# Table of Contents

**Introduction**

BSMP Website

---

**Program Overview**

Terms of Appointment  
Visa Sponsorship  
BSMP Participant Service Portal  
Program Duration  
Two Year Home Residency Requirement  
Family  
International Travel  
Revision and Termination of Scholarship

---

**Pre-Departure and Arrival**

Your J-1 Visa and Entering the U.S.  
SEVIS and OBIM  
Immunizations  
Baggage  
Pre-Departure Checklist  
Initial Arrival at Your U.S. Host Institution  
Arrival Checklist

---

**During Your Exchange Program**

General Advice and Assistance  
Reporting to IIE  
International Travel  
Your Intensive English Program  
Your Academic Program

---

**Final Departure from the U.S.**

Obtaining a Return Ticket  
Final Reporting  
Departure Checklist  
Grace Period  
Emergency Departure or Withdrawal

---

**Covered Costs and Fees**

Housing  
Meals  
Stipends and Allowances  
Billing
Receiving Scholarship Funds ................................................................. 15
  Banking in the U.S.
  Stipends and Electronic Fund Transfers (EFT)
  Personal Funds
  Credit Cards

Health Insurance .................................................................................... 17
  Health Insurance Requirements
  Understanding Your Health Insurance Policy
  The U.S. Healthcare System
  Staying Healthy

Academic Training .................................................................................. 20
  J-1 Requirements and Eligibility
  Student Employment
  Social Security Number (SSN) and Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)
  Taxes

U.S. Society, Culture, and Government .................................................. 23
  Characteristics of Americans
  Cultural Diversity in the U.S.
  The Law and Civil Rights

Higher Education in the U.S. ................................................................ 25
  Academic Year
  Undergraduate Courses
  Graduate Courses
  Methods of Teaching
  Grading Systems

Holidays .................................................................................................... 26
  Official Holidays
  Cultural Holidays
  Other Holidays

Miscellaneous .......................................................................................... 28
  Time Zones
  Hours of Business
  Electricity
  Climate
  Religion
  Safety
Introduction

Congratulations on your selection as a Brazil Scientific Mobility Program (BSMP) scholarship recipient. It is the Institute of International Education’s (IIE) distinct pleasure to welcome you to the United States and assist you throughout your program. You will not only have the opportunity to immerse yourself in the world of U.S. academia, but also to experience American higher education first-hand by attending a top institution in the United States. IIE hopes that you will use this time to create, share, and apply knowledge with people from different walks of life. May your time in the U.S. be challenging, enriching, and transformative.

IIE, a private not-for-profit organization founded in 1919, is dedicated to the promotion of international exchange for educational purposes. IIE develops and administers over 200 other programs which involve students, teachers, leaders and specialists from approximately 140 countries around the world. IIE works with international organizations, governments, agencies, foundations, private organizations, and colleges and universities in the United States, and abroad. It also serves as a clearinghouse of information on all aspects of international education.

IIE has been contracted by your sponsors, the Government of Brazil - Ministry of Education, Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES) and the National Council of Scientific and Technological Development, Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq) to assist and maintain contact with you and your host institution, in particular your International Student Advisor, for the duration of your stay in the United States. As a contracted administrator of BSMP, and your visa sponsor, IIE is required to request various reports, surveys, transcripts and other related information from you throughout your program. It is essential that you submit this information in a timely manner as it will need to be shared with CAPES and CNPq, as well as the United States Department of State, and the Department of Homeland Security throughout your program.

BSMP Website

There is a lot of additional information on the BSMP website: http://www.iie.org/bsmp.<ref>

Check the site for downloadable forms and documents, important updates, and program photographs and stories. Throughout this handbook, you will see links to relevant sections of the website in light blue boxes.
Program Overview

To provide more insight into what will be expected of you, and what you should expect from the program, this handbook outlines a general overview of program policies, immigration regulations, and scholarship benefits. It is imperative that you fully understand this information. Note that any of these policies or benefits are subject to change, and that if such a change should occur, you will be notified.

Terms of Appointment

Your Terms of Appointment and Special Instructions (TOA) describe the benefits and conditions of your BSMP scholarship. You must read and fully understand this legally binding document in its entirety. IIE recommends that you have a copy of it for reference throughout your authorized program. Contact IIE if you have any questions regarding your TOA.

Visa Sponsorship

Your non-immigrant visa status is J-1 Exchange Visitor, non-degree student category. Your visa sponsorship is provided under IIE’s Exchange Visitor Program P-3-00006. IIE will act as your exchange visitor visa sponsor and will provide you with its respective services, which include issuing you a Form DS-2019 and providing you with instructions for securing a J-1 exchange visitor visa. IIE will continue to assist you in maintaining your non-immigrant status and complying with J-1 visa regulations throughout your authorized program. You, in turn, are responsible for maintaining your status as a full-time student in good standing, and completing and submitting various reports, forms, transcripts, surveys, and other information as instructed by IIE throughout your authorized program. It is also your responsibility to ensure that you are fulfilling all the requirements your host institution(s) has for non-degree students. You are required to comply with all the academic and professional standards of your host institution(s).

BSMP Participant Service Portal

You will need to submit personal information, documents, reports, and more in the BSMP Participant Service Portal, which can be accessed here: https://mycusthelp.info/IIE/cs/Login.aspx.

Program Duration

Your program lasts for the period of time specified in your TOA. You are required to complete the full period of the program. Should an emergency necessitate early departure, prior approval must be obtained from CAPES/CNPq, and IIE.

This scholarship is non-renewable, and your visa sponsorship will not be transferred to any institution upon completion of your program. This scholarship is also subject to the penalties of your host institution(s) for any violation of its academic policies.

Two Year Home Residency Requirement

BSMP is designed for individuals who are committed to completing all components of the exchange program, including the two-year home residency requirement. IIE staff cannot provide any support or information regarding visa lottery applications, green cards or any procedures for immigration. Any individual interested in pursuing these opportunities prior to completing the two-year home residency requirement should consider withdrawal from the program.

If an individual has applied for a diversity visa lottery and does not "win," then he/she may not be eligible for future visa categories. Additionally, visa sponsorship will not be negated; the two-year home residency requirement will still apply. Any questions regarding immigration must be directed to an immigration attorney.

Family

BSMP undergraduate scholarships are for recipients only. BSMP program policy does not support dependents or family members, and IIE will not be able to provide J-2 visa sponsorship. Accordingly, you may not have any dependents or family accompany you for any time during your program. Family and friends may visit you during holidays or designated host institution breaks, but they must come on tourist visas obtained independently. IIE is unable to provide assistance to you or your family in securing tourist visas. In addition to the above, you should not plan on sending any portion of your scholarship funds to support your family back home. Costs are high in the U.S. and your scholarship will only cover your own expenses.

International Travel

It is CAPES and CNPq program policy that BSMP students remain in the U.S. for their entire scholarship period. Should you choose to travel outside the U.S. during your program, you will be willfully breaking program policy and you will be fully responsible for any consequences that are a result thereof. Neither CAPES/CNPq, nor IIE are responsible for any expenses accrued by, or for any consequences of the actions of, those students who do not comply with this policy. Should
circumstances arise that require you to travel outside the U.S., you must consult with IIE and CAPES or CNPq directly. International travel requires that you have your Form DS-2019 signed to authorize travel.

Although you are not allowed to travel internationally during your scholarship period, you are permitted to travel within the U.S. If you plan to travel within the U.S., you are not required to notify IIE or have your Form DS-2019 signed. Any national travel within the United States must not conflict with your coursework, academic training or other program duties. You should not request your host institution to alter scheduled classes or exams for recreational activities.

Revision and Termination of Scholarship
IIE, in cooperation with CAPES/CNPq, reserves the right to revise, adjust, revoke or terminate your scholarship provisions should conditions so require, or should noncompliance with the provisions of the scholarship warrant such action. Conditions for revision may include, but are not limited to: late arrival, extended travel outside of the U.S., and changes in financial resources available to you in the U.S.

A U.S. host institution and IIE may recommend revocation of a scholarship to CAPES/CNPq. Grounds for revocation or termination include, but are not limited to: (1) violation of any law of the U.S.; (2) any act of misconduct likely to give offence; (3) failure to observe satisfactory academic or professional standards; (4) physical or mental incapacitation; (5) engaging in unauthorized income-producing activity; (6) material misrepresentation made by any scholarship recipient in the application form or scholarship document; (7) failure to provide all required documents to the administering agency prior to arrival in the U.S.; and (8) failure to comply with the Terms of Appointment of the BSMP scholarship.

