

Applying for Your F-1 Visa for Your Exchange Program at Goucher College

The process of obtaining all of the items necessary for entering the United States as an F-1 student for the first time can be overwhelming. Each country has different requirements with regard to obtaining an F-1 visa; however, in general, you should be prepared with the following:

1. **Passport:** You must have a passport that is valid for at least six months after your proposed date of entry into the U.S.
2. **Form I-20, Certificate of Eligibility (enclosed):** You must use the Form I-20 and the associated SEVIS ID number of the school that you plan to attend when paying SEVIS I-901 fee, applying for your F-1 visa and entering the U.S.
3. **SEVIS I-901 fee printed payment confirmation:** You must pay the \$200 federal SEVIS fee and print a payment confirmation at www.fmjfee.com. More information about this fee can be found at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/>.
4. **Nonimmigrant visa application, Form DS-160 confirmation page:** The online application can be found at <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>.
5. **Visa application fee or payment receipt:** The application fee is \$160, however, there may be an additional fee based on your nationality. You can find the fee information and appointment wait times at U.S. Embassies and Consulates at <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/study-exchange/student.html>.
6. **Photo(s):** Photos are uploaded with the online Form DS-160. Photo requirements can be found at <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/photos.html>.
7. **Financial support documents:** You should bring the documents that were used to obtain your Form I-20 including bank statements, affidavits of support, and scholarships award letters.
8. **Evidence of intent to return to your home country:** You should bring proof of your temporary exchange program, your family's residence, business and anything else that shows your ties to your home country.
9. **Academic records:** You should bring transcripts, diplomas, or certificates from schools you attended.

Strategies for the Visa Interview

Due to the volume of visa applications, all consular officials are under considerable pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impression they form during the first minute or two of the interview. Consequently, what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success.

Anticipate that the visa interview will be conducted in English. Do not bring parents or family members with you to the visa interview, as the consular officer would like to hear you speak on your own behalf. Be prepared, but do not memorize a speech.

You should expect that the consular officer will ask you why you are hoping to study through an exchange program at Goucher College; how you will be able to afford your time abroad; and what your plans are once you return. You should be prepared to indicate reasons for your return such as family obligations, property or investments that you own or will inherit, employment opportunities, and a career path improved by your exchange experience.

Visa Denial or Visa Delay

The vast majority of Goucher students will be successful in obtaining their student visas. Despite this, a small number of students may have their visa applications denied. The most common reasons for visa denial are failure to prove sufficient ties to your home country or adequate funding. The visa officer must verbally inform you of the reason for the visa denial. If your visa is denied, please notify Karen Sykes, the international student advisor by email at karen.sykes@goucher.edu and provide the date and location of your visa interview, and details regarding the reason given by the visa officer for the denial.

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