Change of Status (COS) to F-1
Your non-immigrant status should always accurately reflect your primary purpose for being in the U.S. If you wish to study full-time, you will need to apply for F-1 or J-1 status.

If you wish to change your current non-immigrant visa status to F-1, you may do so in one of either two ways: (1) by applying for a change of status from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in the United States; or (2) by making application at a U.S. consulate abroad. To find out which option is better for your specific situation, it is very important to see an advisor at the Center for Global Engagement (850-644-1702), or consult an immigration attorney.

Option 1: Application to the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS)

This application will be submitted directly to USCIS and may take 2 - 4 months to be fully processed.

- The application for a COS must be made before your current visa status expires. Note that the expiration of your U.S. visa is not the same as the expiration of your visa status. The validity of your status is generally indicated by the ending date on your I-94.
- An approved change of status allows you to stay in the U.S. and pursue the activity allowed by that status, but it is not the same as having a visa in your passport. If you leave the U.S. after receiving approval from USCIS for a change of status, you must apply for a visa for your current status before returning to the U.S.
- If you leave the United States while your change of status application is pending, the application is considered void. You should then apply for the appropriate visa at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy before re-entering the U.S.
- If your current status does not permit you to study, you cannot take classes until your COS is approved.
- If your current status does not permit employment, you may not begin to work until your new status has been approved. Once your COS is approved, the employment must conform to federal regulations for F-1 students.
- If there is a gap between your current status expiring and your new F-1 status being approved, YOU MAY NOT WORK IN THE GAP period.
- If you are currently in J-1/J-2 status and are subject to the two-year home country residency requirement, you cannot change your status to F-1 in the United States. However, you are eligible to apply for the F-1 visa at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy abroad. Also be aware that a change of status may be denied if your old status ends more than 30 days before the requested start of your new F-1 status.

To Submit the Change of Status Application:
You may apply either online or by mail.

Online- Visit www.uscis.gov and click on e-File with ELIS. Follow the instructions to create an account. Please make sure to answer all questions completely and to upload all relevant items outlined on the change of status checklist except the I-539.

By Mail- Mail all material to the appropriate USCIS location (see the I-539 instructions on the www.uscis.gov to determine where to mail the application).

Option 2: Travel and Reentry to the US

- Exit the US, apply for an F-1 visa from a US Consulate or Embassy, and return to Tallahassee within the 30 day period before the start of classes. For more information please check with an F-1 advisor.
- It is advisable to apply for your visa in your home country. Some embassies do not accept visa applications from third country nationals. If you are not a citizen of the country where the US Consulate or Embassy is located, you may not be able to apply for a U.S. visa. There is also a higher chance of visa denial outside your home country, due to the presumption of immigrant intent.
Checklist for the Application for Change of Status (COS) to F-1. Please gather the following documents to be submitted with your Change of Status application.

☐ A letter, with your signature, explaining why you are requesting the change of status. Be clear about the COS that you are applying for, list the contents of your application package, and provide your contact information.

☐ Form I-539, you can find this form online at http://www.uscis.gov under "Immigration Forms". Be sure to read the instructions carefully. Make sure the form is completely filled out, signed and dated. Be sure to use BLACK ink only.

☐ Photocopies of your current passport and visa information: Copy of I-94 card (front and back); Copy of passport ID and expiration date page(s); Copy of current visa stamps or documentation showing previous change of status in US.

☐ If you will be including an F-2 spouse or any dependent children with your change to F-1, please also include requested dependent I-94, passport, and visa copies.

☐ Documentation to support your current status. Please check with an F-1 advisor if you are unsure what documentation is needed.

☐ A copy of your new F-1 form I-20 (for change to F-1), issued to you by the FSU Center for Global Engagement once you have been officially admitted to the university and have shown proof of funding.  (If you are will be including any F-2 dependents in your application, please also submit an original F-2 dependent I-20 for each).

☐ Evidence of financial support such as: A bank statement; A letter from your academic Department stating the amount of funding you will receive; A letter from a sponsor and supporting bank or salary documentation; Proof of employment and payroll information where appropriate (H-1B).

☐ A receipt for payment of the mandatory $200 SEVIS fee: For more information and online payment options please go to http://www.fmjfee.com. You will need your SEVIS ID number from your I-20 form and a credit card. Make sure to print a receipt.

☐ Check or money order for $290 made out to US Department of Homeland Security.

Special Notes on Changing Status:

• The USCIS reviews applications for change of status based on the applicant's ability to document and justify a change of intent after arrival in the U.S. It is not recommended that you apply for a change of status immediately after arrival in the U.S.

• B (B-1, B-2, B-1/B-2): Applicants changing from the B status must take special care to show that they did not intentionally apply for the wrong visa or intentionally enter the U.S. in the wrong status. Give a detailed explanation on why you entered the U.S. in B-2 status. If your current status is medically related, get a letter from your doctor explaining the treatment you were receiving in the U.S.

• H-1B: Be sure to include proof of current employment, a copy of your payroll slip from your employer as well as a copy of the H-1 visa stamp OR a copy of your I-797 Notice of Action.

I understand that this is my application. I am solely responsible for making sure my application packet is complete and for mailing it to USCIS.

Student Signature: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________