BSMP scholarship may be suspended if: (1) the scholarship recipient ceases to carry out the project or academic program during the scholarship period; (2) the scholarship recipient leaves the host country without authorization of CAPES/CNPq, IIE or his/her U.S. host institution; (3) conditions in the host country require the departure of scholarship recipient for reasons of personal safety or security; and (4) the host institution ends the program for any reason.

It is important that you reach out to your Brazilian Consular Representative in the U.S. as soon as you believe there could be an issue to discuss ways to address your situation.

If you are involved in a serious issue that endangers your U.S. host institution’s population or reputation, your scholarship can be terminated immediately.

Before you leave Brazil, be sure all details concerning your J-1 visa and travel have been finalized. For your trip, carry with you the names, addresses and telephone numbers of your International Student Advisor or other important contacts at your U.S. host institution. Carry this information separate from your passport, Form DS-2019, and TOA. Be sure to have these items easily accessible because the United States Customs and Border Patrol (USCBP) will ask you for them at your port of entry into the United States.

Do not pack your passport, Form DS-2019, or TOA in your checked luggage.

Find a full list of contacts: http://www.iie.org/Programs/Brazil-Scientific-Mobility/Contacts.
Pre-Departure and Arrival

Your J-1 Visa and Entering the U.S.

As the recipient of this scholarship, you are required to apply for a J-1 Exchange Visitor visa under the sponsorship of IIE (Exchange Visitor Program Number P-3-00006). You will need your Form DS-2019, which will be issued by IIE, to apply for a J-1 visa at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate nearest to you in Brazil. You should apply for your J-1 visa immediately upon receipt of your Form DS-2019.

You should not apply for an F-1 (student) visa, a B-1/B-2 tourist visa, an immigrant visa, or any other type of visa. If your U.S. institution issues you a Form DS-2019 or a Form I-20 (for an F-1 visa), you must inform them that IIE has issued you a Form DS-2019 and immediately return the documents they issued you.

Your passport should be valid for at least six (6) months beyond the expiration date of your Form DS-2019. Along with your passport and Form DS-2019, the U.S. Embassy or Consulate may ask you to present your TOA, as well as any information about your medical history (e.g., x-ray photograph of your chest, certification of good health, and proof of vaccination against small-pox or measles within the last three years).

Upon arrival at your Port of Entry in the United States, the United States Customs and Border Patrol (USCBP) officer will review your passport, J-1 visa and Form DS-2019. The USCBP officer will then process your electronic Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record and stamp a “Port of Entry Admission Stamp” in your passport. It is important to make sure this stamp reflects the date you entered the U.S., your class of admission (J-1) and your duration of stay (D/S). Your passport, J-1 visa, and Form DS-2019 will be returned to you. The USCBP officer should also provide you with written instructions on how to access your automated Form I-94 online.

As of June 2013, international visitors arriving by air or sea who are admitted under a non-immigrant visa status to the United States will no longer be issued a paper version of Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record, unless there is a very specific circumstance. Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Records will be created electronically and maintained in USCBP systems. This means that upon your leaving the U.S., the USCBP will automatically record your departure using manifest information obtained from your airline/sea carrier.

If you leave and re-enter the U.S. during your authorized program your previous Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record will be overwritten and a new automated record will be created.

Important Note: Be aware that U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) regulations state that holders of J-1 non-immigrant visas will only be admitted to the United States thirty (30) days or less prior to the Start Date on the Form DS-2019. Consider this date carefully when making your travel plans to the United States.

SEVIS and OBIM

The U.S. Department of State (DOS) manages the Exchange Visitor Program for non-immigrant exchange visitors in the J-1 visa classification, and their dependents. DOS uses the DHS Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), an internet-based system, to maintain information on immigration and academic status of Exchange Visitors (e.g., students, teachers, trainees, professors, scholars and respective dependents). In particular, SEVIS tracks arrivals and departures as well as continued enrollment, academic training, on-campus employment, and other important related activities.
The Office of Biometric Identity Management (OBIM) is part of a continuum of biometrically enhanced security measures that begins outside U.S. borders and continues through a visitor’s arrival in, and departure from the U.S. It incorporates eligibility determinations made by the DHS and DOS at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad. OBIM currently applies to all visitors (with limited exemptions) entering the United States, regardless of country of origin, whether they are traveling on a visa or arriving by air, sea, or land. Most visitors experience OBIM’s biometric procedures - digital, inkless finger scans and digital photograph - upon entry to the United States.

Immunizations
Most U.S. host institutions require students to provide proof of immunizations before registering for classes for the first time. Students are also typically asked to complete a medical form which may include emergency contact information, health history, and a physical exam.

Proof of the following immunizations is often required:

- MMR – measles, mumps, rubella (2 doses after the age of 12 months which must be at least 30 days apart)
- TD/DT – tetanus and diphtheria (within the last 10 years)
- TB – skin test for tuberculosis (within 6 months of arrival, and sometimes required again upon arrival)

Prior to your arrival you should contact your International Student Advisor regarding the immunization requirements of your host institution. Ask whether some vaccinations can be administered in Brazil. Bring proof (official documentation issued by your doctor or hospital) of your immunizations.

Baggage
Should you require additional baggage be shipped to the U.S., you must send it directly to your institution. Any baggage sent to IIE’s address will not be accepted. Please note that IIE is not authorized to issue reimbursement or funding to BSMP students for overweight or lost baggage.

If your baggage is lost or damaged upon arrival, you should report it to the airline immediately, while you are still in the airport. Be sure to receive a case number, and inquire about the timeframe for return or refunds for damaged bags.

Pre-Departure Checklist
IIE strongly suggests that you review the following lists prior to your departure from Brazil.

To Do:
- Verify that your passport is valid.
- Obtain your original Form DS-2019 from IIE.
- Apply for a J-1 exchange visitor entry visa.
- Attend your interview for a J-1 exchange visitor visa at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.
- Obtain international airline tickets, with final U.S. destination as noted in your TOA. When doing so find out if there are any baggage specifications or security clearances for your particular airline.
- Inform your International Student Advisor at your U.S. host institution of your complete itinerary, including airlines, flight numbers, transfer cities, and dates and times of flights at least 2 (two) weeks prior to your departure.
- Arrange transportation from the airport to your U.S. host institution.
- Review your host institution’s health insurance plan and health center information.
- Have any necessary medical and dental work done in Brazil prior to your departure.
- Obtain necessary immunization requirements of your U.S. host institution. Contact your International Student Advisor or host institution’s health center if you have further questions.
- Contact your International Student Advisor and/or housing office to find out what your housing and meal accommodations will be, and how to apply/make arrangements accordingly.
- Request that all housing application fees and deposit invoices be sent to IIE directly. You will not be reimbursed if you pay these fees with personal funds.
- Inquire about any orientation programs that have been planned for international students by your host institution.
- Bring a small amount of U.S. currency with you.
- Give your family a copy of your TOA.
To Pack:

- An official up-to-date transcript of your studies in Brazil (along with official English translation).
- Your current driver’s license or international driver’s license.
- Copies of your medical and dental records, especially if you have any pre-existing health condition.
- A year supply of medication(s) for any pre-existing health conditions. Prescriptions from abroad cannot be filled in the United States. It is also a good idea to have your current doctor provide you with a description of the prescription medicine(s) you take. You can then use this information to consult with a U.S. doctor for a prescription that can be filled in the United States.
- An extra pair of eyeglasses or supply of contact lenses.
- Your Social Security Number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) if you were previously issued one.
- A credit card with lesser fees for international transactions.
- Slides, photographs, maps, books, traditional clothing, or other cultural artifacts/objects of your home country which can be used in informal talks that you may be invited to give.

Important Note: It is probably wise to omit most household items such as linens and cooking utensils because they can be purchased in the U.S. at a reasonable cost.

Initial Arrival at Your U.S. Host Institution

BSMP students must arrive at their U.S. host institutions as per the Program Start/Arrival Date as stated in their TOA. You should not arrive before this date as housing or meal accommodations may not be available. You should follow the instructions you have received from your host institution and IIE. If you are instructed to arrive at your host institution before the official start of classes, generally for international student orientation purposes, contact your International Student Advisor to make sure housing is available; he/she may need to help you arrange temporary housing while you wait for your permanent housing to be ready. If you do not have a permanent residence by the 10th (tenth) day from the Start Date of your TOA, you should notify IIE immediately.

