



US PERMANENT RESIDENCE

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Green Card

Permanent Resident is a legal status granted to foreign nationals by US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), an agency of the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS). As the term implies, a Permanent Resident is eligible to remain in the US permanently (forever). If USCIS grants your Permanent Resident application, they will issue a Permanent Resident Card to you. The card is primarily green in color, hence the popular term “green card”.

How to Get a Green Card

There are several paths to a green card: employment, marriage to a US citizen, asylum, etc. Each path has its own eligibility criteria, application process, and timeline. This document addresses employment-based green cards and only in the context of VCU sponsorship.

Sponsorship

In the context of this document, **sponsorship** means that VCU is legally responsible for the processing of your green card application and, usually, pays for some part of the application.

Eligibility

To be eligible for VCU green card sponsorship, you must meet both of the following criteria:

USCIS Criteria	VCU Criteria
You must be eligible for a green card in the USCIS EB-1, EB-2, or EB-3 categories as determined by the law firm that processes your green card application for VCU. VCU cannot sponsor a green card in any other USCIS category. Please see Law Firms below.	At the time you start the VCU green card process, you must have a full-time teaching/research, research-only, or professional/administrative faculty position that you are expected to hold at least through final USCIS approval of the application (I-485 approval). VCU cannot sponsor classified staff, post-docs, or students for green cards.

Law Firms

GEO manages VCU's green card program but your green card application will be processed by a law firm with solid immigration expertise. Since VCU is a state agency, the only law firms we can use for sponsored green card applications are those with current contracts with the state Attorney General (AG). VCU cannot be represented by or pay a law firm that is not under OAG contract for immigration service. Initial access to the AG's immigration law firms is via GEO.

Decision to Sponsor

The decision to sponsor you for a green card is not made by GEO. The decision is made by your hiring unit faculty supervisor and human resources (HR) manager. If you meet the USCIS and VCU eligibility criteria above and you would like VCU to sponsor you for a green card, please start a conversation about it with your supervisor and HR manager.

Starting the Conversation

Do not wait for your supervisor or HR manager to bring the subject of green card sponsorship up on their own. You should therefore empower yourself to raise the issue of green card sponsorship with your supervisor and HR manager in the way you might raise the issue of a salary increase or other employment benefit with them.

Some hiring units expect eligible faculty to complete a year of eligible employment before starting the VCU green sponsorship process but exceptions are possible. Please ask your supervisor or HR manager about the unit policy in this area.

Hiring Unit Considerations

In deciding whether to sponsor you for a green card, your supervisor and HR manager may consider such factors as the unit's long-term department staffing needs and budget priorities as well as performance as an employee.

Self-Sponsored Green Card

If you are not eligible for VCU green card sponsorship, or if your hiring unit declines to sponsor your green card application, or you simply wish to apply for a green card on your own, you may be eligible to file for a green card in a USCIS self-sponsoring category.

If you go this route, VCU cannot provide any administrative, legal, or financial support for your green card application. You would either literally prepare and file the green card application on your own—or hire an attorney to do the work for you.

If you would like general information about a self-sponsored green card application, please contact us. Please see **Green Card Contact** below.

Timeline

How long after you start the green card process will you have a green card in hand? It depends on your green card category and where you were born. A more precise answer to the question is not possible here. The law firm that processes your green card application will give you a clearer idea of the timeline.

Costs

Total green card costs are similar (not identical) regardless of the category, but in every case there are 2 kinds of cost:

Attorney Fees	USCIS Filing Fees
What the lawyer charges to prepare and file your green card application with USCIS	What USCIS charges to process your green card application

For the purpose of this document: **Total Cost of Your Green Card Application = (Attorney Fees) + (USCIS Filing Fees)** Currently, the total cost of a green card application is about \$7,000 excluding Other Costs and **Dependents** costs (please see below).

Other Costs

Other costs include photograph fees, immigration medical examination fees, travel to USCIS for biometrics processing or interview (if required), etc. These other costs cannot be paid by VCU. They must be paid for from your personal funds.

Dependents

If your spouse or minor children need green cards, they may join your case during the final stage of the process (I-485). VCU cannot provide direct financial support for dependent green card applications. The law firm that processes your green card application can discuss this aspect of your case with you.

Cost Sharing

If your unit decides to sponsor you for a green card, you may be asked to share in the total green card costs from your personal funds. It is very rare for a VCU hiring unit to cover the total cost of your green card from state funds. More common is a dollar amount portion (not a percentage) of the total cost split between your hiring unit and you.

Reimbursement

If VCU pays for any part of your green card application, you will need to sign an agreement to reimburse the university for some or all of the attorney fees paid for by the university if you terminate employment for any reason within 3 years of the assignment of the case by the AG to a law firm for processing.

Next Step

If you are interested in VCU green card sponsorship, please have a conversation about it with your supervisor and HR manager. Then, if there is a general agreement to proceed with a green card application for you, please ask your HR manager to contact GEO by email so that we can initiate the process.

Green Card Contact

Paul Babitts, Ph.D.
Associate Director, International Student & Scholar Programs
Telephone: (804) 828-9615
Email: babittsp@vcu.edu

Immigration Advising

912 West Grace Street, 4th Floor • P.O. Box 843043 • Richmond, VA 23284-3043
Telephone (804) 828-0595 • Email GEOIS@vcu.edu