

OBTAINING A VISA

1. If you do not have a passport, you must obtain one from the appropriate office of your government. Your passport must be valid at least six months into the future at all times. It is your responsibility to be aware of the expiration date of your passport and to renew it at the appropriate time.
2. We recommend that you schedule an appointment at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate as soon as possible. Processing times for visa issuance vary and may require additional time due to security checks on applications. For the latest information on visa processing, required materials, and current listings of U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad, we recommend the following web link from the U.S. Department of State: <http://usembassy.state.gov>
3. Read carefully all information on the Form I-20, especially page two. This will explain your legal responsibilities as an F-1 student in the United States. Sign the Student Certification (#11) on page 1 of Form I-20, and provide the information requested if under the age of 18.
4. With your passport, proof of financial support, Form I-20, and acceptance letter from Greenfield Community College, go to (or mail the materials to) the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Again, consult the above link for the processing procedures in your region. The U.S. Consular Officer will review your papers, and if all is in order, issue an F-1 student visa permitting you to enter the U.S. for the purpose of studying at Greenfield Community College. Greenfield Community College will be listed on the visa in your passport. Please note: if you have received a Form I-20 from more than one school, be sure to use the I-20 of the school you plan to attend when applying for your visa; the Consular Officer will only issue the visa for one Form I-20 and will cancel all other I-20s in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System).

Important Note

When you apply for an F-1 non-immigrant visa, the U.S. Consular Officer who interviews you assumes that you plan to stay permanently in the U.S. until you prove otherwise. You will not get a visa if you do not prove to the Consular Officer that you plan to return to your home country when you complete your studies in the U.S. In order to demonstrate to the Consular Officer that you will return to your country, you must show that:

- a) You have sufficient funds to cover all your expenses for the duration of your stay in the U.S. If sponsored by an agency, be prepared to show a letter of award. If your support is from personal and/or family funds, be prepared to show bank statements, certified letters of credit, and proof of your annual salary and/or your total available or anticipated assets or that of your immediate family. If you are receiving a scholarship, be prepared to show a letter of award. At a minimum, you must prove to the satisfaction of the United States Consul that you have sufficient funds for at least one year of study. You will not be permitted to work off-campus during your first year at GCC, and jobs on-campus are limited.
- b) You have a good reason to return home when you finish your program (e.g.: all your family is in your country and not in the U.S.; you have a job awaiting you in your country; all your assets are at home and not in the U.S. etc.). You must show that you have strong ties (professional, family, financial, etc.) to your country and that you will return home upon completion of your studies.

If you cannot prove these points to the Consular Officer, you may be denied a visa.

If you are denied a visa, contact the Office of Admission IMMEDIATELY, and we may be able to contact the U.S. Consulate on your behalf. You should be given a reason for your denial and that information would be helpful for the DSO to know as they assist you.

ENTERING THE UNITED STATES

1. When you arrive in the U.S., you will be required to present your passport with valid F-1 visa, financial documents and your Form I-20 to a U.S. Immigration Inspector. Since you must show your documents before you are allowed to claim your bags, do not pack these documents in suitcases that are checked into the baggage compartment. If you arrive by air, you will show your documents in the airport at your port of entry.

Important Note

You may be interviewed twice; once at the U.S. Consulate or Embassy when you request a visa, and then again at your port of entry to the U.S. Be prepared each time, otherwise you may be denied entry to the U.S.

2. The Immigration Inspector will review your papers and then give you Form I-94, "Arrival/ Departure Record". The I-94 is a small white card that the Immigration Inspector will staple into your passport. It should read "F-1 - D/S," indicating that you have an F-1 student visa and have been granted duration of status ("D/S"). Duration of status means that as long as you are pursuing full-time study, you may legally remain in the U.S. Your I-20 should also have an annotation from the Officer indicating "F-1 - D/S". This mark is found on the upper, right-hand corner box of the I-20 that says "Immigration Official Use". You should keep both your I-94 and I-20 in your passport at all times while at Greenfield Community College.

Important Note If your I-94 does not indicate "F-1 - D/S", contact the Office of Admission immediately upon your arrival at GCC.

AFTER ARRIVAL AT GCC

You are legally required to register your immigration documents (passport, I-20, and I-94) with the DSO (Designated School Official). This is completed at the time of check in for International Students, and will need to be done within the first two weeks of classes. In addition to registering your documents, you should attend an orientation session. More information will be provided to you upon your arrival at Greenfield. We know that you will be extremely busy when you arrive, but you must attend an orientation session so that you may learn more about your responsibilities while on your F-1 Student Visa. We will discuss important topics including employment, travel, taxes, and how to maintain your visa status while you are a student at GCC. The DSO will help you with all immigration-related matters during your studies at Greenfield Community College, but it is your responsibility to maintain your F-1 visa status.

Please feel free to contact the Office of Admission at **(413) 775-1840** or via e-mail at vlaskenko@gcc.mass.edu with any questions. We look forward to meeting you soon and hope that your time at Greenfield Community College will be academically and personally rewarding.