



Resources and Information for International Students

Rights and Responsibilities

As a holder of a student visa, you must abide by specific regulations concerning study, travel, and work. It is your responsibility to be aware of these regulations and to maintain the valid student status.

Maintenance of Status

Once you are admitted to the U.S. as an F-1 student, you must meet certain obligations in order to maintain status. The following is a list of these obligations:

- Maintain a valid passport. Check with your local Consulate or Embassy for passport renewal procedures. Keep your passport valid at least six (6) months into the future.
- Undergraduate students must carry twelve (12) credits or more for a full course of study each semester and graduate students must carry nine (9) credits. No exceptions.
- Follow procedures for moving from one educational level to another.
- Follow procedures to transfer to a college or university other than originally authorized.
- Apply for an extension of programs before the expiration date on the current I-20.
- Limit on-campus employment to 20 hours per week/40 hours during vacation periods.
- Refrain from off-campus employment without authorization.
- Report a change of residence to USCIS and Cabrini within 10 days.

Immigration Documents

- **Passport:** Keep valid at all times as stated above.
- **Visa:** This is a stamped endorsement in the passport indicating that all requirements have been met for entry and future re-entries into the U.S. according to the limitations of the visa. As a full-time student you should hold an F-1 visa.
- **I-94:** This is a small white card in your passport. F-1 students receive Duration of Status (D/S) notation. Do not use the date on your I-20 for Duration of Status. There is an eleven-digit number on the card that is used by the USCIS to monitor your travel in and out of the U.S. This number is only for identification purposes.

Other Important Documents: It is a good idea to keep important documents in a place where they are safe. These are the documents that you should be particularly concerned with:

- I-20 and other immigration forms
- Birth certificate
- Income tax return forms
- Monthly bank statements
- Copies of apartment leases or rental agreements
- Important letters
- Letters showing your financial aid awards
- Validated invoices and financial statements for tuition
- Social Security Card
- Course schedules and registration

Several of these documents may not concern you, and there may be others that are not mentioned here, but this list should provide you with an idea of the types of documents that you should keep accessible and in a safe location.

Travel Outside the U.S.

If you are planning a trip outside the U.S. (this includes Canada and Mexico) and are planning to return, all the following necessary documents must be in order:

- Passport, valid at least six (6) months into the future
- U.S. visa, valid for multiple entries into the U.S. and valid beyond your proposed return date
- Valid form I-20
- Visa (if required) to enter the country you wish to visit
- Letter signed by the registrar stating you are in good academic standing and maintaining full-time status. (Not always required, but may be useful in some circumstances.)
- Current proof of financial support.

Employment

The United State Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has strict regulations regarding international students and their rights to be employed. If you hold an F-1 visa, you must maintain full-time student status at all times. As a student in F-1 status, you have certain options for receiving permission to work legally in the United States. Below is a brief summary of the different types of work for which you may qualify.

WARNING: United States law requires you to obtain permission before beginning any type of employment. Beginning work without authorization from the USCIS is a serious violation of your F-1 status. To be eligible for any employment off campus, you are required to have been a full-time student the previous academic year (one academic year).

On-Campus Employment

You may begin on campus employment as soon you start classes. The one-year rule does not apply. You must be enrolled full-time, have authorization to study at Cabrini with a valid I-20 and be in good academic standing. You are limited to working only 20 hours per week during the academic year, 40 hours during vacations periods. You must have documents verifying your identity and work eligibility in the United States. An I-9 form is available from your employer and employment verification must be updated every semester.

Off-Campus Employment

Curricular Practical Employment (CPT): Your work must be part of an academic program, you need to have a job offer, you must be enrolled full-time, and you must have completed the previous academic year full-time in lawful status and F-1 status when applying. You can work 20 hours per week or less on a part-time basis, 40 hours per week on a full-time basis during vacation periods. You will need your endorsed I-20, I-94, and a passport, along with a department recommendation, completed co-op forms or letter from instructor, and proof of registration for the co-op, internship, or independent study.

Optional Practical Training

During Academic Program: Your work must be related to your field of study. A job offer is not required but you must be enrolled full-time and have completed the previous academic year in F-1 status. You are limited to working only 20 hours per week during the academic year, 40 hours during vacation periods. You will need I-765, an endorsed I-20, I-94 card, a passport, two photos, and a check made out to USCIS. Send the application to the US Regional Service Center in Vermont.

Fee involved—check the USCIS web site at <http://www.uscis.gov>.

Post Completion: Your work must be related to your field of study. A job offer is not required but you must be in F1 status, and have completed the previous academic year in lawful status when applying. You will need a I-765, I-20, I-94 card, a passport, two photos, evidence of completion of program, and a check made out to USCIS. Send the application to the USCIS Regional Service Center in Vermont.

