

Renewing your F-1 Visa

An F-1 visa is used to enter the United States. In most cases, once you are in the United States, you are permitted to remain here as long as you are maintaining your F-1 status (called “Duration of Status”), even if your visa expires. However, you may not leave the U.S. and return with an expired F-1 visa, even if your I-20 form is valid and your program of studies has not yet ended.

You should always be aware of the date when your F-1 visa will expire. You may not plan on travelling abroad, but you never know when an emergency situation will arise, requiring you to leave the U.S. unexpectedly. If you have an expired visa, you will have to apply for a new visa before you return.

Before departing the U.S. to visit your home country for visa renewal, you must come to the International Office to obtain a new I-20 form created for the purpose of visa renewal. In order to issue the new I-20, we will have to update the financial information on your SEVIS record and you will have to show financial documents, proving that you can finance your North Park education and living expenses.

Take the following items to your visa appointment:

1. Valid passport
2. I-20 form prepared for visa renewal
3. Proof of funding equal to the costs listed in #7 on page 1 of your I-20 form
4. Proof of having paid the I-901 SEVIS fee
5. Verification of Enrollment at North Park (obtained from Student Services)
6. A copy of your class schedule for the upcoming semester (if available) to show that you are returning to the United States to continue your studies
7. Optional: If there are unusual circumstances surrounding your visa renewal application or educational program, you may also request a letter of explanation from the International Office. If you are renewing your visa in a timely matter and are making normal progress in your studies, a letter from the International Office is not necessary.

Important Information on Applying for an F-1 Visa or Visa Renewal

- The issuance of an F-1 visa is never guaranteed, even in cases of visa renewal.
- You must show that you intend to participate in only activities that are allowed in F-1 visa status.
- Every time you apply for an F-1 visa, you are assumed to have “immigrant intent.” In order to be issued a visa, you must convince the consular official that you intend to return to your home country at the end of your studies (and any period of approved practical training).
- You should prepare for your visa appointment by thinking about the following questions:
 - Why did you decide to attend North Park University?
 - What are you studying at North Park, and what do you plan to do with your degree once you finish your studies?
 - How will your studies at North Park prepare you for life in your home country?
 - What ties do you have to your home country? Do you have family at home? Do you or your family own property, or will you inherit property in the future? Do you have a job lined up at home for when you return?

Visa Denials

If your application for an F-1 visa (first time or renewal) was denied, it is very important that you get information from the consular official regarding your denial. She or he should put in writing the cause of your denial. The following denials are the most common:

Type of Denial	What it means	What you can do
214b	You did not convince the consular official that you intend to return to your home country (leave the U.S.) at the end of your studies.	<p>You are welcome to apply again, as soon as you believe your circumstances have changed, or when you think you can explain your situation in a different way. All new applications carry the same visa fee.</p> <p>Be sure that you explain clearly why you are studying at North Park, why you chose your field of study, how your program at North Park will prepare you to return to your home country, why you will return to your home country (job, family, property, etc.).</p>
221g	Additional information is needed.	<p>Your visa hasn't actually been denied, but the consular official can't make a decision on approving or denying your application until more information is presented.</p> <p>Make sure you pay very close attention to anything the consular official asks you to do. You may have to submit additional documents, or you may have to wait for your application to be assessed by another office.</p>

Please note: The consular officers at the U.S. Embassy abroad are the only people who can make decisions on your eligibility for an F-1 visa. Even if North Park has said that you're eligible to study here, North Park officials cannot override a consular official's decision on your visa application. In most cases (especially 214b denials) we will not contact the consulate on your behalf, as consular officials are required to protect your privacy and cannot disclose information about your visa interview or application to a third party.