research-compliance/human-subjects-protection-program-irbs>

You must renew your lab safety training annually. This can be done in person or online. We would recommend doing it online here:

http://rehs.rutgers.edu/online_training/rtk_train/frameru.html

If you do the Defensive Driving course and become certified to drive university vehicles, there are a number of faculty and campus organizations with trucks and vans that can be borrowed for research, teaching, or outreach purposes with gas and mileage charged to a grant. This is often easier/cheaper than renting a vehicle from an outside rental company.

10. Payroll, Direct Deposit, and Tax Forms

The pay period is biweekly with pay day being on Fridays. You can receive your paycheck in a few ways: via direct deposit (most common), via a physical check, or through a debit card. You can enroll in direct deposit on the myRutgers.edu portal.

Your first paycheck will come as a physical check. Be sure to check your paystubs to ensure everything looks correct.

In the myRutgers.edu portal, you can also access your electronic W-2 tax form. If you do not opt in to receive your W-2 electronically, the University will send a paper version to the permanent address they have listed for you.

<https://my.rutgers.edu>

11. Insurance and Benefits

As a TA/GA, you are entitled to Health Benefits through Rutgers, also known as the STATE Health Benefits Plan (SHBP). The insurance rates for SHBP are scaled to your income. You are not required to enroll if you already have health insurance.

There are workshops for SHBP and to teach you how to enroll in SHBP. It is usually held before or soon after the semester starts. You are required to enroll in SHBP in the first 21 days of your new employment (which typically starts from September 1).

For the international students who do not have a Social Security Number (SSN), you need to first apply and get your SSN, and then, you can enroll in the SHBP. Here is information about SSN: <https://global.rutgers.edu/social-security>

Note: this is different from student health insurance, also known as Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP). This health plan is what is offered to students on fellowships (January 2024). The student health insurance is automatically added to your tuition bill. According to Rutgers, if you are enrolled in SHBP, you don't need to complete the waiver, but it doesn't hurt to just waive it.

If you have external Rutgers Health insurance you must be waived *every semester!* **You must waive it every semester or you will be charged each semester.**

You can do this by viewing your tuition bill on the my.Rutgers.edu portal and there should be a link there that leads you to waiving the insurance. This is an example of a charge that the student would be responsible for.

Here is the link to waive *Student Health Insurance Plan*:

<https://www.universityhealthplans.com/>

For employee health benefits, visit this page:

<http://uhr.rutgers.edu/benefits/benefits-overview>

On this page, you'll also find information about other benefits we are eligible for. These include 1) a program which takes money out before taxes to pay for commuting costs if you use public transportation, 2) medical expenses not covered by insurance (like money back for buying glasses), and 3) childcare.

12. Union

Rutgers TA/GA's are unionized under the AAUP-AFT. You can expect to receive emails to a non-university email from the union every so often.

Here is the union website if you are interested in learning more:

<https://rutgersaaup.org/>

13. Tuition Remission

As a fully funded graduate student, you are not responsible for paying your term bill. Eligible TA/GA's will receive remission for tuition, campus, computer, school, new student, and course fees. All other charges are the responsibility of the student.

The student health insurance is automatically added to your tuition bill but must be waived every semester if you already have health insurance! **You must waive it every semester or you will be charged each semester.**

Here is the link to waive *Student Health Insurance Plan*:

<https://www.universityhealthplans.com/>

You can do this by viewing your tuition bill on the my.Rutgers.edu portal and there should be a link there that leads you to waiving the insurance. This is an example of a charge that the student would be responsible for.

A quick note about student loans from previous degrees: Being that you are still enrolled as a student, you can defer loan payments with federal student loans or possibly even your private loan company. There are/may be some forms that you need to fill out and submit to the loan company. Consult with your loan company for further information.

14. General Degree Things

Let's look at what you can kind-of GENERALLY expect in terms of coursework.

This is a rough skeleton of a plan, *everyone's looks different*.

Table 1. Rough skeleton of a generic course schedule for a PhD or MSc in Oceanography graduate student.

Blue color denotes PhD students. Red denotes master's students. Black is for everyone.
Italics indicate core-classes offered.

