

IMMIGRATION MATTERS

We expect each international student to take responsibility for compliance with the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) regulations. Failure to comply with these regulations may result in loss of status and deportation. For detailed information on BCIS regulations, contact the International Coordinator. The Office of International Programs serves as your liaison with the BCIS and is aware of any regulation changes which might affect you.

Also memorize the expiration dates on your PASSPORTS, VISAS, AND I-20S!!!!!!

My Passport Expires: _____

My I-20 Expires: _____

My Visa Expires: _____

Do not rely on your friends for advice about immigration. They rely on rumors, speculation, and what happened in someone else's case. The smallest detail can make your case different.

Maintenance Of F-1 Status

Once a student is admitted to the United States in F-1 status, he/she must meet certain obligations in order to maintain that status.

The student must:

- ***Have a valid passport at all times***
- ***Attend the school he/she was authorized to attend (the school on the I-20)***
- ***Continue to carry a full course of study***
- ***Obtain a timely extension if the student intends to remain in the U.S. longer than the length of time estimated to complete his/her program of study.***
- ***Follow the required procedure in order to change from one degree level to another.***
- ***Follow the required procedure in order to transfer from one institution in the U.S. to another.***
- ***Refrain from off-campus employment without authorization.***
- ***Report a change of residence to the INS within 10 days of the change.***

WHAT IS THE BCIS?

BUREAU OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES

On March 1, 2003, services formerly provided by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) transitioned into the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) under the Bureau of Citizenship & Immigration Services (BCIS). In support of the DHS overall mission, the immediate priorities BCIS are to promote national security, and implement solutions for improving immigration customer services.

Created as a separate bureau by the Homeland Security Act of 2002, BCIS allows the DHS to improve the administration of benefits and immigration services for applicants by exclusively focusing on immigration and citizenship services. This new Bureau includes approximately 15,000 employees and contractors, and is headed by the Director of BCIS, who reports directly to the Deputy Secretary for Homeland Security. Through a network of local offices, BCIS processes all immigrant and non-immigrant benefits provided to visitors of the United States.

WHAT IS SEVIS?

STUDENT EXCHANGE VISITOR INFORMATION SYSTEM

SEVIS is a government, computerized system that maintains and manages data about foreign students and exchange visitors during their stay in this country. For more than 50 years, U.S. educational institutions have been required to maintain such information about foreign students studying at their facilities. In the past, this was a paper-driven and inefficient system.

SEVIS is an internet-based system that automates this system. Accurate and current information is transmitted electronically throughout an F-1 or J-1 student's academic career in the United States. U.S. embassies and consulates will also have access to SEVIS. This system allows real-time access to information and helps students comply with the terms of their visas.

SEVIS regulations require MUW to report:

- ❖ Whether the student has enrolled at the school, or failed to enroll.
- ❖ A change of the student or dependent's legal name or address.
- ❖ Any student who graduates prior to the end date listed on the I-20.
- ❖ Academic or disciplinary actions taken due to criminal conviction.
- ❖ Whether the student drops below a full course of study without prior authorization
- ❖ Termination date and reason for termination.
- ❖ Other data generated by standard procedures such as program extensions, school transfers, changes in level of study, employment authorizations, and reinstatement.
- ❖ Any student who fails to maintain status or complete his or her program.

COMMON TERMINOLOGY

CHANGE OF PROGRAM OR MAJOR: If you change a major at MUW, tell the International Coordinator. A new I-20 form must be prepared to reflect your new major. You must also contact your academic advisor from the new program of study to change your major.

DEPENDENT: Dependents (wife, husband or child) may join a student in Columbus. The dependent of an F-1 visa holder should request an F-2 visa at the U.S. Embassy or consulate. If you wish to bring your family to MUW, bring the following to the International Coordinator's office: 1) your I-20 student copy; 2) bank statement or sponsor letter showing financial support; 3) the name, date of birth, and country of birth of each family member. An I-20 form will then be prepared for your family.

