



International Student Pre-arrival Information

Welcome! We are so happy that you will be joining our community! Sage offers many opportunities to make long lasting professional, academic and social connections for years to come!

Now that you have **been admitted and issued your Form I-20, the next steps to obtain an F-1 visa are provided in this guide.** The guide also includes tips for a successful interview and arrival to the U.S.

The F-1 visa application process next steps

To receive a visa, you will have to participate in an in-person interview. During your visa interview, you will need to establish that you meet the requirements under U.S. law to receive the category of visa for which you are applying. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/student-visa.html>

1. Pay the U.S. SEVIS I-901 fee (\$350.00 US Dollars) and print out the receipt. You will need to present this receipt at your visa appointment. **This fee is required for ALL international students who want to study in the United States.** If you have more questions about the SEVIS I-901 Fee, we invite you to visit this link: <https://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901>
2. Complete the visa application- visit <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/> and complete the Online Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application (**DS-160**). Print out the DS-160 barcode page and bring it with you to your visa appointment. **This form is required.**
3. The F-1 visa applicant must also pay and need a receipt for the visa application processing Machine Readable Visa (MRV) Fee (\$160.00 US Dollars) <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/fees/fees-visa-services.html>
4. Next, make an appointment for your visa interview at the U.S. Consulate or Embassy in your home country with jurisdiction over your place of residence. <https://www.usembassy.gov/>

Note: The embassy/consulate *will not issue your visa more than 4 months before your Form I-20's program start date.*

U.S. government officials require evidence to prove that you qualify for the F-1 visa.

What you need to have with you when you go to the visa interview

1. Original Form I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (**F-1**) **Student Status**
2. DS-160 barcode page (confirmation page with application ID number on it)
3. Machine Readable Visa (MRV) Fee Receipt (\$160.00 US Dollars)
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/fees/fees-visa-services.html>
4. Valid passport (valid at least 6 months beyond intended stay)
5. One 2X2 Photograph

6. Original letter of acceptance from Russell Sage College: Russell Sage College or Russell Sage Graduate School).
7. Original financial documents that were provided to DSO (less than 6 months old)
8. Official test scores (TOEFL, IELTS, etc.)
9. Official transcripts and diplomas
10. *Proof of ties to your home country. See #4. Below.

Tips for a successful visa interview

1. Be brief and answer questions directly and honestly.
2. Keep a positive attitude during the interview.
3. Questions asked may be:
 - a. Why do you want to study in the U.S.?
 - b. Why did you choose Russell Sage College?
 - c. What career will your studies prepare you for back home?
4. *You must assure the consul that you do plan to return home after you complete your studies. **This is the number one reason for visa denial! Present documents that show you have “ties” to your home country**, which will force you to return to your home country. These “ties” are usually **social, economic, and/or family**.
5. Practice your English as the interview will be conducted in English. You will be required to speak it and may be asked to show your TOEFL score.
6. Do not talk about working in the U.S. You must be able to demonstrate that you have the sufficient funds to support you while you are studying and living in the U.S.

Important notes after your visa interview

1. After your F-1 Student Visa is issued and before you leave the embassy/consulate, please check the visa to make sure that all data on the visa is correct. Check that your name matches your name in your passport and that it shows that it is an F-1 visa. If these items are incorrect, please ask for them to be fixed.
2. If your visa is denied, contact the DSO with complete details of what was said and what documents you presented with your application. Please send a copy of any written reason for the denial you may have been given. If you were denied based on *214(b)* grounds, you did not present enough evidence regarding your “ties” to your home country.

Once you have completed your visa process, contact a DSO by email and provide your travel plans, and estimated arrival time. DO NOT plan to enter the United States earlier than 30 days before your program start date indicated on your Form I-20. DO NOT pack your immigration documents in your suitcase.

Once you arrive in the United States

After you arrive in the United States, contact the DSO. You will have 10 days from arrival to meet with a DSO in order to be registered in the Student Exchange and Visitors System (SEVIS). This is referred to as *check-in*. Check-in occurs at the start of Fall and Spring semesters.

*** Look in your Sage email for sign up information to check-in.**

For the 1st check-in meeting with the DSO: Bring your passport, I-20, visa, I-94 record, and a copy or screen-shot of your class schedule.

An invitation from DSO, Maria Barthold to attend the **F-1 Student Regulation Information Session will be set to your sage email**. The information session is mandatory for new F-1 students.

DSO locations and contact information

Maria Barthold, Unit Manager for Student Life, DSO

Russell Sage College, Albany, Kahl Campus Center, Room 145. (Ph) +(001) 518-292-1710
barthm@sage.edu

Trish Cellemme, Vice President for Student Life, PDSO

Russell Sage College, Albany, Kahl Campus Center, Room 145 (Ph) +(001)518-292-1710
cellep@sage.edu

Stacy Gonzalez, Dean of Students, Russell Sage College, DSO

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