	Summer	Fall	Spring
Year 1	Register for Classes Handle the admin. stuff Get settled Maybe some research	<i>Physical Oceanography</i> + 6 credits in other classes <i>Biological Oceanography</i> <i>Marine Geology</i> [^]	Misc. Classes <i>Chem. Oceanography</i> Written Pre-Qualifying exam
Year 2	Research/lit dive <you got this> Oral Pre-Qualifying exam	Misc. Classes Oral Pre-Qualifying exam	Misc. Classes Qualifying Exam (Thesis Proposal)?
Year 3	Research Qualifying Exam (Thesis Proposal)?	Misc Classes? Master's Thesis Defense?	
Year 4	Research	Research	
Year 5	Research	PhD Dissertation Defense?	
Year 6	Research	PhD Dissertation Defense?	

[^]Marine Geology is listed under Geological Sciences by the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences

Note this does not include the Operational Master's program

Information about the Masters of Operational Oceanography can be found here:

<https://rucool.marine.rutgers.edu/academics/master-of-operational-oceanography/>

*Another note: at any point after qualifying exam you are able to audit classes that will aid in your research

As you know from the Degree Requirements page, PhD and Master's students are required to take Physical Oceanography plus two other core classes for PhD, or one other for the Masters.

Check out the degree requirements here:

<https://marine.rutgers.edu/academics/graduate/degree-requirements/>

Table 2. General overview of credits needed for PhD and Master's students

	PhD	Masters
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# of Core Classes	Physical Ocean + 2 Cores	Physical Ocean + 1 core
# of Class Credits	30	24
# of Research Credits	42	6
# of Upper Level Undergrad Credits allowed	No more than 12 from undergraduate courses at the 300 or 400 level only 6 of those 12 can be at the 300 level.	No more than 12 from undergraduate courses at the 300 or 400 level only 6 of those 12 can be at the 300 level.

Note this does not include the Operational Master's program

For PhD Students: at the end of your first year you will take your written pre-qualifying exam. At the beginning of your second year, you will take the oral portion of your pre-qualifying exam. Talk with current graduate students about these! They are awesome resources. After that, the next big milestone is your qualifying exam for candidacy (aka your dissertation proposal). Then, after that is your dissertation defense. Here is a link to the School of Graduate Studies Checklist for finishing your PhD: <https://grad.rutgers.edu/academics/graduation/checklist-phd-degree>

15. Registering for Classes

Look up courses here: <http://sis.rutgers.edu/soc/>

Register for courses here: <https://sims.rutgers.edu/webreg/>

DMCS course descriptions are listed here:

<https://marine.rutgers.edu/academics/graduate/course-listing/>

Registering for classes isn't as pressing as it is during undergrad, so don't stress too much about this. It is important to consult with your advisor about what classes are good for you to take and when you should take your research credits.

To be considered full-time, you need to take a minimum 9 credits of courses/research a semester, unless you get approval to do otherwise. TA/GA credits do not count towards this total. For the international student, all F-1 and J-1 students must pursue a full course of study (minimum 9 credits of courses/research) to maintain legal status.

We are allowed to take two high level undergrad courses (300 or 400 level) as well. Dynamics of Marine Ecosystems (11:628:320) is a common undergrad course that many grad students take and is particularly helpful if you don't have a marine science background.

You are also allowed to take courses in other departments (Ecology and Evolution, Atmospheric Science, Geology, Biochemistry, Environmental Science, etc). So make sure

to look at the offerings for those departments too, which can be found on the course look up site listed above.

Rutgers also has an Inter-University Exchange Program that allows PhD students to take courses at other Universities (Princeton, Columbia, StonyBrook,etc) that also participate in the program.

<https://grad.rutgers.edu/academics/inter-university-exchange>

TA/GA and Fellowship Credits

In addition to your classes/research credits, if you are on a TA or GA, you will sign up for 6 TA or GA credits a semester. These credits don't count towards graduation, but are required to maintain status as a TA or GA.

So for a semester you may be registered in 15 credits—9 for classes/research and 6 for TA/GA.

If on a Fellowship, you don't sign up for these types of credits per semester, you will sign up for the graduate fellowship and it will show up on the transcript as zero credits.

Research Credits

Research credits are separate, and you also use Webreg to register for them. They are listed as "Research Oceanography" on Webreg. There is no timeline necessarily on when to take your research credits. Some people register for them in their first year and others wait until their second or third year. The important thing is that you meet the minimum requirements needed for your degree.

