Applying to Change Visa Status within the U.S.

To change from one visa status to another within the United States, you must currently hold a valid visa status and must remain in the U.S. until a decision on the change of visa status application has been made.

The change of visa status application requires the following documentation to be submitted to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS):

- A personal/cashiers check or money order for $290.00 payable to the Department of Homeland Security
- I-539 form (available at www.uscis.gov under “forms”)
- A letter (signed and dated) explaining your reasons for changing status
- A photocopy of the I-20 issued by Madison Area Technical College for the purpose of changing visa status. This document has 3 pages, and must be signed and dated on page 1 at item # 11. This is referred to as the “Certificate of Eligibility” in the application instructions.
- Original I-94 card, if you were issued a paper I-94 card upon arrival to the U.S. or during a change of visa status. If you do not have a paper I-94 card, find directions for printing one at http://madisoncollege.edu/i-94-cardarrival-record.
- Photocopies of your identity, expiry, and U.S. visa stamp pages from your passport
- Photocopies of your current visa status documents, such as the visa stamp and/or adjudication approval notices and/or previously issued student visa documents, including I-20s or DS-2019s.
- Evidence of financial support for your continued stay
- Proof of SEVIS I-901 Fee payment is required when changing to a student visa status:
  - The US Federal Government requires payment of the SEVIS I-901 fee for the operation of SEVIS (the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) for individuals requesting F-1 or M-1 status. Information and instructions for payment of the fee can be found at www.fmjfee.com.
  - You must include the receipt proving payment of the SEVIS I-901 fee with your change of status application. A receipt can be printed after paying the fee online.
- If changing to or from a dependent visa status, such as H-4 or F-2, you must also include:
  - Photocopies of the primary visa holder’s (spouse or parent) current visa documentation, including I-94 card, visa stamp, and/or adjudication approval notice, etc.
  - A photocopy of the primary visa holder’s (spouse or parent) passport identity/expiry pages(s)
  - Proof of your familial relationship, such as:
    - A certified copy of your marriage license (for a spouse)
    - Birth certificate (for a child)
- If you have studied in the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 visa status previously, you must include transcripts from the U.S. educational institutions attended.

Special Considerations:
- F-2 and B-1/B-2 visa holders changing to F-1 status should not begin a program of study prior to obtaining the approval for the change of status from USCIS.
- A J-1 or J-2 visa holder with the “Two Year Home Residency” requirement [212(e)] is not eligible to change status within the U.S. However, you may apply to obtain the new visa status by applying at a U.S. Embassy/Consulate in your home country with a letter of no objection. Please note: if you have been approved for a waiver of the “Two Year Home Residency” requirement, you may apply for a Change of Status in the U.S., but you must include proof of the waiver approval with your application.

After making copies for your records, mail all items with “return receipt” requested to one of the following addresses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If using the U.S. Postal Service:</th>
<th>If using an express mail or courier service:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USCIS P.O. Box 660166 Dallas, TX 75266</td>
<td>USCIS ATTN: I-539 2501 S. State Highway 121 Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Applying to Change Visa Status within the U.S., Continued:

While Your Application Is Pending

Save your “return receipt” as proof of when you mailed your application to USCIS. The USCIS will later send you an official Receipt Notice acknowledging your application and fee. Keep all these documents for your records. The Receipt Notice will include your case number (starting with the letters WAC, if mailed to the California Service Center). You may use this case number to check your case status online at the www.uscis.gov website.

If your current visa status does not permit study, you should not begin studying until your status to F-1 has been approved. You are not eligible to receive any benefits of the F-1 status (such as on-campus work permission) until after the F-1 status has been granted. If your change of status has not been approved by the term in which you had hoped to begin studying, please discuss deferring your admission with the International Student Specialist.

If you leave the U.S. while your application is pending, the USCIS will consider your application abandoned and will no longer review your application. If you depart the U.S. after the “date certain” expiration date given to certain visa types (such as B-2, B-1, H-1B, H-4, etc.), this abandonment could seriously affect your eligibility in future visa applications, as you can be seen as overstaying your previously granted period of stay.

After Receiving Your Approval Notice*

USCIS will mail you notification of the change. The approval (and its effective date) will be stamped on the I-20 in the upper right corner and on the I-797 Notice of Approval; your revised I-94 card will also note the approved status.

After receiving the I-797 Notice of Approval, please bring your approval notice (which includes the new I-94 card in the bottom right corner) and stamped I-20 to the Center for International Education, as we must update your record in the college database. Failure to do this may jeopardize your new visa status.

If you were previously in a dependent visa status, the principal visa holder will need to update his/her records. For example, if your spouse is an F-1 or J-1 student at Madison College or another institution, your spouse must request your F-2 or J-2 record be canceled and removed from his/her I-20.

*If your change of status is denied, please contact the International Student Specialist to discuss available options.

Traveling Abroad to Apply for a Student Visa

By traveling outside the United States with a new I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility), you may apply for the F-1 visa stamp at a U.S. Embassy/Consulate. It is recommended that you apply for the visa in your home country. If you intend to apply in a country other than your own, please contact the U.S. Embassy/Consulate through which you would like to apply to receive information regarding their ability to assist you and their procedures for submitting an application as a “third country national.”

Upon your successful re-entry to the U.S., your new status will be indicated on the I-94 card as well as noted on the I-20 in the upper right corner. Please bring these documents to the Center for International Education, so we can update your record in the college database. Failure to promptly inform the Center for International Education of your new status will jeopardize your status.

For more information on how to apply for a non-immigrant student visa abroad, please refer to the “Applying for a Student Visa Abroad” handout available online or by emailing IntlStudent@madisoncollege.edu.