

The State Department is very clear about the utility of these letters in their visitor visa information and application process. ISSS is providing this feedback and guidance for your knowledge and consideration.

**The Department of State has stated they no longer consider invitation letters from colleges and universities when determining whether to issue a visitor visa for Commencement guests. The letters have no effect on visa issuance. As a result, Middlebury no longer prepares this type of letter.** We provide this guidance to assist you with helping your guests with a successful visa application.

The Consular official begins the visa interview with the premise of “immigrant intent.” So, applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have sufficient resources to pay for their visit costs and that they will return home after their visit to the U.S.

You may wish to visit the following websites and follow the suggested guidance below.

**Three steps:**

- 1) Middlebury’s Commencement Website—  
<http://www.middlebury.edu/student-life/annual-events/commencement/intlguest>
- 2) U.S. Department of State guidance—
  - a. Visa application processes and an online tool to check visa appointment wait times—  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas.html>
  - b. Information about preparing for the interview—  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/tourism-visit/visitor.html#overview>
- 3) You and your guests may wish to consider and obtain these additional items as you prepare for the visa appointment. The items indicated as optional are just that, not something the visa official will likely be expecting or asking for, nor will they likely have any bearing on the outcome of the visa appointment. Those items indicated as required will be vital to their appointment.
  - a) **Guests’ Evidence of Funding to cover the costs of the visit - REQUIRED:**
    - If your guests intend to cover their own expenses, they should provide a bank statement, employment verification or other evidence of funding.
    - If you or another family member will provide room and board or any other specific expenses of the trip (such as airfare), you should supply evidence of funding such as a bank statement or employment letter.
    - There is no minimum dollar amount to show, yet you should indicate an amount that is reasonable for the level of support you are providing.
  - b) **Evidence of Intent to Return Home - REQUIRED:** Your family members must prove that they will return home after visiting the US. Documents showing employment, property ownership, close family relations in home country, or enrollment in school (in the home country) are good examples of such evidence.
  - c) **Invitation Letter from You - OPTIONAL:** Write a letter of invitation that includes the following: your name and your reason for living in the US, the names of your family members who wish to visit, the purpose and approximate length of the visit, and whether you will provide room and board or any other financial assistance for the visit. *See the template on page two.*
  - d) **Evidence of Your Visa Status in the US - OPTIONAL:** provide your family members with a **copy** of your I-20 (do NOT send the original!) to show you are a current F-1 student and to verify your status in the U.S. *(It is not necessary to get a new I-20 when inviting family members.)*
  - e) **Proof of Your Enrollment and Anticipated Graduation Date - OPTIONAL:** Request an enrollment verification letter from the Office of the Registrar via the Enrollment and Degree Verifications website - <https://www.middlebury.edu/offices/academic/records/verifications>. This option is only possible if you have a social security number.
    - If you do not have a social security number, you may wish to contact the Student Life Deans Office to request an enrollment letter. This letter is not customizable for the purposes of a family visa appointment; the intent of the letter is to confirm your enrollment only. This option is only possible if you request it at least 2 (two) weeks in advance of when you think you need it.

**SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER** (highlighted items need to be updated for current year).

You may print this on your own letterhead and sign it.

On student letterhead—with name, campus address, and email address

Guest's Full Name (to match passport)

Guest Address

Month xx, xxxx

Dear **Salutation/Name** (use the person's legal/passport name):

I write to formally invite you to attend my graduation ceremony, also known as Commencement. This visit will give you the unique opportunity to see where I have been living and to personally meet the professors and advisers with whom I have studied.

The graduation ceremony will take place at Middlebury College **on Sunday, May xx, xxxx**. You should plan to arrive on campus by **Sunday, May xx**, in order to participate in the activities planned for the members of the graduating class and their families prior to the ceremony on Sunday. For more details, see: <http://go.middlebury.edu/commencement>.

I look forward to your visit to Middlebury to join me for this festive celebration.

Sincerely,

*student signature*

Print/Type Student Name