



International Student Handbook

MAINTAINING YOUR F-1 STATUS

Students who come to the US are granted nonimmigrant classifications known as “F-1” or “J-1.” This is commonly referred to as your “**status.**”

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has regulations regarding how to maintain your immigration status. As long as you continually meet these obligations, you will be considered “in status” or “maintaining your immigration status.” Our office is available to answer questions and assist you with maintaining your status; however, the responsibility for maintaining your immigration status **lies with you**. A brief overview of how to maintain your immigration status is provided below:

1. **Keep Your Passport Valid**

Your passport must be valid at all times. Contact your country’s embassy or consulate in the U.S. for instructions on how to renew your passport at least 6 months before it expires.

2. **Registration**

F-1 students must register for, and complete a full course of study each term during the academic year. In order to maintain fulltime status at the College of Idaho you will need to be enrolled in the following number of credits each term:

- Fall – Minimum of 12 credits
- Winter – Minimum of 3 credits
- Spring – Minimum of 12 credits

Summer and vacation periods normally do not require registration as long as you are a continuing degree student.

Students may apply for a “Reduced Course Load” at the start of their final term if they have less than 12 credits remaining to complete their degree.

3. **Change of Address**

If you move to a new residence, immigration regulations require that you inform the PDSO within ten (10) days. Your address must be your physical residence; P.O. Boxes are not allowed.

4. **Change of Major Or Degree Level**

If you change your major or degree level at any time during your studies at the C of I, you will need to notify the PDSO. You will be issue with an updated I-20 form.

5. **Abide By Employment Regulations**

Students may work no more than 20 hours per week on-campus while school is in session. During scheduled breaks (fall, winter, spring, and summer) there is no limitation on the number of hours you can work each week on campus. Please note that you are not permitted to work off-campus without receiving PRIOR authorization from the PDSO and/or USCIS.

A. **ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT**

Fully-admitted F-1 students may engage in part-time employment (up to 20 hours per week) on-campus while school is in session. Students may work on-campus full-time (more than 20 hours per week) in between terms and during the summer vacation as long they plan to be a full-time student the following term.

B. **OFF-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT**

F-1 students may not participate in any type of off-campus employment unless authorized by the PDSO and/or the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Students interested in off-campus employment should talk to the International Student Advisor before accepting an employment offer.

C. **PRACTICAL TRAINING**

There are two types of practical training: Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT). Do not begin working until your authorization has been issued. For more information about CPT or OPT please see the [Off-Campus Employment Options for International Students](#) PowerPoint presentation.

Internships which are required or integral to the student's program of study must be authorized by the Director – Center for Experiential Learning (CEL) and the PDSO prior to the internship start date.

6. **Program Extension**

If you are unable to complete your academic program by the end date listed on your I-20, you must request a program extension. You will need to show funding for the duration of the extension as well as compelling academic or medical reasons for your request. It is important to apply for an extension one to two months before the expiration date on your I-20.

7. **Travel**

If you plan to travel outside the U.S. during your studies, you will need to obtain a travel signature from the PDSO prior to leaving the U.S. Travel signatures are valid for one year (refer to the bottom of page 3 of your I-20) and for 6 months for F-1 students on Optional

Practical Training. If your I-20 form has not been endorsed for travel your reentry into the US may be denied.

If your visa has expired or will expire while you are outside the U.S., you will need to apply for a visa renewal at a U.S. consulate or embassy before returning to the U.S. (unless you will visit Canada or Mexico for less than 30 days).

Note: Federal regulations require visitors to the U.S. to carry proof of identification and immigration status at all times. If you are traveling within the U.S. be sure to carry the following items: 1) a valid passport, 2) a valid I-20 form, and 3) the I-94 arrival/ departure card.

8. Completion of Program

Once you complete your degree program (and final term of registration), immigration regulations allow you a 60-day grace period in which you may remain in the U.S. The grace period begins from the last day of the term for which you were last registered and not from the expiration date on the I-20. If you plan to apply for off-campus work permission following your degree, you should meet with the International Student Advisor *prior* to your degree completion.

