



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN WHITEWATER

APPLYING FOR YOUR U.S. VISA

When to Apply

If you are currently abroad, and do not yet have a valid U.S. student visa, you generally apply for one at the U.S. embassy or consulate with jurisdiction over your place of permanent residence. Although visa applicants may apply at any U.S. consular office abroad, it is generally more difficult to qualify for the visa outside the country of permanent residence.

You should apply for your student visa well in advance of the date you would like to depart for Whitewater. The months of June, July and August are very busy times at the U.S. embassies and consulates world wide, and it is important for you to have your visa in time to arrive and begin orientation and registration activities. Appointments are now mandatory for all student visas, and some U.S. embassies and consulates require that appointments be made at least four to eight weeks in advance. All U.S. embassies and consulates have a website where you can read the latest information on visa procedures. Visit: http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html to locate the embassy or consulate near you.

What to Bring With You to the Visa Interview

- Be sure to bring the following with you to the visa appointment:
- Passport
- required photo(s)
- visa fee or proof of visa fee payment
- U.S. non-immigrant visa application forms (unless you will completing it at the consulate or embassy)
- University of Wisconsin-Whitewater admission letter
- University of Wisconsin-Whitewater SEVIS I-20 or SEVIS DS-2019
- test scores and academic records
- proof of English proficiency
- proof of financial support
- evidence of ties to your home country
- any other documents required by the embassy or consulate

Remember that if you plan to attend University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, you must present the visa officer with an I-20 or DS-2019 issued by University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. You cannot apply for a U.S. visa using another school's I-20 or DS-2019, and then try to attend University of Wisconsin-Whitewater as that is considered to be a fraudulent entry by the U.S. Immigration authorities.

Strategies for the Visa Appointment

You are well advised to consider the following matters prior to your visa appointment, as you may be asked about each item.

1. Academics: Be definite and clear about your educational plans. You should be able to explain precisely what you wish to study and why you chose University of Wisconsin-Whitewater for your education. Be especially prepared to explain reasons for studying in the United States rather than your country.

2. English: Anticipate that the visa interview will be conducted in English. Do not bring parents or family members with you to the visa interview. The consular official will want to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.

3. Ties to Your Home Country: Demonstrate convincing reasons for consular officials to believe that you intend to return home after studies in the United States. Emphasize ties to your home country such as employment, family obligations, property or investments that you own or will inherit, and clear explanations of how you plan to use your education to help your country or pursue a career when you return home.

4. Financial Documentation: Be prepared to prove financial ability to pay for your education and living expenses. While some students will be able to work part time during their studies, such employment is incidental to their main purpose of completing their education. You must show the consular officer that you have the annual amount in United States dollars listed on your I-20 or DS-2019 form. Your financial evidence should be in the form of bank statements, affidavits of support, scholarship award letters, etc.

5. Be concise: Because of 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. Keep your answers short and to the point.

6. Not all countries are the same: Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the United States as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from these countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities in the United States.

7. Dependents Remaining at Home: If you have a spouse and/or children remaining behind in your home country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be an especially tricky area if you are the primary source of income for your family. If the consular official gains the impression that your family members will need you to remit money from the United States in order to support them, your student visa will almost surely be denied.

Visa Denial or Visa Delay

The vast majority of University of Wisconsin-Whitewater 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
- failure to provide sufficient evidence of financial support

The visa officer must verbally inform you of the reason for the visa denial. Much more common than a visa denial is a visa delay. This is why it is so important to apply for your visa EARLY! Here are some of the most common reasons for visa delays:

- Closings or reduced hours at U.S. visa issuing posts abroad due to security concerns.
- Closings or reduced hours at U.S. visa issuing posts abroad due to political instability in the host country.
- Student or scholar's record does not appear in the SEVIS system at the U.S. embassy or consulate, even though the student or scholar presents a SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019.
- The need for a security clearance prior to visa issuance if the visa applicant is determined to be pursuing a "sensitive area of study" as indicated on the State Department's Technology Alert. The fields usually include the sciences and Engineering.
- The need for a security clearance prior to visa issuance if the visa applicant is male, between the age of 16-46 and a citizen of or born in one of the designated countries requiring security clearances (Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen). The list of designated countries is subject to change.
- The need for a security clearance for any non-immigrant visa applicant male or female, age 16 or older who is a national of or permanently residing in Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan or Syria. Such individuals will not be issued visas unless the applicant can show evidence that he or she is not a threat to U.S. national security.
- The new U.S. Department of State requirement that all applicants for non-immigrant visas be interviewed. This new policy has created delays at visa issuing posts around the world.

Similar to a visa denial, the visa officer must verbally inform you of the reason for the visa delay.

Special Note for Citizens of Canada

Citizens of Canada are not required to obtain a U.S. visa to enter the United States. However, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer will inspect your papers, either at a pre-inspection site in Canada or upon entry to the United States. You must have with you:

- proof of Canadian citizenship
- your admission letter to University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
- your University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 or DS-2019)
- proof of financial support that corresponds to the information on your I-20 or DS-2019

It is essential that you enter the United States in the appropriate status, so be sure to have complete documentation with you.

IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY IN THE UNITED STATES

F-1 and J-1 Students:

If you already have valid F-1 student or J-1 student status by being enrolled at another school, college or university in the United States, by now you have already completed the required Domestic Transfer Clearance form and requested that the international student advisor at your current school release your SEVIS record to University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Your new University of Wisconsin-Whitewater I-20 or DS-2019, endorsed for pending transfer, is mailed to you as soon as the release date for your SEVIS record (as determine by your previous school) is reached. Once you are enrolled at University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and we have confirmed your registration, the transfer process will be completed. If you are in F-1 status, a new I-20 will be issued to you. Be sure to report to the Center for Global Education as soon as possible after your arrival.

All Other Non-Immigrant Visa Classifications:

If you are currently in the U.S. in a visa classification other than F-1 or J-1, you should contact the Center for Global Education for information about changing your status.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS AND HEALTH REPORT

You will be informed of any health and immigration requirements when you apply for your visa. The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater further requires, as a condition of enrollment, that all students have a QuantiFERON-TB test. Please note that the QuantiFERON-TB test must be performed at the University Health Center, at your expense (billed to your student account), and time is set aside during Orientation for you to do this.

