



INTERNATIONAL SERVICES OFFICE
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TIPS FOR APPLYING FOR A STUDENT VISA

NAFSA: Association of International Educators offers the following tips when applying for a student visa:

Ties to Your Home Country: Under U.S. law, all applicants for non-immigrant visas are viewed as intending immigrants unless they can 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 or residence: job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, investments, etc. You may be asked 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, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate or letter that can guarantee visa issuance.

English: Anticipate that the visa interview, should there be one, will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview. Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular official will want to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.

Academics: Know the academic program to which you have been admitted and how it fits into 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 U.S. consular official that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to immigrate. You should be able to explain how studying in the U.S. relates to your future professional career **when you return home**.

Be concise: Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable 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. Consequently, what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers to the officer's questions short and to the point.

Supplemental Information: 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 at best.

Not All Countries are the same: Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the U.S. 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 U.S.

Financial Documentation: If you are receiving funding from the University of Rochester, your home university, your employer, or from the government, be prepared to present the appropriate letters or



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documents which verify this funding. If your financial support is coming from personal or family funds, bank statements alone are seldom considered credible enough evidence to demonstrate sufficient finances. Only when coupled with highly credible documentation that can substantiate the source (such as job contracts, letters from an employer, tax documents, pay stubs, or deposit slips) will a bank statement be accepted. Bank statements are most credible if they are a series or reliable computer-generated ordinary monthly bank account statements.

Employment: Your main purpose for coming to the U.S. is to study, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. While many students may work part-time 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 F-2 visa, be aware that F-2 dependents cannot, under any circumstances, be employed in the U.S. If asked, be prepared to address what your spouse intends to do with his or her time while in the U.S. Volunteer work and attending school part-time are permitted activities.

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 U.S. in order to support them, your student visa will almost certainly be denied. If your family does decide to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at the same post where you applied for your visa.

Maintain a positive attitude: Do not engage the consular official in an argument. If you are denied a student visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and obtain in writing an explanation of the reason you were denied.

****Special Note for Canadian Citizens:** Citizens of Canada are not required to obtain a U.S. visa to enter the United States. However, an officer of the U.S. Immigration Service will inspect your papers either at a pre-inspection site in Canada or upon entry to the U.S. You must have with you proof of Canadian citizenship, proof of admission to the University of Rochester, your U of R Certificate of Eligibility, and proof of financial support that corresponds to the information on your I-20 or IAP-66. It is essential that you enter the U.S. in the appropriate status, so be sure to have complete documentation with you.