

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING YOUR F-1 VISA OBLIGATIONS

As an international student, your college experience will be a little different than that of many Furman students. You have specific expectations regarding your travel, work, and academics, and it is important that you are familiar with these so that you can continue to study in the U.S. If you have any questions about the information below or your visa in general, please contact Ms. Yancey Greene at yancey.greene@furman.edu, 294-3092, or in the Office for Study Away and International Education, Johns Hall 112-C, and set up a meeting to discuss your questions. If you aren't sure whether something could affect your visa status, it is always better to ask and be sure. Also, realize that processing many kinds of visa-related requests requires a significant amount of time – the sooner you are in touch about your visa-related need, the better.

IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS AND TRAVEL

You are already familiar with the **Form I-20** which you used to apply for your visa. This was issued by Furman University and provides proof that you were invited by Furman to come to the United States to study. When your visa was approved, you received a **visa stamp** in your **passport**. It is important that both of these documents stay up-to-date; once your visa stamp expires you can arrange to get a new stamp at any U.S. embassy or consulate outside of the U.S. It is o.k. if your visa stamp expires while you are in the U.S.; you must have an updated one to *enter* the U.S. Additionally, you should always apply with your home country government to renew your passport at least six months before it expires. At your port of entry into the U.S., an immigration official also stamped an **I-94 Departure Record** card and likely stapled that into your passport. This is your proof of arrival in the U.S. and you will be required to surrender it at the airport or border any time you leave the country; if you are only leaving for a vacation from school you will receive a new I-94 Departure Record card when you return.

Any time you leave the U.S. (to visit your home country or any other country) you must be sure that the travel authorization line on the second page of your Form I-20 has been signed within the last year by someone from the Office for Study Away and International Education AND carry with you the four original documents listed in bold above (be sure not to pack them in your suitcase!). It is also advisable to carry photocopies of all the documents with you and be sure that the Office for Study Away and International Education has copies of your most recent documents.

MAINTAINING STATUS

When you arrived in the United States, your immigration documents were marked with a stamp that says “D/S,” an abbreviation for “Duration of Status.” This means that you can legally remain in the U.S. as long as you comply with the terms of your F-1 visa, that is, as long as you maintain status. In order to assure that we can communicate with you and help you to maintain status, it is imperative that you keep the Office for Study Away and International Education informed with your most recent contact information *and* that you check your e-mail regularly. Most correspondence from the Office will be by e-mail. Federal requirements state that to maintain status, you must:

- Report to the Office for Study Away and International Education within **TWO WEEKS** of the start of classes *each term* so that you can be registered with the federal government as being on-campus for the current term
- Attend the school authorized on your Form I-20 (Furman University)
- Carry a full course of study and make normal progress towards completion of your degree. If you begin to have academic difficulty in your classes, please see someone in the Office immediately so that we can advise you. **DO NOT** withdraw from a class without first notifying someone in the Office for Study Away and International Education.
- Refrain from unauthorized work (see “Working in the United States” section below to learn what constitutes unauthorized work)
- Maintain health insurance. This requires purchasing Furman’s plan or having an alternate plan approved by Mrs. Janie Burton in Financial Services.
- Maintain a valid passport (renew at least six months before it will expire)
- When traveling abroad, always return in proper F-1 status (if your visa will expire before you re-enter the U.S., this will require getting a new visa stamp in your passport)
- If you move (either on- or off-campus), report a change of address to the Office for Study Away and International Education within ten days of the change
- Obey all state and federal laws
- File timely requests with the Office for Study Away and International Education for a transfer, withdrawal, program extension, optional practical training, and other benefits

WORKING IN THE UNITED STATES

As an F-1 visa holder, you are eligible to work without special approval on-campus up to twenty hours a week while classes are in session and up to forty hours per week during school holidays. The Student Employment Office can help you locate an on-campus job opportunity.

No special approval is needed for on-campus work within the weekly hours described above. However, if you would like to work or intern *off-campus*, you must seek one of the two types of approval described below AND must attend a mandatory workshop which covers issues related to CPT and OPT, typically offered in February. E-mail notification of the workshop dates and times will be sent out.

If you would like to enroll in a credit-bearing course for work that is done off-campus (i.e. an internship course for your major), you typically must seek approval for Curricular Practical Training (CPT). Total employment can still only be up to twenty hours per week during the school year and up to forty hours per week during school vacations. Approval is contingent upon course enrollment and a written offer of employment.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit associated with your F-1 visa which allows you to work up to 12 months (total) *during or after* your degree program at an off-campus location as long as the employment is related to your degree program. Acceptable hours of employment are the same as for CPT.

****The following websites provide more information related to F-1 visa regulations:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html

<http://www.ice.gov/sevis/faq.htm>