In addition, as per your TOA, you are also responsible for informing the appropriate offices (Housing Office, Bursar’s, etc.) at your host institution to invoice IIE directly. IIE will make payments for approved BSMP scholarship benefits (tuition, academic fees, housing, meal plan, insurance premium, etc.) on your behalf. You should also provide your residence address to these offices.

Upon arrival you must contact IIE to report your arrival and provide your physical residence address (the address where you are living) and other contact information. J-1 visa regulations require this information be reported to SEVIS. If you fail to report this information to IIE within ten (10) days from the Start Date on your TOA, your legal status in the United States will be in jeopardy. Failure to report your arrival as instructed can be grounds for termination.

It is also a requirement of J-1 visa regulations and your BSMP scholarship that you keep IIE informed of your residential address (the address where you are living), including telephone number and e-mail, throughout your entire program. You must notify IIE of any changes within ten (10) days of making them to your address. You can update your address in the BSMP Participant Service Portal.

Important Note: Mail sent to IIE will not be forwarded to you.

Arrival Checklist

The checklist below will help you prioritize some things that need to be taken care of immediately upon your arrival at your host institution. This should all be done within 10 (ten) days of your arrival:

- Upon entering the United States, you must notify your International Student Advisor of your arrival and your residential address within ten (10) days of the Start Date on your TOA.
- Schedule a meeting with your International Student Advisor. Provide copies of your immigration documents (stamped DS-2019, visa, and printed copy of your I-94 card from https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html).
- Upload copies of your I-94 and J-1 Visa to the BSMP Participant Service Portal.
- Visit the health center/office on your campus to review details about your host institution’s health insurance plan and find out when they are open, as well as what you need to do in the event that you should need medical care.
Complete and submit your Health Insurance Confirmation in the BSMP Participant Service Portal.

Review BSMP Policies.

Open a bank account.

Identify a doctor, and a hospital in the area that accepts your health insurance coverage.

Identify a dentist in the event that you should need dental care.

Complete and submit the Bank Authorization (EFT) Form in the BSMP Participant Service Portal.

Notify the Billing/Bursar’s Office at your host institution of your scholarship. Be sure to tell them your BSMP scholarship is a “foreign-source income.” Provide them with a copy of your TOA, which has IIE’s billing contact information.

Email your Academic Advisor to introduce yourself and request to schedule a time to meet so you can discuss course registration and any other questions you may have regarding coursework, or your host institution’s academic policies.

Find more information about preparing for departure: http://www.iie.org/Programs/Brazil-Scientific-Mobility/New-Students.

During Your Exchange Program

General Advice and Assistance

During your stay in the U.S., your host institution, your designated Brazilian consulate, CAPES/CNPq and IIE will assist you as necessary. Throughout the year, IIE will send you general instructions, newsletters and announcements to inform you of reporting requirements and special forms. All of the information IIE requests is extremely important and integral for your successful completion of BSMP, so adhere to all deadlines and proactively ask any questions that may surface.

For information and advice about academic program matters, consult your International Student Advisor or your Academic Advisor. For information and advice about Intensive English Program matters, contact your IEP advisor.

If you have questions regarding housing, meals, campus facilities, etc., you should contact the appropriate offices at your U.S. host institution. If the on-campus resource is unable to assist you, your next resource for technical campus matters is IIE; for personal matters it is the Brazilian Consulate responsible for your region.

Find a full list of contacts: http://www.iie.org/Programs/Brazil-Scientific-Mobility/Contacts.

Reporting to IIE

During your exchange program it is a requirement of J-1 visa regulations and your BSMP scholarship that you submit mandatory student forms, reports, transcripts and surveys to IIE throughout your program. Some of these documents will need to be completed by both you and your host institution advisors. You will receive newsletters and periodic email reminders regarding which forms to complete, and their respective deadlines. All reports and forms must be submitted to IIE via the BSMP Participant Service Portal within the stated timeframe.

International Travel

It is CAPES and CNPq program policy that BSMP students remain in the U.S. for their entire scholarship period. Should you choose to travel outside the U.S. during your program you will be willfully breaking this program policy, and you will be fully responsible for any consequences that are a result...
During Your Exchange Program

thereof. Should circumstances arise that require you to travel outside the U.S., you should review your passport and J-1 entry visa before you depart, and answer the following questions:

• Are your passport and Form DS-2019 both valid for the duration of your trip?
• Has your Form DS-2019 been validated for travel by IIE and reentry once during the past 12 months?
• Is your U.S. visa entry stamp valid for the date you will reenter the United States?
• Do you need to apply for a new visa because your previous visa was a single-entry visa which you used the last time you entered?
• Does the country you intend to visit require a visa for entry? Contact the embassy/consulate of that country for further information.

If your passport needs to be renewed, it can be renewed by the Brazilian Embassy or Consulates in the U.S. Visas may be renewed only at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate in Brazil. You would need to return to Brazil and renew your J-1 visa. IIE cannot renew J-1 visas.

A travel signature issued by an Alternate Responsible Officer is valid for twelve (12) months after the date of issue, or until the end date of a Form DS-2019, whichever comes first. Once a Form is signed, it is valid for all subsequent travel within the aforementioned time frame. Only a designated IIE Alternate Responsible Officer can sign a Form DS-2019 for Brazil Scientific Mobility Program (BSMP) students. A supervisor or advisor at a host institution cannot sign a Form DS-2019.

Should your J-1 visa expire and you wish to visit Mexico, Canada, or the contiguous islands during your program, you must make sure USCSP verifies your Form I-94 electronically in order to ensure that you meet the conditions of automatic revalidation. For more information about automatic revalidation, visit: http://www.cbp.gov/linkhandler/cgov/travel/id_visa/revalidation.ctt/revalidation.pdf.

At the end of your exchange program you will have several options for departure from the United States. You must understand the information that is provided in the next section of this handbook, and contact IIE if you have any questions. Failure to follow instructions for departure may jeopardize your successful completion of the program and immigration status in the U.S., as well as your ability to reenter at a later date.

Your Intensive English Program

Students who score less than 79 iBT on the TOEFL exam are approved for one of two IEP sessions, short-term, or long-term.

Short-Term Intensive English Program

This session is for grantees whose TOEFL score falls in the 61-78 iBT (500-550 pBT) range. It is a 6- to 8-week period of intensive English study during the summer prior to the start of the fall academic semester.

Long-Term Intensive English Program

This session is for grantees whose TOEFL score falls in the 40-61 iBT (437-497 pBT) range. It is an academic term of intensive English study. This period begins in the fall, with a January (spring) academic semester start date.

Find more information about the IEP: http://www.iie.org/Programs/Brazil-Scientific-Mobility/Current-Students/Intensive-English-Program.

Your Academic Program

If you are not participating in an Intensive English Program, you will begin your academic programming immediately upon arrival in the U.S.

Full-Time Status and Academic Standing

You must be registered as a full-time student during your entire authorized program. The terms of your BSMP scholarship cover a full-time course load. Depending on the host institution, this generally ranges between 12 and 18 credits. Most undergraduates in the U.S. enroll in 12 to 15 credits. When registering for classes, it is your responsibility to check with your Academic Advisor and/or International Student Advisor to ensure that the course-load in which you are enrolled (i) is appropriate for your aptitude; (ii) consists of at least 75% of credits directly related to your field of study; and (iii) meets all institutional requirements and any other minimum academic requirements set forth by your host institution. You are not authorized to enroll in non-academic classes. Online courses are not covered by your scholarship.

It is not recommended that you enroll in any graduate-level coursework as these classes are very rigorous, as well as laborious. Should you withdraw from a course, it is your responsibility to ensure you continue to maintain full-time status. If you do not maintain full-time status, you may be in danger of ending your BSMP Scholarship. You must inform IIE immediately if you have any difficulty meeting these
Final Departure from the U.S.

Obtaining a Return Ticket
You should plan your return early, giving yourself sufficient time to make the appropriate arrangements and purchase your airline tickets. Last minute arrangements can be very expensive and difficult, especially during the months of June-August when international travel is particularly heavy. If you have any questions regarding funding or arranging travel you will need to contact your representative at CAPES/CNPq.

Final Reporting
IIE will send you a Final Program Evaluation Survey which you must complete before you leave the U.S.

Your comments on the Final Program Evaluation Survey are very important for continual program development and improvement. The information collected from the survey may be shared with CAPES/CNPq.

