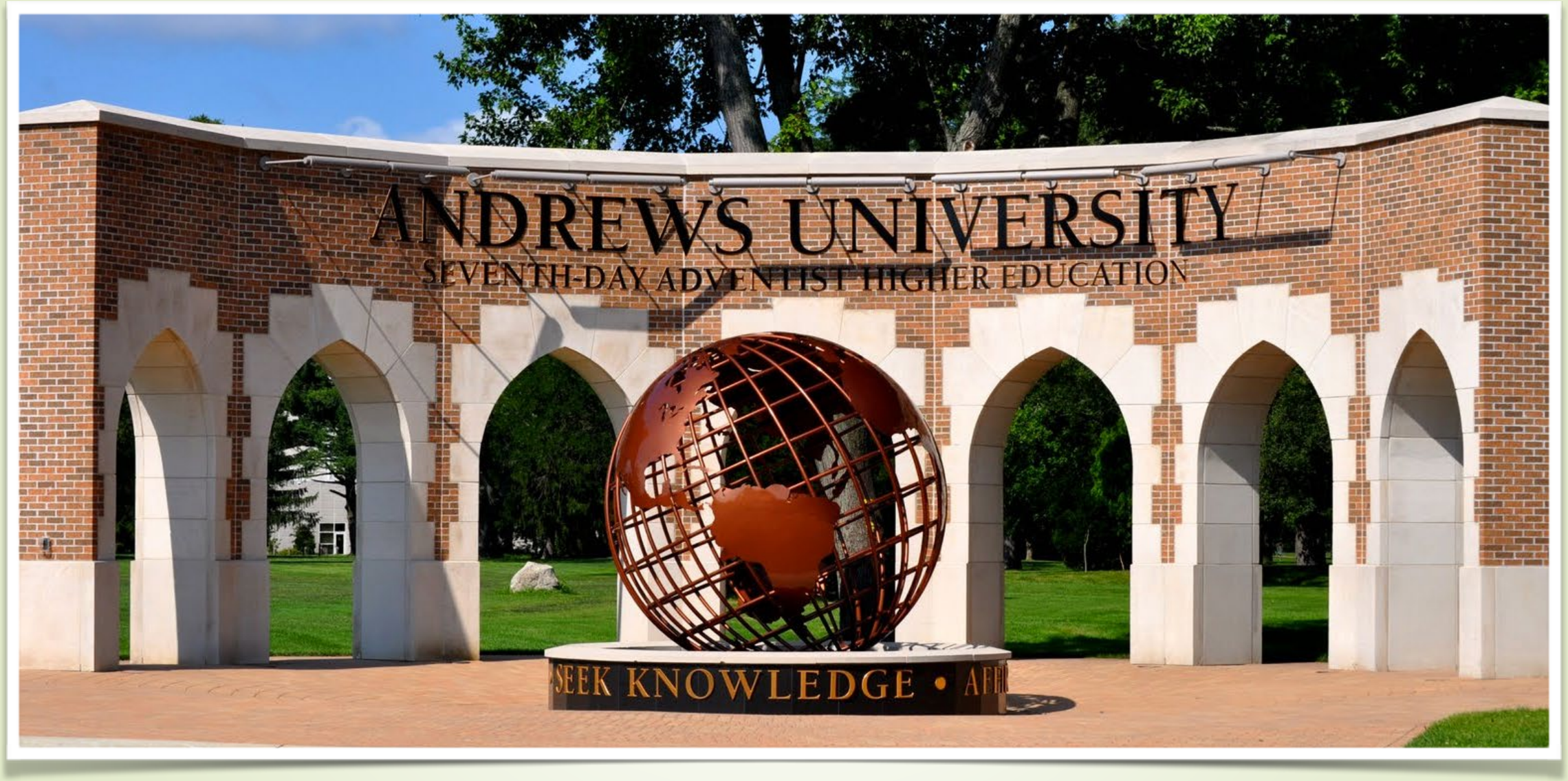
Immigration Information for F-1 Visa Students

Fall 2026



Welcome to Andrews University!

Welcome!

Christian Stuart, Associate Dean
Andrews University Global Campus

The **Andrews University Global Campus** connects Andrews University with students, programs, and educational partnerships worldwide.

Global Campus

International Student Services (ISS) is part of the Global Campus, and supports students with:

- Immigration and visa advising
- I-20 and SEVIS compliance
- International student orientation
- Employment authorization
- Travel and immigration documentation
- Support throughout your experience on campus

ISS Staff

- **Silmara Ferreira**
  ISS Director

- **Sonia Wilches**
  ISS Coordinator

- **Jennifer Pena-Alvarez**
  International Financial Advisor

Contact Information

Email: iss@andrews.edu

Phone Number: 269-471-6395

Office Location: Administration Building 307

Office Hours:

- **Monday-Thursday** 9 AM – 12:30 PM / 1:30 PM – 5 PM
- **Friday** 9 AM – 12 PM

A SPECIAL NOTE FOR FALL 2026

You are arriving at a time of significant change.

