

Points to Remember when Applying for a Nonimmigrant Visa

1) Ties to the Home Country: Under U.S. law, all applicants for nonimmigrant visas are viewed as intending immigrants and have the burden to convince the consular officer that they are not. You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. "Ties" to your home country are the things that bind you to your hometown, homeland, or current place of residence: job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, investments, etc. If you are a prospective undergraduate, the interviewing officer may ask about your specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other relationships, educational objectives, grades, long-range plans, and career prospects **in your home country**. Each person's situation is different, of course, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter, which can guarantee visa issuance.

2) English: Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. If you are coming to the United States solely to study intensive English, be prepared to explain how English will be useful for you in your home country.

3) Know the Program and How It Fits your Career Plans: If you are not able to articulate the reasons you will study in a particular program in the United States, you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to immigrate. You should also be able to explain how studying in the United States relates to your future professional career when you return home.

4) Be Concise: Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impressions they form during the first minute or two of the interview.

5) Supplemental Documentation: Be Prepared. It should be clear at a glance to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. Remember that you will have 2-3 minutes of interview time, if you're lucky.

6) Not All Countries Are Equal: Applicants from countries suffering economics problems or from countries where many students have remained in the United States as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their study in the United States.

7) Employment: Your main purpose of coming to the United States should be to study, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. While many students do work off-campus during their studies, such employment is incidental to their main purpose of completing their U.S. education. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program. If your spouse is also applying for an accompanying F2 visa, be aware that F2 dependents cannot, under any circumstances, be employed in the United States. If asked, be prepared to address what your spouse intends to do with his or her time while in the United States. Volunteer work is a permitted activity.

8) Dependents Remaining at Home: If your spouse and children are remaining behind in your country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be an especially tricky area if you are the primary source of income for your family. If the consular officer gains the impression that your family members will need you to remit money from the United States in order to support them, your student visa application will almost certainly be denied. If your family does decided to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at the same post where you applied for your visa.

Common Forms/Documents/Items Required for Visa Application

- ✓ visa application form obtained from the U.S. Embassy/Consulate visa application fee - amount will vary according to the country
- ✓ Proof of \$200 SEVIS I-901 fee payment (if the I-20 was issued for **initial attendance**)
- ✓ immigration forms I-20 or DS-2019
- ✓ letter of admission to UAH
- ✓ copy of TOEFL score as required by UAH for non native English speakers
- ✓ proof of finances and/or proof of assistantship award if you have one
- ✓ photographs for visa
- ✓ valid passport (minimum 6 months validity)
- ✓ previous school transcripts, diplomas or records (not always required)
- ✓ documents to support non-immigrant intent