Departure Checklist
Before your departure, make sure to complete the following:

- Complete the Final Program Evaluation Survey.
- Notify your host institution’s Registrar, Bursar and Housing offices that you are departing.
- Request an official transcript to be sent to IIE.
- Request any additional official transcripts be sent to your home in Brazil or, if necessary, to any respective Brazil Consulate.
- Ensure all pending bills or credit cards have been paid in full.
- Close all bank account(s).
- Update your mailing address.

Grace Period
Following the completion of a J-1 exchange visitor’s program, the USCIS allows exchange visitors 30 (thirty) days to settle their affairs, travel and visit friends/family, and prepare for departure. This is commonly referred to as the "Grace Period." During this 30 (thirty) day grace period, J-1 exchange visitors are no longer in J-visa status, and are then under the jurisdiction of the USCIS.

Find more information about the Academic Program: http://www.iie.org/Programs/Brazil-Scientific-Mobility/Current-Students/Academic-Program.
Under no circumstances can exchange visitors continue and/or complete exchange activities during the grace period; this includes taking classes/final exams, conducting research, or participating in Academic Training/internships. Note that while you may travel within the U.S., it is not recommend that you travel beyond the borders of the United States as you may not be permitted reentry.

You are responsible for any expenses you incur during the 30 (thirty) day grace period, which begins the day after the End Date of your BSMP scholarship indicated on your Form DS-2019. You are responsible for covering any incidental expenses you incur during this time, and during your trip home, from allowances previously received.

You are also responsible for your health insurance coverage. The coverage provided by your scholarship will expire once you are no longer in program. IIE recommends purchasing travel insurance. Again, any expenses incurred will be your responsibility.

Emergency Departure or Withdrawal
If it becomes necessary for you to return home for an extended period of time before the end of your exchange visitor program, you must consult your International Student Advisor, CAPES/CNPq, and IIE to obtain approval for your departure. Should such an emergency arise, inform IIE of your situation immediately.

In the event you choose to withdraw from your authorized program voluntarily, or if it is terminated by your host institution(s), before the original end date of your authorized program, you must notify IIE immediately and submit a Withdrawal Form, which will be provided by IIE.

Covered Costs and Fees
On behalf of CAPES/CNPq, IIE will pay the cost of your tuition and related academic fees; deposits and application fees; room and board (meal plan); and health insurance premium. Academic tuition and fees must be for a full-time course load, and your full-time course load must consist of at least 75% of credits directly related to your field of study. Housing must be in shared living arrangements (dorm room, suite, on-campus apartment). Board will be taken in your host institution’s dining facilities and will be for a maximum of three meals a day (or the equivalent number of points). You are responsible for informing the appropriate offices at your host institution to invoice IIE directly.

Your BSMP scholarship does not cover:

• Additional health insurance charges, such as co-pays, deductibles or co-insurance.
• Personal fees due to your own negligence, such as lost keys or lost student I.D.
• Unwarranted academic fees, such as course changes after the add/drop period.
• Personal expenses, such as travel during breaks, additional clothing, or personal items.

Housing
BSMP students have pre-arranged and assigned housing. If you have not already received information about housing from your host institution, you should inquire immediately with your International Student Advisor or Housing Office (see your TOA). Read all information on housing carefully and follow instructions. Return any housing applications immediately; do not wait until you arrive in the United States because housing fills up quickly.

On-campus Housing
All on-campus housing must be shared living accommodations at the standard-rate offered at your host institution. If you choose a premium housing option such as luxury apartments, duplexes, or single rooms, you will be responsible for the extra cost of housing. You will need to pay for the difference in price from the standard room before your host institution, or the company providing you with housing, invoices IIE.

If there are no shared-occupancy rooms available, you may live in a single room on-campus. However, you must provide proof from your host institution confirming that there are no
shared-occupancy rooms available. You must receive approval from IIE before you are allowed to live in a single room.

**Off-campus Housing**

If housing on-campus is not available, inquire about your host institution’s off-campus housing options. Contact the Residential/Housing Office on campus to assist you with finding local accommodations. Rooms should be fully furnished with desk, chair, bed, and living room couch. There is no maximum amount for off-campus housing, however, you should be housed in a standard shared room unless none are available. IIE will check to ensure students have found living accommodations that are affordable, and not premium.

**Lease Agreements**

IIE will cover all rent and utilities as required by your institution or the facility providing you with the appropriate accommodations.

If you are living on-campus, IIE will pay the institution directly for your room.

If you are living off-campus, the rental agency needs to send IIE a billing statement in order for IIE to pay the fee for the term or calendar year depending on your terms of agreement. Be advised that IIE will NOT sign the Lease Agreement; only YOU can. The agreement has to be between you and your landlord. IIE’s legal department can provide a “Lease Side Letter” to substitute for signing the lease. The Lease Side Letter states that IIE will make payment for rent utilities, deposits, and application fees for your accommodation. IIE can pay the lease agreement amount in full or per term if needed.

Before signing any lease, be certain that it meets BSMP off-campus housing guidelines, and that the provider will be able to bill IIE.

**Subletting Rooms or Changing Residences**

You are not allowed to sublet rooms without prior approval unless you have an emergency. If you think your case is an emergency, email IIE explaining your particular situation. You may be required to submit sufficient support and evidence. You must update your address with IIE and your host intuition any time you change your residence; this includes rooms. Failure to do so will result in delayed receipt of important documents, such as health insurance and banking cards, and will put your legal status in jeopardy.

**Important note:** IIE cannot make monthly payments on your behalf. It is important that your housing provider invoices IIE per term or year.

**Meals**

You should select the option that provides three meals per day. If your host institution does not offer a meal plan that can accommodate three meals a day, you are approved to purchase extra dining points to ensure three meals a day.

Should you wish, you may choose the unlimited meal plan if your U.S. institution offers it. Campus cash-only meal plans are not allowed.

If your host institution does not provide a meal plan that will give you 21 meals per week, you must inform IIE during the first 30 days of your authorized program so that proper adjustments can be made.

If you have food allergies and need an individualized meal plan, you will need to inform your host institution officials. Contact the dining services office at your host institution and make arrangements prior to informing IIE. You only need to discuss this matter with IIE if your individualized meal plan results in an additional fee.

Students living off-campus must be enrolled in an on-campus meal plan. IIE does not issue meal stipends during the regular academic year.

**Stipends and Allowances**

As part of your BSMP scholarship, CAPES/CNPq will provide you with a monthly stipend of at least $300. This stipend is paid quarterly and is directly deposited by CAPES/CNPq into your bank account. CAPES/CNPq will also provide you with a one-time settling-in allowance of $1,300 and one-time coursework aid allowance of $1,000 to help cover expenses, which include all books and academic supplies. CAPES/CNPq will deposit these allowances into your bank account in Brazil. From time to time CAPES and CNPq may also issue additional stipends for authorized break periods. If applicable, amount and distribution instructions will be provided to you at a later date. Unless clarified otherwise, all questions regarding stipends or allowances must be directed to CAPES or CNPq directly. CAPES/CNPq reserves the right to revise or adjust your financial scholarship provisions if conditions so require. Students that are continuing from the fall to spring semester qualify for an additional school break supplement of $1,300, which will be administered by IIE.

**Billing**

Upon arrival at your campus you should take a copy of your TOA to the Bursar or Accounting Office and request that all billing statements and invoices for approved scholarship
benefits be sent to IIE. Be sure to inform your host institution that your scholarship is “foreign-sourced income.”

All questions or invoices for tuition and fees, room, board and health insurance premiums, should be directed to:
   Institute of International Education
   Attn: BSMP Finance—2nd Floor
   809 United Nations Plaza
   New York, NY 10017-3580

You will most likely receive billing statements from your host institution via email or mail. Before sending any invoices to IIE, contact the appropriate office of your host institution first and ask them to invoice IIE directly.

Note that it takes approximately 10 to 15 business days to process requests. This includes, but is not limited to, payments of invoices, application fees and housing deposits, processing of electronic funds transfers, reimbursements, financial guarantees, health insurance coverage, etc.

Receiving Scholarship Funds

Banking in the U.S.
One you are settled at your institution you should open an account with a U.S. bank. Your International Student Advisor will be able to assist you in selecting an appropriate bank.

Although the bank you select will offer you many different kinds of accounts, they will generally fall into two categories—a checking, or a savings account. IIE strongly suggests that you open a checking account.

- **Checking accounts** allow customers to access their money through cash withdrawals and debit card purchases. Be sure to ask for a student account, or any options that do not charge monthly maintenance fees.
- **Savings accounts** pay interest at a modest rate but limit the number of withdrawals you may make per month, and may require you to visit a teller to withdraw money. This is typically opened in addition to a checking account, and used as a safety net, not for spending money.

