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BETHANY COLLEGE OF MISSIONS

Important Visa Instructions for Canadian and International Students

Eligibility for a Student Visa

Upon acceptance to BCOM and submission of proof of support documentation (**for Canadians**) or upon acceptance **and** submission of proof of support documentation and first term fees (**for all other International students**), Canadian and International students are entered into the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), a computer database of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Upon entry into this system an I-20 immigration form is generated by Bethany College of Missions. The I-20 form and its accompanying documents, equip students to apply for an F-1 student visa to the U.S. All Canadian and International students must secure an F-1 student visa **in the country in which they are citizens**. This requirement is strongly enforced by the U.S. government as a security measure.

How to Obtain a Student Visa to the U.S.

- 1) After meeting BCOM's requirements (above) you will receive your I-20 form in the mail.
- 2) You must now pay the SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) **I-901 fee**. This **\$100 fee** must be paid before applying for a visa, or arriving at a POE (Point of Entry) if you are from a visa exempt country - you will **not** be able to pay the fee at the POE. (see instructions on how to pay the fee, later in this document) .

Allow time for your payment to be processed and receipted. You will need to show your receipt when you arrive for your interview or when you arrive at the POE.

You must pay the SEVIS I-901 fee before going to the United States embassy or consulate for your visa interview. If you do not pay it, your visa application will be denied.

- 3) Once you have paid the I-901 fee (and if you are not from a visa exempt country), make an appointment with the nearest U.S. consulate (if you are from a visa exempt country, skip this step).
- 4) Arrive at your appointment ready to apply for a visa. Bring all appropriate paperwork, including your I-20 form, your passport, birth certificate, copies of proof of support documentation, your I-901 fee receipt etc.

See the following website for more information on visas:

<http://unitedstatesvisas.gov/whatis/index.html>

If you are outside the United States and are from a visa exempt country, apply for student status at the POE.

If you are in the United States in another nonimmigrant status, submit your application for change of status to the USCIS. **You may be required to return to your home country in order to apply for a student visa!**

5) If you are granted an F-1 visa, you may enter the U.S. **no earlier than 30 days** from the start date of your college program, noted on your I-20 form.

6) Important! Please contact the BCOM Admissions Office to inform us as to whether you were granted the visa. E-mail us at lori.beyer@bethanyinternational.org as soon as possible following your appointment.

Students Who are Visa Exempt and Can Apply for F-1 Status at the POE

Potential students or exchange visitors from visa exempt countries can apply for F-1 status at the POE. **You must still pay the I-901 fee in advance and have evidence of payment prior to arrival at the POE.** The following people qualify as visa exempt.

Citizens of Canada or Bermuda	Applying for F-1 status upon entry
Bahamian nationals	Entering the United States without a visa as described in 8 CFR 212.1a and applying for F-1 status upon entry
British subject residents in the Bahamian, Cayman, Turks or Caicos Islands	

Using a Student Visa Initiated by Another U.S. College

If a student was previously enrolled in another college in the U.S. and has officially withdrawn from that college, his/her I-20 form and student visa are no longer valid, even if they are not yet expired, according to the printed expiration date. **Once a student withdraws from a U.S. college, the immigration documents and visa granted for attendance at that college are null and void, regardless of the expiration date.** In order to secure a new student visa for attendance at Bethany, the student must re-apply for a new F-1 student visa from his/her home country.

Transferring from Another U.S. College

If a Canadian or International student is **currently enrolled** under an F-1 student visa at another SEVIS-approved college in the U.S., he/she may request to transfer from that college to BCOM. In this case, the school you are currently attending must indicate that you are becoming a transfer student by adjusting your SEVIS record. Once this step is completed BCOM adopts the transfer students record and generates a new I-20 form from BCOM. This new form is sent to the student, and overrides the form given by his/her current college. The new F-1 student visa is granted automatically by virtue of the official transfer. However, we strongly advise that the transfer student keep their original I-20 form with the student visa stamp together with the new I-20 form from BCOM at all times.

Please note:

- If the student withdraws from his/her current college program at any time prior to his/her SEVIS record being transferred to BCOM, **that student is no longer eligible for transfer student status**, and must re-apply for an F-1 student visa from his/her home country.
- F-1 visas are the only student visas that are transferable. If a student is currently studying under any other type of visa (M-1 etc), he/she is not be eligible to transfer to BCOM, but must re-apply for a new student visa from his/her home country.