DESIGNATED SCHOOL OFFICIAL (DSO): Each college in the United States may have up to five individuals who are each registered with the INS as a "Designated School Official". DSOs are the only people at a school who are authorized to issue I-20 forms and endorse students' I-20s (for travel or to designate changes in information). On the MUW campus, the International Coordinator is the primary DSO to serve students' needs. The Director of Admissions and the Admissions Specialist, both located in the Office of Admissions, also have the ability and authority to assist F-1 students.

EXTENSION OF STAY: Pay special attention to the completion date on your I-20. If you have not completed your degree by the given completion date, you must request a program extension. To do this, go to the Office of International Programs. If you go beyond the completion date given on your I-20 Student Copy without requesting an extension, you will then be considered as out-of-status.

FULL-TIME ACADEMIC LOAD: Non-immigrant students are required by Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) to carry a full-time enrollment. This is defined as a minimum of 12 hours for undergraduates and 9 hours for graduates. BCIS allows for some exceptions. If you feel the need to drop below full time, contact the International Coordinator to see if your situation might permit less than full time enrollment.

International students on scholarships must follow the requirements to maintain their awards. For most this involves enrollment in 12 hours.

F-1s are NOT required to take summer session classes.

I-20 FORM: This document verifies your eligibility for the F-1 visa. You should keep your I-20 in a safe place, so that it will not be misplaced. If you leave the U.S. for vacation and want to re-enter as an F-1 visa holder, you will need to take your I-20 Student Copy to the International Program Coordinator's office for validation. Do this BEFORE you leave.

Your I-20 should accurately reflect your academic progress at MUW. If you change your major or need to extend your program past your I-20's expiration, you MUST contact the Coordinator of International Programs.

I-94 FORM: The I-94 is the small white card in your passport and indicates how long you will remain in the United States. If you are an F-1 visa holder, your I-94 is probably marked "D/S." This means "duration of status," which means that you remain here as long as you are studying

as a full-time student at the school that Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) has authorized you to attend.

I have lost my I-94. What should I do? You must file a form I-102 (available in the International Program Coordinator's office) with the BCIS to request a replacement of the I-94 form. BCIS charges a fee (amount subject to change) for this.

PASSPORT: Your passport must be kept valid at all times. Passports are to be renewed six months prior to expiration at the consulate or embassy of your home country.

I have lost my passport. HELP!! If every possible effort does not result in finding your passport, you should do two things: notify the police in the area where you think you lost it, and telephone your consulate/embassy for instructions on how to obtain a new one. Passport replacement is much easier if you know the passport number, date, and place from which it was issued. For this reason, the International Program Coordinator keeps a copy of your passport on file.

SCHOOL TRANSFER: F-1 Visa holders who wish to transfer from MUW to another school must receive an I-20 form from the new school. Before you leave MUW, go to the International Program Coordinator's office and leave a forwarding address. You must also clear your account with the Comptroller's office.

STATUS: Many of MUW's international students are F-1 visa holders, which are nonimmigrant visas. To say that a student has a "nonimmigrant" visa status means he or she is admitted to the United States on a temporary basis and there is no intent on the part of the student to become a naturalized citizen, nor to seek permanent residency, and it is expected that the student will return to his/her home country after his/her studies are completed. A student must maintain the visa status by following the regulations pertaining to his or her visa type. Failure to do so has serious consequences.

TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE U.S.: Students who plan to travel to other countries during the holidays or semester break may need to have a visa for the country they intend to visit.

In order to return to the U.S., F-1 visa holders must have a valid U.S. visa, I-94. If the visa has expired, a new one must be obtained at a consulate or embassy outside the U.S.

❖ *The I-20 Student Copy must be validated by the International Coordinator BEFORE you leave the U.S.*

VISA: Most international students will have an F-1 visa. F-1 visa holders will have received an I-20 for original entry and will continue to use the student copy of that same I-20 for re-entry after temporary absence.