If you open a checking account, your bank will issue you a debit card that you can use to make direct purchases at most locations in the U.S., and to withdraw cash from an ATM (Automatic Teller Machine). ATMs can be found in many locations (bank lobbies, grocery stores, gas stations, etc.) and are open twenty-four (24) hours. If you use an ATM that is not owned by your bank, you will usually be charged a fee by both the ATM and your bank. Whenever possible, it is best to use an ATM associated with your bank.

**Stipends and Electronic Fund Transfers (EFT)**
IIE will send you additional information to enroll in Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Enrolling in EFT will allow IIE to directly deposit any funds approved by CAPES/CNPq into your U.S.
bank account. In order to participate in EFT, you will need to open a bank account once you arrive and complete the Bank Authorization (EFT) Form, found at: http://www.iie.org/Programs/Brazil-Scientific-Mobility/Current-Students/Materials. You will need to provide a voided check or a letter from your bank to submit your bank information.

**Personal Funds**

Your scholarship does not cover all costs, such as health insurance charges or personal expenses. Therefore, you should budget to have access to funds in order to adequately meet your needs and expectations concerning your health, travel, recreation and incidental expenses.

IIE suggests that you exchange a small amount of money at the airport when you first arrive in the U.S. This will provide you with spending money during transit, as well as funds for traveling to campus, settling in, and emergencies.

**Credit Cards**

In addition to ATM/debit cards, credit cards are widely used in the U.S. The most popular cards are those issued by American Express, Visa, MasterCard, and Discover, but there are many others available from credit companies with a local focus, as well as from individual shops and department stores. Although you can apply for credit cards online or over the phone, the safest place to apply for a credit card is at your bank. The bank will need to run a credit check, a background check of your finances, before you may be approved for the card.

Debit cards and credit cards are accepted at the same places. The fundamental difference between a debit card and a credit card account is where the cards pull the money. A debit card takes it from your banking account and a credit card charges it to your line of credit. With a debit card you must have the money available in your account to make a purchase. With a credit card, you must have room available on your line of credit, but can pay off the purchase later. Credit companies bill monthly and charge interest at varying rates (12–21 percent annual rate) on any unpaid balance from the previous month. Some companies, such as American Express, require payment in full at the end of the month.

**Credit Card “Dos”**

- Do research. If you get a solicitation in the mail, on campus, on the Internet or at the local bank, compare rates and fees. The credit card industry is very competitive, so interest rates, credit limits, grace periods, annual fees, and terms and conditions vary. You may check http://www.creditcard.com or http://www.bankrate.com to compare rates.
- Do read the fine print on the credit application. The application is a contract, so read it thoroughly before signing. Watch for terms such as “introductory rate” and periods that expire.
- Do ask questions. You are the customer and the bank is providing a service. If you don’t understand something, ask.
- Do be wary of anyone who claims they can “fix” your credit. The only thing that can fix a credit report is time and a positive payment history.
- Do promptly open and review your bill every month. This helps you pay your bill on time and protects you from identity theft and unauthorized charges.
- Do be careful with your credit card. Keep it secure. Always have your bank’s phone number available in case your card is lost or stolen.

**Credit Card “Don’ts”**

- Don’t feel pressure to get a credit card if you don’t want one. A credit card may not be right for you. Don’t be afraid to say no to salespeople. It’s okay to walk away.
- Don’t pay your bills late. Late payments often have substantial fees.
- Don’t spend more than you can afford.
- Don’t apply for more credit cards if you already have balances on others.
Health Insurance

As a J-1 visa holder, you are required to have health insurance for all of your time in the U.S. Your health insurance plan must meet specific J-1 requirements. Please make sure the following is true of your host institution’s insurance plan:

• IIE will be invoiced directly for your health insurance premium.
• The current health coverage meets J-1 visa requirements.
• You will have coverage for the duration of your entire program.

If any of the above is false, you must inform IIE immediately. You will need to be enrolled in IIE’s private health plan for the duration of your authorized program.

Upon arrival you will be required to complete and submit your health insurance information via the BSMP Participant Service Portal.

See the BSMP website for more information about health insurance: http://www.iie.org/Programs/Brazil-Scientific-Mobility/Current-Students/Health-Insurance, and for instructions related to the BSMP Participant Service Portal: http://www.iie.org/Programs/Brazil-Scientific-Mobility/Current-Students/Materials.

Health Insurance Requirements

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are enrolled in an appropriate plan that meets the following requirements for the duration of your authorized program:

1. Medical benefits of at least $50,000 per accident or illness.
2. Repatriation of remains in the amount of $7,500.
3. Expenses associated with medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in the amount of $10,000.
4. A deductible not to exceed $500 per accident or illness.
5. An insurance policy secured to fulfill the requirements of this section:
   a. May require a waiting period for pre-existing conditions which is reasonable as determined by current industry standards.
   b. May include provision for co-insurance under the terms of which the exchange visitor may be required to pay up to 25 (twenty-five) percent of the covered benefits per accident or illness.

6. Policy must be underwritten by an insurance corporation having an A.M. Best rating of “A-” or have; an Insurance Solvency International, Ltd. (ISI) rating of “A-” or above; a Weiss Research, Inc. rating of B+ or above.

Important Notes: If you are considering arriving in the U.S. prior to the Start Date on your Form DS-2019, or remaining in the U.S. for any portion of your 30 (thirty) day grace period, it is highly recommended that you purchase traveler’s health insurance coverage.

You are fully responsible for covering the cost of immunizations, dental care, medical care, etc. not covered by your host institution’s or IIE’s health insurance plans. Be prepared to incur out-of-pocket expenses such as co-pays, deductibles, co-insurance, etc. or services not covered by your health insurance plan.

IIE is not authorized to pay medical providers/insurance companies or reimburse BSMP students for any health insurance charges (co-pays, deductibles, co-insurance, etc.) beyond the policy premium. IIE contacts will answer general questions and provide general guidance to the best of their ability, but you are ultimately responsible for understanding your specific health plan, and making payments for any non-covered charges.

Failure to obtain necessary health insurance coverage is a violation of your scholarship exchange visitor immigration status and may lead to program termination.

Understanding Your Health Insurance Policy

In order to better understand your insurance policy and be better prepared should you need to seek medical care, you should know the answers to the following questions:

• What does my insurance plan cover?
• What is not covered?
• Is there co-pay, co-insurance or a deductible?
• Where can I seek medical care and what are the hours of service?
• Who are the doctors that provide services in the network of my insurance plan?
• What is a claim form? When do I need it? Where do I find it and where do I submit it?
• Is there a dental or vision plan? Do I need dental or vision coverage?
• When do I need a prescription?
• Is there a co-pay for prescriptions?
• Where is the nearest pharmacy?

Important Notes:
• No matter what the possible cost, your health and well-being must always come first, so it is of the utmost importance that you see a doctor if you are injured or ill. Use your best judgment, or consult an advisor, to assess which medical care facility is appropriate for your current condition.
• It is your sole responsibility to keep yourself up-to-date on any changes to your health insurance plan and coverage dates.
• You are fully responsible for covering the cost of immunizations, dental care, medical care, etc. not covered by your host institution’s or IIE’s health insurance plans. Be prepared to incur out-of-pocket expenses such as co-pays, deductibles, co-insurance, etc. or services not covered by your health insurance plan.
• Not all health insurance plans cover pre-existing conditions and the costs associated with treatment. A pre-existing condition is any condition which (i) originated prior to your effective date of coverage or (ii) you received consultation/treatment/medication from a physician prior to your effective date of coverage. If there is a medicine you take for a pre-existing condition, you should secure enough in your home country for the time you will be in the U.S. It is very important to have all necessary dental care completed prior to your departure. Most dental care is not covered in a health insurance plan and it can be very expensive in the U.S.

