Dear Potential International Student,

Thank you for your interest in College of The Albemarle. There are a number of steps that are necessary in order to become an international student in the United States at COA. Below is information on the process and the expectations we have for students interested in attending COA. **Please note that the information requested must be completed in its entirety before processing of your application can begin**. Students who are applying for an F-1 visa from their home country or are interested in applying for a change of status while remaining in the United States should follow the steps listed below.

How to become an International Student

☐ **Complete the COA Application →**
Process

To apply online visit our website (www.albemarle.edu) and select "Apply and Register" then select "General Application" at the bottom of the webpage. Select New User and create a login account. Students are required to complete the entire COA application which includes completing the "Residency Determination Services" part of the application.

RDS stands for Residency Determination Service and is how the state of North Carolina (NC) determines if a student is a resident of the state. International students are not able to be North Carolina residents but still must complete the RDS part of the application. When filling out the COA application there will be a page on the application that asks for an RDS or Residency Number. To get a number click the RDS link in the text. Students will be taken to a different page and will be asked to verify their information and answer a number of questions. Students should answer that they are not a US citizen and an RDS number will be provided. Students will then return to the COA application to complete and submit their application.

Students will be accepted once they have completed the whole international student process. They will be sent an acceptance letter via email and should save this letter for future reference. International students may enroll in programs that have been approved by the Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). The permitted programs are listed below.

Programs permitting F-1 International Student enrollment (as of July 2023)

- Associate Degree Nursing
- Associate in Arts
- Associate in Engineering
- Associate in Fine Arts (Theater)
- Associate in Fine Arts (Visual Arts)
- Associate in General Education
- Associate in Science
- Associate in Applied Sciences- Business Administration
- Associate in Applied Sciences- Global Business
- Associate in General Occupational Technology
- Agribusiness Technology
- Health and Fitness Science
- Aviation Systems Technology

- Medical Assisting
- Medical Laboratory Technology
- Medical Office Administration
- Surgical Technology

☐ **Complete COA Online Orientation** →

Students will also need to complete the COA online orientation (www.albemarle.goorientation.com). Create a student account and complete the orientation.

☐ **Take the Placement Test or Provide English Proficiency** →

Before COA can issue you an I-20 we have to determine that students meet the minimum English reading and writing requirements. We only accept the TOEFL, IELTS or the RISE test (the RISE placement test can only be taken in North Carolina) to prove English proficiency.

Those who are currently in the United States can complete the COA placement test. Students interested will need to contact international_students@albemarle.edu to receive the Placement Testing Form. Please share the campus where you want to take the placement test. The COA placement test must be completed in person. A score of at least 34 points must be earned on the English portion of the test in order to qualify for an I-20. Students are given 2 opportunities to earn the necessary score on the placement test.

Those who are not currently in the United States must take the TOEFL or IELTS Academic exam and earn the minimum scores: TOEFL- Internet Based 40, Paper Based 425, Computer Based 120. The ILETS Academic score we accept is a 5 or higher.

All international students are required to take the RISE placement test for English and Math before they can register for classes.

☐ **Complete the I-20 application** →

An I-20 is a certificate of eligibility and is required for all international students seeking to enroll at COA. The I-20 application can be found below.

☐ **Pay Application Processing Fee** →

COA requires a $50.00 **nonrefundable** application processing fee to be paid prior to submission of your I-20 documentation. This fee can be paid 3 different ways.

In person - Students can pay in person at our Elizabeth City or Dare campus sites. Students will need to bring their completed International Student Processing Form. Students will go to the Business Office at their respective campus to complete payment. Students should ask for a receipt for their records.

Over the Phone - Complete the International Student Processing Form and return it via email to the COA international students email. The DSO will give a phone number to call to complete the payment. The Business office will process the student's payment and will email the student a receipt upon payment. Please allow 1 business day for a receipt to be emailed.

Pay by Mail - Students currently outside of the US can pay by mail. Students should send a money order to the address on the Application Processing Fee

Form and include payment and the form. Upon its arrival, the business office will notify the student that a payment has been received.

