Basic Explanation

If you are intending to study, or already studying at Texas State in a nonimmigrant visa classification other than F-1 student, it may be possible to apply to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for a change of status to F-1 student. To apply for a change to F-1 visa status, you will need a Form I-20 (certificate of eligibility) from the Texas State International Office. This process only changes your status, i.e., the classification indicated on your I-94 record and not the visa stamp in your passport. To receive the F-1 visa stamp in your passport you can either 1) apply for a change of status in the US using the I-539 then once approved travel outside the US and apply for an F-1 student visa at a US consulate in your home country to be able to return to the US as an F-1 student. 2) Alternatively, instead of applying for a change of status in the US, you may obtain a Form I-20 from the International Office and return to your home country to apply for an F-1 visa at a US consulate to reenter the US as an F-1 student. The International Office strongly recommends traveling outside the US with a new Form I-20 and applying for an F-1 visa in your home country. The in-country change of status application is timely and unpredictable.

The following nonimmigrants are not permitted to change status to F-1 in the US:

➢ WT and WB visitors admitted under the Visa Waiver Program, M-1 students, C, D, K, and S nonimmigrants
➢ J-1 physicians admitted to receive graduate medical education or training
➢ J nonimmigrants subject to the 212(e) 2-year foreign residence requirement.
   o (If you are subject to the two-year home country residency requirement 212(e), you must first obtain a waiver, which could take up to 9 months.)

Points to consider before applying for a Change of Status:

- It can take from 3 to 5 months for USCIS to approve a change of status application.
- If you currently qualify for in-state tuition based on your residency status, changing your status to F-1 may disqualify you from receiving in-state tuition and you will be required to pay out of state tuition since F-1s may not domicile in the US. Contact the Residency Officer at Texas State to learn more: http://www.admissions.txstate.edu/future/residency/residencyrequirements.html.
- You may attend school while your application is pending unless you are in F-2 Dependent or B-2 Visitor status. F-2 Dependents and B-2 Visitors may not take classes until your change to F-1 status is approved.
- If you are in a status that does not permit employment, you cannot work on campus nor apply for practical training until the change to F-1 status is approved.
- USCIS officers must determine eligibility for a change of status. A prospective student could be generally eligible for issuance of an I-20, but if he or she is not eligible for a change of status, a change of status application will not be approved.
- A nonimmigrant that travels abroad while an application for change of status is pending is considered to have abandoned the change of status application. USCIS will deny the application if they become aware of the departure.
- Nonimmigrants who have filed a timely application for change of status to a different nonimmigrant status can remain in the US while their application is being adjudicated by USCIS providing:
  a) you are in a valid legal nonimmigrant status at the time you file your application and USCIS receives it; and
  b) your current status continues to be valid up until the date your requested F-1 Student status begins.
- If you are a child in a dependent visa classification (i.e. H-4, L-2, R-2, etc.), your requested start date of your F-1 status must begin before you turn 21 years of age. A-1 and A-2 dependents must change their status before age 25.

Review the steps below; discuss any questions you have with an International Office Advisor by scheduling an appointment.

Step 1 – Obtain a Form I-20 (you must first be admitted and submit financial documents)

Before the International Office can create you an I-20 you must first be admitted to Texas State for a program of study. To request an I-20 use the Changing Visa Status to F1 request page: http://www.international.txstate.edu/prospective/changestatus.html. You must indicate which semester you would like your F-1 student status to begin (choose a semester which begins at least 3-5 months into the future). Additionally, you must submit financial documents that show ability to support the cost of attendance for one year: www.international.txstate.edu/prospective/tuition.html.

