Important Reminders for J-1 Visa Holders

SEVIS I-901 Fee

All Exchange Visitors must pay a SEVIS I-901 fee of $180.00 prior to visa issuance. Once you have received your Form DS-2019, you can complete the Form I-901 and pay the SEVIS fee online at www.fmjfee.com. Be sure to print a copy of your receipt, which you are required to bring to your visa interview.

Health Insurance and Emergency Assistance

The United States Department of State requires that all J-1 visa holders and any accompanying dependents have health insurance and emergency assistance insurance in effect on the date of departure from their home country and for the duration of their stay. The minimum coverage requirements are as follows: (1) medical benefits of at least $50,000 per person per accident or illness; (2) repatriation of remains in the amount of $7,500; and (3) expenses associated with medical evacuation in the amount of $10,000.

The University will automatically bill you and enroll you in our International Student and Scholar health insurance and emergency assistance insurance as of your date of departure from your home country. The monthly charges for this coverage (both health and emergency) are as follows: $83.00 per month for exchange visitors; $178.00 per month for spouses; and $96.00 per month per child.

You may obtain a waiver for the health portion of this insurance if you can provide proof of existing, equivalent coverage. Waivers do not include the emergency assistance portion of this insurance. If you qualify for a waiver of the health insurance, the University will continue to bill you for the emergency assistance coverage, which is $6 per month, per person when billed without the health insurance.

If you are eligible for and choose the employee health insurance through the University, your coverage will not begin until 42 days after your employment start date. Your International Student and Scholar insurance (or approved equivalent insurance) must remain in effect until your employee coverage becomes effective. The employee health insurance plans do not include emergency assistance, so the University will continue to bill you for the emergency assistance coverage, which is $6 per month, per person when billed without the health insurance.

Before your departure from your home country, you are required to complete and return the Arrival Notification and Insurance Commitment form enclosed in your DS-2019 packet. This form can also be downloaded at http://hr.albany.edu/content/Arrival Notification and Insurance Commitment.pdf. Once you arrive in Albany, you must report to the Office of International Student Services (Science Library G-40) to finalize your insurance arrangements.

The International Student and Scholar health insurance and emergency assistance insurance covers a wide variety of medical treatments, from hospital visits, prescriptions and surgery to mental health treatment. The benefits brochure contains more information about what is covered and can be downloaded at http://www.albany.edu/isss/pdf/Insurance/SUNY Participants brochure 08-09.pdf.

Orientation

Upon your arrival and within three days of beginning your stay at UAlbany, you must take part in a check-in session with a Margaret Reich (unpaid visitors), Cheryl Yagelski (Research Foundation visitors), or Kate Thies (State paid visitors).
Please note that under Department of State regulations, failure to check-in within 30 days of arrival will result in cancellation of your exchange visitor status and may subject you to deportation. The purpose of the check-in session is to provide you with information about: a) living and working in the Albany area; b) your visa status and your rights, duties, and responsibilities; c) and the duties and responsibilities of your sponsor, or responsible person.

In addition, as a paid exchange visitor, you must complete tax forms and the Form I-9 (Employment Eligibility Verification). For completion of your tax file, please bring the following documents: a) Your passport; b) Form I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record); c) and Form DS-2019. For the Form I-9 you must present documents that establish both your identity and your eligibility to work in the U.S. The documents listed above are sufficient for this purpose, but you may bring any documents included in List A, or List B and List C (see the last page of the Form I-9).

Social Security Card

If you are a paid employee of the University, you are required to have a U.S. Social Security number. This is not the same thing as Individual Tax identification Number (ITIN), and you will have to replace your ITIN (if you have one) with a Social Security number. If you need to obtain a Social Security card, you will have to go to the Social Security Administration (SSA) office, located in Room 430 of the Leo O'Brien Federal Building, which is at the foot of Clinton Avenue, between Broadway and Pearl Street, entrance on Pearl, across from the Palace Theater in downtown Albany. Before going to the SSA office to apply, applicants should be in the United States for more than ten days. This allows arrival data from the port-of-entry to be entered in the primary system SSA uses for authorization validation. You should take your copy of the DS-2019 form, the I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record), and your passport with you when going to the SSA office. For more details on applying for a Social Security number, you should go to the following URL on the SSA website: http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10107.html.

