Visa Questions for Traveling Outside the U.S.

All F-1 and J-1 students apply for a U.S. visa to enter the United States. This gives you permission to enter and exit the U.S. as long as your visa has not expired.

I am leaving the country and my visa has not expired. What do I need to do to re-enter the U.S.?

You will not need to apply for a new visa. You must have a valid I-20 (for F-1 students) with a signature on page 3 giving you permission to return. J-1 students will need a signature on the front of their DS 2019. Please bring your documents to the Office of International Engagement at least one week before your departure and be prepared to leave them for 48 hours. Your I-20/DS 2019 will be signed and ready to pick up within 2 days. See Travel Signature on I-20 found at uca.edu/international for more information.

I am leaving the country and my visa has expired. What do I need to do to renew my visa?

You will need to schedule an appointment with the US Consulate in your home country in order to renew your visa. You will be responsible for paying any fees and completing any forms required by the Consulate. These are usually available on the Consulate’s website.

Before you leave UCA, you will need

1. Your I-20 or DS 2019 signed by an Office of International Engagement staff member;

2. An official transcript from the Registrar’s Office in McCastlain Hall. (Keep in mind that if you have an outstanding financial balance to UCA, a transcript will NOT be issued). Please request a transcript 5-10 days before you need it. Find the Transcript Request Form at uca.edu/registrar.

3. Documentation of your continued financial support when you apply for your visa. Be sure to take copies of any scholarship or other financial assistance award letters you have received.

Note concerning your transcript and final grades: Final grades are usually not posted and available on your transcript for approximately a week after the semester has ended. You should go ahead and request the transcript and take it with you when you leave. After about a week, final grades will be available through “MyUCA”. You can then print out your final grades for the semester and take this print out with you to your visa appointment. Please request your transcript 7 - 10 days before you wish to pick it up.

Can I renew my visa in the U.S. before I leave?

Unfortunately, this is not an option.
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I am not planning to leave the U.S. and my visa has expired. Am I still here legally?

Yes. Your visa in your passport allows you to enter the U.S. After you are here it does not matter if it has expired. You must, however, have a valid I-20 or DS 2019 to maintain your F-1 or J-1 status. You will only need to renew your visa if you leave the US.

Can I renew my visa in Canada or Mexico?

A student from another country may go to Canada or Mexico to renew their visa. However, if it is denied, then the student will have to return to their home country and will NOT be able to re-enter the US.

If a student visits Canada or Mexico for less than 30 days and does NOT apply to renew their visa, then they can re-enter the US on an expired visa as long as their I-20 has been signed on page 3.

How do I renew my visa in Canada or Mexico?

Applicants who wish to apply for their U.S. visa in Canada must visit http://canada.usvisa-info.com/ to obtain information about how to start their application for a U.S. visa at a consular section in Canada.

Applicants who wish to apply for their visa in Mexico must visit http://mexico.usvisa-info.com to obtain information about how to start their application for a U.S. visa at a consular section in Mexico.

Complete information can be found here: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_5213.html#reentry

NOTE: Students should use caution if entering the country of Mexico. The U.S. Department of State has issued a travel advisory for Mexico, which was updated on February 8, 2012. Please refer to the warning here: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_5665.html when making travel plans. It is highly recommended that students do not travel to Mexico for any reason.