Passport: Your passport is your government’s permit for you to travel internationally. The United States (U.S.) government requires F-1 students to keep their passports valid at least 6 months into the future while here in the U.S. Your passport may be extended only by your home government. You will need to contact your Embassy here in the U.S.—at least 7-8 months in advance of the expiration date—to ask about the forms, fees, procedures, and the amount of time necessary to extend or renew your passport. If your F-1 visa is still valid and you will be issued a new passport, you should request the return of your expired passport. By keeping the old and the new passports together, the valid F-1 visa can be used for reentry to the U.S. Otherwise, you will need to apply for a new F-1 visa the next time you depart the U.S. (NOTE: For the purpose of an F-1 visa application at a U.S. Consulate/Embassy, the passport must be valid at least 6 months beyond the authorized period of stay, which is listed in section 5 of the I-20.)

F-1 Visas: Your F-1 visa is the stamp placed in your passport with your photo, which allows you to apply for entry into the U.S. with other supporting documentation. (Canadians do not need an F-1 visa to enter the U.S. but they do need an I-20 and the SEVIS Fee receipt to obtain F-1 student immigration status at the U.S. Port of Entry.) The visa was issued at the U.S. Embassy/Consulate when you presented your I-20, admission letter, financial documentation, and other required documents. The visa notes the purpose of your visit to the U.S. (student), the last date by which you can enter the U.S., and the number of entries you are permitted. Some visas are valid for the entire duration of your studies, and other visas are issued for a much shorter time depending on reciprocity laws between your country and the U.S. It is NOT necessary to maintain a valid F-1 visa while you are in the U.S., but you MUST have a F-1 valid visa if you plan to reenter the United States for the continuation of your studies after a short departure. F-1 visas cannot be obtained or renewed within the U.S. They can only be obtained from the U.S. Consulates/Embassies outside the country. Please see the Director of the OISS, or our webpage entitled “F-1 Visas”, for more details if you will need to apply for a new visa soon: http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/documents/F1J1VisaHandoutMay242012.pdf

I-94 Arrival/Departure Record: As of April, 2013, the I-94 Arrival/Departure Records are now processed electronically by the U.S. Customs & Border Patrol (CBP) for those arriving by air and sea. This important record serves as your evidence of lawful entry into the U.S. It contains your name, date of birth, country of citizenship, immigration status, the date you entered the U.S., the amount of time you can remain in the U.S., and your 11 digit “Admission Number”, which is used to keep track of the dates you leave and reenter the U.S. F-1 students are admitted into the U.S. until “D/S”, or “Duration of Status”. (See “D/S” below for details.) Each F-1 student should print a copy of his/her I-94 record and is expected to have it on his/her possession as evidence of lawful registration/entry into the United States. If a specific date is ever entered on your I-94 card—or something other than “F-1” status—you must bring your passport, visa, and I-94 record to the Office of International Student Services (OISS) immediately.

(---Over---)
I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility for Non-immigrant Student Status): The I-20 is the document which is used to obtain the F-1 visa; to enter the U.S.; to transfer from one U.S. school to another; and to apply for a change to F-1 student immigration status from within the U.S. On this document, the school certifies your academic level, major field of study, expected completion date, financial support, etc. A new I-20 should be requested from the Office of International Student Services when any errors are discovered, when any changes occur, when beginning a new level of study (moving from a master’s to a doctorate degree, etc.), when changing/declaring your major, or when you may need more time to complete your degree. A student who plans to transfer to a new U.S. college/university must also obtain a new I-20 from the new school for transfer purposes. The I-20 is an important document which becomes your permanent record of your F-1 status while you are in the U.S. You should always keep any I-20s that are ever issued to you. You MUST carry all I-20s with you while traveling. A recent travel signature (no more than 12 months old by the reentry date) on page 3 of the I-20 is required to reenter the U.S. as a continuing student after a temporary departure of 5 months or less. The I-20 may also be needed to prove work eligibility to prospective employers.

Duration of Status (D/S): This stands for “Duration of Status” and is the period of time for which you have been admitted into the U.S. For F-1 students, this period is defined as the time in which you are pursuing a full course of study, with a valid I-20, and any authorized period of practical training plus a 60 day grace period from which you have to depart the U.S. or transfer to a new school/degree program.