FAILURE TO MAINTAIN STATUS

In cases where students do not maintain their immigration status, there may be some options available to help students regain valid F-1 status. However, please note that falling out of valid immigration status may require you to submit an application to the U.S. government or travel outside the U.S. and re-enter with new documents. In all cases, it can be a stressful and potentially expensive process, and may impact a student's ability to complete their program. Please make an appointment with an International Student Advisor if you have any questions about specific situations and how they may impact your immigration status.

SAFEKEEPING OF YOUR IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS

It is extremely important to keep the following original documents in a safe place. You will need them in the future in order to identify yourself, apply for employment authorization, prove your status, and maintain a record of your status throughout your stay in the US. It is also recommended you keep photocopies of the following documents, including the identity page of your passport: I-94, Valid Passport; old passport with unexpired US entry visa, if applicable, I-20, Employment Authorization Document (EAD), if applicable.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

1. You are responsible for the amount of money indicated on the financial certification form and on your I-20. If the college incurs a tuition increase that is not reflected on your I-20, you will be required to cover the additional costs. Non-payment will result in a registration hold and may result in LOSS OF LEGAL STATUS.

2. You are personally responsible for all tuition and fees, even if you are sponsored by a funding agency or government. You are expected to pay your tuition and fees by the due date when billed each semester. Failure to pay any outstanding balance by the tenth day of school will result in your being dis-enrolled from The College of Idaho and the loss of your legal status. Penalty fees for late tuition payments are charged directly to the student. In some cases, sponsoring agencies will not take responsibility for the late fee and the student must pay it, even if the agency failed to make the tuition payment on time. For more information please see the Delinquent Student Account section of the Student Handbook at ...
3. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have enough money to pay for your travel to your home country.

HEALTH SERVICES

The health of students is of great importance to everyone at College of Idaho. Nobody likes being sick. The campus offers free nursing services, a Registered Nurse, and a volunteer doctor who comes in once a week.

Medical expenses in the US are extremely high. International students and their dependents are not eligible to use US government or Idaho-paid public assistance programs; you must have health insurance to pay for health care. The College of Idaho requires all international students and accompanying dependents to have health insurance coverage. For more information, please visit the Student Health Services website at <http://www.collegeofidaho.edu/studenthealth>.

EMERGENCY CARE

You should go to a hospital emergency department ONLY if the problem is life-threatening or extremely serious. Remember, health care in the US is expensive. Services provided at an emergency room cost much more than the same services at a regular clinic.

COUNSELING CENTER

College can be a rich time of personal growth and self-exploration. In addition, college students face difficult life transitions and circumstances, and experience painful emotions. College counselors are professionally trained to help students cope with a wide variety of issues. The Counseling Center supports and assists students through one-on-one counseling sessions. Counseling provides a safe and confidential place to clarify, explore and express your feelings and concerns. The licensed clinical professional counselors will guide and encourage you in this psychological journey. In addition, you will be offered education and coping skills as you pursue options for change to become responsible, reflective and resourceful members of the C of I community. Counseling is available without charge for students. The Counseling Center is located on the south side of Hendren Hall. For more information, please visit the Counseling Center website at <http://www.collegeofidaho.edu/campus-life/learning-and-support-services/counseling-center>.

MONEY & BANKING

There are many different banks in Caldwell. Most banks offer a variety of accounts, each with different benefits and requirements. Because selecting an account type can be a confusing process, you may want to seek the assistance of a customer service representative (often called a member service representative or personal banker) at your chosen bank. This person will be happy to explain details about bank services and help you decide which account is best for you.

Types of Accounts

1. **CHECKING ACCOUNTS.** Banks offer different types of checking accounts designed to fit individual needs. The cost of checking varies from bank to bank. Some banks charge per transaction, some have a basic monthly fee, and others offer free services if you maintain a certain minimum balance in your account at all times. A list of all the account activity for the preceding month, and in some cases your cancelled checks, will be sent to you in a monthly statement. Be careful to keep an accurate record of every check you write in order to avoid having checks returned due to insufficient funds and incurring additional charges.

