DRIVER’S LICENSES, CARS, ETC...
Will you be here for more than 1 year and want to drive and/or purchase a car?

You should apply for a Massachusetts driver’s license*. Individuals with F1, F2, J1, and J2 visas (except for those under the age of 18) are eligible to apply for a driver’s license at the REGISTRY OF MOTOR VEHICLES (RMV) – 116 Pleasant Street, Easthampton. Contact the RMV directly with any questions you may have regarding driver’s licenses, application procedures, car registrations, etc (phone: 1-800-858-3926, website: http://www.massrmv.com/).

To obtain a Massachusetts driver’s license the RMV requires separate original identification to prove items 1 through 3:

1. SIGNATURE (e.g. Cancelled bank check - dated within 60 days - or Lease agreement or Employment Authorization card)

2. MASSACHUSETTS RESIDENCE (e.g. Bank statement or Lease agreement or Utility bill or cancelled bank check)

3. BIRTH DATE (e.g. I-797 Notice of Action from USCIS or Birth certificate that is notarized, and if not in English, is translated and notarized by the UMASS Translation Center or a bilingual (in that language) U.S. notary or Certificate of Attendance from IPO.)

Please visit the following site for a full listing for acceptable identifications for the above items: http://www.massrmv.com/LicenseandID/AcceptableIdentificationDocuments.aspx

4. A verifiable Social Security Number or a Denial Notice** issued by the SSA with your I-20 or DS-2019, I-94 card (print your I-94 here: www.cbp.gov/I94), and non-U.S. passport; you cannot use these as identification of the above items.

*USING A FOREIGN LICENSE? The Registry indicates that "if a student has a home country license, he or she is allowed to drive in Massachusetts for one year from the date of entry" if the license was issued by a country which signed the Road Traffic Convention of 1949. Check the RMV website for a full list of countries which are signatories to this agreement. If your home country license is not in English, you should also carry either an International Driver’s License or a notarized English translation.

**DENIAL NOTICE: For those people - e.g. persons with F-2 visas - not eligible for a Social Security Number, you must still APPLY for a Social Security Number and ask for a denial notice from Social Security Administration. The denial notice must be submitted to the Registry instead of the Social Security Number AND BE DATED WITHIN 60 DAYS OF SUBMISSION.

The LEARNER'S PERMIT can be obtained on a walk-in basis (though you should review the DRIVER LICENSE MANUAL in advance) and currently costs $30. To schedule an appointment for the road test, call 1-800-858-3926 (current costs $20). The license costs $50 and is valid for 5 years (unless it is your first Massachusetts license, in which case it expires on your 4th birthday after the date of issuance).

If you plan to PURCHASE a car, be aware that this is a costly process. In addition to the price of the car, you must pay a 5% sales tax and fees for Registration and Title, as well as the $29 fee to have the car inspected. You will also pay an annual “excise” tax – the amount of this tax is determined by the value of the car. Car insurance is also mandatory in Massachusetts and the cost is based on your age, driving experience, the value of your car, and your place of residence. Car insurance in Massachusetts is rather expensive.