

# Obtaining a Visa for Initial Entry to the U.S.



## What is a visa?

A visa is a stamp in your passport from the U.S. Consulate or Embassy abroad that permits you to apply for entry into the U.S. at a Port of Entry. It only needs to be valid for your entry into the U.S. and does not have to remain valid throughout your stay provided that you maintain your immigration status. This means that as long as you remain within U.S. borders, your visa is allowed to expire. However, your I-20 must remain valid for the duration of your stay in the U.S.

How to obtain a visa. Once you are admitted to the Chicago State University, you will need to obtain a student visa for your initial entry to the U.S.

OIP will send you an I-20. Once you have this document, you should review it to make sure the information is correct and sign the document. Please email [oip@csu.edu](mailto:oip@csu.edu) if you have any questions or concerns about your document.

**The following are recommended steps when applying for your F-1:**

<http://www.csu.edu/international/>

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Pay the SEVIS fee. Once you pay, you will receive a receipt of payment that you must keep. You will need to present the receipt at your visa interview. You will also need this receipt notice for travel and future visa renewals.

Contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate to schedule a visa appointment. To find the nearest embassy, please refer to [www.usembassy.state.gov](http://www.usembassy.state.gov).

SEVIS stands for the “Student and Exchange Visitor Information System.” It is a database maintained by the Department of Homeland Security and allows U.S. agencies to track visitors for the duration of their stay.

You may have applied and been accepted to several institutions. Before applying for a visa, you must decide which institution you would like to attend. This is important because the name of the institution on your I-20 must match the visa in your passport for your initial entry to the U.S.

## **To obtain a visa, you need to prepare the following documents for your visa interview:**

Valid passport for at least 6 months

I-20 or DS-2019 form prepared by

Your admission letter to

One passport size photograph (2X2)

SEVIS fee payment receipt

DS-156 Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form

DS-158 Contact Information and Work History for Nonimmigrant Visa Applicant

if a male between the ages of 16 and 45, DS-157 Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application

Evidence of financial ability to meet expenses

Evidence of English ability sufficient for course of study

Evidence of intent to depart the U.S. after completion of studies

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Any other documents listed on the website of your Consulate or Embassy

## **You should be prepared to show:**

Transcripts and diplomas from previous institutions attended;

Scores from standardized tests required by the educational institution such as the TOEFL, SAT, GRE, GMAT, etc.

## **Applicants with dependents must also provide:**

Proof of the student's relationship to his/her spouse and/or children (e.g., marriage and birth certificates.);

It is preferred that families apply for F-1 and F-2 visas at the same time, but if the spouse and children must apply separately at a later time, they should bring a copy of the student visa holder's passport and visa, along with all other required documents.

The visa interview is not a document review, but a conversation. If you are denied a visa, make sure to get the decision in writing.