

INVITING FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO VISIT YOU IN THE UNITED STATES

Because the purpose of a tourist visa does not directly involve Southern Maine Community College's visa sponsorship, the letter you need does not come from us. You need to provide your family and friends with a Letter of Invitation written *by you*. With your invitation letter, you should also supply the Applicant with an Enrollment Verification Letter and/or a copy of your transcript.

Families, relatives and friends who plan to visit you in the U.S. will most likely need to apply for a tourist visa (B1/B2 visa). There are no specific documents, e.g. Form I-20 or DS-2019, with which to apply for a B1/B2 visa. However, there are some guidelines on what a consular official expects of applicants.

Applicants should be prepared to explain the following points and provide related documents.

1. The visit to the United States will be temporary.

Your invitation letter should list the purpose of the visit, i.e. to attend your Commencement Ceremony, visit family, etc. Please note that the invitation is from you and it is not from the Center for International Education Office. U.S. Consular Officials will only acknowledge invitation letters from the actual non-immigrant who is inviting a family member or friend to visit him or here in the U.S.

2. There are adequate funds to cover the cost of transportation and cost of living in the United States.

The Applicant may need to provide evidence of sufficient funds to support themselves while in the United States in the form of a bank statement. Alternatively, you may provide your own current bank statement as evidence of adequate financial support to cover their temporary stay in the United States.

3. The visitors have residences outside of the United States to which they intent to return.

The Applicant will need to prove the intent to return home. This may need to be documented by the evidence of a job, immediate family members who will be left behind, property, business ownership, or other strong ties to their home country.

Applying for the visa

For many individuals, a B1/B2 visa from a U.S. embassy or consulate outside the United States is needed to enter the United States. Guidance on the non-immigrant visa application process is available on the website of the U.S. Department of State. Please note that Canadian citizens and citizens of Visa Waiver countries do not need to obtain visas for this purpose. Visa Waiver applicants do, however, need pre-clearance authorization called ESTA prior to traveling. They must present evidence of ESTA approval at the port of entry to the United States. (It is important to print out the approval when applying for ESTA as it may need to be presented at the Port of Entry.)

SEE SAMPLE LETTER ON REVERSE

SAMPLE LETTER for Inviting Foreign Guests to Commencement

Your U.S. Address

City, State, Zip

(Date)

Consular Officer

United States (Consulate or Embassy)

(To find embassy/consulate address go to http://travel.state.gov/visa/embassy/embassy_4825.html)

(City), (Country)

Dear Consular Officer,

(DO NOT MAIL this letter to the embassy/consulate. Ask your guest to bring it with the Enrollment Verification Letter and/or a copy of your transcript to the visa interview)

My name is (your name) and I am a student in (F1, J1, etc.) visa status at Southern Maine Community College in South Portland, Maine, pursuing an Associate's degree in (field of study). I am graduating in (month and year of graduation).

I would like to invite my family (and/or friends) listed below to attend my Commencement Ceremony and other celebration activities that will be held in (month and year).

First Name, LAST NAME (as on passport), relationship to you, his/her address

(List same info as above for more guests here)

My guest(s) will stay at (U.S. address) during their visit, (and may visit a few other U.S. cities before returning home). It would be greatly appreciated if you could grant (him, her, or them) a visitor visa so that (he, she or, they) may join me to celebrate my graduation.

If you have any questions, I can be reached by email at (your email address) or by phone at (your phone number). (Please indicate who will cover the expenses of travel, accommodations, personal expenses, etc.)

Thank you for your time and kind consideration of the visa application.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

(Your full name)