

## Immigration Rights and Responsibilities for International Students

### Immigration Documents

The following documents are very important and must be valid at all times in order for you to maintain lawful F-1 status:

- **PASSPORT** (should be valid for a minimum of 6 months into the future)
- **Form I-20** (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student F-1 Status)
- **Form I-94** Arrival/Departure Record (white card usually stapled in passport)

Please keep your original documents in a safe place. We recommend that you make photocopies of these documents and store them in a location separate from the actual documents. If any of these documents is damaged, lost or stolen, you must have it replaced as quickly as possible. Please keep in mind that the F-1 visa stamp in your passport does not need to be valid at all times; but it must be valid when you reenter the United States after traveling outside the country. You should contact the ISA (International Student Advisor) if you have any questions about the documents or if you need to have them replaced. Please bring all of these documents with you each time you visit the ISA.

## When to Contact the ISA (International Students Advisor)

To ensure that you maintain lawful immigration status, you must contact the ISA if any of the following events occurs:

- If there is a change to your legal name, U.S. address, country of citizenship, immigration status, major, program of study, level of education, expected date of completion, information on F-2 dependents, or source of funding. If you intend to travel outside the U.S. and need a travel signature from an ISA staff member on your Form I-20 or if you will apply for a new visa before reentering the U.S.
- Any time you or your F-2 dependents obtain a new Form I-94 upon reentering the U.S.
- If you lose any of your immigration documents, or if they are stolen.
- If you intend to change your immigration status.
- If you intend to study abroad, take a leave of absence, or transfer to another school.
- If you need to request an extension of your Form I-20 ; **contact the ISA** before the Form I-20 expires.
- You must seek prior authorization to drop below full-time study or withdraw from a Riverland Community College class (due to suspension or personal reasons).

- If you want to obtain on-campus work authorization or apply for off-campus work authorization.
- If you want to have your dependent spouse and/or children join you in F-2 status.
- If you are facing charges for any felony or misdemeanor criminal act.
- If you need to apply for a U.S. Social Security Number.

### **Registration, Attendance and Course of Study Requirements**

Although F-1 students have the right to register for as many classes as college policy allows, you must register for at least 12 credit hours each fall and spring semester. Immigration regulations require prior ISA authorization for all legitimate drops below full-time (see the "Registration Exceptions" listed at the end of this section). Dropping below 12 credit hours without prior authorization from an ISA advisor will jeopardize your immigration status.

### **Length of Time You May Remain in the United States on your Riverland Community College Form I-20**

Your Form I-20 is issued for the expected duration of your program of study. F-1 students admitted to the U.S. generally receive a "D/S" notation on their Form I-94 Arrival/Departure card, indicating permission to remain in the U.S. for "duration of status." The duration of F-1 status ends as soon as the student's

Form I-20 expires or as soon as the student completes his or her program of study, whichever is sooner.

If you need more time to complete your studies than allowed by your Form I-20, you must contact the ISA before the expiration date (see the date indicated in Item #5 of your Form I-20) to request an extension. Before completing your program of study, you may want to make an appointment with the ISA to discuss options for extending your lawful status in the U.S.

## **Employment**

**On-Campus Employment** - Riverland Community College does not offer on-campus employment at this time.

**Off-Campus Employment** - F-1 students are eligible for limited employment off-campus. You must obtain written authorization from the ISA and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services before you engage in any off-campus employment.

Please contact the ISA for additional information regarding employment options.

- Please schedule an appointment with your ISA to discuss any off-campus employment questions.

You must be in valid F-1 immigration status to be authorized for on- or off-campus employment.

## **Dependents and Other Family Members**

If you are married and/or have children, you may be eligible to have your spouse (husband or wife) and/or children (under the age of 21) visit you temporarily or join you for the duration of your studies. Under federal immigration regulations, dependent spouses and children who accompany or follow-to-join an F-1 student must each be issued an independent Form I-20 in order to apply for an F-2 dependent visa. F-2 dependents are allowed to remain in the U.S. as long as the F-1 student maintains legal F-1 status. They may not engage in any form of employment. F-2 spouses may not engage in any full-time study or part-time study leading toward a degree and an F-2 child may only study full-time in elementary or secondary school (kindergarten through grade 12). F-2 dependents must be approved by the USCIS for change to F-1 status before commencing full-time study at the college level.

If other members of your family (parents, siblings, etc.) wish to visit you temporarily, the ISA will be pleased to issue a Letter of Invitation to assist with their applications for visitor visas.

## **Travel**

We encourage you to contact the ISA anytime you plan to travel outside of the U.S. This is particularly important as regulations and practices concerning reentry into the United States continue to change. Many students now experience significant difficulties and delays in applying for visas at U.S. embassies or consulates. When you return to the U.S. after travel abroad, you should bring

your passport, Form I-20 and Form I-94 to the ISA so that we may update your file. Immigration regulations require that we maintain current copies of your passport and immigration documents.

**Travel Within the U.S.** - You may travel within the U.S. provided you maintain your lawful F-1 status and have a valid passport, Form I-20, and Form I-94 in your possession.

**Travel Outside the U.S. before Completion of Studies** – You may leave the U.S. at any time. You are permitted to return in F-1 status if you have a valid passport, valid F-1 visa stamp and a current Form I-20 that has been signed for travel on page 3 by the ISA. A travel signature is valid for one year except for travel to Canada , Mexico and adjacent islands, in which case the signature is valid for six months.

**Application for New F-1 Visa during Travel** – F-1 students are allowed to remain in the U.S. with an expired F-1 visa stamp, provided that they are maintaining their status and their passport and Form I-20 are valid. Although you may remain in the U.S. with an expired F-1 visa, it will be necessary to apply for a new visa during your next trip abroad. You will need a valid F-1 visa in order to reenter the U.S.