What to do if your I-20 is not signed?

1. Make sure that your travel signature is valid. (A travel signature is valid for 365 days.) Travel signature is located at the bottom of page three on Form I-20.

2. If your travel signature is not valid, do not sign your document yourself or ask anyone outside the Office of Admission to do so. An unauthorized signature will have serious consequences for you, including being banned from entering the U.S. now and possibly in the future.

   If you have time before you plan to return to the U.S., send your I-20 to Vera Vlasenko or Cynthia Siegler, and ask us for a travel signature. Send your document by Federal Express or another carrier service if possible and include a prepaid, self-addressed, express return envelope for the fastest possible return. (Please keep in mind that WSC will close for business between November 25 and November 27; December 23, and January 4 and cannot respond in this period.) Our address is International Programs Office, 577 Western Avenue, P. O. Box 1630, Westfield, MA 01086-1630. Our phone number is (413) 572-8834; email: vvlasenko@wsc.ma.edu

3. If you do not have time to send us your I-20 and receive it back before you must return to the US you should do the following:

   If you are a student and have an unofficial transcript showing that, you registered full-time up until your departure from the U.S., this evidence of your full-time status may be helpful when you arrive at U.S. immigration inspection. If you do not have your transcript, check to see if you have any documents available (receipts for your payments to the college, grade reports, etc.) that give evidence of your current enrollment at WSC. If you do not have any of these things, do not worry (at least, do not worry too much). See two paragraphs below.

   When you arrive at U.S. immigration inspection without a valid travel signature, simply present your passport, with your valid student or scholar visa, and your I-20 as you usually do. It is possible that the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will admit you as usual without further question. (In a completely rational world, this should happen, at least after CBP checks your SEVIS record online, since SEVIS provides immigration officers with up-to-the-minute information about students and scholars electronically; rationally speaking, the paper I-20 form is obsolete). It is very likely, that CBP will instead admit you to the U.S. for only a 30-day period and issue you a form I-515 (“deferred inspection.”). The CBP officer may do this on the spot or may refer you to another CBP office (for what is called “secondary inspection”) which will probably admit you for 30 days and issue you the Form I-515. We have no reports of students whose SEVIS database records are valid denied entry to the US because of the lack of valid travel signature on an I-20. If you are issued an I-515, please visit our office as soon as possible after you arrive back in Westfield (and most certainly well before your 30–day admission expires) and we will help you comply with the requirements of the I-515.

If you traveled outside the United States without I-20 form:
An attempt to enter the U.S. in F status with a valid visa, but without a valid I-20 form, can be problematic. We know of cases where airlines have refused to allow students to board the aircraft because they did not have their I-20 with them. (Though in other cases, airlines have allowed them to board without question and then been admitted to the U.S. for 30–days under the I-515 deferred inspection procedure described above.) So if you have traveled outside the U.S. without your immigration document you should consider the following options:

1. If you can contact a friend who can get your I-20 and send it to you via an express carrier service before you plan to return to the U.S., you should definitely do so.

2. If you cannot contact a friend who can get your original document but have time to receive mail via express carrier, you can contact International Student Advisor at vvlasenko@wsc.ma.edu and we will prepare a duplicate and ship it to you.

3. If you do not have to receive an actual document, you can ask a friend or someone at the college to fax a copy to you. A copy may not be sufficient in some cases but it may help in others. Airlines reportedly sometimes accept a fax copy in lieu of an original to permit boarding.

4. If you do not have time to receive original documents before your return to the U.S., you should consider postponing your return until you can receive your document. You may decide not to postpone, and if you are allowed to board your flight, you will probably be admitted to the U.S. for 30 days under the I-515 procedure. It is possible that CBP could deny you entry, but if everything else is in order in your case (i.e. valid passport and visa, valid student record in the SEVIS database, no alert list questions, or evidence of prior problems) this is unlikely to happen.