



## Cornell University International Students and Scholars Office

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### CHANGING FROM H-1B TO F-1 VISA STATUS

To change your U.S. visa status, you can either: **a)** travel out of the U.S., apply at a U.S. consulate for the new visa type, and re-enter the U.S. in the new status **OR b)** apply for a change of status within the U.S. by sending an application to an immigration service center as described in this handout. To apply within the U.S. to change from H-1B to F-1 student status, complete the application as described below. Review your application at the ISSO before mailing it to USCIS. USCIS will take approximately 1 to 3 months to approve your change of status application. Your change of status application **MUST** be received by the USCIS **before** your final day of employment in H1B status. You may **NOT** work on campus as an F-1 student until your change of status to F-1 is approved, however, you may enroll in classes prior to the approval. **Please note:** The timing of filing a change of status can vary depending on your situation and where you live in the U.S. and it is best to talk to an advisor at the ISSO about your specific situation.

#### ITEMS IN APPLICATION TO the appropriate USCIS office as stated in the I-539 instructions:

- 1) Receipt showing that you have paid the “SEVIS fee” printed when you pay the fee at: [www.FMJfee.com](http://www.FMJfee.com).
- 2) A letter from you, requesting the change of status and explaining your circumstances and plans. It is recommended that an adviser at the ISSO look at your letter before you mail your packet to the USCIS.
- 3) Completed Form I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status (download this form from [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)). The ISSO adviser can help you with items you don't understand; remember to fill out both sides of the form, answer questions in Part 4 item 3 on a separate page when necessary.
- 4) **APPLICATION FEE:** Check the I-539 form for the appropriate fee amount. Please write your check or money order payable to the Department of Homeland Security. Write your I-94 card number & the type of application you are requesting on your check or money order.
- 5) Your Cornell I-20. Send the original – not a copy. Sign at the bottom of page 1, Item 11.
- 6) Photocopies of your immigration documents:
  - your I-797 approval notice for your H1B status;
  - the ID page of your passport;
  - page in passport showing expiration date if different than ID page;
  - your H1B visa page if you have one;
  - BOTH sides of your I-94 card (send a COPY, NOT the original!)
- 7) Financial documentation: evidence which supports section 8 on your new I-20 (a personal or family bank statements and/or a letter from your department describing your assistantship).

Staple all of the items together (keep a copy for your records) and mail by certified mail to the appropriate USCIS address as stated in the I-539 instructions. **NOTE:** After your I-20 and new I-94 are returned to you, send or bring a photocopy of the documents to the ISSO.