

## Tips for Making Customs Inspection Easy

Once you have obtained your U.S student visa, you are ready to finalize your travel plans. Be sure to have your I-20 form (for F-1 visas) or DS-2019 (for J-1 visas) and your proof of Federal SEVIS fee payment with your passport when you go through your immigration inspection at the U.S port of entry. Remember that if you plan to attend Rutgers, you must present a certificate of eligibility endorsed for study at Rutgers University.

- **DO NOT** enter on another school's certificate of eligibility, as that is considered to be a fraudulent entry by the U.S. Immigration authorities.
- **DO NOT** attempt to enter the U.S on a visitor/tourist visa (B-2) unless it is designated "Prospective Student" by a consular officer. The U.S. Immigration Service rarely authorizes a change of status from B-2 to F-, and you will be prevented from enrolling in school until your change of status application is approved, which could take several months.
- **DO NOT** attempt to enter the U.S under the visa waiver program, available to citizens from nearly 30 countries throughout the world. The waiver program is designed for tourists only, and attending school under the waiver program, is a clear violation of U.S. immigration law.

Expect to go through both immigration and customs inspection at the U.S. port of entry. You may also be required to go through a pre-inspection procedure at certain airports abroad. At the immigration booth, present your passport, your I-20 or DS-2019, your proof of Federal SEVIS fee payment, and your completed I-94 arrival/departure card (if the card was distributed on the airplane). Expect to have your index fingers scanned for fingerprint purposes and a digital photograph taken, as required by U.S. Federal regulations. In the vast majority of cases, there will be no difficulty. In certain cases, if there is some problem with your documents, you may be issued a 30-day entry on your I-94 card and issued a form I-515, usually with instruction to see your international student advisor.

Examine your I-94 and I-20 or Ds-2019 carefully as you leave the immigration booth. F-1 students and J-1 Students should have their I-94s marked "D/S" which means Duration of Status, along with a stamp indicating the date you entered the United States. The same stamp and "D/S" notation should also be on the I-20 or DS-2019. If an expiration date is written on the I-94 instead of "D/S", and you are in F or J status, come to the Office of International Student Services as soon as possible.

Anyone who is denied admission at the U.S port of entry should be very cautious about arguing with the immigration official. You may risk being issued "expedited removal," which now entails a five-year bar on admission to the United States. If you are denied admission, first try to contact the OISS office for assistance, but also make it known to the immigration official that you are willing to withdraw your application for admission to the country rather than be subject to expedited removal.