

March 10, 2010

TO: HPA International Families

FROM: Joshua Clark  
Director of Admission

RE: F-1 Student Visa

Congratulations on your acceptance to Hawai'i Preparatory Academy. As an international student, an important part of preparing to come to HPA is to obtain the F-1 Student Visa. This memo will outline the important steps of the process to assist you in successfully gaining entrance to the United States as a full-time student.

### **Step 1 – Form I-20**

The Form I-20 is a multi-purpose government form that is used in connection with F-1 student procedures. An F-1 student is an international student approved by the U.S. Government to study full-time in the United States. The Form I-20 is generated by the school to certify that the student has been accepted to the institution, has enrolled (paid deposit and returned completed Enrollment Agreement) at the school, and has the necessary academic and financial requirements to study.

HPA is required by law to receive the following items before we send the Form I-20:

1. The completed Enrollment Agreement.
2. The tuition deposit of \$2,500 USD.
3. A photocopy of the student's passport.
4. An original bank statement or letter from the bank (on official letterhead) certifying the family has sufficient funds to pay for the entire year of education. This should include the tuition, cost for books and fees, travel to and from the school, and any other miscellaneous costs.

We suggest that you ask for two original bank statements since HPA will need one copy and you will need to show the second copy to the U.S. consulate. After HPA is in receipt of all the items above, we will send you a Form I-20. When you receive the Form I-20, please be sure to have both parents and the student sign the form.

### **Step 2 – F-1 Student Visa**

Contact the local consulate and schedule an appointment for an F-1 Student Visa interview. Typically you can either schedule the appointment online or by phone. A student can apply for an F-1 visa earlier than 120 days before the start of school, to allow for visa processing and security clearance delays. However, the consulate cannot issue the visa until 120 days before the start of school. For students attending the HPA summer school, remember to plan early and apply for the visa so you can have it prior to arriving for the summer program in mid-June.

When you go to the consulate or embassy, you must bring the following items for the visa application:

1. **Properly completed Form I-20** (with parent and student signatures).
2. **I-901 Form.** Families must pay a \$200 SEVIS Application Fee. SEVIS is the computer system that generates the Form I-20. After submitting payment, you will receive an I-901 form, which is proof of payment. You must show the I-901 at the consulate

during your visa application interview. For more information on how to pay the SEVIS fee, go to: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/>

3. **Evidence of financial ability to meet all educational expenses for the year.** You should use the second original bank statement showing sufficient funds to cover all expenses for the year.
4. **Evidence of intent to depart the U.S. after completion of studies.** This is typically referred to as the “Strong Ties” clause. The F-1 student visa is a non-immigrant visa and so the student must prove that he/she does not intend to immigrate or live in the United States permanently. Students must show strong ties to their own country that will cause them to return home after studying at HPA, university, graduate school, etc. Strong ties differ from country to country, city-to-city, individual to individual. “Ties” are the various aspects of a person’s life that binds them to their country or residence. With younger applicants who may not have had an opportunity to form many ties, consular officers may look at the applicant’s specific intentions, family situations and long-range plans and prospects within his or her country of residence. Each case is examined individually.
5. **Passport valid for at least six months.**
6. **Form DS-156 “Non-immigrant Visa Application”**
7. **Form DS-157, if applicable**
8. **Form DS-158**

Note: Copies of each of the forms above are available at the consulate. You may also obtain the forms online at:

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/forms/forms\\_1342.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/forms/forms_1342.html)

Be sure to check the site often as a new form (DS-160) is expected to be available soon and will replace the DS-156, DS-157, and DS-158. When it becomes available, you will only need to complete the one form.

9. **Photograph(s).** Please check with your local consulate to determine the specific requirements and guidelines as well as the number of photographs required for the visa.
10. **Payment of F-1 Visa fee.** Consulates vary in the fees charged for processing and issuing an F-1 visa.
11. Applicants should also be prepared to provide if asked: The HPA acceptance letter, transcripts from previous institutions attended and scores from standardized tests required by the educational institution such as the SSAT, SLEP, TOEFL, etc.

F-1 Visa applicants should contact the specific consular office where they intend to apply to inquire about specific local procedures or requirements. During the interview, the U.S. consular officer will review the documents and evidence presented, and will ask a few questions. If approved, the visa will be issued within a few hours or days of the interview.

### **Step 3 – Traveling to the United States**

After you receive your visa, you are ready to travel to the United States. When purchasing your airline tickets, be sure that your final destination is Kona, Hawai’i (airport code KOA). Please e-mail your flight itinerary to [travel@hpa.edu](mailto:travel@hpa.edu). When you first land in the United States (either on the mainland, in Honolulu, or directly in Kona), that airport is your Port of Entry. You must disembark from the plane and go through immigration and customs.