“Bouncing” a check (writing a check for more money than you actually have in the account) is illegal and can cost you time and money. Through some banks, you can apply for a line of credit attached to your checking account that provides overdraft protection.

2. **SAVINGS ACCOUNTS.** A savings account enables you to save money and accumulate interest on your savings. Interest is paid either monthly or quarterly. The difference between a savings and a checking account is that you cannot write checks on a savings account.

Bank Cards

1. **CREDIT CARDS.** Credit cards may be convenient, especially if you unexpectedly have major expenses. You can pay expenses such as airplane tickets with any major credit card. You must understand that you can easily accumulate large bills with credit cards, and before you know it, you may be in debt. Before you accept a credit card you must be sure to understand all your obligations. Most banks charge an annual fee. If you are unable to pay your full balance each month, you will be charged high interest rates (usually 18% or higher) on the remaining balance and any additional charges you make. Make sure you stay within your budget when making credit card purchases.
2. **DEBIT CARDS.** A debit card, also known as a check card, allows you to withdraw or deposit money to your bank account using an automatic teller machine (ATM) and to make purchases at stores that accept the card. Some debit cards carry a credit-card logo (such as MasterCard or Visa), and can be used in place of a check or credit card. However, debit cards are not credit cards and they can only be used to the extent that you have funds in the account to which they are linked.

Money Transfers

If you anticipate transferring money between your home country and your US bank account, you should discuss the processing time and fees associated with international wires and deposits.

SHOPPING

There are several grocery stores close to the college, most within walking distance of the college. These include:

- Albertson's
- Walmart Supercenter
- Walgreen's

Other places that students might go to shop include the malls, which have stores of every type where you are able to take care of all of your shopping needs without traveling to a lot of different locations. Local malls include:

- Karcher Mall (Nampa)
- Nampa Gateway Center
- Treasure Valley Marketplace (Nampa)
- Boise Town Square Mall

Most stores will allow you to return or exchange items, particularly if they are damaged or do not fit. You should save all of your receipts because receipts are almost always required to return or exchange items. Always note that the return/exchange policies vary from store to store.

IDAHO STATE ID & DRIVER LICENSE

Contact the Department of Multicultural Affairs for information about getting a driver's license or Idaho State ID. More information is also available at the Idaho State website:

<http://itd.idaho.gov/dmv/index.htm>.

EMERGENCIES, CAMPUS SAFETY

The Department of Campus Safety at The College of Idaho is committed to providing quality service and protection to the entire campus community 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The men and women of the department are professionally trained to provide safety, security, and parking services. The department maintains and promotes respect for the individual rights and dignity of all persons and is dedicated to excellence in all of the services that are offered on a year-round basis. You can reach the department at any time at (208) 459-5151, or simply dial 5151 from any on-campus phone.

It is YOUR responsibility to ensure that you understand and abide by all US laws. Failure to do so could result in loss of legal status. Some things to know include the following:

- The legal drinking age in the US is 21.
- It is illegal to drive a motor vehicle without a valid driver's license.
- It is illegal to consume or be in possession of prohibited drugs.

ACADEMICS IN THE CLASSROOM

At The College of Idaho, classrooms are interactive—students are expected to participate in discussions and sometimes work together in groups. As a student at The College of Idaho you will be expected to:

- a. **Read Your Syllabus Carefully:** At the beginning of the semester, your instructor will give you a syllabus, a document that provides critical information about the course, including assignments, grading policies, and your instructor's contact information. Be sure to read through your syllabus carefully so that you will know your instructor's expectations and refer to it often during the term.
- b. Understand the expectations of American classrooms
- c. Participate actively in class and in groups
- d. Attend classes regularly; arrive a few minutes before each class begins
- e. Learn to recognize intellectual property and avoid accidental plagiarism: Cite all sources...seek assistance if in doubt.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions about this handbook or your visa status, please visit our office.