Fee involved—check the USCIS Web site at <http://www.uscis.gov>.

Severe Economic Hardship

You are eligible only if no other employment options exist, financial need is an "unforeseen circumstance" and you have completed the previous academic year full-time in F-1 status. You are limited to working only 20 hours per week during the academic year, 40 hours during vacations periods. You will need a I-765, I-20, I-94 card, a passport, documentation of financial difficulties, a letter explaining unforeseen financial hardship, and a budget of expenses.

Fee involved—check the USCIS Web site at <http://www.uscis.gov>. Fees change without notice. Please check the USCIS website before making any application.

Pennsylvania Driver's License

Many non-immigrants and their dependents obtain a Pennsylvania (PA) driver's license or state identification card. In addition to providing visitors the opportunity to drive, state-issued photo identification can be a good alternative to the passport. The license or state ID card may be used when opening a bank account, paying via personal check, or going to bars and restaurants where alcohol is served. The relevant rules are set by the [Pennsylvania Department of Transportation \(PennDOT\)](#) under the direction of the Pennsylvania state legislature.

Conditions and Limitations

1. Non-immigrants granted admission to the US for less than one year and those with less than one year remaining on their non-immigrant document (I-20, DS-2019, or H1B/H4 Approval Notice) are NOT eligible to apply for a PA driver's license or state ID card. (Exceptions may be available to some students and scholars who have definite plans to stay for a longer period of time.)
2. Generally, visitors who will be in the US for less than one year are expected to use their home country driver's license plus the international driver's permit (in English).
3. For identification, PennDOT will not accept birth certificates which are issued outside the US.
4. Applicants must present their Social Security Number (SSN). For those who are not eligible for an SSN at the time of application, PennDOT will allow use of the I-94 number in place of the social security number.
5. The validity period of the PA driver's license or state ID card will be the same as the validity period of the current non-immigrant document or four years, whichever is shorter.
6. All applicants are required to surrender any out-of-state driver's license or ID card prior to being issued a PA driver's license or ID card.

Bank Accounts

Banks require certain forms of identification to open accounts. Most ask for a Social Security number. Many local banks, however, will now consider opening an account temporarily until the Social Security number can be processed. Your student identification (ID) card, passport and I-20 can serve as means of identification. The bank will attempt to assist students who are waiting for a Social Security card if they have other means of identification.

Money Access Center (MAC/ATM) Machines and Cards: Basic banking such as depositing, transferring, and withdrawing money is available anytime (day or night). Your bank-issued ATM card can be used in the machine at Cabrini and in most other bank machines in the U.S

Wachovia

305 E. Lancaster Avenue
Wayne
610-687-3705

Bank of America

558 E. Lancaster Avenue
Radnor
610-971-9430

Citizens Bank

363 W. Lancaster Avenue
Wayne
610-688-5454

Social Security and Taxes

Social Security

Social Security is a U.S. government program designed to replace part of the income Americans lose when they retire or become disabled. The Social Security Administration issues cards with a 9-digit number not only to American citizens, but also to non-immigrants living or visiting the United States. In most cases, you would be exempt, as a non-immigrant, from paying Social Security taxes, but the Social Security card serves as a means of identification for you. You will need to have a number if you wish to work on or off campus or if you wish to apply for a driver's license. It is also helpful for you to have a Social Security card as a form of identification if and when you open a bank account.

How to apply for a Social Security Card

Before going to the Social Security office, you need to have the following items in your possession:

- A job offer from employer in writing.
- Valid passport
- United States immigration form I-94 (which should be stapled in your passport)
- I-20

The nearest Social Security office is in Norristown and can be reached at 610-277-0440. Call 1-800-772-1213 for other locations.

Social Security Card for Employment

This card can be used for identification purposes and for on-campus employment since you are permitted to work on campus after you register at the College.

Taxes

F-1 visa holders generally must pay taxes if you earn money from a U.S. source during the time you are a student. U.S. federal income tax and Pennsylvania state income tax will automatically be withheld from your paycheck. F-1 students are not required to pay Social Security (FICA) tax. F-1 students are considered non-residents for tax purposes. (This is one of the reasons for not paying the Social Security tax.) You must file your income tax return on form 1040 NR or 1040 NR EZ by April 15th of the current year for the previous year. You will receive a W-2 form from your employer, showing the amount of money that you have earned and the amount of taxes that has already been withheld during the course of the year. F-1 students must fill out the appropriate tax form (1040 NR) regardless of how many years you have been in the U.S. and how much income you have earned.