F-1 Visa Application Tips

This information is for people who plan to enter the United States for the first time to study on an F-1 visa. For information on bringing dependents to the U.S., returning to continue studies, or renewing your visa, or for more details on how to apply for a student visa, refer to the U.S. Department of State.

STEPS
1. Contact your local U.S. Consulate or Embassy to ask about how to get an F-1 international student visa.

2. After you receive an I-20 form from Union University, follow the U.S. Embassy/Consulate's instructions to schedule an interview for your F-1 student visa. It is important to apply for your student visa as far in advance as possible. Many consulates recommend that appointments be made no more than 90 days from the intended date of travel, but some can make earlier arrangements for interviews.

3. Pay the visa application fee by following instructions on your local U.S. Embassy's or Consulate's web site.

4. If your I-20 was issued on or after September 1, 2004, and is marked for “Initial attendance” (see #3 on your I-20 form), you will also need to pay the $200 SEVIS fee.

To Pay Online
Find the I-901 Form

Complete the form online and supply the necessary Visa, MasterCard or American Express information. *Be sure to write your name exactly how it appears on your I-20 form.*

Print a copy of the online receipt.

Be sure to make copies of your receipt, and keep it with your other important immigration documents

You must bring the receipt of fee payment with you to the interview. If you have lost the receipt, the Visa Officer should be able to view your payment history in his or her database.

If you are transferring schools, extending your program, applying for an F-2 dependent visa, or have paid this fee and been denied a visa within the last twelve months, you do not need to pay the $200 SEVIS fee.
To Pay By Mail
Get a Form I-901 “Fee Remittance for Certain F, J, and M Nonimmigrants."
Download the I-901 form or
Ask for the form by phone at 800.870.3676 (inside the Unhited States)
Complete the Form I-901. Be sure to write your name exactly how it appears on your I-20 form.

Prepare a check, international money order or foreign draft (drawn on US banks only) in the amount of $200 USD, made payable to "The Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement."

Many foreign banks are able to issue checks or money orders drawn on a U.S. bank. You may therefore obtain a check from a bank chartered or operated in the United States, a foreign subsidiary of a U.S. bank, or a foreign bank that has an arrangement with a U.S. bank to issue a check, money order, or foreign draft that is drawn on a U.S. bank.

Mail the completed I-901 and payment to the address listed on Form I-901. A Form I-797 receipt confirmation letter should be mailed within 3 days of processing the fee. Be sure to make copies of this receipt letter, and keep it with your other important immigration documents.

5. Complete the following forms:
   DS-156 Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form
   DS-158 Contact Information and Work History for Nonimmigrant Visa Applicant
   if a male between the ages of 16 and 45, DS-157 Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application

6. Prepare and bring to your visa interview the following:
   • A passport valid for at least six months
   • Form I-20 (sign the form under Item 11)
   • School admission letter
   • Completed visa applications (DS-156, DS-158, and, if applicable, DS-157)
   • Two 2"x 2" photographs in the prescribed format
   • A receipt for the visa application fee
   • A receipt for the SEVIS fee. If you have not received an official receipt in the mail showing payment and you paid the fee electronically, the consulate will accept the temporary receipt you printed from your computer. If you do not have a receipt, the consulate may be able to see your payment electronically if your fee payment was processed at least 3 business days before your interview.
   • Financial evidence that shows you have sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period you intend to study.
   • Any information that proves that you will return to your home country after finishing your studies in the United States. This may include proof of property, family, or other ties to your community.
7. Remain calm and answer all the Visa Officer's questions to you openly and honestly. Be sure you understand your financial situation as it was listed on the Declaration of Finances form you sent to Union. Bring financial documents with you. These should be dated within a few months of date of your interview and show resources that are at least as good as what you presented to Union. You will often be asked questions such as:

- What does each of your parents do for a living and how much money do they earn?
- What is their savings and what will they give to you?
- How will they cover their other family expenses and still support you in the USA?
- If you have a sponsor, then you must know that same answers about that person/organization's finances also.

Be prepared to defend the reason you chose Union, and your major area of study.

Officials are looking for evidence that you have strong ties to your own country. They want to verify that your time in the USA will be temporary—to study—and that you do plan to return to your own country when your education is complete.

Bring your Union University letter of admission, tuition information, test scores, and transcripts from all the schools you attended in your own country.