

# F-1 Student Visa Interview Tips



In preparation for the visa interview at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, it is important to understand the interview process and what is expected of you. Make sure that you know the time, date, and location of your interview, and make all of the necessary travel arrangements to arrive on time.

## Documents to Bring

- Valid passport with at least 3-4 blank pages
- I-20 – be sure to sign it!
- SEVIS fee receipt
- DS-160 confirmation page
- Saint Mary's acceptance letter
- Proof of funding
  - These are the same documents that you submitted with your Certificate of Finances
- Passports and I-20's for dependent applications (if applicable)

## Interview Setting

- Do not bring your cell phone or any other electronic devices into the U.S. Embassy or Consulate
- You will have to be fingerprinted and photographed as part of the visa application
- You will wait in a crowded office until you are called for your interview
- The Consular Officer who interviews you will be behind a glass window and there will be an opening for you to pass your documents to the Officer

## The Interview

- The Consular Officer will ask for the required documents and may ignore others
- Your reason for studying in the U.S. and at Saint Mary's must be clear and logical
- Similar to a job interview, so dress in business casual attire
- The Consular Officer will tell you at the end of the interview if your visa application has been approved or denied
- Interview is only 1-3 minutes long

## The Consular Officer's Point of View

- The Officer will review your DS-160 application and supporting documents as well as ask you additional questions to determine the following:
  - Does this student understand the implications of studying in the U.S.?
  - Is the student going to disappear once in the U.S. or are they planning to immigrate to the U.S.?
  - Does this student pose a threat to national security?
  - Does the student have enough financial resources to support their expenses in the U.S.?

## Visa Approval

- If your visa application is approved, you will submit your passport and I-20 to the Consular Officer
- It will take a few business days to process your visa and return your passport and I-20
- You may need to go to a separate location to collect your documents – be sure to check the website of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate for instructions on how and where to pick up your passport
- Contact the Center for International Programs to let us know that your application was approved
- Take a picture of your visa and email it to the Center for International Programs

## Visa Denial

- If your visa application is denied, ask the Consular Officer for a denial notice
- Contact the Center for International Programs

## Interview Tips

- Tell the truth
- The most important point to prove is that you have strong ties to your home country and that you plan to return home after graduation
- Answer each question confidently and completely, and provide a thoughtful response that answers multiple questions
- Know the details of your program of study at Saint Mary's – dates, scholarship information, major of study, athletic program, post-graduation plans, etc.
- Be able to clearly state why you want to study at Saint Mary's and/or in the U.S.
- Center each response around studying in the U.S., gaining valuable knowledge and cultural experience, and then returning to your home country to apply what you have learned
- Demonstrate that you are serious about being a student in the U.S.

## Sample Interview Questions

- Why do you want to study in the U.S.? Why do you want to study at Saint Mary's?
- How are you planning to fund your expenses while you are studying in the U.S.? What does your sponsor do for work?
- Who do you know in the U.S.?
- What are you going to do after you graduate?

## Additional Resources

- For more information regarding the interview process and studying in the U.S., please visit the [Study in the States website](#)

## Center for International Programs Contact Information

Ashley Cross  
Director | PDSO & RO  
Center for International Programs  
1928 Saint Mary's Road, PMB 3091  
Moraga CA 94575  
arm11@stmarys-ca.edu  
+1 (925) 631-4352