☐ **Submit your Documentation →**

Once the student has completed the I-20 application and has gathered all the required documentation, that is listed below, they should email their documentation (in 1 email) to international_students@albemarle.edu. **Once all the required documentation has been submitted and approved, a college DSO will create the Form I-20. Students should allow 1-2 weeks for a Form I-20 to be processed and completed.** Once the Form I-20 is processed and completed they will be contacted via email with their I-20.

Documentation Required:
- ☐ Completed COA Application
- ☐ Proof of English Language Competencies
- ☐ Receipt for International Student Application Processing Fee
- ☐ Copy of Student's Passport - passport must be valid for 6 months beyond the date of submissions of documents
- ☐ Copy of I-94
- ☐ Copy of Student's Valid Visa - Students seeking a change of status should apply while they still have a valid J-1 or B visa or are within their valid travel period
- ☐ Letter from a student's sponsor which states they are "willing to help the student financially" for their ENTIRE length of studies. A sample letter can be found below. A US business can not serve as an F-1 visa sponsor as it may give the impression that the student would work for that business while an F-1 student.
- ☐ Sponsor Bank statements consisting of the three most recent months of bank statements on official bank stationery showing that the sponsor has an ending balance of at least $23,000 for each month. If the documentation is from a bank overseas, the money must be "translated" to the US dollar. The money does not need to be officially converted to the dollar but the statement and the information must be translated to English and shown in the US dollar.
- ☐ High School transcripts in your native language and officially translated to English. All university transcripts are required to be translated to English by an official translation service as well as being evaluated by an approved evaluator. Approved agencies are agencies that are members of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Service (NACES). We must have proof that you have graduated from High School and must have a transcript of the classes taken at your University.
- ☐ Completed COA Form I-20 application
- ☐ Students seeking a change of status should submit a signed F-1 Status Agreement Form with their packet

☐ **Make an appointment or Complete COS Paperwork →**

Students seeking to return home for an F-1 visa will return home with their I-20 and will be required to make an appointment with the US Embassy. Students will have a limited time to share valuable information with the State Department official. Generally students are asked only 2-3 questions and should be prepared to share their ties to their home country during the interview process. Students should be able to demonstrate a tie to home via property ownership, a future job, etc. Students will also want to know the program they are planning on

completing and how it fits their career plans. Since F-1 visa holders are not permitted to work, students will want to be able to clearly explain their plans to return home at the end of their studies.

Students seeking a change of status should contact a licensed immigration attorney to complete the change of status paperwork. They are encouraged to write a letter to USCIS to submit with their COS request. We recommend you share the reasons why you would like to stay in the United States to study and how this educational opportunity will assist you when you return home. Since an F-1 visa is a non-immigrant visa, USCIS officials will want to know of your plans to return home. Be prepared to explain how a US education will benefit you in your country. If you have attended a university at home you will want to let officials know how it benefits you to study in the US versus continuing your studies at home. Students with multiple J-1 jobs will need to provide proof that their additional jobs were approved by their J-1 sponsor organization.

All students must pay their SEVIS (I-901) fee once their I-20 has been created. To pay a SEVIS fee, visit: https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html.

What exactly is a Sponsor?

The term sponsor can be confusing because it has 2 different meanings for international students taking classes at a community college in North Carolina. All international students must have an **F1 visa sponsor.** These sponsors are individuals that assisted a student in becoming an F-1 student by writing a letter of sponsorship to the US Government. These sponsors also provide bank statements to show they have the cost of attendance in a bank account for each of the last 3 months (cost of attendance is $23,000).

A **North Carolina Non Profit sponsor** is a sponsor available to international students studying at COA that allows the student to qualify for in-state tuition. A nonprofit sponsor is different from an F1 sponsor & can change from semester to semester. Once a non profit sponsor letter is received the students balance is transferred from their account to the account of the listed sponsor. Sponsors must be approved by the college and must provide documentation. More information will be shared with students prior to registering for classes at COA.

Sample Sponsor Letter

Date

Dear Immigration Official :

This letter verifies that I will sponsor (name of student) while s/he studies at the College of the Albemarle for their entire length of studies. (In the next 1-2 sentences explain you know this student & why you want to sponsor them). Attached please find my most recent bank statements (last three consecutive months) which show that I have in excess of $23,000 in my bank account. (If these funds replenish please note that).

