

Helpful Hints about the U.S. Immigration Process

Be Prepared:

1. Pay your SEVIS fee in advance. You will not be permitted to pay that day. **SAVE THE RECEIPT**
2. Make your appointment with enough time to spare before departure. You can enter the US 30 days before the start of the semester. Keep in mind that if you do, you will not be able to stay at Alderson Broaddus until a few days before the start of your term.
3. Make your appointment online.

Gather your documents:

Required documents

- Passport must be valid through November of the following year.
- Visa Application (Form DS-160) confirmation page
- Payment receipt
- Photo if your photo did not upload during the visa application process
- F1 form signed by a representative of Alderson Broaddus. This must be an original document. AB cannot scan, email, or fax one to you.
- Statement of Support signed by Alderson Broaddus with the AB seal indicating we believe you have adequate finances. All of the documents we required will be stapled to it in your I-20 packet. This can be a photocopy.

Additional Documents that May be Required:

- Academic preparation such as transcripts, diplomas, degrees, or certificates
- Any standardized test you took like the SAT or the TOEFL
- Take only legitimate documents.

Day of Appointment

1. Dress like you are going to a job interview. At some Embassies, you may have to stand for a long period of time, so wear comfortable shoes.
2. Be early, not excessively early, but allow yourself enough time to fight the traffic, find a parking place, and get to the check in desk.
3. You will have to make your own fingerprints

At the interview:

- Be candid and concise. You will only have ten minutes to make your case.
- Be truthful.
- Demonstrate you will want to come home! This is the #1 reason for denials – they don't see your connections to come home. The U.S. wants you to come to study and then they want you to return home.
- Sample questions
 1. *Agent:* "Where is Alderson Broaddus University and why have you chosen to study there?"

You: "Alderson Broaddus University is in Philippi (like the Bible), West Virginia. I chose to study here because they have a well-respected program in (name of major). While it is in a small rural mountain town, it is also close to major cities like Washington, DC and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. (look it up on a map just in case they ask you.)
 2. *Agent:* "Where will you be staying?"

You: "In student housing on campus."

3. *Agent*: “What is your address at Alderson Broaddus?”
You: “It is on the F1, but it is 101 College Hill Drive, Philippi, West Virginia.”
(memorize the address)
4. *Agent*: “Do you have relatives in the United States?”
You: (Answer truthfully, but don’t volunteer unless asked)
5. *Agent*: “Have you booked your airline tickets?”
You (Answer truthfully)
6. *Agent*: “Do you have medical insurance?”
You: “I plan to purchase a policy after I receive the visa. Alderson Broaddus works with several providers.”
7. *Agent*: “What is your academic preparation?”
You: (show your transcripts and test scores). “I earned above average grades in secondary school and passed the test for graduation. I scored a X on the TOEFL. Alderson Broaddus waived the SAT in my case. Please note that Alderson Broaddus has granted me (amount) as an academic scholarship.”
8. *Agent*: “How will you pay your expenses while in the United States?”
You: “You can see from my Statement of Support that Alderson Broaddus has decided that between financial aid and funds from my parents, I will have enough money on which to pay my bills for the next year.”
9. *Agent*: “Do you plan to have a job?”
You: (This is a trick question, don’t fall for it.) “No, international students are not allowed to work on the F-1 student visa.”
10. *Agent*: “Do you plan on returning home after graduation?”
You: “Yes, my plan is to come back to (name of country) and pursue a career in (field of study)

At the Border:

Your first border stop might be at a border crossing in Canada, but for most international students, it will be the first U.S. airport. Gather all of your luggage before proceeding to the Immigration Desk. Here, you are asking for admission to the United States. Your documents are just for the ask. You can still be denied here.

Do not bring:

- Firearms or any incendiary device. Note that you cannot have firearms on campus, anyway.
- Food. A snack you purchased at the airport would be acceptable, but don’t bring things like meat or vegetables.
- Pets or live animals of any kind
- Live plants.
- Drugs. If you bring prescription medications, be sure to have the prescription translated into English in its generic form. You’ll need that for the Student Affairs people, too. Bring a copy of your corrective vision prescription, too. Any other drugs might get you denied access and possibly arrested.

Customs will likely ask for:

- Passport with visa (Canadians will only have the I-901 receipt.)
- They may ask for your Statement of Support.