

Social Security Number for International Students on F-1/J-1 Visas

(This letter is not for the purpose of applying for a Social Security number)

To Whom It May Concern:

The purpose of this letter is to clarify certain requirements that must be met before international students on F-1 or J-1 visas can obtain Social Security numbers:

In fall 2004, the Social Security Administration implemented new policies and procedure governing under what circumstances international students on F-1 visas may apply for a Social Security Number (SSN). Effective 10/13/2004, only F-1 international students who have an on-campus job or have been offered one are eligible to apply for an SSN. This new policy considerably restricts the ability of international students to apply for and receive SSNs. Additionally, international students on F-1 or J-1 visas are required to show proof of enrollment in a full course of study before applying for a Social Security number, as referenced on the Social Security Administration's website: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10181.html>.

At the University of Denver, our office will issue letters for international students to obtain Social Security numbers once the academic term of admission has begun and on-campus job requirements have been met. Therefore, it is not possible for any international student to apply for an SSN before the following has occurred: an on-campus job has been obtained or offered AND his or her studies have commenced.

Additionally, after application for an SSN has been made by an eligible international student, please note that the Social Security Administration requires all international student records to be verified by the Department of Homeland Security. In some cases, this process can take "several weeks or months" according to the Social Security Administration (SSA). For further information on the process, please visit <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10181.html>. Therefore, the length of the process of obtaining a Social Security number after application has been made is beyond the control of any international student.

International students are, however, eligible to start work without a Social Security number, provided that they are in good immigration status, have applied for a Social Security number, and the number subsequently obtained is used for the reporting of wages to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). For more information about the IRS, please visit <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/article/0,,id=96431,00.html>.

While individuals are not required to provide Social Security numbers to private businesses, new international students who cannot yet apply for Social Security numbers, or are waiting for a Social Security number to be issued, are often refused services as a consequence of not having a social security number. As listed on the Social Security Administration website, <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10096.html>, there are very few benefits and services that international students are able to obtain without a Social Security number.

We hope that given the above circumstances, new international students who are unable to provide Social Security numbers can be given an exception to business policy and be provided with services for which they would otherwise qualify.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

International Student and Scholar Services