

Commencement Visitors: Inviting International Friends and Family

Congratulations on your upcoming graduation! If you would like to invite family and friends to commencement, please see the tips below regarding visas.

Visitor Visas

A foreign national traveling to the United States for tourism or a social event needs a visitor visa (B-2), unless qualifying for entry under the Visa Waiver Program. Please note that Canadian citizens do not need a visa to enter the U.S.

- [The Visa Waiver Program](#) (VWP) enables most citizens or nationals [of participating countries*](#) to travel to the United States for tourism or business for stays of 90 days or less without obtaining a visa. Travelers must have a valid [Electronic System for Travel Authorization \(ESTA\)](#) approval prior to travel.
- If your guests are not eligible for the Visa Waiver Program, they will need to apply for a B-2 Visitor Visa. Application information is available on the [Department of State website](#). Applicants should also review specific instructions and guidelines with the U.S. Consulate where they will apply.

In both cases, an invitation may be helpful for proving the purpose of the trip for a visa interview and/or at the port of entry. You can provide an invitation letter that includes the following information:

- The name of the invited guest
- Their relationship to you
- The purpose of their visit (to attend commencement, for example)
- The dates of the intended stay
- How their visit will be funded
- The location of their visit, such as the address of the hotel where they will stay
- If they will be sightseeing before or after commencement, include an itinerary
- Confirm your F-1 or J-1 student status and provide the dates of your study in the U.S.

Please see the template [here](#).

Length of Stay

The length of stay granted by the U.S. government is discretionary, typically no longer than six months. Shortly after arriving in the U.S. B visitors should retrieve and print a copy of their [I-94 record](#), which will indicate the duration of stay.