

# **WELCOME TO TRUMAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

**International Student Pre-  
Orientation Information  
Understanding your I-20**

# WHEN YOU SIGN YOUR I-20, YOU ARE AGREEING TO FOLLOW ALL THE RULES

An I-20 is a document that says you are eligible for F-1 status. When you receive it, it is already signed by Truman staff, but you must sign it for the document to be valid.

What does it mean when you sign your I-20?

In the rush to get their visas, most students just sign their I-20 without even reading. That's a bad idea! When you sign your I-20, you are agreeing to follow ALL the rules on page 3.

If you break those rules, **you could lose your legal status in the United States** and have to return home. So what are you agreeing to when you sign your I-20? Let's take a look:



# ON THE TOP LEFT PORTION OF PAGE 3, THERE ARE 'INSTRUCTIONS TO STUDENTS'

You have to read these rules and follow them. We will explain more about them in orientation, but page 3 of your I-20 tells you most of what you need to know.

**Department of Homeland Security**  
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

**I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status**  
OMB NO. 1653-0038

## **INSTRUCTIONS TO STUDENTS**

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**STUDENT ATTESTATION.** You should read everything on this page carefully. Be sure that you understand the terms and conditions concerning your admission and stay in the United States as a nonimmigrant student before signing the student attestation on page 1 of the Form I-20 A-B. The law provides severe penalties for knowingly and willfully falsifying or concealing a material fact, or using any false document in the submission of this form.

**NOTICE OF ADDRESS.** When you arrive in the United States, you must report your U.S. address to your DSO. If you move, you must notify your DSO of your new address within 10 days of the change of address. The DSO will update SEVIS with your new address.

**REENTRY.** F-1 students may leave the United States and return within a period of five months. To return, you must have: 1) a valid passport; 2) a valid F-1 student visa (unless you are exempt from visa requirements); and 3) your Form I-20, page 2, properly endorsed for reentry by your DSO. If you have been out of

# WHAT IS AN I-20 EXACTLY?

**FORM I-20.** The Form I-20 (this form) is the primary document to show that you have been admitted to school in the United States and that you are authorized to apply for admission to the United States in F-1 class of admission. You must have your Form I-20 with you at all times. If you lose your Form I-20, you must request a new one from your designated school official (DSO) at the school named on your Form I-20.



The purpose of the I-20 is for your university to confirm that you are eligible to be a student. Your legal status in the United States is based on being a student and eligible to begin or continue studying at the university on your I-20.



# WHAT DO I DO WITH MY I-20? IS IT THE SAME AS MY VISA?

**VISA APPLICATION.** You must give this Form I-20 to the U.S. consular officer at the time you apply for a visa (unless you are exempt from visa requirements). If you have a Form I-20 from more than one school, be sure to present the Form I-20 for the school you plan to attend. Your visa will include the name of that school, and you must attend that school upon entering the United States. You must also provide evidence of support for tuition and fees and living expenses while you are in the United States.

The I-20 is different from the visa, but you need both of them to enter the United States. The university gives your I-20 to confirm to the embassy or consulate that you are eligible to study. The consular official will decide if you qualify for a visa to enter the United States.



# WHAT DO I NEED TO GET INTO THE UNITED STATES?

**ADMISSION.** When you enter the United States, you must present the following documents to the officer at the port of entry: 1) a Form I-20; 2) a valid F-1 visa(unless you are exempt from visa requirements); 3) a valid passport; and 4) evidence of support for tuition and fees and living expenses while you are in the United States. The agent should return all documents to you before you leave the inspection area.

Your I-20 gives you a complete list of the documents you must present when you enter the United States

# WHAT DO I DO ONCE I HAVE ENTERED THE UNITED STATES?

## **REPORT TO SCHOOL NAMED ON YOUR FORM I-20 AND VISA.**

Upon your first entry to the United States, you must report to the DSO at the school named on your Form I-20 and your F-1 visa (unless you are exempt from visa requirements). If you decide to attend another school before you enter the United States, you must present a Form I-20 from the new school to a U.S. consular officer for a new F-1 visa that names the new school. Failure to enroll in the school, by the program start date on your Form I-20 may result in the loss of your student status and subject you to deportation.

The 'DSO' is a professional staff member in the International Office. These are the people who have access to your records and can mark that you have arrived. At Truman, the DSOs will use your online address verification form to mark that you have arrived. It is very important that you complete that form within the first two weeks of classes. If you do not submit that form, you will lose your legal status and may have to return home.