The U.S. Healthcare System
A major difference between the U.S. and many other countries is how the health care system works. In the U.S., healthcare is privatized. In other words, there is no universal national health care plan. This makes it very expensive to receive treatment and medicine without health insurance. Additionally, there are specific laws that govern which medications require a doctor’s prescription, and which do not. International students and scholars are also not eligible for financial assistance from the U.S. government or from their host institution to pay medical bills. A few additional facts to know about the U.S. health care system are:

• Payment is the responsibility of the individual patient, with or without health insurance, and patients are fully responsible for seeing that bills are submitted and that claim forms are properly completed.
• Some doctors providing services at a hospital may bill patients separately.
• Co-pays or pre-certification authorizations are usually expected at the time the care is given.
• The reimbursement process of an insurance provider takes time, and incomplete or incorrect forms can cause further delays.
• Not all health insurance plans cover pre-existing conditions and the costs associated with treatment; others have very low coverage limits or waiting periods.
• All patients’ privacy must be respected and be kept confidential by law. With a few exceptions, licensed physicians, nurses or other medical care staff, including psychologists and other mental health professionals, are not permitted to discuss a patient’s medical symptoms, conditions, illness or treatment without written consent. These few exceptions include a life-threatening condition, an unconscious state leaving someone unable to make a decision, or abuse.
• Life-threatening situations are defined as conditions that require immediate attention at an emergency room. For example, uncontrolled bleeding, high fever, broken bones, seizures or unconsciousness.

Recommendations
Upon arrival visit your on-campus health center to better understand what services it offers, when it is open, and what you need to do to receive care. It is also recommended that you ask the health center staff what you need to do if the center is not open and you need immediate medical care. They should also be able to tell you where the nearest off-campus urgent-care clinic or hospital emergency room is located.
Always be aware of your own health needs and background, and be ready to explain your symptoms and conditions from the onset to a physician or nurse. When doing so be prepared to tell them what medications or treatments you have taken or are currently taking, and try not to feel intimidated. Always tell the truth.

Always feel free to ask as many questions about your condition, treatment, medical procedure or cost as you would like, even if you have already left the office. In the U.S. it is appropriate to seek second or third opinions from different doctors before deciding on a course of treatment.

Always keep copies of your past medical records with you.

If you need to seek medical care, use your best judgment to assess which medical care facility is appropriate for your current condition.

Prior to your arrival check with your host institution’s health center to see if you need to complete a medical form and/or submit immunization documentation. Many States in the U.S. now require students to have immunizations (tuberculosis, measles/mumps/rubella, hepatitis, influenza, meningitis) before they are able to register for classes.

Staying Healthy
Staying healthy will have a direct positive effect on your overall exchange experience, and academic success. To have a happy and healthy exchange experience, you not only need to understand the U.S. health care system and insurance policy, but also know how to manage stress and approach American food.

Adjustment and Managing Stress
Adjusting to life in a new culture, although exciting, can be very challenging, and at times, stressful or frustrating. Feeling stressed, frustrated, or overwhelmed is a normal part of adjustment, but it is still very important to address.

If you notice a change in your mental outlook, sleeping or eating habits, or experience negative physical symptoms, it is important to seek assistance from the health or counseling center at your institution. It is a good idea to visit your institution’s counseling center when you arrive, in case you wish to visit them later. You can also reach out to your International Student Advisor for advice and guidance on managing culture shock.

Managing stress, whether it is from culture shock, coursework concerns, or personal life, is essential to having an enjoyable and successful experience. There are many activities, clubs, and hobbies available on campus, possibly even some of your favorites from home. If there is a particular activity you miss from home, you can always start a new club and share your skills and enjoyment with your classmates. Be sure to speak with your International Student Advisor about available recreational activities on and near campus, as well as where you might go to start a new club.

In order to best prepare yourself, and know what to expect during you time in the U.S., you may consider asking your International Student Advisor some of these helpful questions:

- How are U.S. values different from my own?
- What is cultural adjustment?
- How can I manage my time better?
- What types of facilities are there?
- Where are they located and at what times are they open?
- Do I need to make an appointment/sign up, or can I just drop-in?

Approaching American Food
Diet and nutrition are one of the most challenging adjustments for many international students. American food, and access to various types of ethnic cuisine, can vary widely depending on where in the country you are located. Although more and more U.S. colleges and universities offer vegetarian, vegan, Kosher, Halal, and other special diet options, they are not always available. Cafeterias often provide many different options, such as salad bars, hot meals, sandwiches and more, but can also be full of high-fat, low-fiber foods such as pizza, burgers, fried chicken, and french fries.

To minimize any potential health problems while adjusting to American food, you should do your best to make healthy choices and eat balanced meals. Try to choose a variety of foods, ones that are high in dietary fiber and low in fat or sugar. You can also ask your International Student Advisor, or other international students, about local groceries or restaurants, both on and off campus, that sell specialized items from your region.

When you arrive on campus, you may want to ask your International Student Advisor some questions to help you prepare for the adjustment:

- What types of on-campus dining facilities are there?
- Where are they located and at what times are they open?
• Can I take any food (an apple or banana) with me for later?
• Do they have nutritional facts or serving information on the food they serve?
• Do they have weekly menus so you can plan where and when you will eat?
• Do they have information about making nutritious choices or do they offer any tips for eating healthy?
• What are the local restaurants and grocery stores in the community?
• Are there places on- or off-campus that sell ethnic foods?

Find more information about Health Insurance: http://www.iie.org/Programs/Brazil-Scientific-Mobility/Current-Students/Health-Insurance

Academic Training

Eligible BSMP students are required to actively seek and partake in a work-related experience, also known as Academic Training (AT) that directly relates to their field-of-study while participating in the program. The scope of this policy falls directly in line with the greater BSMP objective of widening the academic and research exchange between the U.S. and Brazil and increasing Brazilian initiatives in sciences, technology and innovation. To help achieve this program objective, IIE has set up systems to connect you with meaningful AT opportunities, and assist you in your application process.

J-1 Requirements and Eligibility

The authorization to engage in AT is under the discretion and permission of IIE and established program policy.

To be eligible for summer academic training, BSMP students must not only have successfully completed one semester, one trimester, or two quarters of academic coursework, but also have maintained full-time academic and J-1 status and be of good academic standing. Students are not eligible for academic training approval during the school year. Full-time course of study ranges from 12 to 18 (twelve to eighteen) credits depending on the host institution. Good academic standing is defined as maintaining a GPA of 2.0 or higher while simultaneously fulfilling all the requirements that a host institution applies to its non-degree students.

In order for BSMP students to be eligible for AT, the following additional requirements must be met:

• The primary purpose of the exchange program must be the student’s academic studies; it cannot be AT.
• AT must take place at a specific employment or training site (lab, company, or organization) and must be directly related to the student’s field-of-study noted on her/his Form DS-2019.

• Students must receive written approval for the duration and type of AT from IIE and respective AT provider and academic/international student advisor or dean prior to beginning employment, or related orientations.

Important Notes:
• Time spent engaging in the training cannot exceed the time spent in the program of study (i.e., a student engaging in a 6-month course of non-degree study cannot be authorized for more than 6 (six) months of AT).

• J-1 visa regulations stipulate that exchange visitor students in medical, dental, nursing, nutrition and veterinary fields of study are not allowed to have any contact with patients during their program cycle in the U.S.

• Should you not be able to find an opportunity in the area where your host institution is located, you may be permitted to move to another city/state to engage in such activities.

• If you are unable to secure AT, then you must submit proof from your academic/international student advisor or dean to IIE, verifying that you were unsuccessful in securing AT.

• If you are not continuing your grant in the fall 2015 term, and you do not secure AT, you must return to Brazil at the end of your spring term. If you are continuing your grant in the fall 2015 term, and you do not secure AT, you must engage in summer coursework.

Social Security Number (SSN) and Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)
Every person who receives income in the U.S. is identified by either a Social Security Number (SSN) or an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). These are unique personal identification numbers. If you engage in paid AT, you need to apply for an SSN. If you do not get paid, you do not need an SSN.

Applying for an SSN
To apply for an SSN, you must appear in person at the office of the Social Security Administration nearest to your host institution. Take the following documents with you:

2. Passport with proof of J-1 visa.
4. Form I-94.
5. Terms of Appointment issued by IIE.
6. AT Authorization Letter issued by IIE.
7. One other document that establishes your age and identity.

Requirements for obtaining a SSN can differ from office to office, so be sure to confirm the necessary documents online prior to traveling to the office nearest to you. Ask your International Student Advisor for advice since each office has unique requirements.

It is extremely important that your name on the application for a SSN be spelled exactly the same way it is spelled on your passport, and on your Form DS-2019.

The Social Security Administration will verify your immigration status through Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program. SAVE is populated by data collected in SEVIS by DHS at the time you were admitted to the U.S.

Applying for an ITIN
If you are not eligible for a SSN, you will need to apply for an ITIN. To apply for an ITIN, you should go to the nearest IRS office and complete Form W-7. For more specific instructions on applying for an ITIN, go to: http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Individual-Taxpayer-Identification-Number-(ITIN).
Taxes
The income tax season in the U.S. is from January 1st to April 15th of each calendar year. During this time, all people residing or who have resided in the U.S., including international students and scholars, for any time between January and December of the year prior are required to comply with U.S. tax requirements and file income tax returns.