The visa is a stamped page inside the passport indicating the date of validity. It is an entry permit and has nothing to do with how long you may remain in the U.S. If the visa expires during your stay, there is no need to renew it, unless you plan to travel outside the U.S. for holidays or vacation. If you do leave the U.S. and your visa has expired, you must renew it at a U.S. embassy or consulate prior to re-entry to the U.S. Visas cannot be renewed within the U.S. Your I-20 must be endorsed by the International Program Coordinator in order for you to request visa renewal.

VIOLATION OF THE LAW AND DEPORTATION

Usually, you will not be deported for a single misdemeanor or other minor offense (such as disturbing the peace or drunkenness). But if an international student is convicted of a crime for which he/she is sentenced to jail, then deportation is a real possibility.

Failure to maintain your immigration status can result in deportation.

If you violate the rules of the University and are disciplined by suspension or dismissal from the University, your status changes. Once you are no longer a student, you have not maintained your status under BCIS regulations and may be subject to deportation.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

If your permanent address changes, you must complete a change of address form in the Registrar's Office, Welty Hall. F-1 students should also contact the International Coordinator in order to maintain status.

It is the responsibility of every international student to inform the International Program Coordinator of his/her local address. U.S. Immigration regulations require that we have both your mailing address and your residential address. Anytime you change residences you must provide us with current information.

If we do not have your correct address, you will:

- A) Not receive your grades,
- B) Not receive important notices from the Registrar, and
- C) Not be reported correctly to U.S. Immigration (BCIS)

Failure to supply the International Coordinator with your correct mailing is a violation of the F-1 visa requirements.

MUW I.D. CARDS AND YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

If you have a student ID number that begins with "911", this number has been assigned to you because you do not have a U.S. Social Security number. This number will be used for many purposes on The W's campus.

Once you have a job on campus, you can apply for a social security number. Contact the Office of International Programs to make arrangements to get a social security number.

My temporary student ID number is: _____

EMPLOYMENT

International students may accept on-campus employment without authorization from Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) for up to 20 hours/week. Permission must be granted by BCIS for any off-campus employment of non-immigrant students. Off-campus employment without permission is illegal, and those caught are subject to deportation. If you are THINKING about working off campus, please talk with the International Programs Coordinator BEFORE taking any action!

There are limited options available to international students for off-campus employment. Currently, there is curricular practical training, optional training, and off-campus employment due to economic hardship. Because some of the immigration regulations concerning employment are continually being revised, you should check with International Program Coordinator for more updated information.

F-2 visa holders may NOT work under any circumstances — not even on-campus.

ON CAMPUS

A student is eligible to be employed on campus in work that is directly related to the school's mission. No special written authorization from the ISO or INS is required.

Limitations: 20 hours per week is the maximum that a student can work. During holidays and the school's vacation period (as reflected in the official school calendar), the student can be employed full time.

Upon receiving an offer for on campus employment, a student must IMMEDIATELY contact the International Coordinator to set up a time to meet. The student must ask their employer for a written letter on official departmental letterhead stating that employment has been offered to the student and also specifying that it will not exceed 20 hours per week. The International Coordinator will then supply the student with a letter of enrollment and escort the student to the Social Security Office to apply for a Social Security card.

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING

As an undergraduate, this benefit is not available until the completion of one academic year of school. As a graduate student, the opportunity is immediately available if required by the department. If only recommended, the student must complete one academic year before eligibility begins.

Limitations: The employment must be in the student's field of study and is employer specific. In addition, the training has a specific start and stop date; normally in accordance with the school's calendar. This work opportunity **requires authorization** by the school's Designated School Official (DSO).

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

An employment opportunity that can be taken during the summer vacation, during school authorized holidays, after completion of course work but before completion of program, or after completion of the degree program. This training opportunity can only be recommended by the DSO. The INS provides the authorization.

