



## Office of International Affairs

### F-1 Student Leave of Absence Guidelines

When you inform your immigration advisor that you'll be taking a leave of absence, your SEVIS record will be terminated for "authorized early withdrawal" once your leave of absence goes into effect. This termination reason should not cause any negative consequences for you if you decide to return to the U.S.

**If you do not inform your immigration advisor that you'll be taking a leave of absence, your record will be terminated for "failure to enroll". This termination reason can have negative consequences if you plan to return to the U.S.**

Before deciding to take a leave of absence, consider the following:

- 1) When your SEVIS record is terminated, you will have to leave the U.S. within 15 days.
- 2) You lose work authorization (CPT/OPT) when on a leave of absence.
- 3) If your leave of absence exceeds 5 months, you will need to get a new I-20 and pay the SEVIS fee again.
- 4) If your leave of absence exceeds 5 months, you will not be eligible for CPT or OPT until you have completed two consecutive semesters of study upon your return.
- 5) If your leave of absence is due to medical reasons, you may not have to officially take a leave of absence and instead be eligible for a [medical reduced course load](#).

#### Returning from a leave of absence *within 5 months*

- 1) Confirm with your department that you are eligible to return to the university.
- 2) Contact International Admissions for additional requirements. You may need to complete a new application and/or submit updated application documents.
- 3) Submit the [Returning from a Leave of Absence Form](#) up to 60 days before the semester begins and at least one month before you plan to return so OIA can request USCIS reactivate your SEVIS record.
- 4) Confirm you have a valid travel signature (within 6 months) on your I-20.
- 5) Re-enter the U.S. with all [required travel documents](#).

#### Returning from a leave of absence *after 5 months*

- 1) Confirm with your department that you are eligible to return to the university.
- 2) Contact International Admissions for additional requirements. You may need to complete a new application and/or submit updated application documents.
- 3) Submit the [Returning from a Leave of Absence Form](#) 2-3 months before you plan to return to SIUE.
- 4) Receive your new Form I-20 from the Office of International Admissions. Pay the SEVIS fee, and get a new visa if your old visa is no longer valid.
- 5) Travel to the U.S. no more than 30 days before the start date on your new I-20.
- 6) Check in to the Office of International Affairs.