

# Marine Science Institute

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

## Handbook

For

# New Graduate Students

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New Graduate Students,

Welcome to The University of Texas Marine Science Institute (UTMSI). Myself and the other graduate student members of the UTMSI Graduate Student Association (GSA), are excited to have you join our community and look forward to making sure that your stay at UTMSI is both productive and rewarding. The GSA is here to serve your needs, and you should feel free to contact us at any time during your time at UTMSI. We are pleased to provide you with this short Handbook for New Graduate Students. In it you will find vital information about UTMSI, the City of Port Aransas, and the local region. We hope that you will find the enclosed information useful, and we welcome your suggestions for enhancing future editions of the handbook.

This short handbook is meant to supplement the information that can be found in the *MSI New Employee Handbook*, The UTMSI webpage, and The GSA webpage.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact the current President of the GSA.

## **University Housing:**

UTMSI operates two housing complexes with the goal of providing high quality, affordable, partially furnished housing to students, postdoctoral fellows, visiting scientists, and UTMSI guests.

1. The Beach Street Apartments located at 1806 Beach Street, Port Aransas, TX
2. The Wilson Cottages located at East Cotter and Tarrant Ave., Port Aransas, TX (across the street from UTMSI)



## **Eligibility:**

All full time Department of Marine Science graduate student, are eligible to live in university housing. Although graduate students are given priority when applying to live in university housing, space can at times be limited, so it is best to contact Patty Webb ([patty.webb@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:patty.webb@austin.utexas.edu)) early if you wish to live in university housing.

## **Rent:**

Between the two housing complexes there are a variety of units available with the cost of rent varying between \$550 for a 1 bedroom unit and \$975 for a 3 bedroom unit. Housing assignments are typically for a period of 3 months to a full academic year.

### **Roommates:**

Assignment of roommates is standard for units with two or more bedrooms. Every effort will be made to maintain occupancy on this basis to optimize the use of all UTMSI housing. This may occasionally require relocation of existing occupants.

### **Utilities:**

In addition to rent, electricity is metered and billed monthly to university housing residents. The electricity rate charged to housing residents is the same rate charged to UTMSI by its electricity provider (this is significantly lower than off campus electricity rates). Water and all utilities used by communal laundry facilities and for area lighting are included in the base rental fee.

Telephone, internet access, and TV services are not provided and must be arranged and paid by each occupant via commercial providers.

### **University Housing Exclusions:**

It should be noted that pets are not permitted in university housing as well as co-habitation by unmarried individuals.

### **Off-Campus Housing:**

Finding long term rentals can be quite difficult in Port Aransas and rent is often significantly more expensive than University Housing. As a general guideline, expect to pay at least \$700/month for a one-bedroom apartment, and a minimum of \$450/month for a room in a shared apartment in Port Aransas.

Rental agencies in town usually don't have many listings for long term rentals. You should ask current graduate students, post-docs, research technicians, and other UTMSI employees about possible housing opportunities. Often long term rentals in Port Aransas are not publicly listed and word of mouth is the only way of discovering housing opportunities.

The [Port Aransas South Jetty](#) newspaper will often have a few housing listings in the classifieds section. Also check out the announcement boards at UTMSI.

Some students that live off campus often choose to live in North Padre where it may be easier to find a long term rental. If you choose to live in North Padre factor in a 20-30 minute commute along with added monthly fuel costs.

Don't be afraid to say that you are a student at UTMSI when looking for a place to rent as landlords often prefer renting to graduate students.

### **Off Campus Utilities:**

Above average electricity rates in Port Aransas coupled with high summer time electricity consumption from air conditioning can result in rather hefty utility bills. Be sure to inquire about the cost of a typical summer utilities bill so that you can budget accordingly.

### **Setting Up Utilities/Phone/Internet:**

If utilities are not included in your rent, you will need to arrange to have the gas and/or electricity turned on before you move in to your new place. You will also need to arrange for phone and cable service, if desired. Contact the following companies:

#### **Internet Providers:**

1. Clear internet - [www.clear.com](http://www.clear.com)
2. Century-Link - [www.centurylink.com](http://www.centurylink.com)
3. Time Warner Cable - [www.timewarnercable.com](http://www.timewarnercable.com)

#### **Electricity:**

Electricity: Rates and provider information are available at:

1. [www.powertochoose.org](http://www.powertochoose.org)
2. [www.portaransas.org/port-aransas-business-directory/general-services/utilities--city-services](http://www.portaransas.org/port-aransas-business-directory/general-services/utilities--city-services)

#### **Cellular Phone Service:**

UTMSI plans are not available, but UT Austin employees are eligible for a discount ([www.utexas.edu/its/das/](http://www.utexas.edu/its/das/))

### **Moving In:**

If you need to rent a truck or moving van, start with the following companies. Make sure you get a confirmation number when making a reservation.

\*\*\*Note there are no truck rentals or return facilities in Port Aransas\*\*\*

1. *U-Haul* - [www.uhaul.com](http://www.uhaul.com)
2. *Budget Truck Rental* - [www.budgettruck.com](http://www.budgettruck.com)

## **Driver's License and Car Registration in Texas**

In order to operate University vehicles you will need a Texas driver's license. The location of the closest DMV office to Port Aransas is:

913 South Commercial  
Aransas Pass, TX 78336

If you wish to register your car in the state of Texas you can do so at the Port Aransas City Hall:

710 W Avenue A  
Port Aransas, TX 78373

In order to register your vehicle in Texas you will need a Texas driver's license, Texas proof of insurance, original title, and a Texas state vehicle inspection (check online or at City Hall as other requirements may be necessary). Texas state vehicle inspections can be performed at:

Golf Cart Medic  
1004 6th Street, Port Aransas

## **Banking**

The banks listed below are close to campus and are the only ones on the island. The best way to get information is to visit the website or walk over in person. Some banks will eliminate fees if you arrange direct deposit of your paycheck.

### *American Bank*

Port Aransas Branch  
216 S. Alister  
Port Aransas, TX 78373  
(361) 749-7450

*Special Note:* American Bank has a contract with UT and can cash checks immediately; they will clear it in 24 hrs. They also provide loans at good rates.

### *Value Bank*

Port Aransas Branch  
500 S. Alister  
Port Aransas, Texas  
(361) 749-5264

## **Grocery Stores:**

Port Aransas has only one grocery store, the IGA Family Center. Although the store is small, and more expensive compared to other stores, it has all the essentials. Most people drive to either the Aransas Pass HEB or Flour Bluff HEB for extended shopping.

## **Transportation**

Most graduate students live relatively close to the UTMSI campus and the small size of Port Aransas means that you can survive without a car. You can rely on walking and biking just about anywhere in Port Aransas. However, as most people do their shopping in Corpus, not having a car certainly limits your options for getting out of Port Aransas. While carpooling is certainly viable, there are other alternatives if necessary.

### **Public Transportation:**

The Port Aransas Shuttle travels daily through the city. All the main streets and several side streets leading to the beach are served and the entire route is repeated every hour, from the first stop at about 10:00 a.m. to the last one at about 6:00 p.m. Catch the shuttle at designated locations or just give one a wave and climb aboard anywhere along their route.

[Download the Shuttle Schedule and Fare](#)

The City also offers a Flexi B Bus that will take you to Corpus Christi and back

[Download the Flexi B Schedule](#)

### **Taxicabs**

You must call in advance to order a taxi, they are very efficient and you will normally be picked up within 10 minutes. Taxicab operators in Port Aransas:

1. Gulf Coast Taxi - 361-749-0850