

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT POLICY

The Palmer Theological Seminary accepts international students into its graduate degree programs out of a desire to train Christian leaders throughout the world for ministry, recognizing that the Palmer Seminary community is enriched by the presence of international students.

Because a student's theological training for ministry is best undertaken in the context where the student's ministry will be exercised, Palmer Seminary encourages international students to thoroughly investigate seminaries (theological colleges) in their own country. If, after that investigation, Palmer Seminary remains the seminary of choice for theological training, an application can be submitted online to the Seminary by graduates of a recognized/accredited college or university who have already received a baccalaureate degree, such as a Bachelor of Arts or its equivalent.

**Instructions and all necessary forms for this admissions process can be found and downloaded from Palmer's website at: [www.palmerseminary.edu](http://www.palmerseminary.edu).**

In addition to the application, international applicants must submit the following information:

1. Provide full and complete academic transcript(s) of all post-secondary education in recognized/accredited colleges or universities, demonstrating the completion of an undergraduate or graduate degree. They must come directly from their respective schools and have the school seal stamped on it.

Along with the transcript(s), a comprehensive credential evaluation by a reputable agency is required. Contact information about two recommended agencies is available from Palmer Seminary's Admissions Office or on the website (Evaluations of International Transcripts). If the degree was earned in the United States, this requirement does not apply.

2. Submit a Personal Statement. Specific instructions which contain eight explicit guidelines for this statement can be downloaded from Palmer Seminary's website. Each guideline must be fully incorporated and fully developed in the statement.

3. Complete, sign and submit the Palmer Student Health Form, including the immunization record, proof of a recent tetanus vaccine (within the past 10 years) and proof of a recent PPD (tuberculosis) test (within the past 2 years). If the PPD test was positive, then evidence of a chest x-ray must also be sent.

4. Distribute and submit, when completed, two Reference Forms: one of which should come from the applicant's pastor, mentor or a pastoral colleague, and one from another Christian leader who is able to assess strengths and weaknesses for ministry.

5. Since instruction at Palmer Seminary is in English, students need to demonstrate proficiency in it. Therefore, international applicants whose primary spoken language and language of instruction have not been English are required to take the "Test of English as a

Foreign Language" (TOEFL) and submit the test scores to the Seminary's Admissions Office. Applicants must achieve a minimum score of 550 (paper-based) or 79 (internet-based) on this test. More information about the TOEFL and where to take it can be found at [www.ets.org/TOEFL](http://www.ets.org/TOEFL). If the IELTS is taken, then the minimum score must be 6.5.

If the minimum score is not achieved or it becomes evident— during the admissions process or after commencing study – that a student has significant difficulty in the use of the English language for purposes of graduate study, he/she will be required to successfully complete an English language program. The Seminary recommends the ESLI (English as a Second Language International) program at Eastern University. Palmer Theological Seminary is the Seminary of Eastern University. More information about this program can be found at [www.esli-intl.com/eu.asp](http://www.esli-intl.com/eu.asp). Another program option is provided by the ELS Language Center and involves 12 levels of study. Its information is located at [www.els.com](http://www.els.com).

Although successful completion of either program (ESLI or ELS) satisfies the Seminary's TOEFL requirement, an essay may be required to determine readiness for course work in English. Also, the cost of such a program is the responsibility of the student.

If the English language program taken by the student is not one of the above two programs, the student will be required to take the TOEFL after completion of said program and the required minimum score must be achieved.

If the undergraduate degree was earned in the United States, the TOEFL may not be required. However, the applicant may then be required to take the Miller Analogies Test (MAT) or the aptitude section of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) to facilitate the Admissions Committee's evaluation for acceptance.

The application and the other 5 requirements mentioned above must be received by April 30.

6. Complete and submit the Statement of Support forms (one by the applicant and the others by each sponsor.) This information should reflect adequate financial resources for meeting the cost of the applicant's educational and living expenses at the Seminary. An Estimate of Expenses can be found on Palmer Seminary's website. This information reflects a discount up to 50% of the tuition expense. The Seminary does not offer additional discounts or scholarships to international students.

