Pre-Arrival Information for New J-1 Exchange Visitors

The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program administered by the U.S. Department of State has the purpose “to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange”.

The International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) Office is authorized by the U.S. government to manage the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program at San José State University. If you have any questions regarding the exchange visitor program and J-1 visa, please feel free to contact us at (408) 924-5920 or international-office@sjsu.edu.

We look forward to welcoming you to the SJSU community!

Form DS-2019
Enclosed is Form DS-2019, “Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status.” If you are outside the United States present the form to a U.S. embassy or consulate to apply for your J-1 Exchange Visitor visa. Per U.S. government regulations DS-2019 forms cannot be scanned or sent by email.

Obtaining a J-1 Visa
To enter the United States as a J-1 Exchange Visitor under SJSU sponsorship, you must have a valid J-1 visa stamp in your passport. Canadian citizens do not need a J-1 visa stamp to enter the United States; however, they must present Form DS-2019 at the port of entry to request admission to the country in J-1 Exchange Visitor status.

To apply for your J-1 visa, take your Form DS-2019 and your passport to a United States consulate abroad. The Consular Officer may ask you to document how you will cover your expenses while in the U.S. Be ready to present funding documents such as a letter of financial support, a bank statement, proof of income, etc. If any dependents (spouse, children) will be accompanying you, they will need to obtain J-2 dependent visas. Be prepared to show proof of marriage to your spouse and parenthood of each child.

Paying the SEVIS Fee
Applicants who require a visa to enter the United States in J-1 status must pay the SEVIS fee ($180) before going to the U.S. embassy or consulate for their visa interview. Spouses and dependent children of exchange visitors who need to apply for a J-2 dependent visa do NOT need to pay this fee. Complete Form I-901 at www.FMJfee.com to pay the fee online. You may use a credit to pay for the fee online. Please visit the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) website for further details and SEVIS Fee Payment video tutorial (https://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901)

Entering the United States
When you arrive in the United States, you should present Form DS-2019 to a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer during an immigration inspection. The CBP Officer will return the DS-2019 form to you, process an electronic I-94 Arrival Record, and place an entry stamp in your passport. The CBP entry stamp and I-94 record are evidence of your admission to the U.S in legal J-1 Exchange Visitor status.

You can retrieve your I-94 Arrival Record online at www.cbp.gov/i94 after you enter the U.S. We advise that you obtain and print this record as soon as you are able to. Please check to make sure all the information is correct and report any errors to the ISSS Office right away.

Keeping Important Documents Safe
It is advisable to photocopy the identification pages of your passport, your visa stamp, your CBP entry stamp, and the Form DS-2019. You will need these documents for such purposes as extending your stay in the United States and obtaining work permission. Keep the copies separately from the original documents for use in applying for replacements if the originals should be lost or stolen.
U.S. Government Reporting Requirement
The U.S. Department of State regulations require all J-1 Exchange Visitors to report in person to the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) Office within 5 days of their arrival to the United States. Failure to do so is a violation of J-1 status and will result in the termination of your immigration record in SEVIS, the U.S. government immigration information system.

J-1 Exchange Students must attend the ISSS New J-1 Exchange Student Orientation program to comply with this reporting requirement.

J-1 Scholars must schedule a check-in appointment and attend a J-1 Scholar Orientation session to comply with this reporting requirement. Please contact Katerina Salas, Assistant Director for International Student Advising at katerina.salas@sjsu.edu to schedule a check-in appointment a few days prior to your arrival in the U.S. and to find out when the next J-1 Scholar Orientation will take place.

U.S. Government Health Insurance Requirement
All exchange visitors in J-1 and J-2 status are required to have and maintain health insurance coverage for the entire period of the program. Even if the J-1 or J-2 is out of the U.S. for part of the time, exchange visitors must remain covered. The insurance must meet standards dictated by the U.S. Department of State (see below) and you must provide evidence of health insurance coverage immediately upon your arrival to the U.S.

Minimum insurance coverage:
- Medical benefit of at least $100,000 per accident or illness
- Repatriation of remains in the amount of $25,000
- Expenses associated with medical evacuation to home country in the amount of $50,000
- Deductible not to exceed $500 per accident or illness

SJSU offers health insurance for international students and for exchange visitors and their dependents. For more details regarding the University approved health plan, please visit www.jcbins.com or ask about it during your check-in appointment at ISSS.

The 212(e) Two-Year Home Country Physical Presence Requirement
Certain J-1 exchange visitors and their J-2 dependents are subject to the two-year home country physical presence requirement, also known as 212(e), two-year residence requirement, or foreign residence requirement.

Exchange visitors who are subject to the 212(e) requirement must return to, reside and be physically present in their country of last legal residence for at least two years before being eligible for the following immigration benefits:
- Obtaining an immigrant visa or adjustment of status to lawful permanent resident (immigrant/green card) status;
- Obtaining an H visa (temporary workers and dependents), an L visa (intracompany transferees and dependents), or a K visa (fiancé and dependents);
- Changing their nonimmigrant status within the United States to any other nonimmigrant category except A (diplomatic), G (international organization), or U (victims of qualifying criminal activity) statuses.

The 212(e) requirement does not prevent individuals from returning to the U.S. in another nonimmigrant status. For example, an exchange visitor subject to 212(e) may return to the U.S. as a tourist using a B-1/B-2 visitor visa or as a foreign student using an F-1 student visa.

For information on the 212(e) requirement conditions, please visit www.travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/exchange.html. If you have questions about the requirement, including whether or not you are subject to it, please raise them with the Consular Officer when you apply for your J-1 visa. If it is determined that you are subject to the requirement, this will be marked in the lower left corner section of your Form DS-2019 and the J-1 visa stamp in your passport with the code 212(e).