Sincerely,

Sponsor signature

Sponsor Name

COLLEGE OF THE ALBEMARLE
Transform Your Tomorrow

CHANGE OF STATUS (COS) TO F-1 VISA STATUS AGREEMENT

1. COA cannot issue I-20s for English language study only, nor for programs that offer the majority of coursework online.

2. You must be in a valid immigration status at the time you submit the application to USCIS. Students can also submit applications during their USCIS approved travel period.

3. You cannot travel outside the US while your application is pending. If you do, you will abandon the COS application.

4. If you are in J-1 or J-2 Status and subject to the 2-year home residency requirement, you **CANNOT** apply for a COS in the US (unless you first receive a waiver). You should return home and seek an F1 visa from the US Embassy.

5. If you entered the US with WT or WB (Waiver for Tourism or Waiver for Business) status or through the ESTA program, you cannot extend or change your status in the US. You must return home to seek an F1 visa from the US Embassy.

6. **Students seeking a J1 to F1 change of status are expected to enroll at COA at the next available start academic term.**

7. Students must give COA International Student Support Services a copy of the receipt notice for the COS application and all copies of all other correspondence for the application such as Request for Evidence, paperwork on the application decision, etc. You <u>must</u> enroll as a full-time student in the next academic term after receiving approval or your status will be terminated. Students currently enrolled will have their SEVIS record activated immediately upon approval.

8. Students in an immigration status that allows you to take courses, can begin to take credit-bearing courses while you maintain that immigration status and while the COS is pending. If you are in B-1 or B-2 (visitor for tourism or visitor for business) status, you <u>cannot</u> take credit-bearing classes until you receive an approval notice from the government. Students seeking a J1 to F1 COS should enroll immediately.

9. Students may not be eligible to apply for, or renew, an NC Driver's License/Permit until your COS is approved AND you have been registered via the SEVIS system for your first term at COA.

10. Changing your status in the US **<u>will not</u>** give you a visa sticker in your passport. If you travel outside the US after being approved for your change of status to F-1, you must apply for an F-1 visa stamp at the US Embassy in order to return to the US.

11. Students should check their COA and personal email for correspondence from COA DSO's. Failure to provide required information in a timely manner will result in a student's SEVIS record being canceled.

12. COA cannot <u>guarantee</u> that the request for the Change of Status application will be approved. USCIS makes the decision. If your application is denied, you must leave the US as soon as you receive the decision or consult an attorney.

I acknowledge and understand the information above regarding Change of Status.

_____   _____   _____

(Student Signature)   (Print Name Clearly)   (Date)

COLLEGE OF THE ALBEMARLE
Transform Your Tomorrow

☐ F-1 visa   ☐ Change of Status

International Student I-20 Application/Request Form

This form, along with the supporting document as listed in the International Interest Packet, should be submitted to an Admissions Designated School Official (DSO) for the creation of a Form I-20. Students are to answer all the questions on the I-20 application. Incomplete applications will be returned. Please email all the documentation to the following email address: international_students@albemarle.edu

Please select the type of visa/status you are seeking:

☐ F-1 Visa Academic Studies

☐ M-1 Visa Vocational/Technical Training

Personal Information

_____   _____   _____
Legal Name: (Last /Family)   (First)   (Middle)

_____   _____
Street Address with house number in home country   City, Zip Code

_____   _____
Providence or State   Country

_____   _____/_____/_____   _____
Email   Date of Birth: month   day   year   Phone Number

Gender: ___ Male ___ Female   Expected Semester to Begin Studies:_____

_____   _____
U.S. Address: House Number, Street, etc.   City, State, Zip Code

Citizenship & Immigration Information

Country of Citizenship: _____   Country of Birth: _____

Native Language:_____   Town of Birth:_____

Are you currently in the United States?   Yes ☐   No ☐
If yes, what is your current
Visa Type (F1, F2, B1, B2, etc): _____   I-94 Expiration Date:_____

If you already hold an F-1 Visa, what school issued the I-20? _____

Application Information

Program of Study: _____

Which Campus of COA do you wish to attend?
☐ Elizabeth City   ☐ Dare   ☐ Currituck Regional Aviation Center   ☐ Edenton-Chowan

Source of Funding

Is your financial statement in your name? ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If the answer is NO (i.e. the bank statement belongs to a relative, friend or other sponsor) then a **letter of sponsorship is required.** If the answer is YES then you can write a letter stating you are sponsoring yourself.