On **September 15, 2026**, new federal regulations will take effect.

Since you arrived before this date, you are in a transition period: some “old” rules may apply to you, but most “new” rules will apply to you.

A SPECIAL NOTE FOR FALL 2026

What is changing?

- How students are admitted to the United States
- How long students can remain in the United States
- Program extensions and the new Extension of Stay process
- International travel and reentry
- Changes to academic programs and educational levels
- The post-completion grace period
- Optional Practical Training (OPT) procedures

A SPECIAL NOTE FOR FALL 2026

Q&A Sessions this semester

ISS will also host several virtual Q&A sessions this semester.

You will be invited, ISS will share the latest developments, and you can ask questions.

If the Q&A Sessions are needed past this semester, we will offer them.

TODAY'S ROAD MAP

What we will cover

1. Your immigration documents
2. Important terminology
3. Maintaining your F-1 status
4. Employment
5. The September 15 rule changes

PART 1

YOUR IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS

Know your immigration documents:

PASSPORT Your government-issued identity document Your travel document containing your *visa	**FORM I-20** Documents your F-1 program at Andrews Your U.S. study permit; should never expire
F-1 VISA Used primarily to seek entry into the U.S. Your U.S. entry permit; can expire after entry	**FORM I-94** Records your admission to the U.S. Your admission record showing F-1 status

*NOTE: Students from Canada and Bermuda have an I-20 but do not have an F-1 visa.

Keep these documents safe and accessible.

Monitor your Passport dates

Your passport should always remain valid

If your passport is going to expire within 6 months, do everything you can to renew it. Contact ISS if you have questions or challenges.

Check your I-20

Your I-20 should reflect your current program of study.

Check:

- Your name
- Degree level
- Major/program
- Program start and end date

If something is wrong, contact ISS. Do not wait until the problem becomes urgent.

Get your most recent I-94

Your I-94 is your official admission records.

Check your I-94 at **i94.cbp.dhs.gov** → GET MOST RECENT I-94/I-95

Check:

- Class of admission
- Most recent entry
- Admission date
- Admit Until Date (or D/S)

Keep a copy of your most recent I-94.

Complete the ISS check-in

This check-in is required by the U.S. government

Check your I-94 at **i94.cbp.dhs.gov** → GET MOST RECENT I-94/I-95

Submit this week to ISS (Administration Building 307):

- Orientation Statement of Acknowledgment
- Initial I-20 that you signed
- Passport with F-1 visa
- Your I-94 (**i94.cbp.dhs.gov** → GET MOST RECENT I-94/I-95)

Updated I-20

This Fall Semester, you will receive an updated I-20

Emails will go out mid-semester (late Sep – early Nov)

Your updated I-20:

- Will change “Initial” to “Continued Attendance”
- Have a travel endorsement on the second page
- Serve as your most recent I-20 (so keep it safe)

PART 2

IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY

DHS and SEVP

DHS = Department of Homeland Security

This is the government agency that has oversight over non-citizens in the U.S.

SEVP = Student and Exchange Visitor Program

The part of DHS that oversees student visa matters. SEVP manages schools, as well as F-1 students and F-2 dependents.

SEVIS

SEVIS = Student and Exchange Visitor Information System

This is a web-based database used by SEVP to maintain information on SEVP-approved schools and F-1 students and their dependents.

Your I-20 is issued and maintained through SEVIS.

SEVIS

SEVIS = Student and Exchange Visitor Information System

Any changes that happen regarding your program (example: change in name, major, degree level, or program end date) must be reported through SEVIS.

DSO

DSO = Designated School Official

DSOs are the contacts between a school and SEVP, and most communication happens through SEVIS.

Only a DSO may issue, update, and sign an I-20 or make changes to your SEVIS record.

Your DSOs at Andrews are **Silmara Ferreira** and **Sonia Wilches**. They are here to help you maintain your F-1 student status and answer any questions you have.

USCIS

USCIS = United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

This is an agency within DHS that authorizes immigration benefits and **extensions of stay** for non-citizens.

Benefits can include off-campus work authorization and changing to another visa status while inside the United States.

Extensions of stay = staying past the original end date on your I-20 (part of the new rules).

