Change of Status: B-1 or B-2 (Tourist) to F-1 (Student)

Dear Prospective International Student,

This guide will explain how you can gain F-1 status here in the U.S. As you decide on whether you would like to return home or apply for a change of status, there are a few things that you should be aware of.

To explain, first let me clarify the difference between status and a visa.

- **Status**
  - When you enter the U.S., you are allowed in for a certain period of time to do a certain activity. This is your status, or the reason that you are here in the U.S. In order to maintain your status in the U.S., you must continue to do the activity within the time frame that you were given.

- **Visa**
  - This is the travel document that allows you into the U.S. The visa is issued to do a certain activity for a certain period of time. It is similar to a key to get into the house. One you are in the house (U.S.) you no longer need the key, unless you plan to depart and return.

To become an F-1 student in the U.S. there are two options.

1. **Change of Status**
   - a. Because you are already here in the U.S., you are currently here under a B-1/B-2 visa which is for tourists. This means that for 90 days, you were given permission to stay in the U.S. for pleasure. To become an F-1 student, you could request a change of status from a B-1/B-2 to an F-1 student. Requesting a Change of Status is requesting new permission for the reason and amount of time you’re are allowed in the U.S.

2. **Travel**
   - a. You can obtain a visa from your home country to enter the U.S. as an F1 student. Once you enter the U.S. on this visa, your F1 status would begin.

Things to be aware of if applying for a change of status

- If you plan to request a Change of Status while in the U.S. as a visitor, please note that you will not be able to begin classes until your Change of Status is granted. A Change of Status takes at least 2 months to be processed by immigration.

- If your Change of Status (COS) is approved, you will still need to return to your home country to obtain a visa for travel, if you intend on travelling internationally during your F-1 status.

- It is more difficult to obtain a COS from B-1/B-2 to F-1 because it is assumed by immigration that you were not truthful about your original intent when you first entered the U.S. When applying for this type of COS, you will need to show that you had no intent on staying when you first entered as a visitor. You will also need to provide evidence that you have been here for pleasure thus far (i.e. receipts of activities that you have been engaging in).

**If you plan becoming an F-1 student through a change of status, you do not need to return home to obtain a visa. You would only need to get a visa if you plans on travelling while studying as an F-1 student in the U.S.**

It is important that you have all of the information in regards to becoming an F-1 student. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best,

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