INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL F-1 & J-1 STUDENTS

F-1 and J-1 students must carry specific documentation to reenter the U.S. to study after a temporary absence or vacation. Contact an OIE advisor if you have any questions about your proposed travel plans. Scheduling an appointment with an OIE advisor is strongly advised if you will be out of the U.S. for more than 5 months as your immigration status could be impacted.

To re-enter the U.S. using your Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) I-20/DS-2019, you must be currently enrolled or planning to enroll for the next academic semester at CMU. It is prohibited to re-enter the U.S. with your I-20/DS-2019 after you have completed your studies unless you have received authorization to engage in Optional Practical Training (OPT - for F-1 students) or Academic Training (AT - for J-1 students), and this requires additional documentation (outlined below).

Review if you need an entry or transit visa to visit another country
Foreign country visitor and transit visas may be required depending on your country of citizenship and legal permanent residence. Check with the Embassy or Consulate of each country to find out if you need a visa (www.embassy.org). Applying for visas is costly and time consuming, so plan ahead. If your plane is landing in another country, you may need a visa for that country as well, even if you do not plan to exit the plane. (Note: to obtain a Canadian visitor’s visa, your I-20/DS-2019 may need a new signature).

Review your travel documents. To re-enter, you must have the documents below.

A VALID PASSPORT
Your passport must be valid at all times and at least 6 months into the future to enter the U.S.

A VALID I-20 OR DS-2019
The I-20/DS-2019 needs to be from the school you are attending or will attend upon reentry. The document must have a valid travel signature and must have a future end date. You may not reenter the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 status during your grace period.

A VALID TRAVEL SIGNATURE ON YOUR I-20 OR DS-2019
Travel signatures must be signed by an OIE advisor within 12 months for F-1 and J-1 students of the date of re-entry.

To get a new signature from OIE (Processing time is 3 business days):
Bring your I-20/DS-2019 to the front desk of OIE any weekday between 8:30am-5:00pm.
Complete a request form, and return 3 days later to pick up the signed I-20/DS-2019.
Do not wait until the last minute or you may have to travel without your document and arrange for mailing it to you, pay a rush fee, or postpone your travel plans altogether.

A VALID U.S. ENTRY VISA STICKER (with an expiration date in the future and a valid entry/multiple entries)
EXCEPTIONS TO VISA REQUIREMENT:
1) Automatic Visa Revalidation for travel. If you are traveling to Canada, Mexico, or one of the islands off the U.S. (other than Cuba) for pleasure or vacation for fewer than 30 days, you can return to the U.S. using an expired U.S. entry visa of any type. As long as, you have a valid passport, I-94 record, and signed I-20/DS-2019 as specified above. Note: This does not apply to residents of Mexico or the islands who are returning to their home countries. Automatic Revalidation also does not apply to citizens of Cuba, Iran, Syria and Sudan.
2) Canadian citizens are exempt from entry visa requirements, but must enter the U.S. with a valid passport, I-20/DS-2019, and I-94 record.

FINANCIAL DOCUMENTATION/PROOF OF NECESSARY FUNDS PLUS EXPENSES
Finances can be demonstrated by:
1) a letter from your department stating the amount of funding you are receiving or
2) a letter from another financial sponsor stating the amount they are giving you, plus supporting financial documents, such as bank statements or salary statements. Personal funds can be demonstrated with relevant supporting documents.

Updated 9/2016
Prepare for your travel and re-entry

PASSPORT RENEWAL:
To renew your passport within the U.S., contact your country of citizenship’s Embassy. www.embassy.org

NEW U.S. ENTRY VISA Sticker Application:
If you are NOT traveling to Canada, Mexico, or one of the islands off the U.S. and your visa in your passport has EXPIRED or is not a visa for your current immigration status (i.e., it is not F-1 or J-1), plan enough time in the country you are visiting to visit the U.S. Consulate and complete the visa application process. You cannot obtain an F-1 or J-1 visa from within the U.S.

The Consulate may request information in addition to the signed I-20 or DS-2019, such as:
- PROOF OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT: Bank statements for those with personal funds or department letters for those with CMU support (The I-20/DS-2019 is not proof of financial support.)
- PROOF OF STUDENT STATUS: The HUB (www.cm.edu/hub) can provide a verification of your enrollment. Currently enrolled students may order verifications on Student Information Online by clicking on "Request Verification" under the Academic Info tab. Verifications can be mailed, faxed, or ordered as a .pdf. Typical processing time is 2-3 business days.
- PROOF THAT YOU HAVE NO INTENTION OF IMMIGRATING TO THE U.S.: This can include future job offers at home, property, bank accounts, strong family ties, etc.
- RESEARCH INFORMATION: Graduate students in particular may have to provide details about their research including their CVs.

These documents may not be asked for at the visa appointment, however, you should be prepared with all of the potentially required documentation. If you have relatives that are U.S. citizens or permanent residents, you may have difficulty obtaining an F or J non-immigrant visa. Consult the website of the Embassy/Consulate where you will apply for the visa for specific application instructions.

Applying for a visa in a third country

If you are traveling to a country which is not your country of citizenship or permanent residence (i.e., a “third” country), you could have difficulty in applying for your visa - talk to an OIE advisor before planning to apply for a visa in a third country, so that you know your options. If you are NOT maintaining legal status, immigration rules make it impossible to obtain a U.S. entry visa in a third country. If you try to apply for a visa from a third country, you may need to show evidence that you have been maintaining legal status. In most cases, a recent travel signature will verify maintenance of status to consular officials, but in some cases the Consulate may want to see additional evidence. It can help to be prepared with the following: letters confirming your student status and funding, transcripts (from all current and previous U.S. schools), and copies of ALL previously issued I-20s/DS-2019s and visas. To obtain more information on visa requirements, visit the State Department’s website: http://www.usembassy.gov

Other important information

A. Graduating Students
OIE advisors cannot sign your I-20 or DS-2019 once you have graduated unless you have applied for post-completion practical or academic training. Do not make plans to travel out of the country and return on your same student documents after you have completed your studies without contacting OIE to ask about your situation.

B. Students Authorized for Optional Practical Training (OPT) or Academic Training (AT)
Students who travel while on OPT or AT are required to travel with additional documentation and run a greater risk of not being readmitted to the U.S. (particularly those who must obtain a new visa stamp to reenter the U.S.). Students on OPT/AT should carry the following to reenter the U.S. after a trip abroad:
- Valid passport
- I-20/DS-2019 with signature less than 12 months old with AT authorization
- Valid F-1/J-1 visa sticker
- OPT EAD card (additional for F-1)
- Job offer letter (additional for F-1 and J-1)

C. Dependents
The information above applies to F-2 and J-2 dependents as well. In case of travel to other countries (other than “contiguous territory”) the dependent must have an F-2 or J-2 entry visa. In addition, the dependent should carry photocopies of all pertinent immigration documentation of the F-1 or J-1 principal.

D. Security Clearances and Visa Delays
If your field of study or research might be considered a "sensitive" field that has direct or indirect military application(s), you should understand the information related to the Technology Alert List ("TAL") IF you will be applying for a new visa at a U.S. consulate overseas. Application of the TAL during the visa application process will lead to a security check, and inherent delays in obtaining the U.S. visa. However, not all visa applicants are subject to the TAL. Contact an OIE advisor to discuss your particular visa situation.