

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Mt. Sierra College is proud to accept qualified international students. If you are not a citizen or permanent resident of the United States and wish to study in the United States, you will need to apply as a nonimmigrant (international) student. Nonimmigrant students are governed by the United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS). We recommend that you visit their website at <http://uscis.gov> for information about becoming a nonimmigrant student in the United States. You will also find useful information on the United States Immigration & Customs Enforcement website at www.ice.gov.

To support our international students, we offer assistance from the initial inquiry through graduation and beyond. The College has a designated International Student Advisor to address the special needs and concerns of international students. The International Student Advisor is trained to assist students in maintaining legal student status while attending Mt. Sierra College. I-20 certificates are issued to all international students accepted by Mt. Sierra College, who can then obtain F-1 student visas from the U.S. Consulate. Academic and personal advising is offered when needed.

Mt. Sierra College is not a residential campus and does not have room and board facilities. However, housing is readily available in the city of Monrovia and surrounding communities. Accommodations range from hotels with cooking facilities to apartment complexes. Convenient public transportation is available. There are also many shops and restaurants in the local area.

Prior to the first day of classes, you will be required to attend an Academic Orientation, either on campus, or for those students enrolled in an online program, on the Mt. Sierra College Student Portal. This orientation is designed to provide an introduction to the College administration and staff, and to acquaint you with Mt. Sierra College procedures and policies.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADMISSION POLICY

International applicants must meet the basic admission requirements to the College as well as all USCIS requirements. International applicants who plan to complete an online degree program while residing outside the United States are NOT required to apply for an F-1 visa, so do not need to meet requirements 7-13. All others must fulfill all of the following requirements.

Admission to the College (all applicants):

1. Application for Admission, accompanied by non-refundable application fee (\$50)
2. Proof of High School Graduation
3. High School and/or College transcripts
4. Mt. Sierra College Math & Writing Assessments

International Applicant Requirements (in addition to the requirements above):

5. Proof of English Proficiency. This may be met by one (1) of the following:
 - a. Official TOEFL results.
Required Score: 213 on computer or internet based exam
500 on paper-based exam
 - b. Official transcripts from a recognized ESL center certifying successful completion of an advanced ESL program
 - c. Official transcripts showing completion of a minimum of 18 quarter credit hours of substantive academic courses with a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or

- higher at an accredited post-secondary institution where English was the language of instruction.
6. Notification of Permanent Address in country of origin.
 7. Notarized Statement of Financial Support. This includes three items:
 - a. Form I-134: Declaration and Certification of Finances
 - b. Letter from sponsor indicating the intent to sponsor the applicant for the duration of studies
 - c. Letter from the sponsor's bank indicating the ability to meet the applicant's estimated living expenses of approximately \$35,000 per year.

International applicants transferring from another institution in the United States must also provide the following:

8. I-94 card
9. Official transcripts from all US institutions attended
10. Copies of all previous I-20 forms
11. Transfer Authorization Document from prior school – Form I-20 A-B
12. Copy of passport
13. Copy of US Visa

Foreign Credentials

A detailed evaluation by a recognized credentials evaluation service is required for all documents submitted from foreign institutions. The evaluation must include degrees and the U.S. equivalence, grades, credits, and overall grade point average. If English was the primary language of instruction at the institution, the evaluation should indicate this.

A list of accepted credentials evaluators is available upon request from the Academic Affairs Office. If you are seeking transfer credit for courses completed out of the country, course descriptions such as are provided in an academic catalog, should be submitted to your enrollment manager.

YOUR F-1 STUDENT VISA

Mt. Sierra College is authorized to issue a USCIS I-20 certificate upon fulfillment of the requirements listed above so that you may obtain an F-1 Student Visa. Your F-1 visa will remain valid as long as you are enrolled as a full-time student, remain in good academic standing, and show sufficient progress. However, Mt. Sierra College is required to notify the USCIS should you cease to attend college for any reason.

Keep your I-20 current.

This is an important document so keep it with you at all times and don't let it expire! You need this document when you:

- A. Travel outside of the U.S.
- B. Apply for campus employment or employment through practical training options.
- C. Transfer to another school.
- D. Apply for a social security card and a driver's license or identification.

Keep your passport valid at all times.

If your passport expires, you may not be able to travel to your home country. This is very important in cases of emergency. Your passport can be renewed at the nearest consulate of your country and addresses and phone numbers of many consulates are available online.

Know when your visa expires (your visa is the stamp in your passport).

A visa allows you entry into the U.S. If it expires while you are studying, you will need to renew it the next time you return home. To avoid difficulties in re-entering the U.S., discuss all travel plans with the International Student Advisor. It is not possible to renew your visa while you are in the U.S. The renewal of your visa must be done at a U.S. Consulate outside the U.S. The best choice is the Consulate in your home country.

Always enroll in a full program of study.

Undergraduate students must carry a minimum of 12 units per quarter. USCIS regulations limit international students to one online course per term. The majority of courses each term must be completed on campus.

If you travel out of the U. S. have your I-20 signed and updated by the International Student Advisor BEFORE you travel.