*If your spouse and/or child dependent(s) are changing status with you, you must request an F-2 dependent I-20 for each dependent and provide financial evidence for at least $5,400 per spouse and/or $3,600 per child dependent.
Step 2 – Submit the I-539 and all supporting documents to USCIS
The Texas State International Office strongly suggests including all the following documents with your I-539:

1. **Form I-539 Application to Extend Status/Change Nonimmigrant Status:** [http://www.uscis.gov/i-539](http://www.uscis.gov/i-539)
   - **Form I-539A** – required for every co-applicant included on Form I-539. Parents may sign for children under 14 years old
   - **Personal checks** or money orders payable to the *Department of Homeland Security* for:
     - $370.00, Form I-539 filing fee
     - $85.00, biometrics service fee for every applicant and co-applicant (dependents)

2. (optional) **A Letter of Request to USCIS** addressed to “Dear USCIS Officer”. Send a letter explaining why you want to change status to F-1. A strong letter can help convince USCIS of your temporary intent. **Examples:**
   - “I have been admitted as a full-time regular degree seeking student and the eligibility to accept practical training related to my field of study would be beneficial…”
   - “My spouse or parent will soon complete his/her program or have status expire and leave the U.S…”
   - “I will soon turn 21 and my current visa status will expire…”

3. **A copy of your acceptance letter from Texas State or an unofficial transcript**
   - If you do not have a copy of your acceptance letter contact the Graduate College or Undergraduate Admissions for a copy; or an unofficial transcript can be printed from Catsweb.

4. **Evidence of financial support** that proves how you are paying for your education and covers the amount stated on the Form I-20. Documentation should show funding available to cover the cost of attendance for at least one year of study and barring unforeseen circumstances, adequate funding will be available from the same or equally dependable sources for subsequent years. Financial documents must be current and in English or have a certified English translation.
   - **Self-supporting** – provide copies of three months of your most recent bank account statements with an amount covering at least one year of study as indicated on the Form I-20.
   - **Sponsor currently in the US** – submit Form I-134, Affidavit of Support, should be completed by the sponsor along with a letter of employment and copies of three months of most recent bank account statements. See [http://www.uscis.gov/i-134](http://www.uscis.gov/i-134)
   - **Sponsor outside the US** – submit an affidavit of financial support completed by the sponsor along with a letter from a bank or other financial institution which certifies the sponsor’s ability to provide the stated support.
   - **University funding** – through scholarships and fellowships may be in the form of an official award letter from the school or sponsoring agency.

5. **Copies of your immigration documents (and any dependents who will be included with you on the application)**
   - Passport ID page(s), visa stamp, I-94 (copy of card or electronic printout), any I-20s or I-797s related to your status

6. **A Copy of your Texas State Form I-20**
   - You will receive your I-20 approximately 3-5 business days after submitting the I-20 request to the International Office

7. **Receipt Showing Proof of Payment of SEVIS I-901 Fee of $200**
   - After receiving your Form I-20, you must pay the SEVIS fee to obtain the receipt; you must pay the fee online: [www.fmjfee.com/I901fee](http://www.fmjfee.com/I901fee) and print the receipt at the end.

8. **If changing from a dependent classification (such as E-2, L-2, H-4, F-2…)** you should include
   - Copies of primary visa holder’s immigration documents (passport ID page(s), visa stamp, I-94, any I-797s)
   - Marriage certificate for spouses in dependent statuses or birth certificate (if applicable)
   - **Proof that primary visa holder is in valid legal status**
     - If you are in F-2 status, then I-20s and a transcript of the F-1 or letter of good standing from university
     - If you are in H-4, L-2, TD status, then paystubs for the last 3 months of employment of the H-1B, L1, TN
     - If you are in E2 status, proof of business ownership of the primary visa holder

Step 3 – Mailing Documents
Mail directly to USCIS using the address below. See more information here: [https://www.uscis.gov/i-539-addresses](https://www.uscis.gov/i-539-addresses)

**For U.S. Postal Service (USPS):**

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<tr>
<th>USCIS</th>
<th>P.O. Box 660867</th>
<th>Dallas, TX 75266</th>
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**For FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:**

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<tr>
<th>USCIS</th>
<th>Attn: I-539</th>
<th>2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business Suite 400</th>
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<td>Lewisville, TX 75067</td>
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