MEMO TO: J-1 Exchange Visitor  

FROM: Tina Sickinger & Cheryl Barnett, Center for International Education (CIE)  

We are pleased to welcome you to Southern Illinois University Carbondale as a J-1 exchange visitor. Visiting scholars such as yourself are selected and invited to participate in SIU’s exchange visitor program to increase your knowledge and skills in your field of study while making important contributions to academic, research, and cultural activities at SIU.  

Attached you will find your DS-2019 form for your visit to Southern Illinois University Carbondale. You should have separate DS-2019 forms in your name, and the names of your family members that may be traveling with you. You will notice that your original copy is signed in blue ink and has a bar code in the upper right hand corner. You must present this document to the embassy/consulate to obtain your J-1 visa (as well as the J-2 documents of any family members that may be traveling with you). You should also be prepared to show your DS-2019 to the officer at your port-of-entry. 

At port-of-entry, the officer should examine your original DS-2019 and return it to you. Upon your arrival at SIU, please have your department sponsor direct you to our office (Center for International Education, Northwest Annex-B Wing). At that time I will make copies of all of your immigration documents (passport, I-94 card, and DS-2019) for my records. I will also need to make note of your current Carbondale address and a copy of your health insurance information. If you are going to be a J-1 enrolled student, then the health insurance fee will be a portion of your regular student fees and you will not need to provide any further health insurance information. If you are going to be a Research Scholar, Professor, or Short-Term Scholar, then you will need to provide proof of health insurance. (See following important insurance information) 

In addition, we can discuss any questions/concerns you may have regarding your immigration status at this time. I look forward to meeting you and wish you a safe journey to Carbondale!
PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION

In order to apply for a J-1 visa at a US Embassy/Consulate, you must first obtain the original form DS-2019 “Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status”. This form will be mailed to you by your SIU faculty sponsor.

SEVIS FEE
After receiving the form DS-2019, you must pay a mandatory one-time SEVIS fee of $180 and obtain a receipt PRIOR to booking your visa appointment at the US Embassy/Consulate. This fee may be paid online at www.fmjfee.com. The Department of Homeland Security will issue you an official paper receipt (Form I-797) acknowledging the payment of your SEVIS fee.

Who must pay the SEVIS fee?
- Persons applying for a J-1 visa at a US Embassy/Consulate abroad for initial participation as an exchange visitor;
- Citizens of Canada or Bermuda who are applying for J-1 admission at a US port-of-entry;
- Persons who are in the US in another nonimmigrant status and who are changing status to J-1.

Who does NOT have to pay the SEVIS fee?
- J-2 dependents;
- A person who paid an initial SEVIS fee when seeking a J-1 visa from a US Embassy/Consulate, was denied a visa and is applying again for a visa in the same J-1 exchange visitor category within 12 months of the visa denial;
- A J-1 exchange visitor applying for a visa to return to the US as a continuing participant of an exchange visitor program (this applies only to J-1’s returning to the US to resume participation in a program that began previously, in which s/he has maintained status, and which has not been completed);
- A J-1 exchange visitor transferring to SIU in the same exchange visitor category
- A J-1 exchange visitor applying for an extension of stay in the same program.

APPLY FOR A J-1 VISA AT A US EMBASSY/CONSULATE
Schedule an appointment for a visa interview at an Embassy/Consulate in your home country. An in-person interview is usually required. You will be asked to present your DS-2019 document, SEVIS fee receipt and proof of funding. Other specific documentation may vary depending on your home country, so please check with your particular Embassy/Consulate prior to your interview to make certain you have all necessary documentation. As all visa applications undergo a security background check, it may take some time to process your application. Therefore, you should apply as soon as possible.
Documents needed at time of visa interview

- A valid, unexpired passport (must be valid for at least 6 months beyond intended stay)
- DS-2019 issued by SIU
- Form I-797 SEVIS fee receipt
- Department of State Form DS-160 Nonimmigrant Visa Application. Online visa application can be found here: http://travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms_4230.html
- Original financial documentation
- One passport-style photograph
- Nonimmigrant Visa Processing Fee of $160. Depending upon the arrangement between your country and the US, you may also need to pay an additional visa issuance fee. Please check with your Embassy/Consulate for details.

Citizens of Canada and Bermuda do not need to apply for an entry visa.

TWO YEAR HOME RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT 212(e)

J-1 exchange visitors who are subject to the 212(e) rule must return to their home country and reside in that country for two years before they are eligible for H, L, or Permanent Resident status. If subject to 212(e), exchange visitors are not permitted to change their nonimmigrant status within the US from J to any other nonimmigrant category (except for A Diplomat and G International Organization statuses).

J-1 exchange visitors may be subject to this requirement if:

- The exchange visitor’s skill category appears on the applicable country’s “list of skills” that are in critical demand. (see link below for Department of State Skills list) http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/study-exchange/exchange/exchange-visitor-skills-list.html
- The exchange visitor’s program is supported financially by a government or international agency.
- US Embassy/Consulate General visa officers determine if an exchange visitor is subject to 212(e).

A waiver of rule 212(e) is possible by filing an I-612 with the immigration service for the following:

- Statement of no objection from the home country
- Interest of a US government agency
- Exceptional hardship to a US citizen or permanent resident spouse or child of the exchange visitor
- Persecution of the exchange visitor because of race, religion, or political opinion
12 AND 24 MONTH BAR DEFINITIONS

12 month bar: Foreign national cannot have participated in a J program (as J-1 or J-2) for all or part of the 12 month period immediately preceding the start date on the Form DS-2019, unless s/he is transferring to SIU’s program, prior physical presence in J status in the US was less than 6 months, or was a Short-Term Scholar.

