

MAINTAINING YOUR F-1 STATUS WITH THE CIS REGULATIONS & SEVIS

The Citizenship and Immigration Service (CIS) has implemented regulations that require LU to report information into the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). The SEVIS system collects information on students and reports academic progress to CIS. As an F-1 student, you were admitted to the U.S for “duration of status” (D/S is found on the white 1-94 card in your passport). This means you are permitted to stay in the U.S. as long as you maintain your status by fulfilling the requirements of being an F-1 student. Keep in mind that there is an important difference between an F-1 visa and F-1 status. The visa is a stamp or sticker placed in your passport by a U.S embassy or consulate and is granted for entry purposes only. F-1 status is granted when you enter the U.S. and is regulated by the CIS. Even if your visa is valid, you can lose your legal F-1 student status if you do not continue to comply with immigration laws regulating your stay in the U.S. **Keeping the following regulations is extremely important. Penalties for violating student regulations vary from: (1) applying for reinstatement, (2) voluntarily leaving the U.S., or (3) deportation.**

Overview of Government Regulations You Must Follow in Order to Maintain Your Legal Status

◆ General Information

- Maintain a valid passport at all time.
- Attend the university that the CIS has authorized you to attend.

◆ **Full-time Enrollment** – Complete a full course of study during the fall and spring semesters (12 hours per semester for all undergraduate students. No more that three credit hours of on-line or distance education courses can be counted as a full course of study. You must obtain a grade of A, B, C D, or F in all courses; a “w” (withdraw) will not qualify as completion of the course. You are not required by CIS to enroll in classes during the summer session, unless summer is your first semester in the U.S. If you believe that you need to drop a course come to the ISS **BEFORE** you drop the course. Under the new CIS requirements the ISS must report the reduced course load. This decision could create a very difficult situation.

◆ **Change of Address** – The CIS regulations require that all students report their change of address within 10 days of the change. You must report this change to ISS with 10 days so ISS may report the address change within 21 days to CIS. If your permanent housing arrangement will be available at a later time please complete a change of address form now and update your address later.

◆ **SEVIS Reporting** – Under the SEVIS reporting requirements LU will be required to report any student’s failure to complete the program or withdraw from courses, drop courses below full course of study, address change, major or level change, program completion, Optional or Curricular Practical Training, and school transfers within 21 to 30 days depending on the event.

◆ **Transfer** - Complete an official immigration transfer whenever you change educational institutions. Inform the previous school of your intent to transfer and confirm the release date. Contact ISS within 15 days of the first day of classes to begin the transfer process. The Form I-20 must be processed and reported to CIS within 30 days of enrollment by the International Students Services (ISS) - Designated School Official (DSO). Please note: An immigration transfer is a totally separate process from transferring academic credit from another school. An immigration transfer is not complete until a DSO has registered your information into SEVIS and informed CIS of the change.

◆ **Change of Level** - Obtain a new Form I-20 whenever you make a change in degree levels. This would include changing from language studies to a bachelor’s degree, from bachelor’s to master’s degree, from master’s degree to a doctorate, from Optional Practical Training to a new degree, from one level of degree to one of the same level (master’s to second master’s degree), etc. This change is a reporting event into SEVIS so it is essential that you inform ISS within 30 days of the level change. A new SEVIS Form I-20 will be issued as well as registration into SEVIS.

◆ **Change of Major** - A Form I-20 is also required when you have a change in major/department or correction in name, date of birth or citizenship. You will need to contact ISS at the time of change or correction. This is a reporting event in SEVIS.

◆ **Program Extension** - Apply for an extension of your program if you cannot complete your degree by the ending date listed on item five on your Form I-20. You can apply for a program extension any time during your course of study. You will need to contact the ISS prior to the end date of your Form I-20. The program extension will require a new Form I-20.

◆ **Employment - Work off-campus only if you have first received authorization from International Students Services or CIS. On-campus work requires an on-campus employment clearance and you must maintain your full-time status. Please Note: If you work illegally, you must leave the country or face deportation. You cannot be reinstated.** On-campus work is limited to part-time (20 hours or less per week) during fall and spring semesters. It may be full-time (more than 20-hours/ week) during summer and official school breaks.

◆ **Travel** - A new Form I-20 may be required for travel depending on the need to renew an expired visa and/or if there are major changes in your financial situation. It is important that you contact ISS in advance of your travels to obtain the appropriate documents.

◆ **Dependents** - All spouses and children must obtain their own Form I-20 while residing in the U.S. The F-2 may not enroll in a full-time course of study until the CIS has approved the change of status to an F-1.

◆ **Special Registration** - There are certain countries that are required to register at the Port of Entry and at the Port of Exit. If you have entered the U.S. and are one of the Special Registrants you may need additional information or updates; please see the ISS for updates.

◆ **Reinstatement** - If you have failed to maintain your F-1 status you will be required to apply for reinstatement to the CIS district office in Oklahoma City. The CIS regulations have been narrowed and it is important that you contact ISS if you find yourself in this situation. Due to the SEVIS reporting requirements it is essential that you follow the immigration regulations and if you have any questions please contact ISS.

◆ **Questions** - If you have any questions regarding your immigration status please contact the International Students Services in Gandy Hall Rm. 302. The ISS staff are employed by Langston University and do not work for CIS. The staff is here to assist you in understanding the CIS regulations and help you stay "in status" with CIS.