Immigration Requirements for F-1 and J-1 Students

When you receive your F-1 or J-1 student visa and enter the United States, you are expected to follow certain rules regarding your studies. We refer to that as "Maintaining your immigration status". It is very important that you follow these rules – if you do not, you will be considered "out of status", which means you are in the U.S. illegally. Time spent out of status can keep you from getting future visas.

Maintaining your Immigration Status

♦ You must continually be a full-time student. You must be enrolled in and complete a minimum of 12 credit hours (undergraduate students) or 9 credit hours (graduate students) each fall and spring semester.

♦ You must receive permission for dropping below full-time enrollment. Exemption for full-time enrollment is not guaranteed, but may be made under the following circumstances only AFTER permission has been granted from International Engagement and a new I-20/DS-2019 has been issued. The following reasons for dropping below full-time enrollment may be considered:
  ♦ Difficulty with American teaching methods or English language during your first semester
  ♦ Documented medical reason (requires written statement from a physician)
  ♦ Final semester before graduation
  ♦ Note: Being dropped from a class for non-attendance is not an acceptable reason for being enrolled less than full-time.

♦ No more than 3 credit hours of online instruction may be applied to the 12/9 credit hour minimum. For example, if an undergraduate student is enrolled in 12 credits, 9 must be in person and 3 can be online. If the same person has 15 credits total, 9 must be in person and 6 can be online.

♦ You must complete your studies before your passport and/or I-20/DS-2019 expire. If you need an extension on your I-20/DS-2019, you must apply through International Engagement.

♦ You must only work on-campus for a maximum of 20 hours per week. International students may not work off-campus without prior authorization from International Engagement. For more information on work authorization, see the handout entitled Employment Information available at uca.edu/international.

♦ You must maintain a correct physical address on file with International Engagement. This can be done through myUCA and must be updated within 10 days of a change of address.

♦ You must have a valid travel signature by a Designated School Official (DSO) from International Engagement before leaving the country. Bring your I-20/DS-2019 along with the Travel Request Form a minimum of 3-4 days before leaving the country or the university closing for holidays or weekends.

♦ You must follow all state and federal laws. It is your responsibility for knowing and following U.S. laws, even when they differ from the laws of your home country. In seeking to renew or extend your visa, there is a very low tolerance for crimes, especially in matters related to alcohol.

♦ You must quickly and lawfully respond to any immigration concerns. If International Engagement or Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) contact you with potential immigration issues, it is in your best interest to cooperate and settle the matter quickly.
Final Thoughts

- **Failure to comply with these regulations** will result in a terminated I-20/DS-2019 and possible arrest and detention by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and deportation. Accrual of unlawful presence time in the United States could bar you from future lawful entry into the U.S.

- **Only you are responsible for maintaining your immigration status.** The staff of International Engagement is here to assist you and provide you any information that we can about UCA and your immigration status. However, it is up to you to be sure you are familiar with the rules and regulations of UCA and of your student visa.

- **Do not take immigration advice from fellow students.** Contact International Engagement for questions or further information. If you have any questions or concerns, please visit our office Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Further Information

More information on immigration regulations can be found at uscis.gov or at uca.edu/international.

The following forms have been developed by International Engagement to make student aware of

- Travel Signature on I-20
- Visa Questions for Traveling Outside the U.S.
- Absence from the U.S.
- Employment Information