

TIPS FOR APPLYING FOR A STUDENT VISA

The following tips for applying for a student visa have been adapted from NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

Ties to Your Home Country: Under U.S. law, all applicants for non-immigrant visas are viewed as intending immigrants unless they can convince the consular officer that they are not. You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. "Ties" to your home country are the things that bind you to your hometown, homeland, or current place of residence: job, family, property that you own or will inherit, investments, good financial prospects, etc. You may be asked about your specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other relationships, educational objectives, grades, long-range plans, and career prospects in your home country. Each person's situation is different, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate or letter that can guarantee visa issuance. If you are denied under Section 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, this means you have failed to prove intent to return to your home country.

English: Anticipate that the visa interview, should there be one, will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview. Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular official will want to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.

Academics: Be able to talk about the academic program of Randolph College. How does it fit into your career plans when you return home? If you are not able to explain the reasons you want to study here, you may not succeed in convincing the U.S. consular official that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to immigrate.

Be concise: Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impressions they form during the first minute or two of the interview. Consequently, what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers to the officer's questions short and to the point.

Be Honest: You should be honest with consular officials at all times. Do not lie, for example, about your sources of income. If consular officials believe you are lying, they will probably not issue the visa.

Supplemental information: It should be clear at a glance to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated.

Financial Documentation: If you are receiving funding from your family, your employer, or from the government, be prepared to present the appropriate letters or documents which verify this funding. If your financial support is coming from personal or family funds, bank statements alone are seldom considered credible enough evidence to demonstrate sufficient finances. Only when coupled with highly credible documentation which can substantiate the source (such as job contracts, letters from an employer, tax documents, pay stubs, or deposit slips) will a bank statement be accepted. Bank statements are most credible if they are a series of reliable computer-generated ordinary monthly bank account statements and are not more than 6 months old.

Not All Countries Are the Same: Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the U.S. as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their study in the U.S.

Employment: Your main purpose for coming to the U.S. is to study, not for the chance of work before or after graduation. While many students may work part-time during their studies, such employment is incidental to their main purpose of completing their U.S. education. You must be able to clearly describe your plan to return home at the end of your program.

Maintain a Positive Attitude: Do not engage the consular official in an argument. If you are denied a student visa, ask the officer for a written list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and obtain in writing an explanation of the reason you were denied.