Under the provisions of the Tax Reform Act of 1986, certain scholarships made to international students are generally subject to withholding for income tax purposes and may lead to tax liability unless the scholarship is used to pay tuition or other instructional fees. Your scholarship funds from the Government of Brazil are not subject to withholding, but it is your sole responsibility, as required by the federal U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS), to complete and submit Parts I and III of Form 8843 at the end of the calendar year. The form and instructions can be found at http://www.irs.gov/uac/Form-8843,-Statement-for-Exempt-Individuals-and-Individuals-With-a-Medical-Condition-1.

If you participate in AT and receive any income from your AT provider, then this income is subject to U.S. income tax regulations and withholding of all local, state and federal taxes, except social security. It is your sole responsibility to obtain all proper tax documents from your AT provider. These tax documents (e.g. W-2, Form 1099MISC, etc.) are generally issued and sent in January of the subsequent year, and summarize income earned and the taxes withheld or already paid to the respective federal, city and/or local governments. It is your responsibility to inquire with the IRS and respective State tax authorities to see if you are required to pay additional tax on this income.

Note that IIE will not be able to assist you with Federal, State or City/Local tax filing preparation, however, below is some general guidance.

If you were present in the U.S. for any part of the calendar year AND earned any U.S. source income in that calendar year, then you must:

- Complete and submit any required State, City/Local tax forms for the state(s), cities/localities in which you lived/worked.

Below are resources that can provide assistance with tax filing preparation:

- International Student and Scholar Office – many ISSO’s have workshops and/or have contracted specialized tax preparation software or services to help their international students with tax filings.
- Local IRS Taxpayer Assistance Centers – most communities have assistance centers that are open to the public and provide tax preparation services and advising (http://www.irs.gov/uac/Contact-Your-Local-IRS-Office-1).
- State/City Departments of Revenue – many state/city governments have specific websites that list forms, instructions and other resources that can provide guidance on filing obligations.
- Examples of Helpful University Resources – the following websites are very helpful in trying to understand tax filing requirements and forms for international students:
  - University of Cincinnati (http://www.uc.edu/international/services/taxes.html).
  - University of Missouri (http://cashiers.missouri.edu/aliens.html).
  - University of Tennessee (http://www.uthsc.edu/international/taxfaq.php).

Find more information about Academic Training: http://www.iie.org/Programs/Brazil-Scientific-Mobility/Current-Students/Academic-Training
Characteristics of Americans
It is not easy to make generalizations about the United States—above all, it is a land of diversity. The size of the country, its geographic and climatic differences, and the ethnic mix of its people all contribute to its variety. Still, there are a few characteristics you will encounter in "typical" Americans from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

For example, Americans tend to value their individuality, to think themselves the equal of any other man or woman, and to believe they are masters of their own destiny. They feel free to speak their minds on most subjects and are often astonishingly frank in expressing political opinions, cherishing above all other rights, the freedom of speech, guaranteed by the United States Constitution. They are direct in their communication; they ask questions when they need information; they say "no" when they mean no.

Americans are often friendly and polite at first meeting. They are also informal; often introducing themselves, and calling others, by their first names. In professional situations, however, it is preferable to address people using their title and last name (e.g., Dr. Smith, Professor Jones, Ms. Black) unless they request that you use their first name. Americans tend to stand at least an arm's length apart when conversing, and are not inclined to touch one another, except to shake hands upon greeting one another. They value their privacy and rarely visit, even good friends, without an invitation or notifying them first.

Appointments/Punctuality
It is always appropriate to make an appointment before visiting someone, particularly at an office. It is best to be on time for appointments. When they are professional in nature—an appointment with a doctor or a colleague at the university—you should appear within 5 (five) minutes prior to the time you have agreed upon. On social occasions, especially when the invitation is for a meal, plan to arrive no more than 10 to 15 (ten to fifteen) minutes after the appointed hour (but never before the hour, as the host may not be ready. In both cases, be sure to telephone if you are unavoidably delayed. Remember that public events, such as sporting events and university classes, begin promptly at the scheduled time.

Invitations
If you accept an invitation or make an appointment, it is very important that you appear as promised. It is perfectly acceptable to decline an invitation if it is not convenient for you, but some response is always called for. Formal invitations will often include a request to "RSVP" by a certain date. RSVP is an acronym for the French phrase "répondez s'il vous plaît", basically meaning to please reply. It is usually not necessary to bring a gift, unless the occasion is a birthday, or perhaps if the invitation is for an entire weekend. In these cases, a simple, inexpensive gift of flowers, candy, a bottle of wine, or a small souvenir from your own country are appropriate. A thank-you note to your host, especially following an overnight visit, is considerate, but not required.

If you have been invited to go out for a meal, you should assume that all parties will pay for themselves, unless the invitation included a specific offer to pay for your food.

Dietary Restrictions
If health or religious beliefs restrict the foods that you can eat, you should feel free to explain this when you accept an invitation to visit. Such preferences are always understood; your host will be happy to take them into account. You can also be assertive about dietary preferences or restrictions in a restaurant. Many places will do their best to accommodate your request.

Smoking Restrictions
It is now quite common in the United States for cigarette smoking to be either restricted or completely prohibited in public places. This includes restaurants, airplanes and other public transportation, theaters, stores, museums, and many office and university buildings. Cigar and pipe smoking are almost always prohibited. You should also be aware that Americans often object to guests smoking in their homes, and you should always ask your host before you "light up."

Asking Questions
The best advice this handbook can give is to suggest that you always ask questions when you need information or guidance. Americans do so freely, and do not believe that it is a sign of ignorance or weakness. On the contrary, questions indicate interest and the desire to tackle a situation properly, regardless of the situation; you will find that most people are glad to help!
Cultural Diversity in the U.S.
The United States is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. This cultural diversity stems from having had a steady flow of immigration from different parts of the world for over 150 years, which contributed to the already existing culture. These immigrant populations have influenced both the cultural as well as the physical landscape of their environment. The degree to which each group’s influence is felt depends on the density of a given ethnic group and the length of time that the community has been in the United States.

The 2010 United State Census found that 12.9% of people living in the United States are foreign born and 18% of households speak a language other than English at home. The largest groups of immigrants in the last ten years have been from: Latin America and the Caribbean (53%), Asia (28%), Europe (12%), Africa (4%), Northern America (2%), and less than 1% in Oceania.

Climate and geography are other factors that play a role in the cultural diversity of the United States. This is reflected in the lifestyle differences found in the various regions of the United States expressed through their choices in architecture, cuisine, leisure activities, etc.

The Law and Civil Rights
The United States is governed by the “rule of law.” It must be observed by every resident, including the President and other public officials, and can be changed only through established legislative procedures. The law also offers everyone equal protection; it applies to everyone equally, regardless of position or wealth.

The Constitution of the United States, which supersedes all federal, state, and local law, protects all persons within the borders of the country. With the exception of a few laws that regulate such matters as immigration and voting, foreign nationals enjoy the same rights and privileges as American citizens. They also have the same obligations under the law.

The first 10 amendments to the Constitution, collectively termed the Bill of Rights, contain the most cherished legal principles, among which are the following:

- The right to protection against unreasonable search and seizure.
- The right to due process (you are safe from punishment under the law unless orderly procedures have been followed. For example, persons charged with a crime do not need prove their innocence; rather, they are considered innocent until proven guilty. They are also entitled to representation by legal counsel, appointed by the court if a defendant cannot pay for such services.)

The body of civil law regulates contractual relationships between individuals. If one party to a contract fails to observe its conditions, the injured party can ask the court to enforce the terms or demand compensation for loss or damages.

The Exchange Visitor Program Regulations promulgated by the U.S. Department of State govern the requirements for your J-1 visa. These regulations implement the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended. In September 1996, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) was enacted, which directed the development of an electronic information collection system, known to you as SEVIS, for individuals in J visa status. In October 2001, the USA PATRIOT Act subsequently amended IIRIRA and mandated that the SEVIS database be implemented by January 2003 as part of its underlying effort to facilitate information sharing and cooperation among government agencies. Other laws were also passed by Congress that further defined the types of information to be collected and maintained in SEVIS.
Higher Education in the U.S.

Higher education is the term used in the United States for formal education beyond the twelve years of elementary and secondary school. United States higher education is decentralized and diversified. Educational institutions may be supported by state funding, private organizations, or religious denominations. Each United States institution of higher education is headed by a President or Chancellor and is usually controlled by a governing board of trustees or regents.