Limitations: The employment must be in the student's field of study. It is limited to one aggregate year (12 months) per academic level. It is not employer specific. Employment is limited to the time period stated on the Employment Authorization Document

SEVERE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

Students are eligible for this employment if he/she can demonstrate an unforeseen financial emergency, employment is not available or is insufficient on-campus, the student has been in F-1 status for one full academic year, and employment will not interfere with the student's studies.

Limitations: The authorization is issued by the INS and is limited to a 12 month period or to the expiration date on the I-20, whichever comes first.. It can be renewed if the student can satisfy the INS that the unforeseen financial crisis has not abated. The authorization is not employer specific and the work is not restricted to the student's field of study.

TAXES

The IRS now requires all international students to complete tax forms each year, whether or not you worked. The deadline to submit tax forms each year is April 15.

F-1 visa holders who receive an income may have federal and state taxes withheld from their pay. When you begin working, you will be asked to fill out a tax withholding form. If you work off-campus, your employer will provide you with one. If you work on-campus, your department should provide you with one. This withholding form is what provides the employer with information to determine how much to withhold from your pay for taxes.

Certain countries have tax treaties with the United States. If you are from one of these countries, you may be exempt from federal tax. Each year the Internal Revenue Service issues Publication 901, which summarizes the benefits of these treaties and how it affects students. If, according to a tax treaty, you are exempt from federal tax, you must submit a tax report (called a tax return) to benefit from a treaty.

A federal tax return must be submitted before April 15, for the preceding year. If federal tax was withheld for your pay, then you must submit a tax return form (the 1040NR). You may or may not receive a refund.

See the website <http://www.irs.gov> for information on taxes. The site <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/index.html> has links specifically for international taxpayers, including links to treaty information.

The Site <http://www.nraware.com/index.htm> will do your taxes for approximately \$40.

❖ More tax tools are available at:

H & R Block: <http://www.hrblock.com/taxes/tools/index.html>

Tax Planet.com: <http://www.taxplanet.com/statetaxes/statetaxes.html>

Always make copies of the tax forms before you submit them to the IRS.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- ❖ I want to work on campus and see many advertisements for work-study” students. Can I be a work-study student?

Unfortunately, no. Work-study jobs are for students who qualify for federally sponsored financial aid; international students cannot qualify for financial aid. You can, however, take campus jobs advertised as non-work-study or “wage” jobs.

- ❖ I want to take summer courses at another school. Whose permission do I need?

BCIS does not require that you attend school in the summer, if you were enrolled in the spring and plan to re-enroll in the fall. However, if you do want to go to summer school, you may do so without special permission. Any F-1 student attending The W, for example, in the spring can enroll in another school in the summer and return to The W in the fall without having to change I-20 forms for the summer school.

- ❖ I am graduating, and I think I want to stay forever and work. When can I go to BCIS and tell them this?

Unfortunately, much as you might want to stay here forever, this may not be possible. The process for becoming a permanent resident can be quite complex — too complex to explain in this handbook. The International Program Coordinator can provide you with updated immigration information and/or an immigration workshop. At this workshop, an attorney who specializes in immigration law explains the entire process.

- ❖ I am going to visit another country this summer, and I have a job there. Can I take it?

If you meet the qualifications for employment in another country, your status in the U.S. is unimportant.

- ❖ My mother wants to come to the U.S. with me when I come back from summer vacation. can she get the F-2 or the J-2 visa?

Only your dependents (wife/husband/children) are entitled to the F-2 or J-2 visa. Your mother and other relatives may come to visit, but they will need to apply for the B-2 (tourist) visa.

- ❖ In order to get my passport renewed or to have funds sent from home, I need proof that I am a student. How can I get this proof?

Letters certifying your status as a W student and letters stating your estimated expenses may be requested from the International Programs Office. Allow three days for preparation of these letters.

I have many questions about immigration matters. My friends and professors give me different answers. Whom should I ask?

The best place to start asking questions about immigration matters is with the International Program Coordinator. The Coordinator is not a part of the immigration service but does have current information on the student and scholar regulations. While friends and teachers may be trying to help you, incorrect information can cause problems.