Bring your I-20 to the office at least 5 days before you travel. You will need an endorsed I-20 to cross the border into Canada or Mexico, even if you are going for a few hours. I-20's are not needed for travel in the 50 states of the U.S. However, if you travel to the San Diego area you should carry your I-20, as there are immigration checkpoints in the region.

Notify the International Student Advisor in advance if you:

1. Plan to take a quarter off for any reason, including health and financial problems
2. Change your major and/or your graduation date changes
3. Plan to transfer to another school
4. Graduate
5. Move
6. Have an I-20 that is going to expire.

Notify the International Student Advisor if you move.

Mt. Sierra College is required to keep your current residential address on file, as well as your permanent address in your country of origin. A post office box number is not sufficient.

I-94: Arrival And Departure Record

You will receive this white card when you arrive in the U.S. Together with your I-20, it is your permit to reside and must be given to officials at the border when you depart the U.S., except when visiting Canada or Mexico for less than 30 days. Your I-94 is valid as long as you are enrolled as a full-time student in good standing. Just like your F-1 visa, your I-94 remain valid for 60 days after graduation.

WORK OPPORTUNITIES

1. **On-Campus Employment**—International students in good academic standing who are pursuing a full course of study may work on campus up to 20 hours per week, or 40 hours per week during vacations. Students must receive permission from the International Student Advisor and have the back of their I-20 signed appropriately. Students must have a social security number and all on-campus work must terminate at graduation.

2. Optional Practical Training (OPT)—Practical training (such as preparation for certifications) is granted to students who are in good standing and who have been studying in the U.S. for at least nine months or three quarters. An F1 student may apply for OPT before and/or after completion of study. OPT must relate directly to your field of study and is limited to one year. An F1 student may apply for post-completion optional practical training 120 days before completion of his/her program of study and no later than 60 days after completion of his/her program of study. Details are available on the USCIS website.

3. Curricular Practical Training (CPT)—An F1 student may also participate in academic internships, cooperative education and similar programs, when those programs are an integral part of their curriculum. Undergraduate students may apply for CPT after having been in F1 status for nine months or three quarters.

INFORMATION for NONIMMIGRANT STUDENTS

For your convenience, the following information from the USCIS website has been provided. However, U.S. immigration laws are very complex. It is your responsibility to be aware of USCIS and ICE regulations and to remain in compliance with those regulations, as well as any regulations governed by your country of origin. We recommend that you check the USCIS website regularly for updated information.

Mt. Sierra College assumes no liability associated with matters of immigration and student eligibility or suitability for training beyond our own admissions requirements. No official or employee of the College is authorized or qualified to advise students on matters of immigration.

Note: Mt. Sierra College students are classified as F-Academic Students.

From the USCIS website, February 21, 2006:

“The Immigration and Nationality Act provides two nonimmigrant visa categories for persons wishing to study in the United States. The "F" visa is reserved for nonimmigrants wishing to pursue academic studies and/or language training programs, and the "M" visa is reserved for nonimmigrants wishing to pursue nonacademic or vocational studies.

F-Academic Students and M-Vocational Students Requirements

Foreign students seeking to study in the U.S. may enter in the F-1 or M-1 category provided they meet the following criteria:

The student must be enrolled in an "academic" educational program, a language-training program, or a vocational program;

The school must be approved by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS);

The student must be enrolled as a full-time student at the institution;

The student must be proficient in English or be enrolled in courses leading to English proficiency;

The student must have sufficient funds available for self-support during the entire proposed course of study; and

The student must maintain a residence abroad which he/she has no intention of giving up.

...specific information about becoming an academic student in the United States.

Who is Allowed to Study in the United States?

A nonimmigrant is someone admitted to the U.S. temporarily for a specific purpose. People who are coming to the United States to pursue full-time academic or vocational studies are usually admitted in one of two nonimmigrant categories. The F-1 category includes academic students in colleges, universities, seminaries, conservatories, academic high schools, other academic institutions, and in language training.

What Does the Law Say?

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) governs the admission of all people to the United States. For the part of the law concerning temporary admissions to the United States, please see INA § 214. The specific eligibility requirements and procedures for applying for academic student status are included in the Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] at 8CFR § 214.2(f).

How Do I Apply?

How do I apply if I am outside of the United States? You first must apply to study at a USCIS-approved school in the United States. When you contact a school that you are interested in attending, you should be told immediately if the school accepts foreign national students. If you are accepted, the school should give you USCIS Form I-20 A-B/ID (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status - for Academic and Language Students). If you require a visa, then you should take the USCIS Form I-20 to the nearest U.S. consulate to obtain a student visa. Only bring the USCIS Form I-20 from the school *you plan on attending* for visa processing at the U.S. consulate. You must also prove to the consulate that you have the financial resources required for your education and stay in the United States. Please see the State Department Website for more information on visa processing.