Name of person or organization providing financial documentation to support your attendance at COA:

Name: _____   Relationship_____

Out of State Tuition, books, transportation and living expenses for one academic year will cost approximately $23,000 USD. We must have statements from your sponsor's bank that shows that above amount on deposit. The documents provided must show for 3 consecutive months you or your sponsor has/had $23,000 USD in available funds for each month. Please make sure the currency is in United States dollars and that all account information has been translated to English. If applicable please provide a letter from the bank stating the currency exchange rate.

Agreement

1. I understand as an F-1 visa student I must be a full time student (12hrs) and I must take 9 hours of face to face classes.
2. I understand that during my stay in the United States as an F-1 visa student at College of The Albemarle, I will not be permitted to work off campus for salary or wages unless I have permission from USCIS.
3. I understand that as an international student at College of The Albemarle I am required to attend the International Student Informational Meeting at the start of each semester and it is my responsibility to check my COA email for other International Student updates.
4. I understand that I must make academic progress and failure to maintain a 2.0 will result in academic alert status, conditional status and possible suspension.

All I-20's will be signed electronically and sent via email to the address provided on this form.

I certify I understand the agreement statements listed above and that all the above information is true and accurate. Due to Federal Regulations an I-20 can only be sent to or picked up by the student. A third party is not authorized to pick up or receive an I-20.

Applicant's Signature_____   Date_____

I-20's will not be issued until the student applies to COA and all the documents are received in their entirety. Once all the required documents are received and a student's application is complete, COA will issue an I-20 within 1-2 weeks.

- A note about the term "sponsor". The term sponsor is used in a number of different ways for international students studying at a North Carolina Community College. For the Form I-20, visa and immigration purposes sponsors can be family members, friends, etc. and are individual(s) who state they are willing to assist students financially to help them study in the United States. Bank statements or letters from a bank serve as evidence that the sponsor has the funds necessary to allow for the College to issue an I-20. These financial documents are required by USCIS/SEVIS in order to issue an I-20 (students can self-sponsor, meaning they pay for themselves)
- Once admitted to COA per North Carolina General Statute 115D-39, North Carolina non-profit entities are permitted to sponsor up to five individuals lawfully admitted to the U.S. and currently residing in North Carolina and attending a North Carolina Community College. The rule requires the N.C. non-profit entity to accept financial responsibility for the student's tuition at the in-state tuition rate and the student's other required educational fees. Students do not have to have a North Carolina Community College sponsor, students with a sponsor are granted access to the in-state tuition rates, students without a sponsor are responsible for the out of state tuition rate. **This sponsorship is not the same as the sponsorship required for a student to secure an F-1 visa. Please request a nonprofit sponsor FAQ sheet for more information on nonprofit sponsors.**

College of The Albemarle International Student Processing Form

International Students seeking admissions to College of The ALbemarle are required to pay a $50.00 Admissions Application Processing fee. This fee is required of all new International students and International students seeking to re-enroll at COA after an absence of 2 semesters or more. Students should complete the information below. Please review the included steps for additional information.

Student Name: _____

Expected 1st Semester of Enrollment: _____

Phone Number (if in the United States): _____

Payment Options:

For Students Currently in the United States

☐ Cash payment can be received at the Dare campus and the Elizabeth City campus locations

☐ Credit Card payments can be made in person or over the phone, please refer to the directions in the International Interest Packet for more information

☐ Money Order payments can be made at the Dare campus and the Elizabeth City campus locations or mailed to:
College of The Albemarle
℅ Business Office
PO Box 2327
Elizabeth City, NC 27906-2327

Any payment mailed should include this form so that the proper student is credited with payment. Students should NOT mail cash or credit card numbers.

For Students Currently Overseas/International Payments

☐ Money Order payments should be mailed to:
College of The Albemarle
℅ Business Office
PO Box 2327
Elizabeth City, NC 27906-2327

Any payment mailed should include this form so that the proper student is credited with payment. Students should NOT mail cash or credit card members.

For College Use Only:
Budget Code: 05-000-00-492110-25042   I-20 Application Received_____
Student ID number: _____
Application Processed: _____