

## Changing your Immigration Status

### Overview

When you enter the United States on a nonimmigrant visa, you do so for a specific purpose, such as study, work, or travel. In many cases, people enter the US for one purpose and later want to change their purpose. When this happens, you will need to obtain a new immigration status.

It is important to note that different visa/status categories allow for different activities. Please see [Study in the States](#) for further information as not all original entry statuses allow for a change within the US.

**DISCLAIMER: Staff in the ISSS Office are not immigration attorneys. We provide you with the options to change your status.**

There are two (2) ways to gain a new immigration status:

#### **Option 1: Travel and Reentry** (the ISSS Office strongly encourages this option)

Leave the US; apply for a new visa at a US Consulate; and then reenter the US with the new visa and other relevant documents. You will automatically be in the new status when you are admitted into the US.

Advantages:

- Usually faster than changing status inside the US
- You will obtain the visa and the status

Disadvantages:

- Possibility of visa processing delay
- Expense of travel

#### **Option 2: Change Status from inside the US** (work with an immigration attorney)

An application and other documents must be submitted to the US Citizenship & Immigration Services for consideration. This option allows you to change your nonimmigrant status while remaining in the US.

This option grants you the new status, but it does not give you the new visa; visas are only issued outside the US and you would be required to secure that new visa when you do travel outside the US.

Advantages:

- Ability to stay in the US during processing
- Avoid securing a new visa until you decide to travel outside the US

Disadvantages:

- Processing can be very slow (6-9 months or even more), which could jeopardize your ability to begin your new activity, such as studying or accepting a research or teaching assistantship or other on-campus employment
  - you must stay in the US while the application is being processed; if you leave, the application is canceled

- When you do travel outside the US, you will need to secure the new visa in order to return to the US
- If the application is denied, you would be required to depart the US quickly

When deciding which option is best for you, be sure to consider several factors; these will help you determine the best way for you to make your intended change:

- upcoming travel plans
- processing times
- expiration date or special conditions of your current status

Please make an appointment with an advisor in the ISSS Office to discuss any questions/concerns you may have about changing your status.