



Welcome – New International Students

Congratulations on your acceptance to California Miramar University! The International Program Center (IPC) would like to extend a warm welcome to you.

The following information is to help you understand the F-1 visa process and your responsibilities once you have obtained your F-1 visa.

Now That You Have Been Accepted to California Miramar University

International students are required to obtain an F-1 visa to attend California Miramar University (CMU) and study in the USA. Once you have been admitted to CMU and have submitted all required documents and fees, you will be issued an **I-20** or Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) by CMU's International Admissions Office.

Transfer students: International students, who are currently in the US with valid F-1 status and are transferring their SEVIS record to CMU, are also required to receive a new I-20 from CMU's International Admissions Office and follow the SEVIS transfer process.

Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)

Once you have received your I-20, review your name and date of birth to be sure it matches the information on your passport. If there is an error, please contact CMU's International Admissions Office immediately in order for a new I-20 to be issued.

Next, you will need to pay the **SEVIS I-901 Fee**, which is currently \$350.00 (F-1 students).

The SEVIS I-901 Fee can only be paid by one of the following methods:

Internet:

- Go to <https://www.FMJFee.com/i901fee/index.jsp>.
- To complete and submit a new SEVIS Form I-901 and pay the I-901 Fee, click the Submit Form I-901 and Fee Payment button. This takes you to the form selection page.
- Carefully read all instructions, choose I-20 Form, and click OK.
- Complete the form and pay the fee by either Visa, MasterCard, or American Express credit card. Debit cards (check cards) with either the Visa or MasterCard logo also may be used.
- **Print a copy of the online receipt** for your records. You will need to take this receipt with you to your visa interview and may be asked for it at your port-of-entry.



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Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Continued

Western Union Quick Pay Service™ :

- Print instructions from http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/wu_instr.htm
- Complete Form I-901
- Bring instructions and completed Form I-901 to a Western Union agent in your area. For a list of agents in your home country, visit <http://www.westernunion.com>
- Request and complete the Western Union “Blue Form.” For instructions about the “Blue Form,” visit http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/wu_instr.htm

Note: Payment through Western Union is processed immediately. You will receive a receipt at the time of payment.

Mail:

- Access the I-901 form from www.fmjfee.com or call 1-800-870-3676 (in the U.S.).
- Complete the I-901
- Mail the completed I-901 and payment to the address listed on the I-901 Form.
- Payment must be a check, international money order, or foreign draft (drawn on a U.S. bank only) in the amount of \$200.00 and payable to “I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee.”
- Receipt Notice I-797 Form should be mailed to you within 3 days of processing the fee.

Note: Mailing the SEVIS fee does **not** constitute payment. The fee is processed when it is received by DHS. If payment is mailed, it can take 4-6 weeks to be received and for a receipt to be mailed to you. Therefore, we highly recommend that students pay the fee via the internet to expedite the process.

Obtaining Your Visa

Once you have received your I-20, the next step is to apply for your F-1 visa. First, you will need to complete **Form DS-160-Visa Application**. Form DS-160 is submitted electronically to the Department of State website via the Internet. The information entered on the DS-160 is used to process the visa application and, combined with a personal interview, determine an applicant’s eligibility for a nonimmigrant visa. Information regarding the DS-160 may be found at <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/forms/ds-160--online-nonimmigrant-visa-application.html>



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Note: Be sure to print and keep the DS – 160 barcode page.

Next, you will need to make an appointment for an interview with a Consular Officer at an American Embassy or Consulate in the nearest city to where you reside. For guidance, please refer to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your country. You may find this information at:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/find-a-u-s--embassy-or-consulate.html>.

Documents You Must Bring to Your Interview

Prior to your visa appointment, consult the website for the U.S. embassy or consulate that you will visit. Go the **Nonimmigrant Visa** section and follow the instructions. Many people are denied visas when they are unprepared.

At the visa interview, you must present:

- Passport which is valid up to six months after date of entry into the U.S.
- Form I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student
- Proof of Payment of SEVIS Fee
- Evidence of financial support and ability to meet expenses while studying in the U.S.
- Bank statement or financial support letter from sponsor
- Evidence of English ability
- Confirmation Page of Application Form DS-160
- Proof of Payment of the Non-Refundable Application Fee
- Home country address and documentation of home ties (if available)
- School transcripts, if you are a transfer student applying for a new visa
- Color photographs

Preparing for Your Interview

Based on information received from various consular officers, the following are recommendations to prepare for your visa interview:

- Listen carefully to what the consular officer asks you and then answer the question directly
- Be prepared to show strong ties to your home country with official documentation. Ties to your country are ties that compel you to leave the U.S. after you finish your program of study.
- If your family owns property, take the deed or papers showing your ownership.