Full-Time Student Status: F-1 students must be enrolled full-time each fall and spring semester (and each summer semester if you are in a 12 academic month program that requires summer enrollment). For immigration purposes full-time status is generally defined as 12 credits for undergraduates; 9 credits for graduate students; 10 credits for law students; and 6 credits for doctoral students. There are a few exceptions to the full-time rule, but students planning to drop below full-time status, MUST consult with the Office of International Student Services (OISS) to receive PRIOR WRITTEN APPROVAL before dropping below full-time status. Failure to receive prior written approval from the OISS is a serious violation of the F-1 status which will result in the loss of the student’s lawful immigration status. For students in academic programs that begin in the summer, and programs that require summer enrollment, full-time status is required during the summer term.

On-Line/Distance Education Restrictions: Students in F-1 immigration status cannot count more than 1 online/distance education class, or more than 3 online/distance education credits toward the full-time status requirement per semester. If an F-1 student has only one course remaining, the course cannot be taken through online/distance education as there must be a physical presence requirement for at least one course.

Transfer to a Different School: If you are planning to study at a new school, you must first submit a “Request to Transfer Out” form in order to have your SEVIS/immigration record transferred from Regent University to the new school. You must also contact the International Student Advisor/Designated School Official at the new school to inquire about their transfer procedures, the paperwork you will need to complete for the new I-20, and any deadlines that might apply to you. The transfer procedures and deadlines will likely differ from school to school with certain federal deadlines that apply to all. Current regulations require all F-1 students to register with the International Student Advisor/Designated School Official at the new school within 15 days of beginning attendance in order to complete the immigration transfer process on time. Failure to do so will result in the loss of your lawful F-1 status. If a student completes a degree at one U.S. institution and plans to enroll at another U.S. institution for another degree, this student must also submit a “Request to Transfer-Out” form for immigration purposes even though this is not considered an academic transfer. For F-1 students, the I-20 from the new school MUST be issued within 60 days after the student completes his/her studies at the current/previous institution.

(See Next Page–)
**I-20/F-1 Program Extension:** F-1 regulations allow students in F-1 immigration status to apply for an I-20/F-1 program extension under certain circumstances. If you are unable to complete your program before the program end-date listed on your I-20 because of compelling academic or medical reasons, such as changes of major or research topics, unexpected research problems, or documented illnesses, you may be eligible for an I-20/F-1 program extension. Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are NOT acceptable reasons for a program extension. The government has a very strict deadline regarding the extension of program. Students who fail to submit the required paperwork by the deadline may fall out of lawful status and may need to apply for a reinstatement to lawful F-1 immigration status. **If you anticipate that you will not be able to complete your degree by the time you are currently authorized on your I-20, you should submit your I-20 Program Extension Application to the Director of the OISS at least 1 month before your current I-20 will expire (in section 5).** Application packets for program extensions are available at the Office of International Student Services and on our website: [http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/onlineform.cfm](http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/onlineform.cfm).

**Employment:** Employment is considered to be the part-time or full-time rendering of services for any type of compensation (financial or other). Employment is a “benefit” of the F student statuses, which is only available to those students who have maintained their lawful immigration status. F-1 students can only work in the U.S. after receiving the proper authorization and with certain restrictions. Working in the U.S. without proper authorization is a serious violation of the F-1 student statuses which can lead to deportation. If you are considering any type of employment in the U.S., you should first consult with the Office of International Student Services for specific rules and restrictions. A summary of the regulations regarding the various types of F-1 employment authorization is included on the OISS website under “Working in the United States”: [http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/employment.cfm](http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/employment.cfm). All students who plan to work in the U.S. must first obtain a U.S. social security number (SSN) for employment and taxation purposes. Details about applications for a social security number are available in the OISS. The “On-campus Employment” benefit and authorization will automatically end on the Term-End Date of the semester when the student completes his/her degree.

**Dependents:** The lawful immigration status of all F-2 dependents is connected to the lawful status of the primary F-1 visa holder. If an F-1 visa holder violates his/her immigration status, then all dependents are out of lawful immigration status as well. **F-2 dependents are not permitted to work or accept employment in the U.S. under any circumstances.**

(Revised 7/12/13—LJ)