When you arrive in the United States, you should receive a Form I-94 (Arrival-Departure Record) that will include your admission number to the United States. An Immigration inspector will write this admission number on your USCIS Form I-20 A-B/ ID. The Immigration Inspector will then send pages one and two of this form, known as I-20 A-B, to your school as a record of your legal admission to the United States. You are expected to keep pages three and four, known as the I-20 ID. This document is your proof that you are allowed to study in the United States as an F-1 student. You should see your designated school official (DSO) if you need a replacement copy of your I-20 ID. You should also keep safe your Form I-94, because it proves that you legally entered the United States. If you need a replacement copy of your Form I-94, please see How Do I Get an Arrival-Departure Record?.

How Can I Change My Nonimmigrant Status to Become a Student If I Am Already in the

United States? You first must apply to study at a USCIS-approved school in the United States*. When you contact a school that you are interested in attending, you should be told immediately if the school accepts foreign national students. If you are accepted, the school should send you USCIS Form I-20 A-B/ID (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status - for Academic and Language Students). You must submit this form and a USCIS Form I-539 (Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status) to the USCIS. You must also prove that you have the financial resources required for your education and stay in

the United States. For more information, please see How Do I Get Permission to Change to a New Nonimmigrant Status?.

**Please be aware that if you have been admitted as a B-1 (Temporary Visitor for Business) or B-2 (Temporary Visitor for Pleasure) visa holder, you may not begin your program studies until your application for these studies is approved.*

How Do I Apply for Permission to Transfer Schools? You must be a full time student in good academic standing. You must notify your current school of your intent to transfer. You must ask the school that you plan on attending to give you a new USCIS Form I-20 A-B/ID (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status - for Academic and Language Students). You must complete your portion of the USCIS Form I-20 and give it to your new designated school official (DSO) within 15 days of transferring. The designated school official (DSO) should give you the last two pages, known as Form I-20 ID, and forward a copy of the first two pages, known as Form I-20 A-B, to the USCIS and your prior school.

Can I Bring My Spouse and Children with Me to the United States? Your spouse and children may come with you to the United States in F-2 status. They should go with you to the U.S. embassy or consulate when you apply for your student (F-1) visa. They should be prepared to prove their relationship to you. If your spouse or children are following to join you at a later date, they should provide the U.S. embassy staff with a copy of your USCIS Form I-20 ID (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status - for Academic and Language Students) and proof of their relationship to you. The F-2 status of your family will be dependent upon your status as the F-1 academic student. This means that if you change your status, your family must change their status. If you lose your status, your family will also lose their status. (For more information on changing status, please see How Do I Get Permission to Change to a New Nonimmigrant Status?)

How Long Can I Stay in the United States?

You are allowed to stay in the United States for as long as you are enrolled as a full-time student in an educational program and making normal progress toward completing your course of study. If approved, you also will be allowed to stay in the country up to twelve additional months beyond the completion of your studies to pursue practical training. At the end of your studies or practical training, you will be given sixty days to prepare to leave the country. See 8 CFR § 214.2 for more complete time limits.

How Can I Extend My Stay as a Student in the United States?

You do not need to apply to extend your stay in the United States as long as you are maintaining your student status and making normal progress toward completing your academic course of study. The designated school official (DSO) from your school will write down a completion date on your USCIS Form I-20 A-B (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status - for Academic and Language Students). Under normal circumstances, you should be able to complete your studies by this date. If you need to extend your stay for compelling academic or medical reasons, then you and the designated school official (DSO) should fill out USCIS Form I-538 (Certification By Designated School Official) and send it to the USCIS student data center at least 30 days before the completion date listed on USCIS Form I-20 A-B.

Will I Get a Work Permit?

You may be allowed to work on-campus or off-campus (after the completion of your first year of study) under limited circumstances. Please see the rules on student employment at 8 CFR 214.2 (f) . You may also wish to discuss employment with the designated school official (DSO) at your school. Your accompanying spouse and child may not accept employment.

Can I Travel Outside the United States?

Students may leave the United States and be readmitted after absences of five months or less. Upon your return to the United States, you should provide immigration inspectors with:

A valid passport.

A valid F-1 entry visa stamped in the passport (if necessary).

A current USCIS Form I-20 ID (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status - for Academic and Language Students) signed by your appropriate school official (you should have the appropriate school official sign your USCIS Form I-20 each time you wish to temporarily travel outside the United States).

A new USCIS Form I-20 A-B/I-20 ID if there have been any substantive changes in your course of study or place of study.

Proof of your financial support.

When making your travel plans, please remember that you must be a full-time student to keep your F-1 student status. You will be considered to be "in status" if you take the annual summer vacation, as long as you are eligible and intend to register for the next school term.

How Can I Get USCIS Forms?

You should be able to pick up immigration-related forms from your designated school official (DSO). Only your designated school official (DSO) can give you a USCIS Form I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status - for Academic and Language Students) or a USCIS Form I-538 (Certification By Designated School Official). If you would like other immigration forms, you may call 1-800-870-3676, or submit a request through our forms by mail system. For further information on filing fees, please see USCIS filing fees, fee waiver request procedures, and the USCIS fee waiver policy memo .

Can Anyone Help Me?

Your school will have a designated school official (DSO) to help you with immigration issues. Please note that you (the F-1 student) are solely responsible for following U.S. immigration laws.”