PART 3

MAINTAINING YOUR F-1 STATUS

Reporting Requirements

You are required to report the following information to International Student Services within **10 days** of the date of change so it can be updated in your SEVIS record:

- Change in name
- New address or phone number
- Change in program (major) or degree level
- Change in student status (i.e., withdrawal or in-absentia)
- Change in immigration status

Academics

To maintain status, **undergraduate students** must meet the following academic requirements:

- Enroll **full-time** 12 or more credits per semester
- Attend all your classes and make satisfactory progress towards the degree programs stated on your I-20
- (One online class may count toward the full-time status requirement – the others need to be in person)
- Talk to ISS before dropping below 12 credits

Academics

To maintain status, **graduate students** must meet the following academic requirements:

- Enroll **full-time** 8 or more credits per semester (9 for MDiv) or be enrolled in a course that counts as “full time” in the university bulletin
- Attend all your classes and make satisfactory progress towards the degree programs stated on your I-20
- (One online class may count toward the full-time status requirement – the others need to be in person)
- Talk to ISS before dropping below 8 credits (9 for MDiv)

Academics

For Summer:

- If Summer is your first semester, you must enroll full-time in the first summer you attend
- If you begin studying in Fall or Spring semesters, summer is considered an “annual vacation”
- You can choose to take classes or to take a break if you studied in the previous spring semester and intend to study in the fall

International Travel

International students may leave the United States for a short period of time and re-enter to continue their program if they hold the appropriate travel documents:

- Unexpired I-20 endorsed (signed) by a DSO on page 2. Note: a **travel endorsement** must be less than 12 months old at the time of re-entry to the United States
- Valid passport
- Valid F-1 visa

NOTE: If you plan to leave the U.S. during your studies, <u>consult ISS before leaving</u> to avoid immigration problems.

Program Completion

Once you graduate, you have a ***grace period** after your program ends. During this grace period, you have the following options:

- Apply for an extension of stay (if required and if applicable)
- Post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) – i.e., working 12 months in your field of study
- Transfer Out to another SEVP-approved school
- Begin a new degree program at Andrews University
- Leave the United States

***Old rule = 60-day grace period / New rule = 30-day grace period**

Failure to Maintain Status

Failure to maintain status may jeopardize the benefits of your F-1 status, including your ability to:

- Work in the United States
- Continue your education in the United States
- Re-enter the United States
- Bring dependents to the United States
- Attempt any future entries into the United States

PART 4

EMPLOYMENT

Work During Program

There are two types of work F-1 students may do while studying:

- On-campus employment in a student job
- Curricular Practical Training (CPT) with **ISS authorization**

<u>WARNING</u>: Working off campus without authorization is <u>never</u> allowed. If the U.S. government finds that you are working off campus without authorization, you may lose your F-1 status and be required to leave the U.S. Please take this seriously!

On-campus Employment

- You may work on campus up to 20 hours a week in a student job when school is in session in both the Fall and Spring semesters; during school breaks, you may work more than 20 hours a week
- DHS authorization is not required prior to beginning on-campus employment

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

CPT may authorize qualifying off-campus paid practical training. Examples: an internship, clinical, or practicum that is **required** to earn your degree.

CPT authorization from ISS must be obtained **BEFORE** you begin the employment.

Never start the job and then ask ISS for CPT authorization.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

OPT may allow eligible F-1 students to work in their field of study after completing their program. STEM degrees allow for extended OPT time.

OPT involves:

- Your DSO
- SEVIS and USCIS
- Possible Extension of Stay application and approval
- Employment authorization

Do not apply for OPT without first talking to ISS.

PART 5

THE SEPTEMBER 15 RULE CHANGES

September 15 Rule Changes

What does September 15 mean for you?

- You are part of the transition from the old D/S system to the new fixed-period system
- The transition will feel strange
- Your I-94 may still say D/S
- Some allowances from the old rules may still apply…for a while

Always stay in contact with ISS and do not assume anything to be true without checking first

September 15 Rule Changes

How long can you stay in the U.S?

- You are admitted under the new Admit Until program end date on your I-20 (despite your I-94 saying D/S)
- To extend your stay, you will need to have ISS extend your I-20, and then you will need to apply to USCIS for an Extension of Stay (EOS) approval
- The old rule (ISS alone extends I-20s) no longer applies

September 15 Rule Changes

Can you change your program of study?

- You may have some flexibility for a little while to change the program listed on your I-20
- If you travel internationally on/after September 15, 2026 you will be entirely under the new system
- New system: Undergraduates cannot change majors until after one year of study; graduate students cannot change at any point

September 15 Rule Changes

What about F-2 dependents?

- F-2 dependent options are tied directly to the F-1 student
- On/after September 15, passport dates may affect the I-20 dates for F-2 dependents
- In some situations, all F-2 dependents (and even the F-1 student) could be given I-20 dates based on the shortest passport dates rather than on academic program dates (this is new and developing)

September 15 Rule Changes

What are my options when I complete my program?