# CAN I WORK IN THE UNITED STATES?

**EMPLOYMENT.** Unlawful employment in the United States is a reason for terminating your F-1 status and deporting you from the United States. You may be employed on campus at your school. You may be employed off-campus in curricular practical training (CPT) if you have written permission from your DSO. You may apply to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for off-campus employment authorization in three circumstances: 1) employment with an international organization; 2) severe and unexpected economic hardship; and 3) optional practical training (OPT) related to your degree. You must have written authorization from USCIS before you begin work. Contact your DSO for details. Your spouse or child (F-2 classification) may not work in the United States

We know that many students expect to work while they study. However, students are only allowed to work on-campus for up to 12 hours per week. Any other type of employment is not authorized and can result in losing your status and being sent back to your home country. Please understand that you will **not be able to pay tuition and support yourself by working**. You will not be able to earn enough money legally to do this. For information about how much you can expect to earn and how much you can expect to pay, you can look at the [Legal Work Options and Budgeting page](#). You are required to show financial means for this reason. If you are concerned that your sponsor will not be able to support you, you should carefully consider whether or not to study in the United States.



# HOW LONG CAN I REMAIN THE UNITED STATES?

**PERIOD OF STAY.** You may remain in the United States while taking a full course of study or during authorized employment after your program. F-1 status ends and you are required to leave the United States on the earliest of the following dates: 1) the program end date on your Form I-20 plus 60 days; 2) the end date of your OPT plus 60 days; or 3) the termination of your program for any other reason. Contact your DSO for details.

**EXTENSION OF PROGRAM.** If you cannot complete the education program by the program end date on page 1 of your Form I-20, you should contact your DSO at least 15 days before the program end date to request an extension.

If you follow the rules for F-1 students, you remain in the United States until 60 days after the end date on your I-20. Your I-20 may be extended if you qualify, but you must talk to a DSO to see if you qualify. If you let your I-20 expire, you will lose your legal status in the United States.

# DO I HAVE TO STAY AT THE SAME SCHOOL FOR MY ENTIRE PROGRAM OF STUDY?

**SCHOOL TRANSFER.** To transfer schools, first notify the DSO at the school you are attending of your plan to transfer, then obtain a Form I-20 from the DSO at the school you plan to attend. Return the Form I-20 for the new school to the DSO at that school within 15 days after beginning attendance at the new school. The DSO will then report the transfer to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). You must enroll in the new school at the next session start date. The DSO at the new school must update your registration in SEVIS.

You must attend the university that issued your I-20. A school must have your SEVIS record to issue an I-20. Truman's policy regarding transfers is that we require students to submit a formal transfer request and provide proof of acceptance before a SEVIS record will be transferred. More information can be found [here](#).

# DO I HAVE TO REPORT TO ANYONE WHILE I AM A STUDENT IN THE UNITED STATES?

**NOTICE OF ADDRESS.** When you arrive in the United States, you must report your U.S. address to your DSO. If you move, you must notify your DSO of your new address within 10 days of the change of address. The DSO will update SEVIS with your new address.

At the beginning of every semester you complete the address verification process. All university students do this, and it is especially important for international students to maintain their legal status. Students who change addresses during the semester will complete the SEVIS Address Update form.



# WHAT DO YOU DO WITH INFORMATION I REPORT?

**AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE INFORMATION BY SCHOOL.** DHS requires your school to provide DHS with your name, country of birth, current address, immigration status, and certain other information on a regular basis or upon request. Your signature on the Form I-20 authorizes the named school to release such information from your records.

The Center for International is required by law to share the information mentioned above with DHS. However, DHS is the **ONLY** entity we will provide such information to. Your information will not be released to anyone else without your permission.



# DO I HAVE TO DO ANYTHING ELSE?

**PENALTY.** To maintain your nonimmigrant student status, you must: 1) remain a full-time student at your authorized school; 2) engage only in authorized employment; and 3) keep your passport valid. Failure to comply with these regulations will result in the loss of your student status and subject you to deportation.

There are three key rules you must follow –

1. 12 credit hours of undergraduate or 9 credit hours of graduate enrollment each semester
2. No off-campus employment or employment over 20 hours per week
3. Make sure your passport is always valid for at least six months into the future

If you comply with the reporting requirements each semester, follow the rules above, and make sure to consult with the international office regularly, you should be able to maintain your F-1 student status.