Change of Status to F-1

If you are currently in the United States on a non-student, non-immigrant visa, you have two basic ways of becoming an F-1 student. In both of the following cases, you must first be accepted into an academic program at North Park and provide all necessary documents for the production of a form I-20. The form I-20 will be issued for "Initial Status" or "Change of Status," so you must choose one of the following options before the I-20 is created.

- 1. The first option is for you to leave the U.S., thus ending your previous non-immigrant status, and obtain an F-1 visa at a U.S. consulate abroad. You would then reenter the U.S. in F-1 status.
- 2. The second option is for you to remain in the U.S. and file an application for Change of Status (COS) with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This information sheet provides information on applying for COS from within the U.S.

General Information about Change of Status Applications

- A decision to permit a change of status to F-1 is at the discretion of USCIS. North Park University has no say in whether an application is approved or denied, and cannot appeal a decision made by USCIS.
- A COS Application may take several months to be adjudicated.
- Your current visa status must be valid at the point when you apply for a change of status to F-1.
- Regulatory guidance is unclear as to whether your current status must be valid through the point when your new F-1 status is requested to begin. If your current status will expire prior to the start date on the I-20 form, you must understand that you are taking a risk of your application being denied. It may be in your best interest to discuss your particular situation with an immigration attorney.
- If your current visa status permits study, <u>you must enroll in a full load of classes</u> at North Park while your application is being adjudicated, so as to prove that you will be maintaining F-1 status when it is approved. If your COS application is not approved by the first day of classes, your I-20 start date will be postponed one month at a time to keep your application active. You must inform the International Office about the status of your application before the I-20 start date has been reached.
- If your current visa status does not permit study (F-2, B-1, and B-2), you may not begin studying at North Park until your change of status to F-1 has been approved.
- A change of status is not a change of visa. If USCIS approves your application, you may stay in the U.S. as long as you maintain F-1 status, but the next time you leave the U.S. you must obtain an F-1 visa from a consulate abroad before reentering the U.S.
- COS applicants are not eligible for F-1 benefits (on-campus employment, practical training, etc.) until F-1 status has been granted.
- You are not permitted to travel abroad while your COS Application is pending.
- If your COS application is denied, you may file a Motion to Reconsider with the help of an immigration attorney. Unless otherwise indicated, your current status remains valid if it has not expired.
- The following non-immigrants are not permitted to change to F-1 status in the U.S.:
 - o M-1 Students
 - o C, D, and K non-immigrants
 - o J-1 physicians admitted to receive graduate medical education or training
 - o J-1 non-immigrants subject to the 212€ 2-year foreign residence requirement
 - o Individuals admitted as visitors under 8 CFR 212.1(e)
 - o WT and WB visitors admitted under the Visa Waiver Program

Submitting a COS Application

As of summer 2012, you should use the online ELIS system (Electronic Immigration Service) to apply for a change of status. ELIS is run by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

- 1. Go to www.uscis.gov and click on the "ELIS" button on the right hand side.
- 2. Create an online account (this may take several hours, as you have to wait to receive a password by email).
- 3. Select "Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status."
- 4. Complete your personal information
 - a. In the address field, make sure you don't use any special characters; write "West Foster" for your street *name*, for example, not "W. Foster."
 - b. In the section about Arrival/Departure Record, enter the number from your I-94 card. If your I-94 card is marked "D/S" for Duration of Status, leave blank the question about expiration date.
 - c. For the question "Do you have an alien registration number?" answer NO.
- 5. At the section labeled "Benefit Request Type," select "I am applying for a change of status and I am the only applicant" or "Members of my family and I are applying for a change of status and we are all seeking the same benefit," depending on whether or not you are applying with dependents.
- 6. In the section labeled "Eligibility Information," answer NO to the question, "Are you filing this benefit request for status based on a Principal Alien's nonimmigrant status?"
- 7. Upload the following supporting documents, following the online instructions:
 - a. A letter to USCIS, requesting the change of status and explaining your circumstances and plans. You should include information about the original purpose of entry to the U.S., why and how your goals/intentions changed after arriving in the U.S., and what you intend to do in your home country after completing your studies. Because F-1 is a non-immigrant visa category, you must prove to USCIS that you do not intend to immigrate to the United States.
 - b. Form I-20 from North Park, indicating "Change of Status Requested."
 - c. Current financial documents, showing that you can pay for your tuition and living expenses (the same documents used to prepare your I-20).
 - d. Copy of your valid passport
 - e. Copy of your I-94 card, front and back
 - f. Proof of current visa status (copy of visa from passport, visa approval notice, etc.). If your current visa status is a dependent status, you must provide documentation of your relationship to the principal (e.g. birth certificate or marriage certificate) and proof that the principal is maintaining status (passport, I-94 card, visa, etc.)
 - g. Proof of having paid the I-901/SEVIS fee (you can print a receipt after paying at www.FMJfee.com)
 - h. Any additional documents you think might help your case.
 - i. In special circumstances, the International Office may also write a letter as part of your application.
- 8. Pay your \$290 application fee online.
- 9. Confirm all of your answers, and press the "e-sign" button.

You must come to the International Office with the results of your application when you receive them from USCIS.

Please sign here	, indicating that y	ou have read and	d understand this	s information s	sheet about	applying for
Change of Status	s.					

Students Signature:	Date:	
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