Although there is a difference, the terms college and university are usually used interchangeably. The United States college has no exact counterpart in the educational system of any other country. Colleges are usually referred to as liberal arts colleges, although most offer courses in many fields, including the sciences. A college may be an independent institution or part of a university. A university is made up of a group of schools which include an undergraduate liberal arts college, graduate schools, and professional schools. IIE will use the term institutions, in order to incorporate both colleges and universities.

Graduate Courses

Graduate study is post-baccalaureate, specialized study designed to prepare students for research or professional practice, and leads to a master’s degree or a doctorate. Graduate work leading to a Masters of Arts (M.A.) or Masters of Science (M.S.) requires a minimum of one year of study, however many programs are two years. Typical requirements for a master’s degree are similar to those for an undergraduate degree, but with higher-level, more specialized coursework, and often require writing a thesis and/or practical experience, such as an internship. Doctorate (Ph.D) programs are longer than master’s programs, 3 (three) or more years, and are focused more on hands-on research, rather than classroom learning. Doctorate degrees require a completed, and accepted, dissertation.

Methods of Teaching

Courses in most college and universities are either, lectures, labs, or seminars. Lectures are usually larger classes, and contain mostly lecturing from the professor and less discussion. Labs are supplementary, hands-on, courses that accompany science, art, and sometimes math, courses. Seminars are smaller classes, and consist of more discussion between the class members and the professor.

Regardless of the type of course, students are often expected to complete reading assignments prior to each class meeting. Additional assignments can consist of essays, reports, term papers, exams, problem sets, etc. Most examinations are written, not oral. Quizzes and tests are short examinations. They may be given regularly throughout the semester, or they may be unscheduled and even unannounced. Quizzes usually consist of short questions requiring short responses. Tests are often longer, but may only cover one subject. Midterm examinations are usually longer and are given in the middle of the term covering all topics reviewed in the course so far. Finals examinations are given at the end of the term and can either be cumulative, covering the entire course material, or will only cover the material discussed after the midterm.

In addition to class time, professors, and/or their teaching assistants, will hold office hours. This is a scheduled block of time where the professor will be available to meet with you
to discuss any questions you may have about the course or a specific assignment. Most of the time, you do not need to make an appointment during this time, but can simply stop by during the allotted time. If you would like to speak with a professor outside of office hours, you should schedule an appointment.

You will receive a syllabus at the beginning of each course that should clearly outline required readings, assignments, due dates, and exams; as well as provide all pertinent information for the course, such as grading policies, attendance regulations, and professor contact information.

**Grading Systems**
Grading systems vary among institutions, and even professors, so it is important to read your university policies and course syllabi for the most accurate information. The most common grading system in the U.S. is a five letter grading system – A, B, C, D, F – indicating how well you did, and how many credits will count toward your Grade Point Average (GPA).

“C” is considered a satisfactory level of academic work, “B” denotes above-average or superior work, and “A” indicates excellent achievement; while “D” or “F” symbolize unsatisfactory work. Depending on the course, you may not receive credit if you earn a “D,” and an “F” mark fails to receive any credit for the course. Some non-major courses may be taking Pass/Fail, where you do not receive a letter grade on the scale, but simply pass the course for full credit, or fail for no credit. In addition, under certain circumstances, some schools use the symbol “I” to denote incomplete work, and will allow you to make up the work for a course after the end of the semester.

If a student’s work is incomplete or unsatisfactory, they may be put on probation – a period of time, usually one school term, in which to make up incomplete work and/or raise grades to a satisfactory standard. If students do not meet the requirements within the probationary period, they may be expelled from the institution.

**Holidays**
Most colleges and universities close for two weeks or more during the Christmas and New Year holidays in late December, as well as for several days between quarters or semesters. As you will note from your Terms and Conditions, you are expected to pay any extra expenses during vacations from your own funds or from the regular maintenance stipend you are receiving. Some dormitories and residence halls may be closed or may not serve meals during vacation periods. Students who wish to travel and sightsee during vacation periods may ask the International Student Advisor’s office about any local trips planned for international students and visitors.

**Official Holidays**
Official holidays are those days of celebration recognized by the U.S. government and usually include the closing of government offices and private businesses and banks.

- **New Year’s Day** (January 1)
- **Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Birthday** (Third Monday in January)
- **Presidents’ Day** (Third Monday in February)
- **Memorial Day** (Last Monday in May)
- **Independence Day** (July 4)
- **Labor Day** (First Monday in September)
- **Columbus Day** (Second Monday in October)
- **Veterans Day** (November 11)
- **Thanksgiving Day** (Fourth Thursday in November)
- **Christmas** (December 25)

**Cultural Holidays**
Cultural holidays are those days of public celebration when businesses are not necessarily closed.

- **Valentine’s Day** (February 14)
- **Saint Patrick’s Day** (March 17)
- **Passover** (8 days, usually in April)
- **Easter Sunday** (the second Sunday after the Paschal Full Moon)
- **Good Friday** (Friday before Easter Sunday)
Mother's Day (Second Sunday in May)
Father's Day (Third Sunday in June)
Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (3 days in September and October - not official holidays)
Halloween (October 31)
Hanukkah (8 days, usually in December)
Kwanza (7 days, December 26 through January 1)
Ramadan (9th month of the Islamic Lunar Calendar)

Other Holidays
The United States is very culturally diverse and there are many communities with large immigrant populations. Such ethnic communities also celebrate their ethnic and religious holidays, such as: Chinese New Year, Diwali—the Hindu Festival of Lights, Cinco de Mayo and the Independence Day of several different countries.

Different months are also designated to the celebration of different populations in the United States, such as: Black History Month (February), Women's History Month (March), Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 to October 15) and Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month (May).
**Miscellaneous**

**Time Zones**
The continental United States is divided into four time zones, as shown on the map below. The relative times for the outlying states are also indicated. Eastern Standard Time is 5 hours earlier than Greenwich Mean Time. Most states observe daylight saving time during the summer months. This means that clocks are advanced 1 hour in the spring, and restored to standard time in the fall. (They “spring forward” in the spring, and “fall back” in the fall.) Exceptions to this rule are made in Arizona, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and most of Indiana. Arrival and departure times of planes and trains are usually given in the local time of the arrival or departure point.

**Hours of Business**
Offices are usually open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, with employees taking an hour for lunch sometime between noon and 2 p.m. Banks are generally open to the public only until 4 p.m. and most have automatic teller machines (ATMs) that dispense cash from your account or accept deposits 24 hours per day.

Shops open about 9:30 a.m. and remain open continuously until 5:30 or 6 p.m., often until 9 p.m. one evening per week. Most are open Monday through Saturday, and many on Sunday. Most shops in suburban malls are open until 9 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and usually from noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays. Drugstores, supermarkets, and smaller food shops usually remain open until late in the evening and on Sundays.

**Electricity**
Electrical current in the United States is produced at 110 volts, 60 cycles. Appliances manufactured for other voltages can be operated only with a transformer. Even so equipped, appliances with clocks or timers will not function properly, nor will television sets not built for the U.S. color system (N.T.S.C.).

**Climate**
Because of its size and geographical diversity, the climate in different parts of the United States varies widely. To a certain extent, Americans are insulated from weather extremes. Homes, offices, cars, and buses are routinely air conditioned in the warmer parts of the country, and central heating is the rule everywhere. Indoor temperatures are thus maintained at 20–22 °C (68–72 °F).

**Religion**
Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, which also mandates a separation of church and state. The practice of religion is considered a private matter and a person’s religious preference may not be asked by employers, schools, clubs, etc.

**Safety**
Many visitors to the United States are concerned about public order and safety, and it is true that certain precautions should be taken, especially in urban areas. It is best to ask a colleague for advice about which areas are safe if you will be residing in a large city, but a few general rules should be observed at all times:

- Do not leave a room, house, or car with doors or windows unlocked.
- Do not carry valuables or large sums of cash with you.
- Do not frequent parks or deserted public places after dark.
- Do not attempt to arm yourself.
- Do not resist a robber or mugger.
- Do not pick up hitchhikers.
- Avoid using bank automatic teller machines (ATMs) alone after dark.
- Be aware that many university security departments offer escort services for students and faculty during the evening hours.

These suggestions are not made to frighten you, and it is very unlikely that you will experience any problems; however it is always important to be aware of your surroundings and vigilant of your safety.
Map of U.S. Time Zones.

Map of the United States.