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## **INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL F-1 & J-1 STUDENTS**

F-1 and J-1 students must carry specific documentation to reenter the US to study after a temporary absence or vacation. Speak with an OIE advisor if you will be out of the US for more than 5 months. Your immigration status could be impacted.

To reenter the US using your Carnegie Mellon I-20 or DS-2019 form you must be currently enrolled or planning to enroll for the next academic semester at Carnegie Mellon. It is prohibited to reenter the US with your student I-20/DS-2019 form once you have completed your studies unless you have received authorization to engage in Optional Practical Training, for F-1 students (OPT) or Academic Training, for J-1 students (AT), and this requires traveling with additional documentation (see below).

If you will be enrolling at another US institution when you return to the US, you must enter using an I-20/DS-2019 from that school. The only exception is if you plan to attend summer classes at another institution, but you will return to Carnegie Mellon for the Fall semester.

### **IF YOU PLAN TO TRAVEL:**

#### **STEP 1: Find out if you need a visa to enter any country(ies) you are traveling to or through**

Whether or not you need a visa to enter a specific country depends on your country of citizenship and legal permanent residence. Check with the Embassy or Consulate of each country to find out whether or not you need a visa ([www.embassy.org](http://www.embassy.org)). Applying for visas is costly and time consuming, so plan ahead. If your plane is landing in another country, you may need a visa for that country as well, even if you do not plan to exit the plane. (Note: to obtain a Canadian visitor's visa, your I-20 or DS-2019 may need a new signature).

#### **STEP 2: Review your documents to be sure you have everything you need to re-enter the US**

**A VALID PASSPORT**

Your passport must be valid at least 6 months into the future to enter and at all times in the US.

**A VALID I-20 OR DS-2019**

This document needs to be from the school you are attending or will attend upon reentry. **F-1 students on OPT will also need to travel with an EAD card and job offer letter and J-1 students on AT will also need the AT authorization letter.**

**A VALID TRAVEL SIGNATURE ON YOUR I-20 or DS-2019**

To be valid for re-entry, travel signatures must be signed by an OIE advisor *within 6 months* for F-1 students and *within 12 months* for J-1 students of the date of re-entry. Travel signatures are on page 3 of the I-20. If you are attending a new school upon reentry with a new I-20/DS-2019, you do not need a travel signature.

**A VALID US ENTRY VISA STICKER**

**EXCEPTIONS TO VISA REQUIREMENT:**

1) **Automatic Extension of Visa Validity for travel to "Contiguous territory."** If you are traveling to Canada, Mexico, or one of the islands off the US other than Cuba for pleasure or vacation for fewer than 30 days, you can return to the US using an expired US entry visa of any type, as long as you have a valid passport, I-94, and signed I-20/DS-2019 as specified above. **Note:** This does not apply to residents of Mexico or the islands who are returning to their home countries. Automatic revalidation also does not apply to citizens of Cuba, Iran, Syria and Sudan.

2) **Canadian citizens** are exempt from entry visa requirements but must enter the US with a passport.

**FINANCIAL DOCUMENTATION/PROOF OF NECESSARY FUNDS PLUS EXPENSES**

Finances can be demonstrated by:

1) a letter from your *department* stating the amount of funding you are receiving or

2) a letter from another *financial sponsor* stating the amount they are giving you, *plus supporting financial documents*, such as bank statements or salary statements. Personal funds can be demonstrated with relevant supporting documents.

### **STEP 3: Prepare for your Travel and Re-entry**

#### **IF YOU NEED TO RENEW YOUR PASSPORT:**

To renew your passport within the US, contact your country of citizenship's Embassy. [www.embassy.org](http://www.embassy.org)

#### **IF YOU NEED A SIGNATURE ON YOUR I-20/DS-2019:**

Processing time for a new signature from OIE is *3 business days*. To get your I-20/DS-2019 signed, **bring it to the front desk of OIE** any weekday between 8:30am-5:00pm, complete a request form, and return 3 days later to pick up the signed I-20/DS-2019. Do not wait until the last minute or you may have to travel without your I-20/DS-2019 or have to postpone your travel plans.

#### **IF YOU NEED A NEW US ENTRY VISA STICKER IN YOUR PASSPORT:**

If you are **NOT** traveling to "**contiguous territory**" (see above) and your visa in your passport has **EXPIRED** or is not a visa for your current immigration status (i.e., it is not F-1 or J-1), plan enough time in the country you are visiting to visit the US Consulate and complete the visa application process. ***You cannot obtain an F-1 or J-1 visa from within the US.***

To obtain a new visa you must demonstrate that you have enough funding to complete your program and that your intent is to return to your home country. The Consulate may request information in addition to the signed I-20 or DS-2019, such as:

- ❖ additional proof of financial support aside from that on the I-20 or DS-2019 (bank statements for those with personal funds or department letters for those with CMU support).
- ❖ additional proof of student status (the HUB can provide an official letter in 5 working days).
- ❖ proof that you have no intention of immigrating to the US (this is difficult, but could include future job offers at home, property, strong family ties, etc.).

These documents may not be necessary. However, you should be prepared with this documentation just in case. If you have relatives that are US citizens or permanent residents, you may have difficulty obtaining an F or J visa.

**APPLYING FOR A VISA IN A THIRD COUNTRY** If you are traveling to a country which is not your country of citizenship or permanent residence (i.e., a "third" country), you may have some difficulty in renewing your visa - **talk to an OIE advisor before planning to apply for a visa in a third country, so that you know your options**. If you are NOT maintaining legal status, immigration rules make it impossible to obtain a US entry visa in a third country. If you try to apply for a visa from a third country, you may need to show evidence that you have been maintaining legal status (such as copies of previously issued I-20s, visas, proof of continuous school attendance, etc.). In most cases, a recent travel signature will verify maintenance of status to consular officials, but in some cases the Consulate may want to see additional evidence. Therefore, it helps to be prepared with the following: letters confirming your student status and funding, transcripts (from all current and previous US schools), and copies of ALL previously issued I-20s/DS-2019s and visas. To obtain more information on visa requirements, visit the State Department's website: <http://www.usembassy.gov>

### **OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

#### **A. Graduating Students**

The OIE advisor cannot sign your I-20 or DS-2019 once you have graduated unless you have applied for post-completion practical or academic training. Do not make plans to travel out of the country and return on your same student documents after you have completed your studies without contacting OIE to ask about your situation.

#### **B. Students Authorized for Optional Practical Training or Academic Training**

Students who travel while on OPT or AT are required to travel with additional documentation (detailed above). Students who travel while on OPT/AT (and particularly those who must obtain a new visa stamp to reenter the US) run a greater risk of not being readmitted to the US. Please read the OPT/AT handouts or ask OIE for more details.

#### **C. Dependents**

The information above applies to F-2 and J-2 dependents as well. In case of travel to other countries (other than "contiguous territory") the dependent must have an F-2 or J-2 entry visa. In addition, the dependent should carry photocopies of all pertinent immigration documentation of the F-1 or J-1 principal.

#### **D. Security Clearances and Visa Delays**

If your field of study or research might be considered a "sensitive" field that has direct or indirect military application(s), you should understand the information related to the Technology Alert List ("TAL") IF you will be applying for a new visa at a US consulate overseas. Application of the TAL during the visa application process will lead to a security check, and inherent delays in obtaining the US visa. However, not all visa applicants are subject to the TAL. Contact an OIE advisor to discuss your particular visa situation.