Address Notification

While in the United States, you are required to notify the USCIS of the mailing address in the United States for yourself and for your family if applicable. You are required to notify the USCIS within ten days of each change of address. The forms with which to report changes of address may be obtained from any post office or USCIS office. Aliens who fail to comply with the address notification requirement may be fined or imprisoned and may face deportation, unless it is determined that the failure was excusable or not willful.

Immigration and Visa

If you have any questions or problems concerning your stay at UAlbany or the conditions and terms of your visa status, you should contact International Student and Scholar Services immediately. Any change in immigration and visa standing, if applicable, is subject to rigid rules and fixed time limits. Attention to time limits is vital. Contact information for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the U.S. Department of State is listed below.

U.S. Department of State contact information: Exchange Visitor Program, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs United States Department of State, SA-44, Room 734 301 Fourth Street, SW Washington, DC 20547 PH: (202) 401-9810 FX: (202) 401-9809 Email: JVISAS@STATE.GOV

Basic Conditions and Requirements Applying to J-1 Visa Holders
• You have been admitted to the United States for a specific period of time, which is shown on your DS-2019. Staying in the United States beyond the period authorized, or engaging in activities other than indicated on the form DS-2019, are considered violations of the conditions of your visa. Unauthorized employment on and off campus subjects you to deportation proceedings by the USCIS.

• The total time allowed in J-1 scholar status is five years—no exceptions! Short-term scholars have a maximum time of six months—no exceptions.

• An exchange visitor (J-1 visa holder) is not eligible to change categories, i.e., from "scholar" to "student." Remember, you have been admitted to the United States for the sole purpose of carrying out the program stated in Item 4 of the DS-2019 form. If an exchange visitor needs to change categories, the visitor will have to depart the U.S., return to their home country, have a DS-2019 issued showing the new category and apply to the U.S. Consulate to reenter the U.S. in the new category. There are no exceptions to this procedure and there is no guarantee that the visitor will be readmitted to the U.S. in the new category once the visitor returns to their home country.

• If your financial support comes totally or in part from the U.S. government, international organizations, or your government, you must return to your home country for two years for home residency. The two-year home residency requirement and other important conditions of the J-1 visa are explained on page 2 of the DS-2019 form. Please read them carefully. You are responsible for meeting all conditions of your visa.

Extensions of Stay for J-1 Visa Holders

If you are eligible for, and wish to request, an extension of stay, the following actions must be taken no later than thirty (30) days prior to the expiration date shown on your Form DS-2019. There is no exception to this rule.

1. Your University department head should direct a signed statement to Margaret Reich (unpaid visitors), Cheryl Yagelski (Research Foundation visitors), or Kate Thies (State paid visitors), requesting that you be permitted to continue your stay for a specific period of time. The statement should indicate the salary that will be paid to you during this period and your duties. If you are not being paid by UAlbany, you must supply written documentation of your support (in U.S. dollars) from your home institution or sponsor. Upon receipt of the appropriate documentation, your visa status will be reviewed.

2. Provided you are eligible for an extension, you will be asked to sign a new DS-2019. Your passport must be kept valid at all times throughout your stay.

Dependents

a) Employment (if applicable)—Your spouse and/or children have been admitted on J-2 visas. They are not permitted to accept employment unless they have received written permission from the USCIS before starting to work.

b) Health Insurance—You are responsible for complying with health insurance requirements for your dependent(s). The Office of International Student Services will be pleased to provide you information on U.S. Department of State health insurance requirements.