
TEN POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN APPLYING FOR A NONIMMIGRANT VISA

(Modified from NAFSA, Association of International Educators & the U.S. Department of State)

*You may apply for your visa up to 120 days prior to your start date. Please check the embassy website for information on how to schedule your appointment. **Enter the following information for contact person on the visa application form: Krishna Thomas, Eastern Illinois University, 600 Lincoln Avenue, Charleston, Illinois, 61920-3099, USA. Phone: +001 (217) 581-2321***

1. 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 countries 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 prospects in your home country. Each person’s situation is different and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter that will guarantee visa issuance.

2. DOCUMENTATION: Evidence of sufficient funds to cover expenses as well as evidence of scholastic preparation may be requested. Make sure to include your letter of acceptance from Eastern Illinois University along with your I-20. If you have immediate family members (parents, siblings) in the U.S., be prepared to explain why they are here and what they are doing in the U.S. It should be immediately clear to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be read quickly or evaluated. Remember that the interview time is typically less than ten minutes. **For additional information, please see the web sites listed on next page.**

3. LANGUAGE: 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 prepare speeches. Americans generally use direct eye contact when communicating so it is advisable to do the same.

4. 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 (under age 18) and need your parents there in case there are questions, for example about funding, they should wait in the waiting room.

5. KNOW THE PROGRAM 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 United States, 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. Lastly, be prepared to answer the following question: *What will you do if your visa application is denied?*

6. 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 impressions they form during the first minute of the interview. Consequently, 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 and remember to speak clearly.

7. NOT ALL COUNTRIES ARE EQUAL: Applicants from countries with a history of terrorist activities may encounter additional scrutiny. Countries suffering economic problems or applicants from countries where students have remained in the U.S. as immigrants may have more difficulty obtaining visas – statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be intending to immigrate. If you are from such a country, you may be asked about job opportunities at home after your study in the U.S.

8. EMPLOYMENT: Your main purpose in coming to the United States should be to study, not for the chance to work after graduation. While a number of students do work over the course of their studies, such employment requires authorization and is incidental to the main purpose of completing their U.S. education. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program.

9. APPLY IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY: Applicants for student visas should generally apply at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate with jurisdiction over their place of permanent residence. Although visa applicants may apply at any U.S. consular office abroad, it may be more difficult to qualify for the visa outside the country of permanent residence.

10. MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE: Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied a student visa, **request the reason you were denied in writing** and ask the officer for a list of documents to bring in order to overcome the denial.

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.

Additional information may be found on the websites listed below:

- www.unitedstatesvisas.gov ~ Student Visa Information
- www.travel.state.gov ~ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs
- http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html Student visa link for site listed above
- <http://educationusa.state.gov/> ~ Education USA; Your Guide to Higher Education in the United States
- www.uscis.gov ~ General Immigration Services

SEVIS I-901 FEE

Students are required to pay a fee to support SEVIS (the Student & Exchange Visitor Information System); a web-based program which tracks information on non-immigrant students studying in the United States. SEVIS is administered by the Student & Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP).

The SEVIS fee must be paid prior to submitting the application for your student visa. The online & paper application, directions for payment and frequently asked questions may be found on this website: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm>

IMPORTANT: You will need your SEVIS I-901 fee payment receipt when you apply for your visa at the consulate. If you are able to make this payment using a credit or debit card, you may print the receipt upon submitting the payment online. Payment may be submitted by mail using a check or money order (see below). If paying by mail, please expect the return of the receipt showing proof of payment to take at least two weeks or more.

SEVP accepts payment online by:

- Visa, MasterCard or American Express credit cards
- Western Union Quick Pay

Credit cards can only be used when paying the SEVIS I-901 fee and filing in the Form I-901 online at www.fmjfee.com

SEVP requirements for payment by check or money order:

Your check or money order must be an international money order or a foreign draft drawn on a financial institution in the United States and payable in United States currency. Checks must be from one of the following:

- Banks chartered or operated in the United States
- Foreign subsidiaries of United States banks
- Foreign banks that have an arrangement with a United States bank to issue a check, money order or foreign draft that is drawn on a United States bank.

Please make checks and money orders payable to I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee

***If you are unable to make this payment by the means offered above, please contact me immediately.*

If your visa should be denied, you will not be required to submit an additional fee if you apply again within twelve months of the initial payment.

QUESTIONS? Please contact Krishna Thomas at kpthomas@eiu.edu, +001 (217) 581-2321