Change to F-1 Student Status (inside the U.S.)

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) permit prospective students who have maintained lawful nonimmigrant status to apply for a change to F-1 student status. Their decision is based on the information supplied by the applicant and immigration law. The process may take a few weeks to several months depending on the how complicated the case is and how busy the USCIS is. There is no guarantee that your application for a change to F-1 student status will be approved. The following checklist will offer guidance in your application for reinstatement.

Change of status can be processed by traveling outside the U.S with a new I-20 and attempting re-entry/applying for a new visa, or by applying for a change of status within the U.S through USCIS. Both options have some level of risk involved and none guarantee approval.

Checklist:

Submit paperwork to International Student and Scholar Services:

1. **STEP ONE:**
   - A. Submit:
     - Proof of Acceptance to CCSU
     - Affidavit of Support

2. **STEP TWO:**
   - A. Submit:
     - Legible copies of:
       - passport ID pages
       - latest Admission Stamp (red stamp inside passport)
       - latest Visa
       - front and back of I-94 card
     - Form I-539 (Application To Extend/Change Non-Immigrant Status)
     - $300 Fee: check or money order payable to Department of Homeland Security.
     - Letter of Explanation stating:
       - why you are changing status
       - why you originally traveled to the U.S.
       - a brief description of your future plans (educational and career)
       - ties to your home country

3. **STEP THREE:**
   - Pay SEVIS fee ([instructions on SEVIS information sheet](#))
   - Proof of paid SEVIS fee payment (bring copy to me)

---

1 Under U.S. law, all applicants for nonimmigrant visas are viewed as intending immigrants until 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 of residence such as a job, family, financial prospects, etc.
Process:

- Please submit your documents to the Front Desk in the CIE for processing.
- You will be contacted within 2 weeks for a signature on your new I-20, which will be submitted to the USCIS as part of your application for change to F-1 student status.
- During the processing time:
  - you may lawfully stay in the U.S.
  - you are not yet eligible for any F-1 benefits such as full-time study (in accordance with your current visa status), work authorization, transfer, or travel outside the U.S.
- If your application for change to F-1 student status is approved, you will receive an approval notice with a new I-94 card attached at the bottom and your new Form I-20 with an approval stamp from the USCIS. Congratulations! Although you are granted F-1 student status within the U.S., this process does not give you a travel visa. If you plan to travel outside the U.S., you are still required to have a valid F-1 visa if you wish to re-enter the U.S. You may apply for one at the U.S. embassy or consulate in the country you travel to. Please note that some countries may not consider your application if you are not a resident, therefore forcing you to apply in your home country.
- If your application for change to F-1 student status is denied:
  - You are required to leave the U.S. within 15 days unless you wish to work with an attorney to file a “motion to re-open” your case by presenting new and different information (within 30 days).
  - You will begin accumulating days of “unlawful presence”. If you remain in the U.S. after the denial for over 180 days, you will be barred from returning to the U.S. for 3 years; if you remain for one year or more, you will be barred for 10 years.
  - There is an official record of the decision in SEVIS, which may have an impact on future visa applications.

Special Immigration Note:

- individuals who enter the U.S. in B-1/B-2 status either having already applied to schools or apply shortly after entry will be denied a change to F-1 status.
- individuals with a green card application pending will be denied a change to F-1 status.
- Each person's situation is different, of course, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter that can guarantee approval of a change of status application.

Alternative Process:

- A prospective student may depart the U.S. and apply for the F-1 student visa at a United States embassy or consulate.

---

2 B-1/B-2 visa holders may not engage in a “course of study”, full- or part-time; F-2s may study part-time only; H-4s may study full- or part-time. If your current visa status is not mentioned here, please ask.