



Travel for F1 Students

Travel Outside the U.S

If you are traveling from the U.S. to another country, you must meet the immigration requirements of the country you plan to visit, as well as the U.S. requirements to reenter the United States. This includes short trips to Mexico and Canada for which special rules may apply as noted below.

To re-enter the U.S., you may be asked to present the following documents to the immigration service officer:

- Current passport valid for at least 6 months after the reentry date
- Valid F-1 visa
- Valid I-20 with valid travel signature on page 2 (travel signatures valid for 1 year, travel signatures while on OPT valid for 6 months)
- Proof of financial support showing funds to cover tuition and/or living expenses
- Evidence of attendance at SMU, such as an acceptance letter, transcript, or recent tuition payment receipt
- Proof of paying the I-901 SEVIS fee (which you can print from <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html>)

Students on post-completion OPT must **also** carry:

- Valid EAD card
- Job offer/verification Letter from your employer
- Proof of financial support showing funds to cover tuition and/or living expenses

What is Travel Validation?

Your I-20 shows that you are eligible to enter the U.S. as part of a SMU program. U.S. Immigration officials will ask for your I-20 whenever you enter the U.S. They will be looking to see that your I-20 was validated for travel on Page 2 - it is a signature from the GHI Department.

So, if you travel out of the country for a vacation or a conference, you will be required to show your I-20 as you re-enter the U.S.

The good news is that you do not need to request a travel validation (travel signature) every time you travel. Once GHI has provided you with a copy of your I-20 with a travel signature, the validation is good for 1 calendar year.

How to Request

Before you plan to depart the United States, log onto **I-CONNECT** to submit a travel signature request using the I-20 service request form. An GHI advisor will check your immigration record and confirm that you are still eligible to enter the U.S. Once approved, you'll receive an email notification to let you know that a newly validated copy of your I-20 is ready. *You do not need a travel signature to depart the U.S., but you will need it to re-enter the U.S.*

Expired Visa

If your F-1 visa stamp has expired, you will need to obtain a new visa to reenter the US. You can apply for a visa stamp at an American Embassy/Consulate when you are abroad. A U.S. visa stamp cannot be obtained inside the U.S. To apply for a visa stamp you will need to present:

- Valid Passport
- Valid I-20 with current signature on page 2
- Documentation of sufficient financial support - for at least one year
- Copy of current transcripts - an unofficial copy is sufficient and can either be requested from the Registrar's office or you can print your unofficial transcript from GOLD
- Letter from academic department regarding your status or progress in the program - primarily for graduate students.

The visa renewal process will be the same procedure that you followed the first time you applied for the visa. Each time you apply for a visa you must prove to the consular officer you have enough funds to continue studying, you have been a full-time student, and that you plan to return to your home country after completion of your degree.

Please be aware of visa appointment wait times and processing times by the Embassy/Consulate when booking your travel. Also, you may be selected for Administrative Processing which can delay your visa renewal by several months. It is important to consider the validity of your immigration documents before scheduling any travel.

Information on U.S. Embassies and Consulates can be found at the [State Department website](#).