

Guidelines concerning Financial Documentation needed for Issuance of the 1-20

Columbia College Chicago requires international applicants to present documentation of financial resources adequate to cover all their educational, living, and personal expenses in the United States while pursuing their studies at the College for at least one calendar year. This policy ensures Columbia College Chicago's compliance with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service requirements that schools admitting students certify that those admitted have sufficient funding to pursue a full course of study.

1. Financial papers must be submitted by mail or delivered and our responses will be in writing, by mail.

Our decisions will be made after looking at the documents with care and thought. All students are treated the same, whether they come from countries in which visas are "easy" or difficult to get. To the best of our ability, we try to see the documents as if we were particularly tough U.S. consuls. We have not helped a student by saying "yes" to financial papers if a consul later says "no" to the same papers. We have not supported the educational mission of our institution if we help a student come to the U.S. and fail because of insufficient money for tuition, books, or medical care, or to earn poor grades due to money worries or insufficient food.

2. Your sponsor's income is more important than your sponsor's bank statement.

Do not expect bank statements to convince us of a sponsor's ability to give the amount of money promised. Bank statements are very poor evidence of the ability to give a student money, unless the balance is a very large one. Proof of a sponsor's income should be on the employer's letterhead, on income tax returns or receipts, or estimated by a bank or private accountant when the sponsor is a self-employed businessperson. The income of a company is not the income of the owner of the business and will not be accepted as proof of income. You must provide an official statement of the salary paid to the owner/sponsor.

3. We will not accept letters from banks or anyone else saying that a sponsor has enough money to support a student.

Only this office can decide how much is enough. When a sponsor wishes to keep his/her bank balance or income private, we will accept official documents saying that the savings or income is "more than" the U.S. dollar amount (or its equivalent) estimated by the College to cover educational and living expenses.

4. There is no limit to the number of sponsors that a prospective student can have. However, each sponsor must submit a "certificate" stating what is to be provided, (i.e., **educational expenses, living expenses, room and board, etc.**). All questions on certificates and affidavits must be answered. These certificates, whether a "**Certificate of Sponsorship**" and/or "**Affidavit of Sponsorship providing Free Room and Board**" must be signed by the sponsor in the presence of a notary public, official or attorney, who then must also sign and stamp the document(s) with the official seal of a notary public, bank officer or attorney. Documents that have been altered in any way will be rejected unless each change has been signed by both the sponsor and the official. There are notaries public at all U.S. embassies and consulates. In the U.S., most neighborhood pharmacists are notaries, as are most lawyers and accountants. There are notaries in all countries, though the names for them may be different. They are officials licensed by the national or regional government to take sworn statements for courts of law or witness contracts and property deeds.

5. Sponsors should not promise too much money.

Some sponsors believe that the more money they promise, the more likely we are to say "yes". A sponsor should promise only what he/she intends to give and should give only as much as he/she can afford.

6. Do not submit old documents.

Both the U.S. government and Columbia College Chicago require current documents (less than 6 months old).

7. Do not send faxes or copies (unless the copies have been notarized).

Except leases, tax documents, and deeds, all papers must be originals. In preparing these documents, students should make two sets because the same documents submitted to the college will need to be presented to the American Embassy at the time of the application for the visa.

8. Every dollar of needed support must be proven through bank statements, income statements, or a lease or deed.

Each dollar not provided by the student personally must be promised in a "certificate" or "affidavit" by a sponsor. We do not care how many sponsors there are, whether or not they are U.S. citizens, or where they live. It is usually easier to get an F-1 visa when at least part of a student's support comes from outside the U.S.

9. Students can sponsor themselves, either partly or in full.

No certificates are needed for the student's own money. Recent bank statements in the student's name must be provided, and statements from at least a year earlier to show us that the money was not borrowed and recently deposited. Students who have been granted employment authorization due to severe economic hardship can submit letters from employers stating the individual's salary as part of the financial documents required for the issuing of the I-20.

However, students need to remember that the law requires financial support for their entire program in addition to readily available cash for the first year. Unless they have enough cash to support themselves, their families (if applicable) and their studies in the U.S. for their entire program, their cash will soon be used up. A student will probably need a sponsor who has the financial ability to finance his/her entire educational program.

10. Scholarships may be used to qualify for the I-20.

We must have an award letter from the private or government scholarship board stating how much money is to be given and for how many years.

11. Free room and board is worth more than half the dollar amount to support a student for a year.

When a family member near the school gives a student a free place to live and/or free meals, the student needs far less in cash from other sponsors. In this case, an "**Affidavit of Free Room and Board**" must be sent with a copy of the property deed or rental lease.