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- If you and your family have had numerous past visits to the U.S., take along passports, even old ones, to show that you have had many visas and visits, but you returned to your home country after visiting the U.S.
- If you have any membership in a professional organization in your home country, bring proof of the membership.
- If you have the prospect of a job offer, obtain a letter from the company stating that you will be considered for the job upon your return or that people with similar education you are seeking are needed.
- Answer every question truthfully.

Some factors that might work against you in the mind of the consular officer are:

- Someone in the United States is promising to support you
- Lack of family ties
- Poor job prospect upon return
- Poor English language ability
- Poor academic record (suggesting you are not a serious student)

10 Tips for Your Visa Interview

Here are 10 points to remember when you are applying for your nonimmigrant visa and interview:

1. Show ties to your home country

Under U.S. law, all applicants for nonimmigrant visas, such as student visas, are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not.

You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. “Ties” to your home country are the things that bind you to your hometown, homeland, or current place of residence: job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, investments, etc.

If you are a prospective undergraduate, the interviewing officer may ask about your specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other relationships, educational objectives, grades, long-range plans, and career proposals in your home country.



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10 Tips for Your Visa Interview Continued

Each person's situation is different, of course, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter which can guarantee visa issuance.

If you have applied for the U.S. Green Card Lottery, you may be asked if you are intending to immigrate. A simple answer would be that you applied for the lottery since it was available but not with a specific intent to immigrate.

If you overstayed your authorized stay in the U.S. previously, be prepared to explain what happened clearly and concisely, with documentation, if available.

2. Practice speaking in English

Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview, but do **not** practice speeches!

If you are coming to the U.S. solely to student intensive English, be prepared to explain how English will be useful for you in your home country.

3. Speak for yourself

Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.

If you are a minor applying for a high school program and need your parents there in case there are questions, for example about funding, they should wait in the waiting room.

4. Know the program you are planning to study and how it fits your career plans

If you are not able to articulate the reasons you will study in a particular program in the U.S., you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to immigrate. You should also be able to explain how studying in the U.S. relates to your future professional career when you return home.



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10 Tips for Your Visa Interview Continued

5. Be brief

Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impression they form during the first minute of the interview. What you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers to the officer's questions short and to the point.

6. Bring additional documentation

It should be immediately clear to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated.

7. Know that not all countries are created equal

Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries, where many students have remained in the U.S. are immigrants, will have more difficulty getting visas.

Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their study in the U.S.

8. Don't concentrate on employment

Your main purpose in coming to the U.S. should be to study, not for the chance to work before or after graduation.

While many students do work off-campus during their studies, such employment is incidental to their main purposes of completing their education in the U.S. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program.

If your spouse is also applying for an accompanying F-2 visa, be aware that F-2 dependents cannot, under any circumstance, be employed in the U.S. If asked, be prepared to address what your spouse intends to do with his or her time while in the U.S. Volunteer work and attending school part-time are permitted activities.



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10 Tips for Your Visa Interview Continued

9. How to discuss dependents remaining at home

If your spouse and children are remaining home behind in your country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence.

This can be especially tricky if you are the primary source of income for your family. If the consular officer gains the impression that your family will need you to remit money from the U.S. in order to support themselves, your student visa application will almost certainly be denied.

If your family does decide to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at the same post where you applied for your visa.

10. Maintaining a positive attitude

Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied a student visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and try to get the reason you were denied in writing.

Source: Excerpt from NAFSA website: NAFSA would like to credit Gerald A. Wunsch, Esq., 1997, then a member of the Consular Issues Working Group, and a former U.S. Consular Officer in Mexico, Suriname, and the Netherlands; and Martha Wailes of Indiana University for their contributions to this document. NAFSA also appreciates the input of the U.S. Department of State.

Visa Delay or Denial

If you are denied a visa, you will be informed of the reason for the denial and be given the opportunity to reappear if you can provide additional evidence to support your case.

Note: Nationals of certain countries, and all internationals whose area of study has been deemed sensitive by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, will have their names submitted for a special security clearance procedure that may take up to 4-6 weeks before a visa is issued. Disciplines such as nuclear technology, chemical and biotechnology engineering, and advanced computer or microelectronic technology, as well as a broad range of engineering and physical sciences are on the "Technology Alert List." Students in these fields should expect delays in obtaining visas at consulates abroad.

Before reapplying, be sure you understand the grounds for your denial so that you can appeal effectively.



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VISA CHECK LIST

- Received Form I-20 from CMU

- Paid SEVIS Fee of \$200.00

- Completed and Submitted Form DS-160

- Scheduled interview appointment at U.S. embassy or consulate

- Prepared all required documentation for interview

- Prepared for interview