

## Best Practices/Tips for Obtaining a USA Visa

**Start early! Plan your travel and apply for a visa as early as possible.**

REMEMBER: The United States is an open society. Unlike many other countries, the United States does not impose internal controls on most visitors, such as registration with local authorities. In order to enjoy the privilege of unencumbered travel in the United States, aliens have a responsibility to prove they are going to return abroad before a visitor or student visa is issued. Our immigration law requires consular officers to view every visa applicant as an intending immigrant until the applicant proves otherwise.

### **Interview Tips:**

Go to your interview prepared. Take as many supporting documents as you can and take some time to think about responses to common questions, such as:

1. Why are you going to US?
2. Who will fund your travels?
3. Why have they chosen you?
4. Have you done any research in Optics? On what? Describe.
5. Are you doing any defense-related work?
6. How can SPIE stand for “The International Society for Optics and Photonics?”
  - a. This particular question has been asked of many visa applicants; see the [About SPIE](#) page and [SPIE’s History](#) page for more information.

You may want to review the [Visa Denials](#) page for more information. The most important things for an applicant to demonstrate are:

- That they plan to remain for a specific, limited period;
- Evidence of funds to cover expenses in the United States;
- Evidence of compelling social and economic ties abroad; and
- That they have a residence outside the U.S. as well as other binding ties which will insure their return abroad at the end of the visit.

### **Other Tips:**

- Course transcripts, report cards, invitation letters, apartment rental agreements, graduation requirements, conference programs, hotel information and many other things may be requested to support your case.
- A copy of your abstract can act as further proof of acceptance to the conference; your CV and proof of SPIE membership is also helpful.
- It would be a good idea to pronounce “SPIE” by the initials “S-P-I-E” rather than phonetically such as SPEE or SPY. Telling INS agents that you’re going to a “SPY” conference takes on many meanings, most of which are negative.

### **During/After Travel:**

Don’t forget to turn in your I-94 forms back to the airline on your way home. Your record shows that you left the country when you do so, and the next time you come to the States, the agent will see that you came to the US and left back for home like you said you would. A screen with someone's name with a lot of entries and returns looks better than a record with a lot of entries and only a few exits or no exits at all.