



General Information for International Students

The first step for a prospective nonimmigrant student is being accepted for enrollment in an established school which is SEVP Certified. Academic students including those in language training will require the F-1 Student Visa.

SEVP and SEVIS

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is designed to help the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of State better monitor school and exchange programs and F, M and J category visitors. Student information is maintained in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). SEVIS is an Internet-based system that maintains accurate and current information on non-immigrant students (F and M visa), exchange visitors (J visa), and their dependents (F-2, M-2, and J-2).

SEVIS Form I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility for Student Status)

All student applicants must have a SEVIS generated I-20 issued by a SEVP certified school, which they submit when they are applying for their student visa. Your school is responsible for entering your information for the I-20 student visa form into SEVIS. The consular officer will need to verify your I-20 record electronically through the SEVIS system in order to process your student visa application.

I-901 SEVIS Fee

Unless otherwise exempt, the student must submit an I-901 SEVIS fee application form and submit payment of the \$200 SEVIS Fee before the appointment for the U.S. Visa. Sign up to pay fee at: <http://www.fmjfee.com>. (refer to SEVIS Fee/Form I-901 handout for more details).

Applying for an F-1 Student Visa

Students are encouraged to apply for their visa early to provide ample time for visa processing. To make an appointment in the student's home country at a U.S. Consulate for the U.S. Visa go to: <http://usembassy.state.gov>

During the appointment to apply for the **F-1 student visa**, the student will have a short interview. The student will need to convince the U.S. officer that his intention is not to remain in the U.S. after studies have been completed, and that he has reasons to return to his home country.

The student will be told when to sign the I-20. The Consular official should return the I-20 to the student in a sealed envelope, along with the passport. The envelope should be presented unopened, along with the passport, to the CBP Officer at the U.S. port of entry. Canadians do not need a U.S. visa; they may present the I-20 and proof of payment of the SEVIS fee to U.S. officials at the port of entry. The proof of financial support should be carried by the student in case it is requested during the interview or at the U.S. border. Upon arrival in the U.S., the student's documents will be inspected. The I-20 will be returned to the student and should be kept with his passport.

The **VISA** is the colorful document printed in the passport by the U.S. Consular official. Requesting permission to enter the U.S. is the purpose of the visa. The visa may show permission for ONE entry or MULTIPLE entries. It also shows the type of visa (**F-1, B-1, R-1**, etc.) and the expiration date. If the I-94 has "**D/S**" (Duration of status) instead of an expiration date in the upper right hand box, the visa may expire while the student is in the U.S., but the student is still in status as long as he is a full-time student. However, if the student leaves the U.S., and the visa has expired, he/she must apply for a new visa before he can return to the U.S.

The **I-94** is a small white card (3.5"X4.25") stapled to the student's passport upon arrival in the U.S. It shows the type of visa as well as the expiration date. As long as a student is enrolled in school full-time and maintains full-

time status, he does not need to renew his/her I-94. If the I-94 does show an expiration date, it can be renewed with the USCIS. The I-94 will be surrendered when the student leaves the U.S. to return home unless the student travels to Mexico or Canada for less than 30 days.

Important note: the student must have on hand at all times:

- 1) Visa/passport (up-to-date) including the I-94
- 2) SEVIS Form I-20.

UPON ARRIVAL AT MEXICAN AMERICAN CATHOLIC COLLEGE: Let the **Designated School Official (DSO)** know that you have arrived. Go by the Registrar's Office so that a **copy** can be made of your **passport, I-94** and the **SEVIS I-20**.

Leaving the U.S.: If a student wishes to leave the U.S. at anytime, he/she must let the **DSO know of the intention**. The **DSO will sign page 3** of the student copy of the I-20, which grants the student permission to re-enter the U.S. after leaving for a short duration. **This signature is good for one year** and must be signed annually.