In order to change status while in the U.S. from a dependent (F-2) to a student (F-1) status you will need to be admitted to a full-time academic program at a school that can issue you a Form I-20. In addition, your F-1 spouse must be maintaining status when you are requesting this change.

Note: If you are traveling outside the U.S., you can accomplish the change of status upon re-entry if you take your Form I-20 and financial documents with you and obtain an F-1 Visa at a U.S. Consulate. Upon obtaining the F-1 visa, you can enter the U.S. as an F-1 student.

As an F-2 visa holder, you are not eligible to be a full-time student, and you are not able to take courses on a part-time basis that can be applied toward a degree-granting program. Therefore, if you wish to study full time, you must apply for a change of status from F-2 to F-1. F-2 visa holders may not enroll in school after they have applied for change of status to F-1 while the application is pending. They may also not hold employment of any kind, and receive wages or compensation of any kind, until the F-1 status is approved.

Your request for change of status to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) should consist of the following:

1. Completed Form I-539 with the processing fee (check or money order made payable to Department of Homeland Security); for the most current fee information visit uscis.gov.
2. Receipt for paying SEVIS I-901 Fee. Go to FMJfee.com for full details.
3. Copy of pages 1 and 3 of the form I-20, signed and dated
4. Copy of the front and back of the Form I-94 card or printed copy of electronic I-94 card and copy of admission stamp
5. Copy of financial verification
7. Copies of the pages in each individual’s passport that include biographical information, passport picture and passport expiration.

For further information please see the instructions located on the Form I-539. Note that the Form I-539 may be filed electronically through the USCIS Electronic Immigration System (ELIS).

Meet with an immigration coordinator in the Office of International Affairs to review the above documents.

Note: If you have been offered an assistantship, please include and highlight in your letter: “Please grant expedite: assistantship pending.” Also, write on bottom left corner of the envelope “Expedite: Assistantship pending.”