Travel Checklist for Students in F or J Status

This check list is designed for international students in F or J status who are traveling within the United States or abroad. If you will be applying for a new U.S. visa, be sure to review the handout titled “How to Renew Your Visa.”

___SEVIS I-20 OR DS-2019
Check the travel signature on your SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019 and be sure that it is still valid. You must have your SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019 with you when you travel, even within the U.S. You should travel using your most recently issued I-20 or DS-2019. However, be sure to save all of your previously issued I-20s or DS-2019s (IAP-66s), as they represent immigration “history” in the U.S.

___PASSPORT
Check the expiration date of your passport. You must have your passport with you for all travel, including travel within the U.S. If traveling abroad, your passport MUST be valid at least six months into the future upon your return to the United States. Passports may be renewed at your country’s embassy or consulate in the United States.

___U.S. VISA
Check your U.S. visa stamp inside your passport. Has your visa stamp expired? If it is still valid, is it for multiple entry, or has the entry been used up? Finally, is the category for which the visa was issued the status you currently hold (for example, if your visa is F-2, are you currently in F-2 status or did that status change after you entered the U.S.)? An expired U.S. visa need only be renewed if you will be traveling outside the U.S. The exception is travel to Canada or Mexico or adjacent islands of North America. Provided that your travel to those countries is for less than thirty days and you are not applying for a U.S. visa there, you may return to the U.S. on an expired F or J visa. There is a special rule for citizens of Iran, Syria, Libya, Sudan, North Korea, or Cuba currently in the USA. Such individuals can only enter Canada or Mexico and return to the United States IF they have an unexpired multiple-entry U.S. visa in the passport for their current status.

___VISAS FOR OTHER COUNTRIES
Check your travel itinerary. If you are traveling to a country that is not your country of citizenship, find out if you need an entry visa to visit that country. Visit www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/dpl/32122.htm for a list of all foreign embassies in the U.S. and their web sites. If you are “transiting” into that country - meaning your flight home requires an intermediate stop in a third country - find out if a transit visa is required, and if so, if it needs to be obtained in advance. This is most common for students with flights stopping in the United Kingdom.

For information on the requirements for “Visitor in Transit” visas in the UK, visit: www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/ecg/visitandtransit/visitortransit
I-94 ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE CARD
You must have your white, I-94 card with you for all travel, even travel within the United States. You will need to surrender your I-94 card if you are departing from the United States. You will be issued a new I-94 card upon your re-entry to the U.S. with a new admission number. However, your SEVIS ID (printed at the top right of your SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019) will not change.

SPECIAL NOTE: F-1 and J-1 students with expired U.S. visas who are traveling to Canada, Mexico or adjacent islands of North America for up to 30 days, are not applying for a new U.S. visa, AND who will be resuming their studies upon their return should NEVER surrender their I-94 card. Canadian or Mexican nationals returning to their home country should surrender their I-94 card as they enter their country, and obtain a new I-94 card the next time they enter the USA. Canadian nationals should be sure to carry with them their financial documentation that verifies the information on their I-20.

ST. JOHN’S STUDENT ID CARD
Carry your current St. John’s ID card with you as supporting documentation.

STUDENTS ON OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING
If you have completed your studies and have applied for Practical Training, you should not travel outside the United States while the OPT application is pending. If you must travel outside the United States during that time, please come to our office to speak with an international student advisor. Once the Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) for OPT is issued to you, and you decide to travel aboard, you can only re-enter the United States to resume employment. Thus, you must carry with you written documentation from the employer verifying your employment or job offer, as well as the EAD card. DHS has clarified that the F-1 student does not need to have begun actual employment before leaving, as long as the student has a job offer to which to return. The travel signature on the third page of the I-20 should be no older than six months and the F-1 visa must be valid.