You will go through immigration first. When you meet the immigration official you must present the following documents for admission to the United States in F-1 status:

1. **Passport valid for at least six months.**
2. **F-1 visa in passport.** For students entering the United States as an F-1 student for the first time, the name of the school (Hawai’i Preparatory Academy) on the F-1 visa must match the name of the school on the Form I-20. For a student who has F-1

student status at a school in the U.S., but has transferred from another U.S. school to HPA, the name of the new school (Hawai'i Preparatory Academy) does not need to be on the student's visa, only the Form I-20.

3. **Evidence of financial support**, including the same financial support information used when applying for the F-1 visa at the consulate or embassy.
4. **Form I-20**, properly signed by the school, parents, and student.
5. **Proof of having paid the SEVIS fee** may also have to be provided in some cases. Please keep your I-901 receipt with your passport.

Upon admitting the student to the United States, the immigration officer issues the student the departure portion of Form I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record), marked with the date and place of entry, the child's status as an F-1 student, a unique 11-digit admission number, and the period of admission known as "duration of status," indicated by the notation "D/S." **It is important that you keep the I-94 card with your passport and Form I-20 at all times!** When you leave the United States for school vacations, you must surrender your I-94 card.

After immigration, you will go to a special baggage claim room. Retrieve your luggage and go through customs by submitting your customs form you completed on the airplane. Next, proceed through one of two exits (Declare or Nothing to Declare). If you have a connecting flight to Kona, go to the luggage check-in and give back your checked luggage. Verify that the luggage is checked all the way to Kona (KOA).

If you need to contact HPA while you are traveling due to a flight change, delay, emergency, immigration problem, etc. please call **(808) 881-4363**. If you do not have a mobile phone, please ask an operator for assistance to make a collect call.

When you arrive in Kona, an HPA representative will be there to meet you and transport you to campus (45 minute drive). Returning students who are familiar with the process typically do not need anyone to meet them but take a taxi directly to HPA. When you arrive on campus, be sure to give your passport, Form I-20, and I-94 card to the Business Office to be held in a fireproof safe until needed for your next flight departure. You may check out your passport anytime but are required to keep it in the Business Office for safekeeping.

#### **Step 4 – Traveling**

Whenever you plan to leave campus on break or after graduation, especially if you plan to fly within or outside of the United States, you need to have all of your updated immigration paperwork with you.

- A few days before you plan on leaving, go to the Business Office and check out your passport, Form I-20, I-94 card, and any other included paperwork.
- Go to the Admission Office and ask to have your Form I-20 signed. There are only a few individuals on campus who are authorized by the U.S. Government to sign the form and are called *Designated School Officials (DSO's)*. A DSO should sign your Form I-20 anytime you are planning on leaving the country because the signature certifies that you are still a student at HPA.
- Take your passport and all other paperwork when traveling and keep it with you at all times. If you are traveling within the U.S., you may be asked to present the information as proof that you are in the United States legally. If you are travelling outside the U.S. you will need to surrender the I-94 card to the immigration official before embarking on the plane. When you return to the U.S. be sure to present all the documentation listed in the **Traveling to the United States** section above. You will receive a new I-94 card at immigration, keep the new card with your other

documents. Please return all documentation at the Business Office when you arrive back on campus.

### **Step 5 – Staying “in status” and graduation**

Remaining “in status” as an F-1 non-immigrant visa holder is the responsibility of the student. Always check your passport, visa, or other documentation for expiration dates, etc. When traveling back to your home country you may need to schedule an appointment with the consulate to renew your visa. You may also need to apply for a new passport through your own government. You should never discard any documentation, even if you have a replacement. Keep all old Form I-20’s or other forms you receive from immigration officials. Sometimes graduates have called HPA asking for documentation from when they were a student years ago to help prove their immigration status. Keeping all of your paperwork through the years can be very helpful.

When you graduate from HPA you should work with the Admission Office to transfer the Form I-20 to your new college or university. It is very important that the Admission Office is informed of your new college or university so we can transfer the Form I-20, students have experienced difficulties when they have not notified the Admission Office of their new school.

We look forward to your arrival at HPA and hope this information will be useful. If you have any additional questions about the process, please contact the admission office at [admissions@hpa.edu](mailto:admissions@hpa.edu), or call us at 1-808-881-4321 or by fax at 1-808-881-4003. Remember, if you have any problems while traveling to HPA, please call our emergency number at **(808) 881-4363**.