The International Student and Scholar Office (ISSO) provides services and programs for more than 900 international students and international scholars/faculty from about 100 nations. Approximately 75 percent of international students are here for two to five years, working on undergraduate or graduate degrees. The ISSO provides the following programs and services:

- Issuance of documents and guidance on legal matters, which make possible the enrollment of nonimmigrant students
- Advising services necessary for international students to maintain legal status while in the United States, ensuring they understand applicable federal government regulations and university policies
- Design and presentation of programs to assist international students in their transition to life in the United States and the American academic environment
- Advising for students regarding personal, academic, legal, career, intercultural communication and cross-cultural adjustment issues
- Serving as liaison to government agencies and university offices
- Coordination of programs and ongoing services to enhance international students’ social lives, encourages their interaction with American peers, and promote ways for them to become involved and appreciated for their unique cultural perspectives
- Coordination of appropriate services for international students in legal, medical and family emergency situations

New Student Assistance

At the beginning of each term, the ISSO holds orientation programs designed to assist students in their initial adjustment to a new culture. The International Ambassador Program recruits experienced international and U.S. students to serve as peer mentors during ISSO orientation week events.

Ongoing Services and Publications

The ISSO assists students through individual appointments, walk-in meetings, group advising sessions, workshops and informational handouts. The office maintains an email distribution list for all international students, used to communicate pertinent immigration information, recreational offerings, job and travel opportunities, ISSO events & services, and other news for or about the international population on campus.

Summary of Special Immigration Regulations for Students in F-1 Visa Status

Please note that the ISSO can provide the necessary immigration-related information and assistance to students, but it is the student, not the university, who is ultimately responsible for maintaining legal F-1 student status. F-1 students should contact an ISSO adviser if they have difficulty meeting any of these requirements before they have a problem. The ISSO is here to assist students in reviewing options and making wise decisions. The ISSO staff does not work for the Department of Homeland Security or the federal government, but are employees of the university who want international students to be successful. Students must:

- Report any change of local or foreign address to the U.S. government’s SEVIS (electronic information system) by reporting it to the university through Online Services within 10 days of any move
- Enroll at the school that issued the active SEVIS record Form I-20
- Attend a full course of study (generally 9 units) each fall and spring term. See the section “Full-Time and Part-Time Status” in the Procedures and Policies section of this catalog for complete information about exceptions to the 9 units-per-term normal course load. Please also note that:
  - Students must both register for and attend class for the entire term.
  - A “W” (withdrawal) for a class means that class cannot count toward the full course of study.
  - Receiving a grade of “FX” means that the student never attended class or stopped attending during the term without officially withdrawing, so an “FX” grade cannot count toward the full course of study.
  - Units taken on an “Audit” basis do not count toward the full course of study.
  - Under extremely limited circumstances, an international student may obtain an exception to the full course of study requirement. Any possible exceptions must be discussed and approved in advance by a Designated School Official (DSO), per federal Immigration regulations. Towson’s DSOs are the international student advisers at the ISSO.
  - Make satisfactory academic progress.
  - Complete the degree or program by the date in line five of the Form I-20; if a student is not able to complete the program by that date due to valid academic or medical reasons, he or she must apply at the ISSO at least six months prior to the Form I-20 expiration.
  - Follow special immigration status transfer regulations when transferring to another academic institution.
  - Have an unexpired passport at all times, with a validity date at least six months into the future
  - Limit employment to a total (all jobs) of 20 hours per week while school is in session; F-1 students are allowed to work full-time in authorized employment at times when school is not in session, i.e., during the summer, Minimester and spring breaks.
  - Receive written authorization for any and all off-campus employment via the ISSO.
  - Complete special U.S. tax forms and submit to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service even if no U.S. income was received.
  - When nearing the end of the degree or program, or within 60 days of completing all degree requirements either:
    a. obtain a new Form I-20 for a new institution or program and attend the new school or program’s next available term within five months of the current program completion date
    b. apply to change to another immigration status or
    c. apply for optional practical training work permission, if eligible.

If the degree or academic program is not completed and the student withdraws or takes a leave of absence, the student must depart the U.S. within 15 days.

The ISSO staff is available Monday–Friday from 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Some scheduled in-person and phone appointments are available after 5 p.m. to students with urgent needs. Any student who has an emergency
outside of normal business hours may contact the University Police at 410-704-2133. The police may assist the student or may contact an ISSO staff member at home.