- You may still be eligible for the “old” 60-day grace period
- If you travel internationally on/after September 15, 2026, you will have the 30-day grace period
- If you need to stay longer (for OPT, a new program, etc.), you can apply for an Extension of Stay (EOS) through USCIS
- It’s best to apply for EOS before you graduate

Questions?

Final Announcements

Complete the **Statement of Acknowledgment** document and leave it at the orientation session.

Please write very clearly.

If you did not attend the orientation session in person, please contact iss@andrews.edu ASAP.

Final Announcements

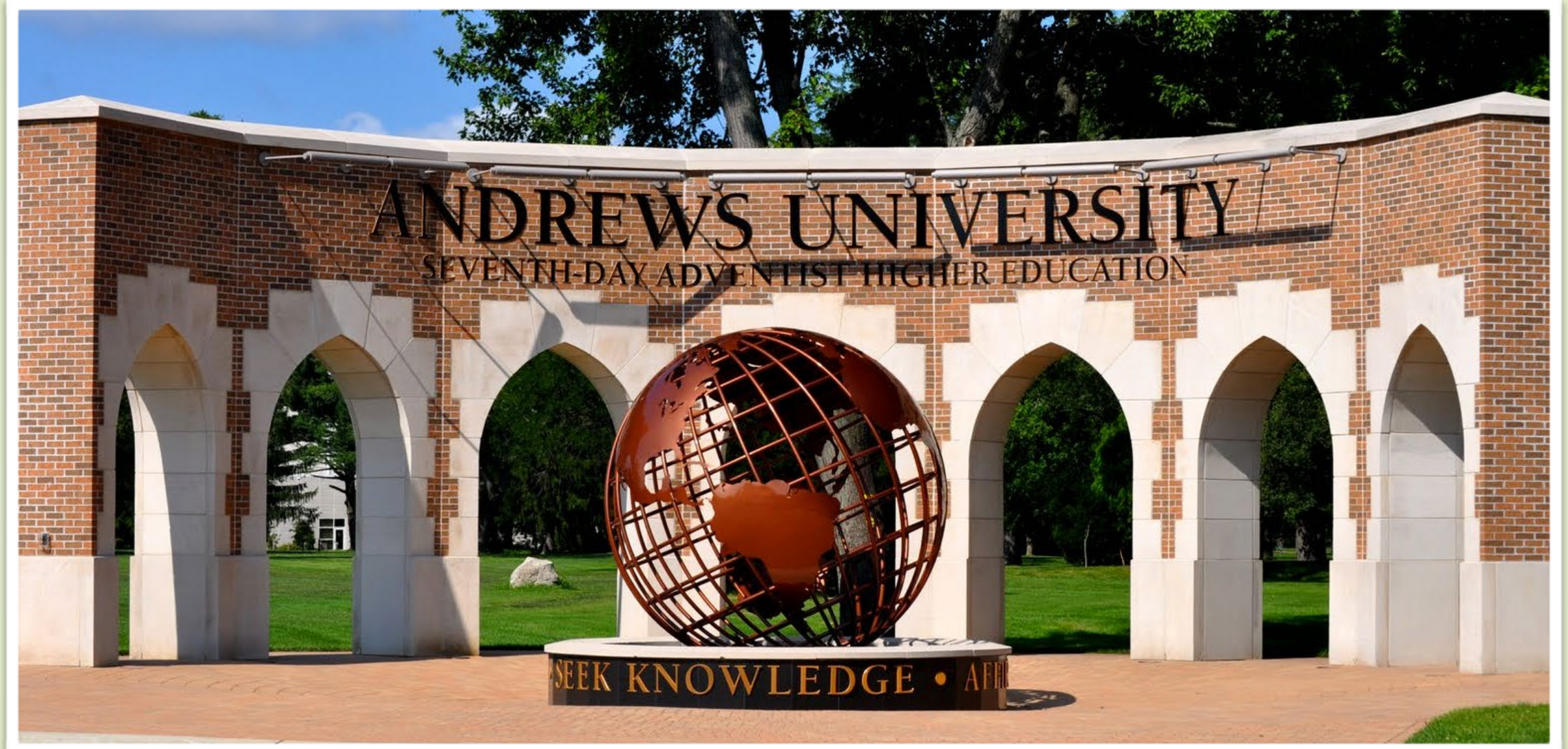
Come to the ISS office (Administration Building 307) to submit your immigration documents ASAP.

Not checking in with these documents soon can delay your ability to register for this or next semester.

Please bring:

- Passport with F-1 visa
- Signed I-20
- Most recent I-94

Thank you!



Have a great semester!