

APPLYING FOR THE F-1 VISA AT AN AMERICAN CONSULATE

As an international student, it is very important for you to prepare yourself for the visa application process. Remember that everyone considered an alien (someone with non-US resident status) who walks into the Consulate's office is assumed to be intending to immigrate to the United States of America. Therefore you need to prove that your stay will be temporary to pursue your course of study. Approximately 80% of student's visas are denied due to this legal reason. As of August 1, 2003 all students are required to undergo an interview at the US Consulate in order to obtain an F-1 student visa.

What is Needed to Apply for a Student Visa?

All applicants for a student visa *must* provide:

- A SEVIS Form I-20 obtained from a U.S. college or university. Please be sure to give the US Consulate all three pages of the I-20 form. The official SEVIS I-20 will have a barcode on the right hand side of the first and third pages. The form must also be signed by you and by a school official in the appropriate places; The I-20 shows the costs involved in pursuing your education, any scholarships that you may have received, the academic level you are planning to achieve and the length of stay at the institution. These are all aspects you must be able to prove to the Consulate. Remember that you can only obtain an F-1 student visa to ONE institution at a time. If you have multiple I-20s from multiple institutions, you can only provide ONE I-20 to the Consulate. If you receive your visa to that institution, it is **mandatory** for you to attend that institution.
- A completed non-immigrant visa application form (DS-156) with photo for each person applying. A separate form is needed for children, even if they are included in a parent's passport. These forms are available at the Embassy at no charge. You can also obtain this form from the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration (BCIS) website at www.immigration.gov.
- A passport valid for at least six (6) months after your proposed date of entry into the United States.
- A receipt for visa processing fee. A receipt showing payment of the visa application fee for each applicant, including each child listed in a parent's passport who is also applying for a U.S. visa, is needed.

All applicants *should be prepared* to provide:

- Transcripts and diplomas from previous institutions attended.
- Scores from standardized tests required by the educational institution such as the TOEFL, SAT, GRE, GMAT, IELTS etc.
- A good explanation of why you chose Goldey-Beacom College and clear plans of what you intend to do upon graduation. These plans should always include the fact that you are planning to return to your home country.

Financial Documentation

You must also submit a rational explanation of support. The amount should total at least 1 year's expenses. A notarized affidavit of support along with bank statements may be able to help your case. Also, show proof of ownership on real estate, stocks bonds or other investments.

The Consulate prefers you to be personally funded. You should have the money yourself or it should come from your mother/father. A distant relative, friend or other third party may sponsor you, but it makes things more difficult. You must explain why the distant relative or third party is willing to spend the money for your education. For example if a friend in the United States is willing to sponsor, you must be able to explain why they will invest in your future and if there will be a transfer of funds at a later date.

Another idea is to prepay the amount to the Institution. In turn, the Institution will send a receipt to clarify that all payments have been made prior to the arrival. Also, bring a listing of any scholarships earned to help finance the education. However, one must never say that he/she will work in the United States to raise the money. The Consulate will then think that your intention is to stay in the United States permanently.

Sometimes, there are incidents dealing with "Black Money." This is when the total family income is not reported to the foreign tax authorities. In this case, it would help to be honest and explain the money which the family has access to. The Consulate will not report this incident to the authorities because it is not of their concern.

Please remember to apply for you visa far in advance to the start of the semester. Due to new regulations and stricter guidelines, the processing time has lengthened. The time may be anywhere from 20 days to 3-4 months. Once you secure your appointment, please let us know.

Good Luck!!