

### **30 DAY GRACE PERIOD TO ENTER THE UNITED STATES**

“As of January 1, 2003, International Students can enter the United States no more than 30 days before the program start date listed on their I-20” (8 CFR 214.2 (j) (1) (ii))

- You may be denied entry into the United States at the port of entry if you arrive early even though you have a valid I-20.
- You might be admitted, but in a different visa/immigration status (as a tourist for example) other than the F-1 status. This can pose a lot of challenges and you will be unable to engage in the activities otherwise available to you as a F-1 International Student.

### **CUSTOMS INSPECTION AT U.S. PORT OF ENTRY**

#### What a Typical customs Inspector will do

- When you arrive at a U.S. airport, you will first go to immigration inspection. Make sure you remember to present your I-20 along with your passport and visa to the border official so that you will enter the U.S. as an International Student (F-1 status). Pack these documents in your carry-on bags because you do not pick up your luggage until afterwards.
- The immigration officer will also give you a white little card Arrival/Departure card (the I-94) which should be stapled into your passport. Keep track of this very important little white card. You will need it to leave the country!
- Additionally, as there are new border procedures, which require digital imaging of fingerprints and a photograph, and verification of your record in the SEVIS system (the U.S. government student database), this process may take a little longer than in the past.
- If the immigration inspector cannot immediately find your record, he or she may ask you to go to a “second station” where the officer has a little more time to find your record. Do not panic – this does *not* mean there is a problem.
- If there is a problem, during office hours, call the Office of International Student & Scholar Services at (973-353-1427).

#### What you need to do

- Collect your documents from the immigration officer
- Carefully secure your I-94 card (little white card). It should be stapled inside your passport opposite the visa page. If you lose it, you will have to apply to U.S immigration for replacement at a fee of \$300!