24 month bar: Foreign national cannot have participated in a J program as a J-1 or J-2 Research Scholar or Professor within the 24 months preceding the start date of the new J-1 Research Scholar or Professor program. Foreign national will be ineligible to participate as a J-1 Research Scholar or Professor for two years following the end date of this program.

ARRIVAL IN THE US

You must enter the US and check-in at CIE on or within 30 days PRIOR to the start date of your DS-2019. If you cannot enter the US by the DS-2019 start date, notify your SIU departmental sponsor immediately so that you can be issued a new DS-2019 with corrected dates. If you are unable to come to SIU for any reason, you must return the DS-2019 to CIE immediately.

At the US port-of-entry, present the DS-2019 and your passport containing your J-1 visa stamp. Any J-2 dependents accompanying you should also present their DS-2019’s and passports. The officer will review the documents and may ask you questions about your stay in the US. These officers can refer you to a more detailed secondary inspection at their discretion.

Your DS-2019 should be returned to you and an entry date will be stamped in your passport. At least 24 hours after you have arrived in the US, you will need to go to www.cpb.gov/I94 to download your I-94 arrival information. The I-94 is proof of your admission to the US and evidence of your legal immigration status. It is very important that you keep a copy of this I-94 information with your immigration paperwork at all times.

ARRIVAL AT SIU

You should be in contact with your faculty sponsor to make arrangements to meet them once you arrive on the SIU campus. One of your first stops MUST be the Center for International Education (CIE) office. Please make an appointment with Tina or Cheryl at tschiff@siu.edu or cbarnett@siu.edu We are located in the Northwest Annex B Wing, 860 Lincoln Drive. Please bring all of your immigration documentation: DS-2019 for you and any J-2 dependents, passport, I-94 information, proof of health insurance, and local Carbondale address.

SIU EMPLOYMENT

If you are being paid by SIU as part of your J-1 program, you may be interested in the following Wilberforce Pamphlet on the Rights and Protections for Temporary Workers.
http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/rights-protections-temporary-workers.html
MANDATORY INSURANCE INFORMATION

Please note that J-1 exchange visitors (and their J-2 family members) are required, as a condition of their visa status, to carry health insurance. Minimum coverage must provide the following:

1. Medical benefits of at least of $100,000 per accident/illness

2. A deductible not to exceed $500 per accident/illness

3. Expenses associated with the medical evacuation to the home country ($50,000)

4. Repatriation of remains ($25,000)

5. Any policy must be underwritten by an insurance corporation having an A.M. Best rating of “A-” or above, and Insurance Solvency International, Ltd. (ISI) rating of “A-” or above, a Standard & Poor’s Claims-paying Ability rating of “A” or above, a Weiss Research, Inc. rating of “B+” or above, OR backed by the full faith & credit of the government of the exchange visitor’s home country.

6. An insurance policy secured to fulfill these requirements:
   • May require a waiting period for pre-existing conditions which is reasonable as determined by current industry standards;
   • May include a provision for co-insurance under the terms of which the exchange visitor may be required to pay up to 25% of the covered benefits per accident or illness; and
   • Shall not unreasonably exclude coverage for perils inherent to the activities of the exchange program in which the exchange visitor participates.

Depending on the specifics of your agreement with your SIU departmental sponsor, you may or may not be eligible for participation in SIU’s health insurance plan. You should check with your academic departmental sponsor to determine if you will be eligible for SIU’s health insurance. If you have health insurance from your home country that will cover you during your stay in the U.S., please bring a copy of this policy IN ENGLISH with you. Your policy must cover the 6 points listed above to be considered adequate for your stay in the US. Please note that the SIU insurance plan does NOT cover items 3 & 4 (medical evacuation and repatriation). If you have SIU health insurance, you must purchase a separate policy that covers these 2 items. You may purchase this type of insurance from a variety of companies on-line. One example can be found at: http://www.hginsurance.com/medevac.asp (the Harbour Group).

If you are not otherwise insured, you should plan purchasing health insurance prior to or immediately upon your arrival in Carbondale. If you plan on purchasing insurance once you arrive in the US, you may want to purchase a short-term travel policy that will cover you during your journey from your home country. CIE can provide you with information regarding
local companies that provide health insurance for J-1 scholars. In the U.S. certain kinds of elective medical care, such as eyeglasses or dentistry, are not ordinarily covered by insurance and can be quite costly. If at all possible, you should plan on taking care of these needs before leaving for your visit to the U.S.

You and your dependents must maintain health insurance coverage for the entire duration of your stay in the US. If your stay is extended beyond the initial time period, you will be responsible for renewing and extending your health insurance coverage. Please understand that failure to comply with this mandated health insurance requirement will result in the termination of your participation in this J-1 Exchange Visitor program. CIE must have a current and updated copy of your health insurance policy at all times. You can visit the Department of State website for more detailed information on the health insurance requirement.

http://j1visa.state.gov/sponsors/how-to-administer-a-program/

As insurance rates may vary based upon the company chosen, as well as the health-status, age, etc. of the insured, it is recommended that visitors get estimates from at least 3 different agencies to make certain that the best choice is made.

If you wait until you arrive in Carbondale to purchase insurance, we do recommend that visitors call the following agency to get one estimate. Many international students and exchange visitors have purchased their insurance from the Diederich Agency and have reported both good service and fair rates.

Diederich Insurance Agency
506 W. Main Street
Carbondale, IL 62901
Phone: 618-457-6721

Other reputable insurance companies that provide J-1 compliant policies include but are not limited to:

Gateway USA
ISO COMPASS (Gold or Silver plans)
International SOS
Patriot International

DEPARTMENT OF STATE EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM WELCOME BROCHURE

Following is a link to the official Exchange Visitor Program Welcome Brochure. It may provide you with additional information as you prepare for your trip to the U.S.