The Statement of Support forms must be **notarized** with an official signature and stamp/seal from a bank officer or other legal authority. This process is more than a formality, but rather a commitment or obligation that needs to be fulfilled. The Seminary expects the sponsors to pay their first annual pledge a few months prior to the student's intended arrival. Each succeeding year should be paid during the same time period of that year.

For those who commit monies during the first year of study, there must be a verification that these particular funds exist. One way to accomplish this requirement is to attach a bank statement or other proof of assets, and have it notarized along with the Statement of Support with

the signature and stamp/seal of a bank officer. It should be sent to the Seminary's Admissions Office along with the Statement of Support.

Also, the applicant must prepare two sets of original, notarized financial documents. One set will remain in the possession of Palmer Seminary. The applicant will keep the second set to take to the visa interview.

The United States does not have public health services for non-citizens. Therefore, all international students **MUST** have health insurance. Palmer does offer a student health plan at a reasonable cost, or the student may purchase insurance through a reputable international insurance company.

The Statements of Support and verification forms must be received by May 31.

7. The money needed to cover the first year's expenses involving tuition (minus any financial aid from the Seminary), room and medical insurance needs to be transferred as a deposit to Palmer Seminary.

This deposit needs to be received by May 31.

If the financial information (Statements of Support and verification forms) and deposit are not received by the May 31 deadline, then the date of potential matriculation may be deferred until the fall semester of the following year. A spring semester start date is permitted only under mitigating circumstances, such as delay in visa approval.

It is strongly encouraged that ALL of the above information about application items and finances be sent to the Seminary as soon as possible to facilitate the evaluation process. Yet, a preliminary admissions evaluation could occur before the financial information is received. If an applicant is accepted during this phase, it would be on a provisional basis to the degree program. The evaluation for provisional acceptance should occur right after the April 30 deadline for receipt of application items. Final acceptance for matriculation in the fall semester should occur right after May 31. Evaluation for final acceptance will be dependent on adequate financial support and housing availability.

Financial constraints or unexpected rejection of visa requests for family members have prohibited many international students from bringing their families to the United States. This separation can cause a lot of stress for these members and could even result in medical and/or behavioral problems among them. Because the cost of living in the U.S. is high, most students find it difficult to pay their expenses and also send money home to support their families. If the potential applicant has a family, Palmer Seminary is concerned about these possible difficulties and urges the potential applicant to prayerfully consider them before any decision is made about applying to the school.

## **I-20 Form, Employment Opportunities, and Academic Studies**

Please note that the I-20, necessary for the F-1 student visa application, will not be issued to the applicant until final acceptance has occurred. Final acceptance not only includes acceptance into the degree program but also means that verification of adequate financial support and sufficient deposit have been received and that housing is available. The I-20 will then be mailed along with its accompanying documents to the accepted applicant. Once received, the accepted applicant must submit these items and his/her copies of all financial support affidavits to a United States Embassy or Consulate official. It is the accepted applicant's responsibility to pay all required fees related to the F-1 visa application process. Additional information regarding immigration procedures and travel is available from the International Student Services Office of Eastern University.

Efforts will be made by the Seminary to identify available on-campus employment opportunities. It must be clearly understood, however, that U.S. immigration regulations prohibit F-1 international students from working more than 20 hours per week during the academic year. The F-1 visa does not permit any off-campus employment except in the case of a required internship. F-1 visa employment restrictions will be enforced and closely monitored by the Seminary.

Admission is granted for a specified period, usually for the duration of a degree program. The continuation of study at Palmer Seminary and the renewal of the financial discount for international students, like national students, will depend upon satisfactory performance during each year of study.

If an international student successfully completes one year of study at Palmer Seminary but is unable to stay in the United States, a transcript with earned academic units (credits) will be awarded. These academic units will be valid for transfer to other accredited institutions should the student continue studies in the future. Along with this transcript, a "Certificate of Theological Study" will also be awarded.

**4/29/11**