It is important to talk with your advisor about registering for research credits as they are something that is catered to you and your research specifically.

Other information

Towards the end of your degree, you may not have a full 9 credits a semester for classes/research to be considered full-time. This could be of concern for students with visas, students buying discounted NJ Transit tickets, or students deferring student loans. These situations could require forms that need to be signed by the graduate program director. Again, it is important to consult with your advisor about classes and research credits!

Main Theme: Consult with your advisor about registering for classes and research credits. It's all a case-by-case, student-specific basis. Everyone's path to finishing their degree is different.

16. Business Cards

If you are interested in getting business cards to distribute at conferences, meetings, etc., talk to the front office staff or order them through this website:

<https://secure.duplionline.com/jDOL/servlet/login>

Login into the website with “rutstu” in all three boxes and design your formal Rutgers / DMCS business card!

17. Travel Awards/Funding opportunities

Rutgers School of Graduate Studies has a webpage where you can search for funding opportunities.

<https://gradfund.rutgers.edu/>

The Graduate School offers funding to travel to conferences across the country. To request funding, you can apply here:

<https://grad.rutgers.edu/funding/conference-travel-funding>

Additionally, be sure to keep an eye on your email because different opportunities are constantly shared amongst the department.

DMCS will cover some of the cost of travel. For more information, be sure to talk with your advisor and/or the Graduate Program Director.

There are specifics on how you need to book travel. For more information, reach out to Donna Napoli, Patty Gillen, or Tom Coluccio in the front office. They are more than happy to help.

18. Library Resources

The Rutgers library system is a wonderful resource:

<http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/>

The library offers a variety of courses which you might find to be useful supplements to your other courses, like programming courses. A calendar list of supplemental courses can be found here:

<https://libcal.rutgers.edu/calendar/nblworkshops?cid=4537&t=d&d=0000-00-00&cal=4537&inc=0>

Courses on R, SAS, SPSS, and Stata programming:

<https://libguides.rutgers.edu/c.php?g=336179&p=2265207>

If the Rutgers' library does not have access to a book, book chapter, or article that you need, you can file a request for those materials online. They will provide the journal article or book chapter within 24-hours. It's actually amazing:

<https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/find-access-and-request-library-materials/interlibrary-loan-borrow-other-libraries>

Books will be delivered to the library of your choice for pickup.

19. Mental Health Resources

Rutgers University has mental health resources. Grad school can get stressful, so it's important to take care of our mental health too!

Check them out here:

<http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>

20. Student Legal Services

Rutgers University has free student legal services. They handle a wide range of things, like landlord/tenant issues

Check them out here: <https://rusls.rutgers.edu/>

21. Getting Involved

An important part of grad school, aside from your research, is maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Getting involved in different activities is a great way to get your mind off stress.

Great ways to start getting involved (click to learn more):

- [Join the Oceanography Graduate Student Organization!](#)
- [Look through the Graduate Student Association Website for other clubs and organizations!](#)
 - o Alternatively, check out the Rutgers getInvolved website that has all of the undergraduate and graduate organizations on campus
<https://rutgers.campuslabs.com/engage/>

Many of us grad students like to run, hike, climb, swim, ski/snowboard, kayak, fish, play board games, visit NYC or Philadelphia, and more. Don't be afraid to ask!

22. Recreation

There are gyms and recreation facilities on each of the Rutgers' campuses. There are pools, weight and equipment rooms, racquetball courts, etc. As a Grad Student you have free access to the gyms with your ID card.

<http://recreation.rutgers.edu/>

There are also many fitness classes and recreational offerings for an additional cost.

<http://recreation.rutgers.edu/fitness-wellness/>

Many intramural sports take place each semester and grad students are allowed to play. In the past we have had a soccer team, and some of us play softball. Check out the leagues and organize a team if you want!

<http://recreation.rutgers.edu/sports/intramurals/>

Learn to partake in Outdoor Adventure with the Go Outdoors program! Guided trips are available here: <http://recreation.rutgers.edu/adventurerec/outdoor-classes/>

After you are all settled, if you feel there is anything missing from this guide, please let the grad students know! We are always looking to add/improve!