



# Cornell University International Students and Scholars Office

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## CHANGING FROM B-2 TOURIST or B-2 “PROSPECTIVE STUDENT” 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 B-2 tourist or B-2 “prospective student” status to F-1 student status, complete the application as detailed below, and mail the items listed to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Review your complete application with an ISSO advisor before you mail it to USCIS. USCIS will take approximately 1 to 3 months to approve your change of status application. **Please note: Your application to change from B-2 to F-1 student status MUST BE APPROVED before you may legally enroll in classes.**

### 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” which you can print when you pay the fee: [www.FMJfee.com](http://www.FMJfee.com).
- 2) A letter from you, requesting the change of status and explaining why you did not enter the US on an F-1 visa. If you entered on a B-2 “prospective student” visa stamp and this is noted on your visa stamp or on your I-94 card, the change of status will most likely be granted, if all other documents are in order. 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 your name on the bottom of page 1, Item 11.
- 6) Photocopies of your immigration documents:
  - the ID page of your passport;
  - page in passport showing expiration date if different than ID page;
  - your B-2 visa page;
  - BOTH sides of your I-94 card (send a COPY, NOT the original!)
- 7) Financial documentation: evidence which supports section 8 on your 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.