Week 2: Visas and Immigration

Sooner Global Newsletter

Issue 2/20

**Issue 2: Visas and Immigration**

This week SGN will focus on F-1 and J-1 visa/immigration requirements

All international visitors must have a current US visa in their passport to be admitted into the US. People come to the US for many different reasons. As an international student at OU, you will apply for an F-1 or J-1 student visa. Canadian citizens are not required to apply for a visa to enter the US but must still pay the SEVIS fee and present the Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 or DS-2019) at the US port of entry. Landed Immigrants of Canada must obtain a US visa.

**How do I obtain a visa?**

- 4 Steps to your student visa
- F-1/J-1 status
- When to arrive
What is the SEVIS fee?

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is an online system that manages data for F-1 and J-1 international students studying in the US. As an international student beginning a new program of study, you must pay a one-time fee to the US government before you can obtain an F-1 or J-1 student visa. The SEVIS fee is in addition to any visa fees you may be required to pay at a US consulate. F-2 and J-2 dependents are not required to pay the fee. The SEVIS fee is not a university fee.

What will I need to apply for my visa?

When you apply for your student visa, you will need:
- Passport (valid at least six months into the future)
- Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 or DS-2019)
- Proof of admission to OU
- Evidence of your financial support
- Visa application forms and fees
- SEVIS Fee Receipt

Some consulates may require additional documentation.

To obtain a US visa and enter the US, you must:

1. Pay the SEVIS fee online at www.fmjfee.com.
2. Receive your DS-2019 or I-20 and make a visa appointment at a US consulate abroad.
3. Apply for your student visa at the consular interview. Make your visa interview appointment as early as possible and bring your SEVIS fee receipt to the interview.
4. Present the required documentation to apply for entry to the US upon arrival.

For more information visit:
http://www.ou.edu/iss
select ‘New Students,’
then select ‘Applying for a Visa.’
What is the difference between my visa and my immigration status?

Your immigration status (F-1 or J-1) is determined when you enter the US by a customs official and is indicated on your I-94 card. You may have many visa stamps in your passport, but upon entry into the US, you may be admitted in only one immigration status. Verify that the correct status is indicated on your I-94 card. Unlike your visa, it may be possible to change your immigration status in the US. The US Department of State provides further information on visas and visa status.

I-94 Card

I-94 Card - This small white card documents your legal entry into the US, and indicates your immigration status. You complete it while in flight or at a US border crossing. It is completed at a US port of entry. An immigration official stamps it, and places it into your passport. The I-94 card notes your name, date of birth, country of citizenship, and the date and port of your arrival in the US. It indicates how long you can stay in the US. The notation D/S signifies "duration of status" and refers to the completion date on the I-20 or DS2019. Each time you leave the US, you must surrender your I-94. The I-94 is an important form. Copy the card and keep it in a safe place. If you lose your I-94, alert the OU ISS office.

Form DS-2019

The Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant J-1 Exchange Visitor Status is the Form DS-2019. This document is issued by the program sponsor (the university, government agency, or other organization sponsoring the visit) through the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) for presentation at a US consulate abroad to apply for a J-1 Exchange Visitor visa. It must also be presented to an immigration officer upon entry into the US. Keep all DS-2019s issued to you. Upon acceptance, students will be required to provide a certified bank statement in US dollars. The financial proof needed for your DS-2019 is:

- Statement showing $5,000 USD for one semester or $10,000 USD for two semesters, dated within 90 days of being submitted.
- If bank account statement is from someone other than you, please provide Support Letter from account holder.

***Please print Support Letter and then sign before scanning or emailing it. 

Contact information:
Phone (405) 325-3337
Email: iss@ou.edu
Entry Into the US

Tips on:
- When to arrive
- What documentation to bring
- When/where orientation takes place

When to arrive

Exchange students must arrive at the date designated by the Education Abroad Office. This date is listed on the EA website under ‘Incoming Students,’ ‘Before Arrival.’ You will receive information about several different orientations, including the orientation program organized by your school and/or department. It is important that you attend these programs. The OU ISS office is required to give all new international students an orientation program; this orientation is mandatory for all new and transferring international students. Students who are transferring from another US school to OU and who have a "Transfer Pending" I-20 or DS-2019 are not subject to the 30-day arrival limit. Transfer students may travel and re-enter the US any time between school programs. However, transfer students must re-enter with their OU I-20 or DS-2019, and not the I-20 from the previous school.

I-94 Card

At customs, you will receive an I-94 Card to complete along with customs declarations. Use the white I-94 Card; the green I-94 Card is for tourists only. Write your name and other information as they appear on your I-20 or DS-2019 and passport. Inconsistency in your name and information will cause problems and delays after your arrival to the US.

Orientation

All new and transfer international students MUST attend New International Student Orientation. Failure to do so will negatively impact your US immigration status.

You can register for orientation at:
http://www.ou.edu/content/iss/home/audience_navigation/new_international/new_international.html.

Student Perspectives

The visa process was very quick and straightforward. Coming with an open mind to a country like the United States, I felt really enthusiastic to be more independent and responsible, experience life on my own, meet new people and study in a different academic system than the one in my country. Coming from the busy city of Bangalore in India, life in Norman turned out to be comparatively low-key and took a little while to get used to. Nevertheless, my experience over the past one-year has been absolutely fantastic.

-Neil from India
MA in Electrical & Computer Engineering