

Guidelines for the Reclassification of Non-Florida Residents to Florida Residency Status January 2007

POLICY: All non-resident U.S. citizens on an appointment shall make a good faith effort to have their residency status changed to in-state after being enrolled for 12 months. This requires the student to take prescribed actions before the beginning of their first semester of enrollment and to apply for in-state residency status before the beginning of their second year. Currently enrolled students who have not applied for Florida residency status should do so immediately.

BACKGROUND: The Legislature provides funding to State universities to offset the cost of educating Florida students. Tuition covers a portion of the cost of education and the remainder comes from the State. Out-of-state residents receive only modest support from the Legislature in the form of tuition waiver authority.

Funding rates for Florida residents (in-state) are based on full-time equivalency. Although FTEs for both in-state and out-of-state students are calculated in Legislative funding models, the budget provided by the State of Florida builds in an expectation that every institution will collect the tuition associated with its in-state and out-of-state enrollments. In addition, each institution is granted some authority to waive tuition and fees, thereby removing some of the obligation to collect tuition.

For two reasons, it is critical to have all eligible non-Florida U.S. citizen residents reclassified as in-state residents. First, a significant tuition differential (between in-state and out-of-state students) increases the amount of UF's expected collections. These collections offset UF's general appropriation. Second, non-Florida students receive a large portion of the dollars associated with waivers granted by UF. Since UF spends more money than it has waiver authority to commit, the out-of-state waivers reduce the funds available to UF from collections.

The State of Florida permits out-of-state U.S. citizens or permanent resident aliens who meet certain criteria to be reclassified as in-state residents. International students are never eligible for classification as in-state residents. Students enrolled for the sole purpose of obtaining a degree, or who continue to be financially dependent on their parents, are not eligible for Florida residency status. However, graduate students who come to the university and accept employment (or a fellowship) may be considered independent of their parents. These students make contributions to the citizens of the State and are eligible for Florida residency status.

REQUIREMENTS: Departments are responsible for ensuring that all (new and currently enrolled) eligible out-of-state students on appointments apply for a change of residency status. There are legitimate reasons why a student may not be eligible to have their residency status changed to Florida. However, the process for reclassification must be explained to each student, and the student's actions must be tracked by the department. Departments that do not comply with these requirements may be charged the difference

between out-of-state and in-state tuition for those students who do not meet the requirements in the Letter of Offer.

Newly admitted students need to be instructed to begin the process for applying for in-state residency status in the letter of appointment (LOA). Recommended language is given below. University policy requiring application for in-state residency and detailed instructions about the application process should be provided to each new student. This information should NOT be included in the LOA to international students.

During the first year, each out-of-state graduate student on an appointment is classified as a Florida resident for tuition purposes (T). However the information submitted to the Board of Governors for reporting to the State of Florida is the student's true residency status (generally, F for Florida, or N for Non-Florida). If all of the necessary paperwork has been completed and the student's petition is supported by the Registrar's Office, then during the second year the student may be reclassified as a Florida resident.

The final authority for determining the residency status of students is the Registrar's Office. The Registrar's Office must comply with very specific State regulations in evaluating the student's Residency Reclassification petition. The most recent information can be found on their website at <http://www.admissions.ufl.edu/residency/>.

TRACKING SYSTEM: A new "Residency Status" website will be developed in GIMS. This site will include the names of students on appointments, current residency status, matriculation date, and information about their contact with the Residency Office. We ask that you monitor this site, talk to students who are eligible for in-state residency status, and provide details about their actions in a text box that will be available at this site.

LETTER OF OFFER: You may use your standard letter of offer. However, please include the following:

"The University of Florida requires all eligible non-Florida residents to apply for Florida Residency Status during their first year. If you are not eligible to apply, then you must contact your department for further guidance."

You can include the document below in the LOA or send it to your newly admitted students in a separate letter.

FLORIDA RESIDENCY INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Information about becoming a Florida Resident is included herein or online at <http://www.admissions.ufl.edu/residency/index.html>.

Before the beginning of your first semester and no later than the end of the drop/add period, there are certain things that you must do. Begin by consulting the official website

above. The “Request for Residency Change Form” is critical to the process and lists a number of documents that you should have before the first day of enrollment.

Numerous items are listed in the documentation section of the form. It is necessary to prove from the preponderance of the documentation that residency has been established. The completed form is submitted to the Registrar’s Office and they make the **final decision**. Discussed below are items of documentation that are likely to result in establishment of residency. Immediately below are various comments and excerpts that indicate what legally constitutes a resident for tuition purposes.

A Florida "resident for tuition purposes" is a person who has, or a dependent person whose parent or legal guardian has, established and maintained legal residency in Florida for at least 12 months. Residence in Florida must be as a bonafide domicile rather than for the purpose of maintaining a residence incident to enrollment at an institution of higher education. To qualify as a Florida resident for tuition purposes, you must be a U.S. citizen, permanent resident alien, or legal alien granted indefinite stay by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Living in or attending school in Florida will not, in itself, establish legal residence. Students who depend on out-of-state parents for support are presumed to be legal residents of the same state as their parents. Graduate students who come to the university and accept employment (or a fellowship) make contributions to the citizens of the State and are eligible to apply for Florida residency status.

Actions to be taken to obtain residency for tuition purposes:

- Obtain from the Alachua County Clerk of the Court a “Declaration of Domicile” form. Complete the form and return it to the Official Records Office, Room 101, Alachua County Administrative Building, Main Street and University Avenue. There is a \$15.00 charge for filing the form and you need a picture ID (check this website for current information on fees: <http://www.clerk-alachua-fl.org/clerk/Recfees.html>). This form must be filed as soon as possible after you arrive in Gainesville and before the start of classes as it will be used to document the start of the 12 month residency period. Be sure to keep a copy of the declaration for filing with your “Request for Change in Residency Status” form.
- Obtain a Florida Driver’s License (original birth certificate required along with secondary identification). If you do not have a car, then obtain a Florida identification card. These can be obtained from the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles Office. (<http://www.hsmv.state.fl.us/dcl/faqkeys.html#USC>)
- Register to vote at the Alachua County Supervisor of Elections Office and obtain a Florida voter identification card. (You may register in whatever

Florida county is appropriate for your residence.)
(<http://elections.alachua.fl.us/>)

- Maintain a copy of your offer letter to use as proof of employment for the 12 month period.
- If you own a vehicle, then register it in the State of Florida, by going to the Alachua County Tax Collector's Office. (<http://www.actcfl.org/>) If you reside in another Florida county you may register your vehicle at the Tax Collector's Office there.
- Open a local bank account, as this provides additional documentation that you are a permanent resident.
- If you file your own Federal income tax return as an independent person, you need to provide a copy of the latest return you filed as documentation when you file the "Request for Change in Residency Status" form with the Registrar's Office.
- If your parents or guardians claimed you as a dependent on their most recent return but are not going to claim you as a dependent on future returns, then they need to provide you with a notarized statement stating this.
- Complete a University of Florida "Request for Change in Residency Status" form after you have been in Florida approximately 10 months but before tuition and fees are due in the first semester in which you have been a resident of Florida for 12 months. This form along with appropriate documentation is filed with the University of Florida Registrar's Office, 201 Criser Hall, Gainesville, FL 32611-4000, telephone (352) 392-1374 ext. 7237. The form is available at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/pdf/residencyreclass.pdf>.
- If you have complied with the above, it is likely, but not guaranteed, that the Registrar's Office will change your residency status to "resident." Becoming a Florida resident reduces the amount of tuition waivers charged to the University, College, and Department. These cost savings are rolled back into support for the entire graduate enterprise.